

Modesty

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[0:00] First Peter chapter 3, where we read the word of God, the word of his wise mind to us, a word that's able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

And I'll read the first 12 verses of chapter 3 of 1 Peter. Wives, in the same way, be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, 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.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master.

You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.

[1:40] So that nothing will hinder your prayers. Finally, all of you live in harmony with one another. Be sympathetic.

Love as brothers. Be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. But with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

For whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good.

He must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. My voice is not doing very well this evening.

[2:48] So I'm going to go as long as I can. And I'll try to lean in and we'll do the best we can. I don't think I have very much projection or power or range of voice.

So please keep that in mind. Kids, do you know how to boil a frog?

This is not a recipe for you to try at home. But according to the anecdote, you are able to boil a live frog if you first put it into cold water.

And you slowly, very slowly raise the temperature. And if you raise it slowly enough, the frog won't notice that it's being boiled alive.

And eventually it's cooked. That's the theory. I looked it up because I wanted to know. And I found out it's not really true.

[3:51] So don't bother. If you put, eventually the frog just jumps out anyways if it's able to. It's not a true picture, but I think it's a very useful picture for what I want to look at and to think about tonight.

Our culture in the last 50 to 60 years has been undergoing a very slow, very slow change. And the change is so slow that we have a very difficult time seeing it even though it's happening to us.

I want to illustrate the change with just a couple of quotes from two journals from two young ladies. They're both teenagers. And these are two actual quotes from two actual journals. The first one is from the 1900s, the early 1900s.

So something like 1908 or something like that. This is what this young lady wrote in her journal.

Now here's a second teenage girl.

[5:19] This is her journal entry from the 1990s. And listen to the vast difference. I will try to make myself better in any way I possibly can with the help of my budget and babysitting money.

I will lose weight, get new lenses. Talking about contact lenses, I think. Already got new haircut, good makeup, new clothes and accessories.

The first girl wanted to make herself beautiful on the inside. And the second girl wanted to make herself beautiful on the outside. The first girl's project was her heart.

I don't have any idea if she was a believer or anything like that. But her concern was her inner life. And the second girl's project was her body.

Do you see the boiling water that's around us? More and more in our society, there's a concentration on appearance and what you wear, what you look like.

[6 : 26] And that focus, that heart direction, is what the Bible calls immodesty. It's a very different definition than what I think we normally think of immodesty.

But I'm going to show you from the Bible that that's what the Bible calls immodesty. We normally think of it just as a girl problem, so to speak.

And it certainly is a special problem for them. But even men in our culture have fallen more and more into the idolatry of their body and their appearance.

So I like to work out to DVDs. And as far as exercise DVDs go, they're pretty nasty hard. They're the hardest ones that I can find.

And after one, the instructor, who is a guy, says, well, we're all stretching out. He says, sometimes I wonder why I do what I do.

[7 : 26] I want to look good. That was his answer. And the camera cuts to another person in the back, another guy that was working out in the class. And the guy gives this big eye roll.

But the mask has been torn away, hasn't it? That man's heart was uncovered, why he was doing what he was doing. So modesty is not just a female issue.

It's a human issue because it's just one more way that we have gone astray and that we do go astray. Perhaps in most cultures around the world and in history, it's been primarily a female issue. But I think in our culture, it's become more widespread than that. It's become a systemic cultural sin. And so we are the frogs and the water is already to the point of almost boiling.

And so that's what we're going to talk about tonight. Immodesty, what it is, where does it lead to, what's the result, and then what's the answer? So what is immodesty?

[8 : 36] Immodesty. I want to look at three passages from scriptures. And the first is 1 Peter chapter 3. We've looked at it. And we're going to look at verse 3.

And Paul, or Peter, excuse me, is talking to wives. And he says, Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.

Instead, 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. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God, that's a key phrase, who put their hope in God, used to make themselves beautiful.

They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

So we see a couple of things about what immodesty is here. First, we see it's not about how little clothes you wear.

[9 : 43] Not necessarily. It's not exactly about how you're trying to be sexually provocative or attractive. You're trying to be. It is certainly those things, but it's not just those things.

These women weren't being particularly sexually provocative in their dress. But what were they doing? They were showing off with their clothing.

They weren't wearing too little. They were wearing too much. They were showing off with their hair and their clothes and their jewelry. They were looking for their beauty to come from their appearance instead of their heart.

And that's the biblical definition, I would say, of immodesty. We saw that difference in those two quotes from the young ladies at the beginning.

One had a project, and her project was her body. And she was interested, very much interested, in being beautiful on the inside. Or on the inside.

[10 : 48] And the other was very interested on being beautiful on the outside with haircuts and contact lenses. But Peter shows us something else here. He shows us that immodesty is a form.

It's connected to unbelief. It's a lack of faith in God. He goes back to the Old Testament. And he says, let's look at these women of old who put their hope in God.

That was what characterized them. They were women of faith. And he says, now look at Sarah. How did she show her faith? Well, he specifically says, She obeyed Abraham and called him her master.

You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. So why is modesty and immodesty a sign of faith or of belief or unbelief?

It's just that Sarah had to trust God if she was going to obey Abraham. I think this is something us husbands, if we are aware, we learn as we go further in our marriage.

[12:01] It's not the easiest thing always for our wives to submit themselves to us. It can be a very frightening experience because unlike God, we are sinners and we aren't all wise.

And we sin and then we hurt the women that love us. And so it takes great faith for them to submit themselves in obedience to God and obedience to us.

Because the woman is going to say, I don't know what my man is going to do. I don't know where he's going to lead me, but I'm going to obey him.

Now, Peter is showing us that immodesty, that dressing fancy, that living for appearance is a way that women especially, but all of us in some way, try to control other people, try to protect ourselves.

It's a substitute for faith. So instead of believing in God and trusting ourselves and putting the woman, putting herself under the man, it reflects a heart that's trusting self.

[13:13] I'm going to control the situation. I'm going to manipulate the situation in order to get around the fear, to avoid the fear and the insecurity.

Do you see what I'm saying? These two ideas of faith and hope in God and then modesty and immodesty are put together because they are related in a heart level.

And that's why whenever you see a person, whether he or she is male, female, living for what their body looks like, you are going to see a profoundly insecure person because they've given to themselves to what they wear, what their teeth and what their tummy looks like.

They're insecure because they're not trusting God. They haven't put their hope in God, or at least they're not living out of that hope in God.

And so instead of entrusting themselves to God, they try to manipulate and control and try to protect themselves because they are afraid.

[14:20] And so what is immodesty? It's a lack of faith. What is immodesty? It's a worship direction. Turn over to 1 Timothy 2.

1 Timothy 2. And verse 9. And Paul here says that immodesty is something that doesn't go with worshiping God.

It's the opposite. It's an opposite of worshiping God. He says this. I also want women to dress modestly with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

So Paul takes immodesty and he takes it back to the heart. And he exposes something of what goes on in the modest woman's heart and then in the immodest woman's heart.

An immodest person who's living for the way he looks physically, dresses physically, appearance, is someone that goes directly against.

[15:47] It doesn't fit with worshiping God. There's a certain heart level worship and then there's a certain level or kinds of clothing and decency and propriety that goes together with worshiping God.

So immodesty instead is worshiping what people think. The oohs and aahs of the crowd. It's a worship of what man thinks about me instead of what God thinks about me.

And so it's a direction of the heart and it's a direction that's facing away from God. It's not enthralled with God, but instead it's running away from God, worshiping an idol.

Now, one more passage. I would take you to Isaiah chapter three. Isaiah chapter three. This is actually the passage where the sermon first started percolating in my mind.

As I saw as I sat listening to Pastor John preach on this passage over a year ago, a very profound thought struck me. And as we read a few verses here, I want to see if you could see that thought that hit me.

[17:15] And I want to see if you can see that truth. So Isaiah three and verse 16. The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles.

That's a picture. Go down to verse 18. And that day, the Lord will snatch away their finery, the bangles, the headbands, the crescent necklaces.

And I'm not going to read all the rest. It goes on for four or five more lines. So all these nose rings, signet rings, ankles, sashes, tiaras, all that.

What is that? Well, it's immodesty. It's immodesty. It's showing off for others. It's living for what other people think of you. Now, then the passage goes on.

Look at Isaiah four and verse two. We're still talking about in that day, in that day. And he talks in that day. The branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious.

[18 : 25] And the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. So who is the branch of the Lord? It's Jesus.

And then the next line, the fruit of the land. Again, I think that's Jesus. Now, now in the day of the Lord, the branch of the land, the fruit of the land, the branch of David is going to be the pride and the glory of the survivors.

Before, what was their pride? What was their glory? It was what they looked like, what they were wearing, what they dressed like. But now something else has happened.

Something else has captured their hearts. It's the branch of David. He has become their glory. So what is immodesty? It's just this.

Immodesty is what we do when we don't have Jesus. When we don't have Jesus being our glory, we are going to seek our glory elsewhere.

[19 : 32] And immodesty is the is one way that we do that. And so immodesty, then it becomes a self salvation project. If you are listening, you could hear that in that second girl's journal.

She was planning to make herself good. Planning to bring herself out of that place that where she was to improve herself. She wanted to save herself.

And so immodesty is a way that we, instead of turning to Jesus, we turn to something else. We turn to close to our body.

And so. It's us trying to justify ourselves. We are creatures of God. And if you remember. In Genesis one, God's refrain again and again to creation and finally to man was it is good.

It is good. Creation lived under the benediction, the smile, the justification, so to speak, of God. It was his acceptance of all that he had made.

[20 : 41] And it was good in his sight. Well, we were meant to live that way. That was our original condition. But now we've sinned.

And God can no longer look upon us and say, it is good. Because our record is full of sin and our heart is full of sin. But in our hearts, we still long for that approval.

We still long for that stamp of you are accepted. It is good. We were made to hear that. And so instead of turning to Jesus, we turn away.

And then one of the places that we turn to is to this idol of what I'm calling immodesty. Of living for our appearance. And so we say, if I just look like this, if I just had a six pack, if I just lost five pounds or if I lost 50 pounds or 15 pounds, if my nose was smaller, then I would be happy.

Then I would feel secure. Then my heart would hear the benediction. It is good. Then I would be beautiful. Then I wouldn't be empty.

[21 : 59] I wouldn't be so needy and so estranged. And so we try to save ourselves. So immodesty is trusting in our looks instead of the branch.

It's taking our beauty and our affirmation and our acceptance from other people's and their approval of us instead of God. Instead of finding God's.

It is good on our lives. His justifying word on us. We instead live for something else. And that brings us to the results.

So immodesty is it's a lack of faith. It's a it's a it's a worship direction. And then it's it's what we do when we don't have Jesus.

So what are the results? Well, two things. And they're on the spectrum. And one's on one end and one's on the other. The first it's either despair or pride.

[23 : 04] So who struggles with this? I want you to think about this. Who struggles with this? This heart condition, this worship direction, this reliance on on something else instead of Jesus.

Well, is it just teenage girls dressing scantily? No. The most immodest person. With the biblical idea in mind.

Could be. The Amish girl. With her long dress and her head cover. If she's doing that self-righteously.

I'm not saying that's true of everyone, but I'm saying the most conservatively dressed. If they're doing it self-righteously, relying on how they look.

It's just one other form of immodesty by the biblical idea. Or it could be the middle aged woman who dresses decently and appropriately as Peter and Paul talk about.

[24 : 09] But in her heart, she judges the teenager with the short shorts. Because behind it, it's the same heart. Except instead of disobeying the rules, she's obeying the rules.

And she's still thinking that that middle aged woman is thinking, I'm good. I'm special. I'm accepted. Because she's obeyed these things.

She's saying, like the Pharisee in the temple. I thank God that I'm not like that teenage girl. I dress appropriately and I don't have, you know, those nose rings and those belly button rings.

And I don't dye my hair and I only exercise twice a week. And I eat, you know, sensibly or whatever she says. And so what is the result of immodesty?

Well, if you do a good job at it, you know, where you're very attractive. Or where you set up rules and you've achieved those rules.

[25 : 12] The result is pride. And then on the other end is despair. Do you ever feel despair the way you look?

Do you ever say to yourself, I'll never get to be where I want to be? Do you stand in front of the closet and say, I have nothing to wear. And I don't have enough money to buy the clothes that I want to wear.

And then you go to church. You go to school. You go to work. All doom and gloom. In despair. So let me ask you, is that a heart?

Trusting in Jesus. Is that a heart that has taken Jesus as his glorious dress? And all of his righteousness? Are you thrilled with Jesus?

Are you thrilled with Jesus if you're standing in front of the closet or you're standing in front of the mirror? Just in despair. The despair shows what's going on in your heart.

[26 : 16] So the heart of immodesty leads to pride. If you've arrived in some way. Or it leads to despair if you haven't.

And the worst result of all is that it keeps you from Jesus. It keeps you from Jesus. It puts distance between your soul and Jesus.

Jesus. So as long as the women of Zion, the daughters of Zion, were in love with their hair and their earrings and their ankle bracelets and all the rest, they could never enjoy the branch of David.

They didn't need him. They didn't want him. And it's the same way with us. Whenever we start looking or whenever we start living for the way we look, whether you've arrived or not, it takes you far away from Jesus.

The idol leaves you hard. Jesus is the sun that's meant to shine on our lives. And immodesty is the thick canopy that keeps the sun from reaching our hearts, keeps his beauty from touching us and molding us and fixing us and comforting us.

[27 : 38] And until you tear it away, you won't feel the sunshine of his face. As long as you're looking up at the canopy, you'll never see the sun. And so then what is the answer to immodesty, to this hard direction, this lack of faith?

Well, rules, guidelines, directions have their place. I'm not going to talk a lot about them because as I thought about this, it's like to get into it, you almost have to be so exact that it just wouldn't really work in a sermon context.

But Peter and Paul both had sensible directions. They said, do this. Don't do that. Do it like this. Don't do it like that.

And so there is a place for directions. But if that's all we have. So moms, if all you're doing with your teenage daughters or fathers, if all you are doing or if it is talking about sensible rules and guidelines, it won't fix the problem.

It might contain it for a while. It might contain it for a long time. But instead of putting out the fire, you're going to build a box around it. The fire hasn't changed.

[29 : 11] It's just burning out of sight now. The idol is still there. It's not off the throne. The idolatry of our heart can't be cured by rules and laws, no matter how good they are.

And there is a place for them. But Isaiah 3 points us to the only true answer. And it points us to Jesus. When we are dressed in his robes of righteousness, then we don't need fancy clothes. And we don't need that beach body. Because I have something more lasting, more durable, something more beautiful, something that actually gets me, that thing that my heart longs for, that fellowship with God.

We, you know, St. Augustine talked about, you know, there's this thing in our heart that longs, that needs God to fill it.

We all have that hole. And no matter how much clothing and exercise and beauty we put into that hole, it doesn't fill it up.

[30 : 26] But when we come to Jesus, we receive him, and we receive the one who sent him. And we actually find satisfaction. And so there then is no need to go and bow down at the idol of our looks.

And so when through Christ's death, you hear again God's justifying word, then you don't need to live for the affirmation of men.

Because you have the acceptance of the one that really matters, God, the creator. And so you don't have to despair over what you don't have.

And then you realize there's no pride. There's no room for pride over what you have obtained. And so look at Jesus. He had all the glory of the Father.

He was in very nature God, but did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, to be clutched, to be held on to at all cost, but made himself nothing.

[31 : 42] Do you see the modesty of Jesus? There was no beauty or majesty to attract us to him. Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Do you see his modesty? He was willing to become ugly, that we could become beautiful. And so he was all unattractive.

He was stripped, and he was mocked, and he was beaten. And we ask, why? Why is he there? And if we open the door on his heart, we see it was love.

It was because that's what we needed. And so he took the curse. He cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He lived his whole life under God's benediction of him, this is good.

This is my son with whom I am well pleased. His smile. But now for us, Jesus cries out and the heavens are silent.

[32 : 49] There's no word. And nothing but the curse comes down. And now in our place, he dies, and he becomes hideous so that you wouldn't even recognize him as a man.

And it was all for sinners gain. Do you see how quickly Jesus threw aside glory? He threw aside the praises of men.

And finally, with a broken heart, he threw aside the acceptance of his father. He threw aside the smile of the father in order to take on all of our, all of your ugliness.

And so, what is the cure for immodesty? It's found here in the cross, in the love of Jesus. He became ugly so that I could become beautiful.

He did what? Exercise and good clothes and white teeth and good haircuts and fine jewelry and in style shoes.

[33 : 58] Never could. Jesus did. And so, the answer to that fear, the insecurity, my desires to control and manipulate the people around me to get their smile and their approval, the cure for that is the gospel.

The antidote to immodesty is the gospel of a Savior crucified for sinners. sinners. So, let's talk about application.

First, parents, are you, are you teaching, are you talking about the gospel with your young children?

This, you know, if, if you've had young children, you know, they don't really give two hoops about what they look like. They'll wear whatever so now is the time to talk to them and give them a solid foundation of the gospel because they need to have that in their mind.

That has, that needs time to percolate in their heart for when the trials and the temptations come.

Parents of teenagers, excuse me, I'm almost done.

[35 : 18] Look at Peter. Look at Paul. they give sensible directions. They set sensible guidelines.

They do it, though, in the context of the gospel. Your teenagers need direction, wise guidelines, and that's going to look different.

Well, I don't know how different it will look, but you need to apply yourself and think about that and work those things out for yourself. But again, don't forget what we've looked at.

The cure for this heart that it eagerly desires the smile of others is not found in rules and guidelines no matter how good they are.

It can only be, that fire can only be quenched with the water of the gospel. women, young ladies, don't let this culture determine where you find your beauty.

[36 : 24] Don't let it decide what glory you are living for. The culture has a king and it's not Jesus. So, don't let the culture decide where you are going to determine what's beautiful.

But don't even let yourself decide either. The Bible tells you the kind of beauty that is worth having. The kind your Father in Heaven loves.

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. Finally, men, praise your wives for the way they look in the context of covenant love.

That's a beautiful and wonderful and helpful and good thing. If you want to know more, read Song of Songs. There's a lot to say about a man and a woman telling each other how beautiful they are.

It's not wrong to do that and it's very good to do it. And then finally, men, praise your wife for her heart. Find the things that you could encourage her about.

[37 : 41] You're her shepherd. You're her gardener. Care for her. Take care of her. She needs watering. She needs encouragement.

And you're called to care for her spiritual life. It's easy for us to say that's between her and God. But God has put her under our care and that has become your domain, men.

It's your responsibility. If you can't find anything to praise your wife for at all, I think that probably speaks more about you than it does her because the buck stops with you in your house.

Obviously, you know, you'll need to think through that. But take it to heart. She's your responsibility. This issue of immodesty, immodesty, it strikes closest to her heart.

And so protect her, love her, encourage her. Jesus, men, Jesus died to make his wife, his bride, beautiful.

[38 : 53] He wasn't indifferent to her holiness. He wasn't indifferent to that. So he rules and he prays and he leads and he loves to make her beautiful.

So men, do the same in your homes. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for sustaining grace, for upholding my voice as we made it through this sermon.

Thank you for your word that doesn't just address the superficial parts of our life, but reaches down to our heart and teaches us the way, shows us our sin and shows us Jesus, the one who is full of grace and truth for us.

I pray that you would convict sinners, that's all of us, and that you would lead us all to Jesus, that we would trust in him again, or for the first time, that you would do something glorious tonight and this week.

Keep bringing back the truth of your word and keep applying it, Holy Spirit, to our hearts. We forget so easily, we're so easily distracted.

[40 : 28] keep bringing the truth to us, to build us up and ultimately so that we would find joy in you and that we would live in confidence and thankfulness before you.

I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.