

## 10.19.20 - Modesty in the Bible

The word “modesty” only appears once in the KJV. To get a better idea what the Bible says about modesty we will look for some of the synonyms. Here are a few from an online dictionary: *self-effacing, self-deprecating, humble, unpretentious, unassuming, unpresuming, unostentatious*. We will be using the KJV synonyms of these words for continuity’s sake.

We will start with the only verse with the word modest in it: **1Ti 2:9 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;** We have expounded on this verse at least 6 times before. So we will only do a brief summary here. Western culture and modern times have changed the meaning of the word "modest" over the years to the point that it is no longer a good translation of the Greek word the Apostle Paul used. Appropriate would be much closer today. The first part of the verse could be paraphrased this way using other words that fit the Greek: *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in appropriate apparel, with reverence and self control...* The show of wealth is the thing Paul was discouraging in this verse as shown by the examples in the last half of the verse. It seems strange that we find few rules against hair style, wearing of jewelry or costly clothing just what must be covered to be "modest". Could Satan's hand be involved in this selection? As stated before, the verse has nothing to do with how much skin to cover or how much may be exposed. If history is correct, then they most likely had women who attended church services without any garments on due simply to the cost of clothing. This is why the Apostle Paul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit wrote for the women to wear “modest” (appropriate or humble) clothing so as not to make the poor unclothed women feel uncomfortable. If that poor woman felt shunned or somehow less worthy, she likely would not come back just as a woman today who is not wearing the correct costume would likely not come back if she is looked down on by those in costume. It amazes me how we have taken Paul’s teaching which was to make a poor naked woman feel welcome and have instead turned it into “wear your Sunday best” which could make most of the poor today feel uncomfortable attending. Satan is so good at turning what God intended into a complete opposite. No wonder he is called an angel of light and that we are told he could fool the very elect. If he came to your church today most folks would think he was the best person to ever visit your church.

I think we may have beat that horse to death, so let’s move on to the other meanings of “modest” mentioned in the King James. We are going to consider

*self-effacing, self-deprecating* together since they are rather similar. They both involve devaluing self. We will use the phrase, "Who am I" to search the scriptures.

**Exo 3:11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?**

Moses was probably the most qualified Israelite for the job because he grew up in the palace with leadership roles and training. He also knew the drudgery of working with sheep for a living. He was familiar with the headaches of leadership and the heart of the working class. Moses gives a lot of other reasons/excuses for not doing the job God has for him. From the story of fleeing from Pharaoh, we can conclude that Moses wanted to free his people from Egypt. Is modesty a way to get out of a difficult job? Whatever the answer to that question, for sure this has nothing to do with clothing or the lack of clothing.

**1Sa 18:18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?** This is David when he was in the service of King Saul after Saul recognized that David might be the person Samuel said would replace him. David was being realistic. He did not rank high enough or have enough to pay the dowry to be the king's son-in-law. Saul was trying to get David killed by the Philistines like David had Uriah killed by the Ammonites. We believe this is a true example of modesty, but again nothing to do with attire.

The following verses do not contain the word humble, but they display it rather well. **2Sa 7:18 Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?** This is being humble before God after being told that he would be in the line of ancestors of Jesus. Even though David had taken Israel from the whipping boy of the Philistines to a world power he did not count himself worthy of such a blessing. **1Ch 29:14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.** This is King David again being humble before God in a very similar manner to the verse above except it is about the offering for the temple. There are 24 verses with the word humble in the KJV, with no mention of clothing. Humble has nothing to do with how much skin clothing in covering.

If we try to use clothing to overvalue ourselves or undervalue ourselves then we are not being humble. Nakedness would be the most affective "attire" for

displaying a humble/modest mindset through clothing. Fancy clothing can make us seem better than we really are, and ragged clothing devalues us. One of the common observations about a naturist venue is the surprise that the person you are conversing with as an equal is in a much higher position than you would have guessed. We all look like the same status when we are all naked, naturism is the great equalizer...no one greater and no one less than the other.

We are going to lump the following synonyms together and use the idea of not acting like you are better than you really are *unpretentious, unassuming, unassuming, unostentatious*. If we drop the un on these words we get the antonyms. These characteristics fit a person who is immodest and shows what modesty is not. The biblical example of these characteristics is the Pharisees. Jesus called them hypocrites. A modest person then is not pretending to be something he is not, be it better or worse than he really is.

Can immodesty be a sin? In the Old Testament, the false prophets would be immodest because they were pretending to be something they were not. Their behavior towards the real prophets would be proof that they were not following the God of the Bible which leaves only Satan for their god. In the New Testament the Pharisees are the main example and they forced Pilate to have Jesus crucified. This is also not the work of God but of Satan. Thinking of modesty as humble or realistic, it is a sin to be immodest.

What about the misuse of 1 Tim 2:9? Is that form of immodesty a sin? When the Apostle Paul wrote the verse there were some women who were naked all the time because they could not have food and clothing both with their income. Today they could get free clothing at most Christian ministries. Today it is no longer a lack of any clothing that could be immodest, but the use of clothing. The issue we are concerned about is creating lust. If the purpose of the clothing is to create lust, the wearer is encouraging sin, but the lust is still a sin of the observer as we have clearly established that lust is a condition of the heart.

Can we judge someone's righteousness by their clothing? What are you going to use as a standard for righteous clothing? The Bible does not have a clothing standard. Your standard may help you feel righteous, but that does not mean it will work that way or should be applied to everyone. Without a standard we have no basis to judge by. Only God knows the intentions of the clothing selection so you can not say someone is trying to cause lust by their clothing.

Do we need rules to define what is "immodest clothing"? You probably guessed the answer to this one, but we will still give it. When you got saved, God wrote His rules/commandments in your heart. That means you are not following rules, but you follow the Holy Spirit/Jesus in your heart. If you are about to sin or are in the process of sinning there will be warnings from your heart to stop that behavior. Yes, Satan can still trick you into sinning like Adam and Eve, but you are still righteous in God's sight. He forgave all your sins...that means your past, present and future sins, when you got saved. You are still as righteous as Jesus because His righteousness has been imputed to you. As soon as we try to follow or are forced to follow a set of rules, we are occupied with how well we are following the rules instead of helping others have the blessings we have because we are saved.

Since there is no clothing standard in the Bible and since we cannot tell what someone's intentions are, modesty has nothing to do with what we cover. Because we are following the rules printed in our hearts instead of on stone, we cannot make a set of clothing rules for everyone. The rules may not be the same on every heart because the person is not like everyone else. Where that person is in their walk is not where you are in your walk. What God has for you may not be what God has for your Christian neighbor, therefore for you to impute your standard on them would be judgment on your part if they do not live up to it. This is where God's "judge not lest ye be judged" comes into play. You will have enough on your plate listening to the Holy Spirit's lead on your life that you should not have to spend any time listening for Him to tell you how someone else should live theirs. I'm guessing that He is quite capable of leading their heart without your help.

The bottom line is that any attempt to use any verse regarding "modesty" as a reason for covering the image of God in us humans is a complete sham. Now if you want to use the verses as a lesson in dressing humbly or appropriately for the situation then I could buy that. Let's also keep in mind that God already sees us naked before Him and your nakedness is not shocking or shameful to the One who created us to be naked and not ashamed from the beginning.