

more to be MODESTY

it is about more than clothing

What we wear and how we present ourselves is the first impression we give to others. It is like a magazine's front page, communicating to the onlooker what they will find inside.

Does your outside appearance and behavior reflect the inner truth of who you are?

Sometimes we send mixed messages because we're still trying to figure out who we are. We may use clothing like a costume, pretending we're somebody else in order to be liked. Clothing can also become a sort of sorority pledge experience, wearing styles our friends deem best in order to fit in.

The way we dress ought to be a reflection of our individual personality, while also meeting the practical needs each occasion warrants. But it is our inner beauty that ought to be the most captivating part of our appearance. If this is our goal, then pursuing modesty in what we wear and how we behave doesn't become a burdensome set of rules, but rather a framework for honoring God and sharing our authentic self with others.

defining modesty

Modesty is a lifestyle that encompasses how one dresses, behaves, and even speaks. Pursuing modesty is really about having our "outside" not distract from our "inside." The goal is for our character and testimony of faith to shine brighter than any bling we might put on.

spiritual modesty

The Scriptures give us wonderful instruction on how we should pursue beauty and live modestly. According to the Lord, we are beautiful when our behavior lines up with the Word as we live with a reverence for the Lord. It is our character, words, and actions that make a

woman beautiful. When what we say and do is consistent with Scripture, an unquantifiable inner beauty takes over. This is the essence of a modest woman, as she seeks to fulfill the call in the following Scripture passages.

1 Peter 2:3-5

³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.

Colossians 3:12-14 The Message

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Psalms 45:11 NIV

The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.

Proverbs 31:30

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

physical modesty

As we grow in relationship with the Lord, our inner beauty reshapes our outside appearance. However, we still must be practical as we consider what we should wear and even how to behave. We want to communicate an attractive, God-honoring message, even before we open our mouth. While our clothing is significant, so is

our speech and body language. Our words should be modest by refraining from fowl language, gossip, slang, and being rude to others. The way we carry ourselves should also be modest by not flirting, bending, or leaning in ways that communicates sexual overtones that will lead guys on with an expectation of more than friendship.

Modesty is especially important when considering the men in our lives. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are challenge to not cause each other to stumble but to love one another through our actions. Choosing to consider others is one way to honor God and his word (1 Timothy 1:5).

It is safe to say that God made men visual creatures. As such, they are naturally awakened by a woman's body (read Song of Solomon)! So when we consider how we dress and the type of clothing we put on, we can show respect to the men in our lives by striving toward an appearance that won't cause them to stumble. Yes, as women, we are free to wear whatever we want, but just because we can doesn't mean we should. When our clothes are tight or reveal a lot of skin, guys don't have to use their imagination to visualize what is underneath. We can encourage them to not sin, even in their thoughts, by being modest with our clothing. Think of your own weakness -- would you like your friends to set you up to fail in your area of weakness? NO! So consider how you clothe yourself (and carry yourself) in the same regard.

General Modesty Guidelines

Use these general guidelines to develop a habit of physical modesty that gives way to revealing your inner beauty.

Shirts & Dresses

- avoid necklines that have a plunging neckline or use a camisole (spaghetti strap tank top) underneath
- if it has a modest neckline, but drops open when you bend over, get in the habit of using one hand to keep it close to your skin
- if a shirt is super short when you raise your arms or even when you sit down, wear a camisole underneath to keep your mid-section covered
- even though fashion says otherwise, bras and straps should be concealed; if you can see the bra through

the shirt, the shirt is either too tight or the bra is too dark in color

- a shirt or dress is considered too tight if you can see the bra and panty lines, if it pulls across the bust, belly, or butt, or if you can see skin between the button holes
- choose to wear a slip under a dress to prevent it from clinging, riding up, or seeing through it in the light

Pants, Shorts, & Skirts

- pants and shorts are considered too tight if you can see your panty lines
- short-shorts shouldn't fit like bathing suit bottoms; there should be at least a few inches of material from the center seam to the bottom of the short on the inner seam, so at least you are covered when you sit with your legs criss-crossed style
- a skirt should hit mid-thigh, at least, and ideally hit the end of your fingertips
- it is a good idea to wear a slip with a skirt, unless it is lined with a satin material, to prevent it from clinging, riding up, and seeing through it

Final Notes

- Be sure to look at yourself in the mirror moving into various positions. What looks good standing upright, may become revealing as you sit or bend over.
- If it doesn't fit right, don't wear it or buy it unless you plan to take it to the tailor for alterations.
- Strive to use modesty in your movements, regardless of what you are wearing, such as crossing your legs gracefully in a skirt or dress, and even when wearing pants. Also, don't bend at the waist to pick something up, instead bend your knees. And please don't lean over a table with your butt in the air!

Remember, the purpose of this is to encourage you to be beautiful and modest on the outside, in order to not distract from what you really want others to see -- your heart and personality and love for the Lord.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.therebelution.com/modestysurvey/>

<http://affiliate.purefashion.com/modesty>

<http://isthismodest.com/>

<http://www.purewarrior.org/index.php?id=230>