

Unclothing Modesty - A World of Sexual Immorality

singing...

(Girls) goin' swimming, (Girls) in bikinis

(Girls! A-walkin' and a-wigglin' by (Yay, yay, yay)

(Girls) on the beaches, (Girls) oh, what peaches

It was one of my favorite Elvis songs as a young child growing up in the '60s. I could not wait to watch all those Elvis Presley movies, as well as the Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello "Beach Blanket Bingo," "Beach Party," and "Bikini Beach" movies. There was a time when I would look back at those days and talk about how much fun it was to watch those movies. Although as a young kid at only 4 or 5 years old, it was all about the singing instead of the girls. I loved the music... and I was a huge Elvis fan. I now realize those movies are much of what contributed to me being so blind in my teen and young adult years to the immorality, lust, and immodesty that swallow up the screen of such type movies and is so prevalent in our world today. My parents assumed there was nothing wrong with me watching these movies, just as many will think there is still nothing wrong with watching them today. The same will believe there is nothing wrong with watching Blue Lagoon, Baywatch, or other similar type movies of the modern-day. However, if we study the Bible, we can learn what is wrong with watching such movies and how Christians should be more concerned about immodesty.

As we read through this study that shows how the world is changing modesty into immodesty by unclothing it, thus titled "Unclothing Modesty," let's give careful thought to the following question...

If we consider a woman in a swimsuit to be modest, how would she have to be dressed for us to consider her immodest?

Scripture references are NKJV unless otherwise noted.

Let's first consider the status of Christians among an immoral society.

As I continue to study the Bible and grow in my Christian faith, the more I realize that this world and our society are in great moral disarray. Granted, this is nothing new if we consider that this world has been in moral confusion for a very long time, even long before any of us were born. We can trace moral issues back to the beginning of the world, and we will consider some of those issues later in this study. However, because I hear so very little public discussion about the moral problems of our society, I suspect the majority will not agree that it is in moral chaos. Perhaps they choose to ignore it, ignorant of its very existence. For a very (very) long time, I know I was ignorant of it. There was absolutely no doubt that when I was roaming about my younger days chasing all kinds of evil; I never gave one single thought to the moral condition of this world. Had anyone tried to explain to me that the world had moral issues when I was younger (and even many of my later years), I am almost sure I would have shrugged it off and gone on about my heathen ways. I am not surprised that so many of our younger generation is blind to the immorality in this world today, just as I once was. But this is not something that ends with the younger generation... it extends to the middle-aged, the older aged, parents, grandparents, and even great grandparents... including many among these various groups who call themselves Christians.

I am waving my hand high... I will be one of the first to admit it took me over forty years of my life and several years as a Christian to realize the many years of my ignorance of the moral issues that should confound every Christian. I hope you will not follow in my footsteps and make the same mistakes I have made in taking longer to better understand these issues and how God wants Christians to deal with them. We should all have a desire to follow in the steps of Jesus, who left us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21).

God has a lot to say about immorality, especially regarding immodesty, which is what our main focus will be. I wholeheartedly encourage everyone to dig deeper into this subject through God's Word and not simply rely on what we will study here. This study will not encompass all there is to be said on the subject but will hopefully cause those reading it to want to learn more.

Let's define a couple of words for good measure since we will be using and discussing them frequently. Perhaps as we read these words throughout this study, we will have a broader sense of their meanings.

Immorality - the quality of not being in accord with standards of right or good conduct... synonyms are wickedness, sin, depravity, corruption, dissolution, dishonesty, iniquity.

Modesty - defined as humility - unwillingness to draw attention to your own achievements or abilities... defined as sexual reserve - reserve about nudity or sexual matters, especially a preference for clothes that keep much of the body covered... it is defined as freedom from vanity, freedom from excessive pride (especially in appearance), freedom from self-importance, egotism, arrogance and conceit... synonyms are decency, humbleness, shyness, bashfulness, virtue.

At the time of my writing this, there are not many preachers I have ever heard preach on immodesty... only a couple of lessons in my lifetime. Only a few will preach on the subject and deal with it forthrightly. Our pulpits are filled with weak-kneed preachers who fear they may offend someone; thus, they trade the difficult topics for those that will tickle the ears of their listeners. This neglect is what the inspired Paul said would happen when he wrote his second letter to Timothy. He said there would come a time when these listeners will not endure sound doctrine, but because of their itching ears, they will seek teachers to teach them what they want to hear and turn away from the truth (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

In the preceding verse, Paul charged Timothy to "preach the word"... and to be ready "in season and out of season"... the KJV reads, "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Notice that the majority of what Timothy is to preach will be to reprove and rebuke those in error. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words and charge Timothy to preach this way because He knew there would be a time when people would not endure sound doctrine. People do not want to hear it... they stop up their ears and get mad, just as they did with Stephen (Acts 7:51-60). **Please don't stop your ears up and get mad!**

As Christians, we are to take time to study our Bible... we are to be diligent in our study to show ourselves approved unto God and be able to rightly divide God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). If we study Bible as we should, we will learn that the apostle Paul spent nearly his entire Christian life preaching negatively and warning other Christians against false teachings and sinful activities. He was constantly reprovng and rebuking the churches and their members publicly, even calling out names of specific individuals who were in error. He even wrote it down by inspiration for the whole world to read, which is as public as it gets. Paul certainly was not worried about offending anyone. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write the following words.

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Therefore, we should appreciate preachers who imitate Paul, who step up and preach as Paul preached, in season and out of season, just as God expects, although they certainly seem to be hard to find these days. Sadly, it seems we have but a remnant of preachers who do not shun to declare the full counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Furthermore, it is as though we are repeating the times of Noah when Noah's preaching fell on deaf ears, and only a few (eight souls) were saved by God from the flood (1 Peter 3:20). I wonder if God only sees a few who are willing to preach as He expects... and only a few who will listen and be doers of His Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).

Immodesty is certainly not a popular subject because it does not support the normal flow of most of today's lifestyles... and it steps on a lot of toes. It seems to interrupt what a lot of people consider "fun." And "everyone" is dressing the same way, so what is wrong with us simply dressing like the "majority"? As Christians, we should not be concerned with what the majority are doing. However, we should be concerned with how God wants us to dress, and we should be different than the majority of the world because we are no longer of this world (John 15:19).

Are Christians supposed to change and be different? What do you think the following two verses mean?

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2Corinthians 5:17).

As Christians, we are now walking in "newness of life." When we came up out of that watery grave of baptism, we became a "new creation." Granted, we are not made perfect, but we have chosen a new life... the life of a Christian, so we now need to look at God's Word and see what we need to do to live like a Christian. ***This is what Christians do.***

As Christians, we must be "peculiar" people (1 Peter 2:9). The Greek word translated is "peripoiēsis" and means "acquired... we were purchased with the blood of Christ". We are a "special" people. Those outside of Christ will likely not be fond of us because we will not act as they act... we will not run in the same excess of riot ("flood of dissipation") as they do. Consider what God inspired Peter to write concerning this.

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Peter 4:1-5).

When we stop partying with them, when we stop running with them, and we tell them it is because we finally learned (as we continue to mature as a Christian) that God no longer wants us to live in that manner, some will get mad at us. They will tell us that we think we are too good for them now. We may even feel awful because people we have been friends with for many years, maybe even most of our lives, do not understand what happened to us. They might even make fun of us. These responses would be part of the persecution that Jesus said we would suffer because of Him. Consider what Paul was inspired to write to Timothy.

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

If we dedicate our self to being a Christian and living as a Christian should live, and we are not facing at least some persecution from time to time, then we might ask ourselves if we are trying too hard to fit into the world instead of trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Some will "give in" to their family and friends, and they will "give in" to the world that surrounds them... as Jesus explains in the parable of the sower.

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:18-22).

They are like the seed cast on the stony places... they cannot withstand the persecution. It is too much for them to go against their family and friends. It is just too difficult.

Then some try to straddle the fence. They want to be called Christians, but they also want to live it up. They want to have "fun" during the week, then try to fix it by attending what they call "church" on Sunday mornings. Or maybe they do not "go to church" at all, but they still claim to be a Christian despite what the inspired Hebrew writer said about forsaking the assembling of the saints (Hebrew 10:24-26). This is why so many outside of Christ (those in the world) call Christians hypocrites. They look at the so-called Christian lifestyle and do not see any difference between them and the world. It is no wonder why they see no need to become a Christian.

If we call ourselves Christians, why not live like we are Christians? We cannot pretend... do you think God will somehow not see it?

As Christians, we are to renew our minds and no longer be conformed to this world (Romans 12:1-2).

As the inspired Paul wrote to Titus, we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

Renewing our minds, living soberly, righteously, and godly, is going to require knowledge of God's Word... it requires study!

Have we studied to show ourselves approved, and can we rightly divide the word (2 Timothy 2:15)?

Are we examining and testing ourselves to make sure we are keeping the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5)?

This is what Christians do!

Let's consider a few questions concerning immodesty and see if we align with God's word.

- What does God expect of us concerning modesty/immodesty?
- What does the Bible say about modesty/immodesty?
- How should we dress every day?
- Is it okay for a man or woman to wear a bathing/swimsuit?
- Is public swimming okay?
- Is public sun-tanning okay?

These are merely a few questions relating to immodesty that we might consider from a Biblical point of view... what saith the Lord?

Let's look back at the definition of modesty and consider that it means keeping most of the body covered. It is then reasonable to discern that immodesty is the opposite... keeping too much of the body uncovered. The Bible will show us that short-shorts and skirts/dresses (cut above the knees and showing part of the thighs) are immodest. The Bible will show us that low-cut shirts (showing any portion of the breasts) and half shirts (showing any portion of the stomach) is immodest. The Bible will show us that skin-tight pants and shirts (that tightly outline the curves of the body) and similar type clothes, along with swimsuits, and many sports outfits, are all immodest. I know... how crazy does that sound to most people? It's not crazy at all to God.

We will do well to remember it does not matter in the least what you or I consider immodest... what matters is what God considers immodest. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). The only way we can know what God considers immodest is to study and evaluate the whole of His Word and use our good common senses in understanding the truth of His Word. After we know what His Word says on the matter, we have a choice to make. What saith the Lord?

Nearly everywhere we go today, we will find people dressed immodestly. We can go to the grocery store, gas station, post office... places we need to visit regularly... and there will be people dressed immodestly. We may even see immodest dress in worship services. Then some places are known for immodesty, such as crowded beaches, pool parties, water parks, nightclubs, beauty pageants, dance studios, work-out gyms, etc. There are some places we will need to go and will not be able to avoid immodesty, but then there are other places we may want to go, but we have the choice to avoid going to those places.

It sure seems like everyone goes to the beach... and it sure seems like everyone goes to the public swimming pools. And surely there is nothing wrong with the Olympics. How is it possible that any of this can be something God would not want us to do since everyone seems to do it, right? The first time someone said something to me about public swimming and going to crowded beaches not being a good idea for Christians... I have to tell you, I got knots in my stomach and felt somewhat awkward. Seriously... I had one of those puckered-up looks all over my face. I had never in all my life heard such. All during my very early years, my parents took us to "church" each week, Vacation Bible School, and "revivals"... as well as the beach quite often. We were churchgoers and beachgoers and never heard anyone say anything negative about it. As a teenager, one of the local denominations I frequented took us on a bus trip to the beach for a day... and we dressed like the majority dress for the occasion. Even on up in my years, we took our daughter and her cousins, friends, etc., on week-long beach trips. We thought absolutely nothing of it... it seemed like the typical American thing to do, as I suspect most people think the same today. Think about it... it's rather evident most people think it's okay.

Now is not the time to stop your ears up!

It was not until late in my life (not too long after I was baptized into Christ in 2004) that I first heard a preacher preach on immodesty, which opened my eyes and caused me to realize I needed to study this subject more. It has been a subject I have studied for several years now and finally decided to write about it. As stated earlier, God has a lot to say about it in His Word, and it requires a lot of study.

Most young Christians have never been asked to consider whether public swimming, going to the beach, and similar events, are right or wrong. I suspect that if we were to start randomly asking people in general what their views are on such things, the vast majority would firmly believe there is nothing at all wrong with any of it. Ask most people who claim to be Christians, and they will say the same... they see no issues, despite God's problems with it.

Ignorance will not be an excuse we can use with God on judgment day (Acts 17:30).

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY"" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Just because we have grown up thinking something is okay does not make it alright. Just because the majority are doing it does not make it alright. Jesus says that the majority will follow the broad path to destruction, and few will find eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14). Are we going to follow the majority... or the few?

Are we conscious of our conscience? If we are blind to the dangers of immodesty and accept what many of us have been accustomed to all of our lives, ignoring or refusing to acknowledge the truth, our conscience becomes seared. Consider what the inspired Paul wrote to Timothy.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron," (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

The same passage in the ASV reads...

"But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron;" (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

So, just what does the Bible say about immodesty? What saith the Lord?

It does not take long after the creation of the earth and the creation of man for God to have to deal with immodesty.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings" (Genesis 3:6-7).

Adam and Eve were not literally blind (they could see the tree and its qualities, they named animals, etc.), but the fact that they were naked and needed no clothing did not bother them, up until the point when they ate the forbidden fruit and sin entered into their lives. Their eyes were then opened to the knowledge of good and evil... they were then aware of good and evil.

Per the above passage, they made themselves "coverings." The KJV and ASV use the word "aprons," while the ESV translates it as "loincloths." The word "coverings" is translated from the Hebrew word "chăgôr," which means "loincloths" or "loin coverings," "aprons," a belt (for the waist): - apron, armor, gird (-le).

According to the Hebrew, they literally used fig leaves in an attempt to cover themselves. An apron or belt implies they only covered a portion of their bodies. After God learned that Adam and Eve realized they were naked, He was not satisfied with how they were covered, thus confirming the fig leaves were not sufficient for God.

"Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"" (Genesis 3:9-11)

After they had sewed fig leaves to cover themselves, God was looking for them, but they hid because they felt like they were still naked, and they were ashamed. According to God, the fig leaves were not enough to consider themselves clothed... at least not sufficiently, as evidenced by their shame.

How did God respond?

"Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21).

The Hebrew for "tunics" is "kethoneth," which is a "coat of skin" or "garment of skin." The ASV translates it "coats of skin" and the ESV "garments of skin."

From Strong's Biblical dictionary, "coat" is, "From an unused root meaning to cover; a shirt: - coat, garment, robe." The word "skin" comes from the Hebrew word "ore."

From Strong's Biblical dictionary, "ore" is "skin (as naked); by implication hide, leather: - hide, leather, skin."

Think about what "skin" covers... it covers the entire body, not only a portion but every part of the body. Do you have any part of your body that does not have skin?

Wilson's word study and other studies pertaining to this phrase, "coats of skin," will bring us to the conclusion that a tunic, a coat, a cloak... which is what God made for Adam and Eve, and what was worn in those days, was clothing that covered a person from the shoulder to the knees.

If we concluded this study right now and did not consider another word of what the Bible says about immodesty, what would our conclusion be?

From no more than what we have considered thus far, would it be okay to wear shorts in public that show the area of skin above the knees or a portion of the thigh?

Would it be okay for a woman to wear a tube top in public?

Would it be okay for a man to go in public without a shirt?

When we think about what we wear in public... how public would it have to be for our insufficient clothing to be unsatisfactory to God?

Remember the question I asked early on... **If we consider a woman in a swimsuit to be modest, how would she have to be dressed for us to consider her immodest?**

Consider where Adam and Eve were. The only people present in the garden were Adam, Eve, and God... and Adam and Eve were not dressed well enough for God and were ashamed of what they were wearing. There were no other people around... no beach crowd... no people shopping... no people swimming... the only humans were Adam and Eve, yet they were considered immodestly dressed according to God.

How much more so would it be essential for us today to be dressed appropriately in public where more people are present than there were in the garden with Adam and Eve?

Why is it that when we wear nothing more than fig leaves (swimsuits), we are not ashamed in the same manner that Adam and Eve were ashamed?

Reasonably thinking, it is because we have been raised in a society that has slowly allowed the shameful of wearing fig leaves to dissipate into thin air.

People say that our culture has changed... and that we should adapt to these cultural changes. However, God's Word does not change; His desire for us to live righteously does not change. No one is authorized to change God's Word to allow wearing fig leaves to be okay, regardless of how our culture has changed. We cannot add to or take away from God's Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18). Everything (all things) that we do we must do in the name of Christ, which is by the authority of God's Word (Colossians 3:17). We cannot change something because we feel like it needs to be changed, at least not expecting that there will be no consequences on judgment day.

Let's look more at modesty and immodesty and consider what else God has to say about it in His Word.

The inspired Paul in his first letter to Timothy wrote the following.

"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" (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

Brother Harold Littrell translated the ESB (English Study Bible), which is considered an extremely literal translation of the New Testament, translated the passage as follows.

"Likewise, that the woman should dress becomingly, adorning themselves in a respectable and sound-minded manner; not with braids and gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

The KJV translates the passage as follows.

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

The Greek word for "modesty" is "kosmio," and according to Thayer's Biblical Dictionary, it means "well arranged, seemly, modest." Strong's Biblical Dictionary defines it as "orderly, of good behavior, modest." Webster defines it as "behaving according to a standard of what is proper... especially not displaying one's body." Thorndike-Barnhart defines it as "decent or chaste; not calling attention to one's body."

Considering these definitions of "modest," modest apparel is clothing that will not draw attention to a person. Given these definitions and logical common sense, modest apparel should de-emphasize the sexual aspect of the body, which in turn will help prevent evil thoughts, lusting, and desires. "Well, that's just silly!" some may say... but it's not silly according to God.

Immodest apparel is lascivious. Lascivious comes from the Greek word "aselgeia" and means "something that causes lust," "filthy words," "indecent bodily movements - as in dancing," "unchaste handling of males and females," "unbridled lust," and "shamelessness."

Consider apparel advertised as being sexually attractive, such as swimsuits, skimpy outfits, sport, and exercise apparel... all intentionally designed to be lascivious. Lascivious apparel will excite lustful thoughts and desires.

"Shamefacedness" that is used in the KJV of 1 Timothy 2:9 is from the Greek word "aidōs," and according to Strong's Biblical Dictionary, it means (through the idea of downcast eyes); bashfulness, that is, (towards men), modesty or (towards God) awe: - reverence.

Thayer's Bible Dictionary defines it as a sense of shame or honor, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect.

Refer back to how Adam and Eve reacted when God called for them in the garden. They were ashamed!

The word "sobriety" from this same verse means "soundness of mind, self-control."

God intends for a woman to dress in a bashful and sober manner. Where she happens to be matters not, she could be in the garden where Adam and Eve were, at work, or the beach. She is to profess godliness in how she dresses. The fact that we may be in one place or another that accepts immodest dress does not make it acceptable to God. It's worth repeating... the fact that we may be in one place or another that accepts immodest dress does not make it acceptable to God. From our study thus far, we can realize we should do all we can to avoid places that accept immodest dress.

How can a woman profess godliness if she is wearing lascivious apparel? How is it possible for a woman to profess godliness, be shamefaced, with sobriety, and do good works while wearing a swimsuit in public... or when she has not dressed appropriately in public? Good ole common sense should give us the answer to this question that it is absolutely beyond the realm of possibility, and if our common sense doesn't populate that answer, God's Word does.

God's Word has to be the standard for all Christians and will help us determine what is appropriate to wear. We cannot leave these things up to our culture or society to dictate how we dress. For hypocrites and heathens, this may be fine. Still, Christians are to be different... as mentioned earlier, a peculiar people, abiding in the Word of God, studying to show ourselves approved, studying to prove ourselves worthy of being called a Christian.

Consider what God has said about modesty/immodesty, and surely it cannot be too difficult to figure out what He would have us to wear to be pleasing to Him.

Can we look into our hearts, look at God, and honestly believe that a swimsuit is modest?

If we consider a swimsuit modest, what "apparel" do we consider immodest?

Remember... the inspired Paul wrote, "adorn yourselves with modest apparel"... thus, if we go less than a swimsuit, we are going to be naked and not wearing any apparel at all.

Wearing immodest clothing such as a swimsuit should make us blush... if it does not make us blush, then we need to examine our heart to see if it has been "seared as with a hot iron."

Dressing modestly shows we care about what God has said. Dressing immodestly shows a hardened heart that does not care what God has to say.

The truth is that swimsuits are skimpy and leave very little to our imagination, and it doesn't matter if it is a bikini or a one-piece swimsuit. A one-piece still reveals most or all of the legs... and depending on the style, can reveal a lot more up top, and it is going to be skin tight, revealing the sexual contours of the body. Surely, we cannot believe the apparel referenced here can be considered with shamefacedness and sobriety. Surely, we cannot suggest this apparel professes godliness.

Some women will (and do) say that they cannot help the way a man looks at them, that it is not their fault.

But consider what Jesus says.

"Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:4-7)

Verse 7 in the ESV reads as follows.

"Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!" (Matthew 18:7)

This passage teaches us that causing someone else to sin is a sin in itself. It is very clear that if a woman causes a man to stumble, she has sinned herself. There is no reference to it being anyone's fault other than the one who caused the sin.

If a woman ignores God's command to dress modestly, then, in turn, causes a man to lust after her because of how she dresses; she has sinned. If a man or a woman dresses immodestly and in turn causes another to sin because of how he or she dresses, there is an offense... and Jesus says, "woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

Women should consider how men may look at them based on what they are wearing. A woman may not think that what she is wearing is too revealing, but a man could very well view her apparel differently. A woman could be sending the wrong signals to a man simply because of how she is dressed... and she may not even realize it. We should use our good senses to see that it is better for the woman to be over-cautious than to risk causing another to sin.

Wearing swimsuits (whether a man or a woman) and going to crowded beaches, water parks, and swimming pools where there is mixed swimming are all sinful. It is sinful because it promotes immodesty, immorality, and sensuality, and it causes other people to stumble. Remember that Jesus said, "woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

Going to places where we know there will be immodest dress, even if we are fully clothed, and we have a clear choice not to go, is placing ourselves in a situation where we can be tempted, allowing Satan to work on us. Why would we lead ourselves into this kind of temptation?

Later in his letter to Timothy, the inspired Paul writes that we should keep ourselves pure.

"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

The inspired Peter tells us to watch out for Satan.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

As Christians, we must do all that we can to not put ourselves in places where we have the opportunity to be tempted.

Just as women are not to dress immodestly and potentially cause a man to be tempted, a man must also prevent lusting after a woman. Naturally, it does not help if she is dressed immodestly, and both will be guilty if he lusts.

"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Some men might claim that they are not tempted to lust after a woman based on how she is dressed. Some may argue a woman in a swimsuit will not cause them to be tempted. I suggest this is nonsense thinking, and why risk it? It is in man's sinful nature to lust after a woman who is dressed immodestly... and while he may not sin, the temptation can be tremendous and unavoidable in many cases. The risk can be eliminated by both men and women dressing appropriately.

Now how do you answer this question? **If we consider a woman in a swimsuit to be modest, how would she have to be dressed for us to consider her immodest?**

If you consider a woman in a swimsuit to be modest (you believe it is okay and not against God's will), you would have to accept a woman must be naked to be immodest. Do you even remember what God thought about the fig leaves?

God cares about our outward appearance. How we dress indicates our values and our love for God.

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Moral issues are prevalent everywhere these days, but many of these moral issues could be eliminated if we would dress in a way that would not provoke lust in others... and if we would avoid places that are known for immodest dress. If we do not take God at His Word and do as He has asked, moral issues will continue, even in the church. If we are going to call ourselves Christians, we must act like Christians, and immodest dress is not part of the actions of a Christian.

As Christians, we may be looked at closely, especially as we profess and represent the Christian religion. Our actions and good works should reflect Biblical principles and values and have no appearance of evil.

"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

Are we going to be noticeably different than the majority... and will we stand out in a crowd because of our purity or because of our immodesty? Are we going to set ourselves apart or try to fit in and be part of the crowd? Remember, we must be different... we must come out from among them.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE." Therefore "COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU." "I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

It is what Christians do!

God bless you!
Sonnie Parker