



A  
CALL  
TO  
MODESTY

We live in an age when exposure of the human body seems to be an accepted way of life. On the billboards, on the streets, at the office, on the job site, in the classroom—everywhere we turn, men and women parade their bodies for anyone to see.

In view of such shameless immodesty, is it any wonder that in our society

—65% of high school students have had sexual relations.

—43 million Americans have incurable sexual viruses.

—illegitimate births increased 400 percent from 1963-1993.

—every 2 minutes an arrest is made for sex offenses.

Oh, you might say, immodesty is not all to blame. Our society is filled with lust and perversion. True enough. But immodesty and lust are two sides of the same coin.

Has immodesty become so commonplace that we cannot admit what it does to us as men and women?

### ***Who sets our standards?***

Who tells us the kinds of clothes we should wear? Why do we pick out certain styles and avoid others?

Powerful social forces account for most people's dress standards.

1. *I don't want to be different.* I want to fit in. All

my friends wear this kind—I want one too.

2. *I enjoy being attractive.* I like when I make heads turn. I like the feel of people admiring what they see when they look at me.

3. *I like to imitate my favorite stars.* Famous people on the screen, in the sports world, or on stage are my mentors. I enjoy being like them.

4. *I like to be in style.* This particular fashion is in, and I like to be up-to-date. No one likes to be an old fogey.

If you are one who follows the standards of friends, styles, and stars, you may think, “I’m not out to seduce anyone. If someone whistles or makes wisecracks, that’s his problem, not mine.” Such rationalizing may silence your conscience. But it fails to nullify your demoralizing influence or your accountability for violating God’s standards.

### ***What are God’s standards?***

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

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 2:8-10).

Imagine what a different world this would be if men everywhere prayed regularly with holy hands and women conducted themselves discreetly, and dressed without display.

What would the statistics be on sexual relations before marriage, illegitimate births, sexual viruses, and rape? ZERO!

What do the preceding verses tell us about God's standards for dress?

*1. God wants people to be holy.* That may not at first seem to be a dress standard, but it is. Dress is an expression of the heart. Make no mistake: the problem of morals in our society is NOT a simple matter of how people dress. Dressing immoral people in modest clothing would not solve the root problem. Immodesty and lust are with us because people's hearts are not right with God, so the first step in cleaning up immodesty is cleaning up the heart.

*2. God wants people to be pleasing in their appearance.* The Greek word translated "modest" means orderly or decorous. There is no virtue in ugliness or slovenly dress. It is right to be orderly and neat.

*3. God wants people to avoid that which is suggestive, seductive, or bold.* The call to "shamefacedness and sobriety" forbids the display so prevalent in our society. This instruction is to women in particular because women's bodies are the focus of lustful men's attention. Unfortunately, our society

proves this daily. Where do men's eyes naturally go when a woman has a low neckline, a short skirt, a slit skirt, tight slacks, a form-fitting blouse, or a blouse or dress with V-lines? God's standards are against such clothing.

4. *God wants people to avoid an ornamented appearance.* Gold, pearls, and “costly array” are the specific items mentioned in these verses. In our society it seems almost inconceivable for women not to ornament themselves—their faces, their ears, their eyes, their wrists, their fingers, and their clothing. Why does God forbid this? Because God knows that the face is the mirror of the heart, and God wants the beauty of our lives to be deeper than jewelry and makeup.

Just imagine for a moment what it would be like to walk down a street and the only people you saw were people who were holy in heart and who followed God's standards for their appearance. No immodesty; no ornamentation; neat, orderly dress; faces that mirrored no guilt and hid no lustful desires.

Could we improve such a scene with “gold, pearls, or costly array”? The answer should be obvious.

### ***What are your standards?***

Who tells YOU what to wear and how to appear? Maybe you have never thought seriously about this.

Are social pressures dictating your dress standards? God's Word says, "Be not conformed [literally, "fashioned"] to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Our world needs the witness that obedience to God's will is GOOD. Your life could testify to the goodness of living according to God's will.

Unfortunately, violations of God's standards are not only on the street. They are in many churches. You will not find many professing Christians who follow God's standards in dress. Immodesty and ornamentation are the norm not only for many church members, but also for church leaders.

PEOPLE cannot be your standard.

Will you follow God in this matter?

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF GOD abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

—John Coblentz