

Why You Shouldn't Wear Paint-On Leggings

We live in a culture that tells women to be skinny, and to show their skin—a culture that has driven some of us mad, as we've been lured into its insanity.

I remember a teenage girl who stepped on the scale every single day of her life and measured her worth by the numbers between her feet. She constantly made out diet plans, had an unofficial list of “forbidden” high-calorie and carb foods, and did internal penance if she missed a day of exercise.

She was me, hanging in painful insecurity, feeling powerless in my wearied reaches to measure up. And other girls my age hung with me.

But bound with us were also those in their twenties, thirties, forties, fifties ... and I saw that the fingers of deception weren't necessarily generationally particular concerning who they fastened in their grip. But they liked to start young.

A culture drunk with worldliness has feigned beauty for us—flashing its images and pictures, dangling before us an erroneous definition of the word, and ensnaring many in the lie.

The lie that whispers and pierces us with fabricated assurances that man's admiration is where happiness is found.

It feels inescapable in a culture that relentlessly screams at us, *Look like this!* and *Wear this!*

These days I see girls sacrifice modesty to join in with the latest trends, decided by whoever the fashion designers were that season—and I literally hurt inside over it. Because yes, I've been there. I've wanted to be up-to-date in fashion, and

(let's be honest) I didn't mind if I drew the attention of a cute boy or two—even if it meant laying aside some discretion.

But truth is, there is no substance in complimenting a culture's ever-changing image. **Honorable eyes, and honorable men, will see beyond, much deeper, to the beauty fashioned in the Creator's image.** And deep down, maybe even a little beneath our own consciousness, our hearts know the difference between the two. The former holds us captive, while the latter unlocks our true identity, and our true beauty—the beauty that the world seeks to layer over with its impressions and ideas, but the Spirit has the power to unearth and declare.

Men might cast their admiring eyes and approving votes, but when the approval is nothing more than the shallow endorsement of the world's simulated idea of beauty, it comes as a dagger in disguise, leaving our hearts bleeding more than before the flattery ever came.

Because the human heart was designed to desire something deeper.

And sometimes it takes a while, sometimes years, to realize that you are even bleeding. But women, we've all received the wound. When magazine covers in the grocery line tell us that our beauty is in being barely clothed, when box-office hits tell us that sex has nothing to do with love and cherishing and life-long covenant, when men's scanning eyes look us up and down like our worth is wrapped up in curves and skin.

As I stepped into my second year of college, I began a journey of finding myself before, and of letting myself be defined by, another set of eyes. The eyes of the One who fashioned this frame. My heart started moving toward its healing, and I started believing, down in my deep, that He who *is* beauty, who *creates* beauty, is the only One with the authority to define it.

I broke free then. And I decided that I actually really love

cheeseburgers and pizza, a lot, and that no man other than my someday husband was ever going to see my cleavage. I was saving my skin for the man who would love me, for life.

And now, well over a decade later, I know it's a heart's life-long journey of remembering and re-surrendering to the truth that liberates.

I'm still and always free, so long as I cling to Jesus who frees me.

As summer comes to us again, and as the bikinis and short skirts and short shorts (you know, the ones that hang just a few centimeters below the bum) start showing up, I decidedly reserve things like that as "wear-at-home clothes." Truth be told, I have short shorts and low-cut tanks, and I'm sure my husband wouldn't mind if I wore a bikini (so long as we were the only two people at the pool). But these things are for my husband's eyes, only.

Amid other eyes, I'm taking the modest route. It's not about the religiosity, and it doesn't mean wearing ankle length skirts, baggy pants and turtle necks. Modesty doesn't mean forgoing all fashion sense.

This is about my dignity, about knowing my beauty in shirts that cover my lower chest and dresses that cover my upper thighs.

And, it's about my husband's honor.

I respect this man that I've covenanted myself to. My body is for him. My skin is for him, and I'm not going to make an inappropriate amount of it available to other men's eyes. I saved my body and my skin for him before marriage, and it is still for him—just for him.

Back when he and I were dating, I remember him introducing me to one of his friends—a guy I recognized from church, but had

never met. After our introduction (I learned later), he pulled Jon aside to give his thoughts on “the girlfriend.” And one of the things he said really surprised me. He said, “I’ve noticed that she dresses modestly. I bet you appreciate that.” Come to find out, my modest way of dressing was actually one of the things that sparked Jon’s interest and drew him to me.

Not every girl is necessarily trying to draw a guy’s attention in the way she dresses. Some are simply aiming to be fashionable. But we need to be aware.

Men notice how we dress, whatever way we dress.

A man of God will bring true praise that agrees with God’s praise of you—not just in what he says, but in how he acts towards you. If a man is drawn to you because you’re wearing short dresses or low-cut shirts, we have two problems—he doesn’t know how valuable you are, and neither do you. That man is incapable of giving you the honor that your heart needs.

This is about your honor, and the honor of husbands and husbands-to-be.

This is about the honor of the One who made, fearfully and wonderfully, that frame of yours.

And this is about helping our brothers around us. There’s no question that men are extremely visually-driven. A multi-billion-dollar porn industry proves it. And why would we hang temptation before other men—whether it be the stranger in the grocery store or the man sitting a few seats down the row in church? We’ve got to love our brothers by helping them help themselves. And that can be as simple as skipping out on the revealing shirts and paint-on leggings.

If I could talk to the women just for a moment, as sisters, I’d just want to say something you’ve heard before, but it bears repeating: You are immeasurably valuable to the Father,

and He deeply desires that we know it. Our culture has spoken otherwise, but we need God's truth to run into our hearts. Beauty is not measured by the clothes that we wear or the skin that we show or the numbers on a scale or how flat our tummies are or how big our breasts are or how tan our skin is or any other number of things that media's changing opinions throw at us.

Women are being crushed under the weight of a deteriorating culture. And what we need, counter to one more woman displaying her body in a broken world, is women who will weep over their sisters, who will get down on their faces before God and contend for deliverance, who will embrace a bleeding woman's heart and tell her that her worth reaches far beyond a fickle world's esteem—because sometimes we just need to hear it spoken over us.

What we need is men who are grown-up in God, matured in the Holy Spirit, able to control every part of their bodies—even *their eyes*—in dignity and honor. What a woman wears does not force the way a man responds. He always has a choice of where to put his eyes. And what we need is men who will be serious and relentless in guarding their eye gate, who will not drink in the drunkenness of the world, who will value purity more than they value their hormones, who will declare in word and in action the dignity and worth and sacredness of the stunning creation God pulled from his side.

Let He who is beauty, who creates beauty, define it.

The most beautiful One has stamped us with His image.

Beauty isn't a world's feigned idea. Beauty is a heart that is the Lord's.

Beauty is who He is making us on the inside.

Beauty is beneath the surface, too deep for culture, or even

time, to manipulate—so that when media casts changing opinions, or when we're pregnant and swollen and 50 pounds heavier, or when our hair starts graying and wrinkles start invading ... beauty can still shine as bright as it ever did.

Because beauty is God-made and God-infused in a heart that beholds Him and refuses to look away.

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