

Why It's Not OK to Say Women Invite Rape

A radical Islamist preacher says Christian women should wear veils to avoid rape—as if to imply that women who don't cover themselves are asking to be raped. This may shock you, or it may anger and disgust you. I feel all three emotions.

Charisma News published an article Jan. 9 about the preacher. In response to this piece, a commenter wrote that in some situations, women are partially at fault for being raped. Upon doing some research, I found that this opinion is much more common than one would think.

In fact, in a Yahoo! Health article that debunks popular myths surrounding rape, No. 3 was: “Women invite rape by dressing provocatively.” Sheela Raja, an assistant professor and clinical psychologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago, combated this belief, saying, “We don't invite being robbed by carrying a purse or wallet. No one has the right to use someone else sexually against their will.” Rape is rape.

One can argue that leaving your vehicle unlocked increases your chance of having it stolen. But even so, whoever took your car—whether it was locked or not—stole it, and could be prosecuted for theft. You may have been ignorant to leave your car unlocked, but you were not asking someone to drive off with it. As such, women who wear revealing clothing may command attention from men—they may even desire that attention—but they are *not* inviting rape.

It is amazing to me that anyone could believe a woman is inviting men to forcefully have sex with her. Should women dress modestly? Absolutely. Should women avoid getting drunk—especially with strangers? Absolutely. But does that mean women who don't take this advice deserve being raped? No.

The passage often quoted when discussing modesty, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, says: "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works." Notice it does not say that women who dress immodestly are to blame for any violence that may come upon them.

Any time a man forcefully has intercourse with an unwilling woman—whether she was wearing a skimpy outfit, got drunk in a bar with strangers, engaged in a sexual behavior with him or is married to him—it is rape.

In the same Yahoo! article, Silvia Dutchevici, the president and founder of the Critical Therapy Center, said: "I think one of the biggest myths is that someone was led on sexually, that being naked or sexual with someone automatically means you want it to go further towards intercourse, therefore it's should not be rape."

I've had conversations with women who have experienced this, and they are as much a victim as a woman seized and violated in a dark alley. They are not only tragically heartbroken, but they also face guilt in a culture that is increasingly less sympathetic toward victims.

"What is interesting about these myths is that not only are they untrue," Dutchevici said, "but they subconsciously offer some of us some comfort in believing that we can have control over being raped, meaning that if we do not do any of those things (dress a certain way, engage in flirting, etc.) we will be safe. Of course that is a myth."

As Christians, we have a responsibility to come alongside rape victims and show them the love of Christ in the midst of their suffering. How can we do that if we're judging these traumatized women?

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