

Modesty - By: Mickey Galloway

Warmer temperatures are coming. It will soon be the season for swimming and other water sports. It is also the season for exposing, in the name of summer temperatures, bare or nearly bare bodies. Please understand; the act of swimming is not a problem. **Christians must think about how we ought to dress.** We all need to guard carefully against being seen in public in the immodest, unchaste, ungodly, revealing attire that goes with the season. As you consider this material, please ask yourself again, "*Do my clothes send the wrong message?*"

Our clothes do send a message. The promiscuous woman who set a trap for the *simple* young man who was "*void of understanding*" knew what kind of clothing to wear to entice her victim. When they met, she was wearing "*the attire of a harlot*" (*Proverbs 7:10*). Is it any wonder we have been influenced by the humanistic philosophy that dominates our society? Everything, from toothpaste to cereal, health-spa memberships to automobiles, is sold by way of lewd, sexually enticing commercials. Displays of near nudity have become so commonplace that children view it as a normal part of life. When you oppose what your children want to wear, do you ever hear the argument, "*Well, I don't see anything wrong with it.*" Parents, take heed. Christians who are concerned about their children must address these problems--modesty issues, preserving our influence for good, and pleasing the Lord.

When God finished His creation He said it was "*very good*" (*Genesis 1:27-31*). Remember, God made the bodies of man and woman attractive to each other. He also created within each a sexual desire for the other. However, from the beginning, God placed boundaries on men and women, limiting their desires for one another and permitting the fulfillment of those desires only in marriage. "*Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*" (*Hebrews 13:4*) Only in marriage can man and woman lawfully become "*one flesh*;" only there is the "*bed undefiled*;" only there is it right for a man to "*look upon a woman to lust after her.*" (cf. *Genesis 2:18-25; Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 5:27-28*)

God has given us responsibility. When men and women dress and behave in ways that promote inordinate, unlawful urges, they promote lasciviousness. Almost all TV programs contain vulgar and lurid filth designed to condition our thinking into accepting, without being offended, that which we ought to find shocking. One can hardly go to Wal-Mart or the grocery store without being faced with women whose apparel (or lack of it) is immodest and unblushingly scanty and revealing. We are expected to behold near nudity without shock. Much of today's music is designed to produce lewd, foul and dirty thoughts in the listeners' minds. And who would deny that the modern dance is intended to promote such lewd and lustful thoughts? Careless displays of affection (petting) are also lascivious! The apostle Paul said, "*They who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" (*Galatians 5:19-21*) The term "*lasciviousness*" is found in the following passages: *Mark 7:22; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; 1 Peter 4:3; and Jude 4*. Lasciviousness "**denotes excesses, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness ... The prominent idea is shameless conduct**" (Vine). Those who either carelessly or callously display their bodies in such a way as to invite and provoke lasciviousness commit sin and share responsibility in the resulting sin committed by others. No Christian who is interested in his or her soul's welfare, or the welfare of others, would jeopardize that soul.

What should a Christian do? Rather than become upset, think soberly and righteously. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they sewed together fig leaves to make aprons (*hagorah*) for themselves. This means they made themselves loin coverings. Adam was then as well attired as many today would consider themselves in their swimming attire. Yet, when God approached them in the garden, they hid themselves because, as Adam said, "*I was naked.*" Adam was not totally unclothed, for he wore the apron he had made, but God, not denying that he was naked, said, "*Who told thee that thou wast naked ... ?*" (*Genesis 3:10*) The Lord made for Adam and his wife "*coats of skins and clothed them.*" (*Genesis 3:21*) God did this, not to protect them from thorns and the elements, but to cover their nakedness.

These principles are timeless; we need to learn that human attraction is a powerful thing and that we must respect and treat carefully the appeal generated. When women adorn themselves in clothing that reveals the most alluring parts of their bodies, or when men dress so as to provoke impure thoughts, surely we are not thinking and living soberly (cf. *Romans 12:3; Titus 2:12*). The control that we are to exercise over our thoughts and intents--the keeping of our hearts with all diligence (*Proverbs 4:23*)--is essential as a safeguard against degenerating into the state of lasciviousness. We must bring our thoughts into captivity to obedience to Christ (*2 Corinthians 10:5*); that is, we must think as Christ wants us to think.

Paul wept over those whose God was their belly, whose glory was in their shame, and who minded earthly things (*Philippians 3:19*). Their end was destruction. He wrote, "*I want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety ... appropriate for women who profess to worship God.*" (*1 Timothy 2:9-10 NIV*) Let us give appropriate attention to how we dress. Indeed, our clothes do send a message.