

# The Meaning of Modesty

By Mark Mayberry  
6/1/2014

## Introduction

This is a follow up to previous lessons on the need for modest clothing. Immodesty is a significant problem, especially during the summer months. Modesty is inversely proportioned to the heat: as temperatures rise, modesty falls. What does God's word say on this subject?

### **God Wants Our Clothing to be Modest**

God wants our clothing to be modest (1 Tim. 2:9-10). He is not always satisfied with our choices. In their original ignorant and innocent state, the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). Yet, after eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve realized they were naked and were ashamed (Gen. 3:6-7). Please note that nakedness is not something shameful in the private and personal relationship of a husband and wife (Heb. 13:4). Rather, shame and embarrassment occurs when third parties are present. Adam and Eve were ashamed when God came to visit with them in the cool of the evening (Gen. 3:8-10).

*1 Timothy 2:9-10 ... 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; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. (KJV)*

*1 Timothy 2:9-10 ... 9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, 10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. (NASB)*

*Genesis 2:25 ... 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (NASB95)*

*Genesis 3:6-7 ... 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 13:4 ... 4 Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (NASB95)*

*Genesis 3:8-10 ... 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD*

*God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." (NASB95)*

When Adam and Eve realized they were naked, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (Gen. 3:7). Some Bible versions say "aprons" (KJV, ASV, RSV), while others read "coverings" (NKJ), "loin coverings" (NAS), or "loincloths" (NRS).

Yet, their original efforts to correct this problem were wholly inadequate. Adam and Eve still felt ashamed at their naked condition even though they had made some effort to cover their bodies (Gen. 3:7, 10). Moreover, the Lord was not satisfied with their feeble efforts. To correct this deficiency, God gave them modest clothing (Gen. 3:21).

According to the KJV and the ASV, God made "coats of skins" for Adam and Eve and clothed them. The RSV, NASB and NRS say that God made "garments of skins." The NKJ says that He made "tunics of skin, and clothed them."

How were the God-made garments different from the loincloths of Adam and Eve? First of all, animal skins were more permanent than fig leaves. Secondly, they were more effective in covering the body. The concealment afforded by fig leaves was flimsy and faulty, but animal skins provided an opaque, nontransparent covering. Finally, while the fig leaves covered only the generative portions of the body, the tunics that God made covered the body from the shoulders to the knees. In the third chapter of Genesis, God established clothing - specifically, modest clothing - as a permanent institution among men and women.

### **The Bible Condemns All Forms of Public Nakedness**

The Hebrew and Greek words that are translated "naked" or "nakedness" have several distinct meanings: First, they may refer to one who is completely nude and bereft of any clothing (Gen. 2:25; 3:7; Job 1:21; Eccl. 5:15; Mark 14:51-52). Secondly, they may refer to a state of partial nakedness or inadequate dress. Often they are used to describe someone who is raggedly, poorly or inadequately clad (Gen. 3:10; Deut. 28:48; Job 22:6; 24:7, 10; Isa. 58:7; Ezek. 18:7, 18; Matt. 25:35-44; Acts 19:16; Rom. 8:35; 1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 11:27; James 2:15).

Even after Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings, the man said, "I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself" (Gen. 3:7-10). They recognized their attempt at covering themselves was inadequate.

*Genesis 3:7-10 ... 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked [i.e., complete nudity]; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked [i.e., partial nudity]; so I hid myself." (NASB95)*

Public nakedness is counted as shameful in both the Old and New Testaments (Gen. 3:6-11; Isa. 47:3; Mic. 1:11; Rev. 3:18-19).

*Genesis 3:6-11 (NASB95) — 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' 10 He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' 11 And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'*

*Isaiah 47:3 (NASB95) — 3 'Your nakedness will be uncovered, Your shame also will be exposed; I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.'*

*Micah 1:11 (NASB95) — 11 Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir, in shameful nakedness. The inhabitant of Zaanan does not escape. The lamentation of Beth-ezel: 'He will take from you its support.'*

*Revelation 3:18-19 (NASB95) — 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.'*

Christians must exercise caution regarding their clothing, avoiding attire that is lascivious and sexually suggestive (Prov. 7:10; 1 Tim. 2:9-10).

*Proverbs 7:10 (NASB95) — 10 And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.*

*1 Timothy 2:9-10 (NASB95) — 9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, 10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.*

Christian women (and by extension, men also) should wear clothing that reflects their chaste and respectful behavior (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

*1 Peter 3:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the*

*heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.*

## **Clothing that is Too Short**

Christians should avoid clothing that is too short. Modest clothing will conceal the thighs.

In addition to their official robes, the Levitical priests wore linen breeches to cover their bare flesh; these garments reached from the loins even to the thighs, i.e., from the waist to the knees (Exod. 28:40-43).

*Exodus 28:40-43 (NASB95) — 40 **'For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics; you shall also make sashes for them, and you shall make caps for them, for glory and for beauty. 41 'You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests. 42 **'You shall make for them linen breeches to cover their bare flesh; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs. 43 'They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him.*****

Furthermore, the Lord said, "You shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it" (Exod. 20:22-26, esp. vs. 26). In other words, this prohibition ensured that the priests were modest from all angles.

*Exodus 20:22-26 (NASB95) — 22 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. 23 'You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves. 24 'You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. 25 'If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. 26 **'And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.'***

Offering a lamentation over Babylon, the prophet Isaiah said, "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, uncover the leg, cross the rivers. Your nakedness will be uncovered, your shame also will be exposed; I will take vengeance and will not spare a man" (Isa. 47:1-3).

*Isaiah 47:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 'Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate. 2 'Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, Uncover the leg, cross the rivers. 3 **'Your nakedness will be***

***uncovered, Your shame also will be exposed; I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.'***

Thomas defines *kethoneth* or *kuttoneth*, translated “coat,” “dress,” “garment(s),” or “tunic(s),” as “a tunic” [Thomas ]. BDB say a tunic was the “principal ordinary garment of man and woman.” Tunics were worn next to a person, with long skirts and (sometimes) sleeves constructed of skin or cloth. Gesenius says a tunic was an inner garment next to the skin; also worn by women; generally with sleeves, coming down to the knees, rarely to the ankles. Holladay says it was a “long shirt-like (under-) garment” of linen or skins, worn by both men, women and priests.

## **Clothing that is Too Tight**

Christians should avoid clothing that is too tight. Modest clothing will conceal the hips.

Consider the humiliation subjected upon David’s ambassadors by Hanun of Moab, who took David’s servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away (2 Sam. 10:1-5). Some clothing is too short, exposing the thigh and even the hips; other clothing is too tight, revealing the underlying form of the body.

*2 Samuel 10:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 Now it happened afterwards that the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son became king in his place. 2 Then David said, “I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent some of his servants to console him concerning his father. But when David’s servants came to the land of the Ammonites, 3 the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think that David is honoring your father because he has sent consolers to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?” 4 So Hanun took David’s servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away. 5 When they told it to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, “Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and then return.”*

Skinny jeans, yoga pants, spandex, leggings, tights, etc. only change the color of a person’s skin. Tight clothing reveals the form of the body rather than concealing it, drawing the eyes of those who observe, sexualizing encounters rather than promoting and preserving chastity.

In recent years, public school officials across the country have been banning yoga pants and other tight leggings because they are distracting to male students. School faculties recognize that male students are inattentive to classroom instruction when girls wear skin-tight clothing. These rules are designed to help avoid the sexualization of students, and create a better learning environment.

Both men and women have a responsibility in this regard. Jesus warned against looking upon a woman with lust (Matt. 5:28). Job made a covenant with his eyes not to look longingly upon a maiden (Job 31:1). Men must control their thoughts, but women must also be mindful of the need for proper attire. Tight clothing shows a lack of attention to shamefastness, i.e., a necessary sense of shame that is rooted in one’s character (1 Tim. 2:9).

## **Clothing that is Too Low/Loose**

Christians should avoid clothing that is too low or loose. Modest clothing will conceal the chest.

Just as clothing may be too short, or too tight, shirts or blouses may also be too low or loose, exposing or accentuating the breasts. This aspect of our physical being should be reserved for the shared intimacy of marriage (Prov. 5:15-23; Song of Sol. 8:8-14).

*Proverbs 5:15-23 (NASB95) — 15 Drink water from your own cistern And fresh water from your own well. 16 Should your springs be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be yours alone And not for strangers with you. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. 19 As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love. 20 For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress And embrace the bosom of a foreigner? 21 For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He watches all his paths. 22 His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin. 23 He will die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.*

*Song of Solomon 8:8-14 (NASB95) — 8 ‘We have a little sister, And she has no breasts; What shall we do for our sister On the day when she is spoken for? 9 ‘If she is a wall, We will build on her a battlement of silver; But if she is a door, We will barricade her with planks of cedar.’ 10 ‘I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace. 11 ‘Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers. Each one was to bring a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit. 12 ‘My very own vineyard is at my disposal; The thousand shekels are for you, Solomon, And two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit.’ 13 ‘O you who sit in the gardens, My companions are listening for your voice— Let me hear it!’ 14 ‘, Hurry, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young stag On the mountains of spices.’*

Note: The following outline clarifies who is speaking in this section of the Song of Solomon.

Part III: In the Royal Palace in Jerusalem - Love Tested (4:1-8:4)

- Solomon (7:6-9a)
- Shulammitte (7:9b-10) [interrupting Solomon, stating her final decision]
- Shulammitte (7:11-8:3) [to her expected lover]
- Shulammitte (8:4) [to the Ladies]

Part IV: In Issachar: the Shepherd and Shulammitte - Love Victorious (8:5-14)

- Scene 1: The Shepherd-love and Shulammitte approaching their mountain home (8:5-7) [for the first time he appears in person]
  - Chorus of country people (8:5a)
  - Shulammitte (8:5b-7)
- Scene 2: The Bride and her Brothers (8:8-14)
  - First Brother (8:8)

- Second Brother (8:9)
- Shulammitte (8:10-12)
- Shepherd-Bridegroom (8:13)
- Shulammitte (8:14)

## **Examples**

### ***Brazoria County Jail Visitation Guidelines***

Note the following guidelines for visitors at the Brazoria County Jail:

- All persons wishing to visit an inmate in the Brazoria County Jail must meet the following requirements:
- A visitor must have an approved picture identification card. Acceptable identification is a current Texas Driver's License or Identification Card, or a current, valid out of state driver's license or identification card. A current United States Passport is also acceptable.
- Visitors wishing to visit must be properly dressed. Females must wear a bra, have their shoulders and have their chest and stomach area covered. No halter tops, no shorts, dresses, or skirts above the knee are allowed. Males must wear shirts with sleeves (e.g. no muscle shirts) and no shorts above the knee. All visitors must wear some type of footwear. No Bare Feet!

Source: <http://www.brazoria-county.com/sheriff/visitation.asp>

### ***Alvin Independent School District Dress Code***

Note the following guidelines for students in the Alvin Independent School District:

ALVIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT DRESS AND GROOMING 2013-2014 School Year

#### **Pants, Shorts, Skorts, Skirts, Jumpers, Bib Overalls (Page 2 of 3)**

The general requirements for all pants, shorts, skirts, jumpers and bib overalls are as follows:

- **Color** - Solid black, navy, or khaki (tan or beige) for slacks and shorts
- Blue or black jeans may be worn. Jeans must be appropriately sized, fitting at the waist; no holes or frays allowed.
- Blue or black jean shorts may be worn. Shorts must be appropriately sized, fitting at the waist; no holes or frays allowed.
- No athletic shorts or pants.
- **Size** - No oversized items. Baggy, saggy garments will not be acceptable. Pants, shorts, skirts or shorts must be worn at the waist. Tight-fitting slacks, skirts, skinny jeans, shorts, or shorts are not acceptable.
- **Belts** - For 2nd grade and up, belts must be worn with any garment that has belt loops when shirts are tucked in.

- **Hems** - May not be frayed or cut. Pants cut on the inseam must be hemmed. Hems of shorts, skorts, culottes, skirts, or dresses will be no shorter than the top of the kneecap.
- For the primary and elementary level, no short shorts or short skirts will be allowed (the standard will be the tip of the longest finger).
- No sweat pants, wind pants, leather or spandex of any color are allowed.
- Pants or shorts with oversized pockets are not acceptable.

**Length: Shorts, skorts, skirts, jumpers, and bib overalls must be knee length.**

Source: <http://www.alvinisd.net/>

## **Conclusion**

These dress codes, maintained by human organizations, recognize the need for modest clothing. May the people of God also recognize these truths, and acknowledge the standards set forth in God's inspired Word.