

Why Do So Many ‘Born-Again, Spirit-Filled’ Women Show Off Cleavage in Church?

“I know I’m inappropriate, but I’m trying to save time. I know I’m in the wrong. My mother would not approve. But would it be better that I not come?” Those were the words of a 30-year-old woman entering church in Maryland wearing a revealing tank top and tight pants.

God bless her, but that’s in the same spirit as saying, “I know it’s inappropriate to cuss in church, but I can’t think of any better way to say it,” or, “I know it’s inappropriate to smoke during praise and worship, but I didn’t have time to finish my Marlboro on the way here.”

Some women—and I am talking about so-called “mature believers,” not lost souls or baby Christians—come into God’s sanctuary on Sunday morning wearing clothes you might rather expect to see them wearing at a dance club on Saturday night. Their blouses cling to their bodies, their necklines dip so low and stretch so wide that they reveal cleavage, and the slits up the sides of their skirts offer more than an innocent glimpse of their thighs. Again, I’m not talking about sinners seeking God or new believers who plain don’t know better. I’m talking about those who claim to be “born-again, baptized, blood-bought” (even tongue-talking) members of the church!

Paul instructed Timothy that women should “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation” (1 Tim. 2:9), and he told the church at Corinth that “our unpresentable parts have greater modesty” (1 Cor. 12:23). Regardless of how hot it is outside or how busy we are, there’s no justification for **Spirit-filled** women to come to church wearing clothes that cause some men to pay more attention to the things of the

flesh than the things of the Spirit.

But rather than repenting, some of these progressive women are lashing out against campaigns like Modest Is Hottest, calling it sexist. In her critique of Modest Is Hottest, Sharon Hodde Miller, a doctoral student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, argues, "A woman's breasts and buttocks and thighs all proclaim the glory of the Lord." Maybe, but I somehow doubt Jesus intended for this aspect of His glory to manifest in church.

Worship artist Jaime Jamgochian launched Modest Is Hottest to reach out to teen girls with the love of Christ. She says, "I feel like there's always more to it when a girl is dressed inappropriately than 'I just want to look cute.'"

I agree—and the same goes for older women who call Jesus Lord. I'm not suggesting that women subscribe to the Holiness Movement's guidelines for women's clothing and makeup. No, I'm not suggesting religious rules and regulations. But I don't think Christian women should dress like the worldly women in church or anywhere else. It's not about a shame-based approach to modesty that Miller opines about in her column. It's about self-respect—and respect for others.

"I love what Jaime is doing; she is right on: Modest is hottest! I think this is such a good message to convey. Jaime is not being sexist but rather sharing that as beautiful women of God we can look so gorgeous without being revealing," says Alyssa Shull, a youth pastor at Words of Life in North Miami and founder of The Pink Lid, a conference designed for girls between the ages of 12-18 where beauty and purity are key themes.

"You are respecting yourself and those around you when you are modest," Shull says. "Lust is very prevalent in our culture, but Jesus says in Matthew 5:28, even if you look at a woman with lust in your eyes it is adultery. So I believe that women

can do their part and display themselves in a beautiful way without promoting lust. You can be stylish and modest! I agree with Shull and, as the mother of a 16-year-old girl, appreciate what she and Jamgochian are doing for young teens.

Again, it's not about the sinner coming in to look for Jesus or the baby Christian still shaking off the dust of the world. We're talking about tongue-talking women wearing clothes so tight they may as well have been spray-painted on and cleavage falling out of their blouses. That's why Facebook comments about this topic like this one trouble me: "Get to where God sees and don't worry about the wardrobe of another person unless you are inclined to buying them new clothes to wear." And this one: "Even if they aren't lost, they have an identity issue. Who are we to judge?"

If we can "judge" that they have an identity issue, can't we judge that they shouldn't be showing cleavage in church? Isn't the Word of God clear on this matter? And it's not our responsibility to buy a woman new clothes just because she's wearing seductive garb to church. But it is our responsibility to speak the truth in love to those who may not know better and to lead by example. In too many ways—including sometimes our wardrobe—Christians have conformed to the world. Paul warned us not to "be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).

It's not about being the fashion police, and it's not about condemnation. If the Holy Spirit convicted your heart about the way you dress as you read this, don't let the devil beat you up. Just buy a few new modest outfits and keep praising God! It's about not purposely opening the door to the spirit of immorality. Sure, as one Facebook commenter noted, a woman could wear a burlap sack to church and still find lustful eyes upon her. But does that mean we let it all hang out in the name of liberty? God forbid.

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