

Three Views of Modesty

by Bill Hall

Three women face the problem of modesty. All three recognize the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:9, *"In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing."* However, their attitudes toward modest dress differ considerably.

The first woman takes the "Where do you draw the line?" view. If someone could draw the line for her (at the knee? ankle? calf?) and prove by the Bible that it was the line separating modesty from immodesty, she would abide by it (she says). But, meanwhile, until someone comes up with the Bible line, she wears what she wants to. If anyone approaches her about her immodesty, she justifies herself with one question, "Where do you draw the line?", followed by one observation, "Grandma wore her dress at the ankles, you know."

The second woman takes the "follow the dress code" view. She has listened to sermons on modesty, and has established for herself a code of dress by which she lives religiously: no shorts, no halters, no swimsuits, skirt below the knee, high neck, etc. She is a good woman and is to be commended for her conscientiousness, but it has never "dawned" on her that a woman can dress by her code and still be worldly, suggestive, and immodest in appearance. She would be shocked to learn that reasonable people consider her to be immodest at times.

The third woman is concerned about dress, but is more concerned about the character of which dress is a reflection. Recognizing Bible teaching concerning purity and chastity, she has become genuinely pure and chaste, not only in conduct, but in heart and disposition. She is pure "through and through," "inside out," and her clothing reflects that purity. Decency of dress is not a mechanical, "follow the dress code" type of thing with her. It is a natural outgrowth of her modesty from within. While other sisters in Christ grope with 1 Timothy 2:9, and wonder why the Lord would be so restrictive in their dress, she sees that teaching as being perfectly natural, an obvious supplement to Bible teaching concerning purity and chastity of heart and life.

Her dress reflects her character in other areas. For instance, she seeks to be lady-like in heart and demeanor, and this attitude is reflected in her dress. She remembers the warnings in the scriptures concerning pride, and has become truly *"poor in spirit."* This is also reflected in her dress. Her dress in every way is a true commentary on her character. One glance reveals that here is a woman who is pure, lady-like, humble, and genuine.

And is this not what 1 Timothy 2:9 is teaching? The verse says that we are to dress with modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety. When we all develop these three qualities in our hearts, then — and only then — will our problems of dress vanish.

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