

The Sin of Bathsheba

An Appeal to Christian Women by a Brother in Christ

Anonymous

This paper is presented to challenge Christian women to consider how they dress and to advocate modesty in accord with 1 Timothy 2:9-10. The author is unknown.

*Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.
2 Samuel 11:2*

OVER THE CENTURIES, preachers have talked a great deal about the sin of David, but seldom have they mentioned the sin of Bathsheba. It is true that David's sin was very severe and Bathsheba's very minor. David's was deliberate and presumptuous, while Bathsheba's was only an inadvertent indiscretion. David committed adultery and murder, while Bathsheba only carelessly exposed her body. So we have no doubt that David's sin was severe and Bathsheba's minor.

Yet the fact remains that it was Bathsheba's small sin that instigated David's great sin. It was her minor act of indiscretion, her thoughtless little exposure of her body, that was the spark that kindled a great devouring flame. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" On the one side, only a little carelessness, only a little thoughtless unintentional exposure of herself before the eyes of David. But on the other side, adultery and guilt of conscience; murder and the loss of a husband; the death in battle of other innocent men; great occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the shame of an illegitimate pregnancy and the death of the child; the uprising and death of Absalom; the defiling of David's wives in the sight of all Israel; the sword never departing from David's house (2 Samuel 12:11-18). Again I say, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

None of this great evil might ever have taken place had Bathsheba only been more careful not to display her body in the sight of a man. Observe: she neither designed nor foresaw any of this evil. She did not display herself purposely or

wantonly: she did it only ignorantly and thoughtlessly. Yet the results of her little sin of ignorance were just the same as if it had been purposeful seduction and immorality.

Now the reason for my writing all of the above is this: there are many Christian women today who are guilty of the same kind of carelessness as Bathsheba. Godly women, who would recoil with horror from the very thought of wantonly displaying their bodies, do nevertheless carelessly and thoughtlessly display themselves habitually by the manner in which they dress. I do not write to accuse them of intentional exhibitionism. I believe they are as innocent of that as Bathsheba. But neither can I altogether excuse them from blame in the matter. The whole world is well aware that certain kinds of feminine dress are provocative and tempting to the eyes and heart of a man. Are Christian women alone altogether naive and ignorant? This can hardly be; yet I do not write to blame you, but to instruct you—to provoke you to love and good works, to make you thoughtful where you have been thoughtless, to make you careful for the spiritual welfare of the weakest of your brethren where you were careless about it before, to make you wise where before you were simple.

The Difference Between Men and Women

The first thing that must be understood is that nakedness before the eyes of others is wrong. It is wrong in a man, and it is wrong in a woman. When Adam and Eve sinned, “God made coats of skins, and clothed them.” The sole reason for this clothing was to cover their nakedness, as the Genesis account makes plain.

Observe, he clothed them with coats. They were already wearing aprons, which probably covered as much as, or more than, much of the clothing that is worn today. Yet, in spite of their aprons, they were still naked in their own eyes and God’s. And God did not clothe them with shorts, or swimming suits, or tank tops, or halter tops, or anything of the sort—not with jackets, either, but with coats, long coats, or robes as the word might be properly translated.

Observe further, he clothed “them” with coats. He did not clothe Eve with a coat, and Adam with a pair of shorts. He clothed them both with coats, whence we may assuredly gather that nakedness is just as wrong in a man as it is in a woman.

But if it is equally wrong for a man to expose his nakedness as it is for a woman, it is not equally dangerous, for the passions of most women are not so easily or thoroughly aroused by the sight of a man’s body, and many women affirm that the sight does not arouse them at all. A man could therefore (though he ought not to) go three-fourths naked and not do so much damage as a woman who goes one-tenth naked. For when a woman exposes herself only a little, she becomes a fiery dart to tempt the heart of every man who sees her. Like it or not, this is the plain fact. And because of this fact, you are not at liberty to dress any way you please. “What? Know ye not your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,

which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body..." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

But if you dress in such a way as to expose your body, or parts of it, to the lustful gaze of every man who chooses to look at you, you certainly do not glorify God in your body. And if you fear God and love your neighbor, you dare not dress so. You dare not use the temple of the Holy Ghost as an instrument of unrighteousness to allure the eyes and tempt the hearts and tantalize the passions of men, though your heart may burn with desire to be seen as attractive as possible. Just a godly man is expected to subdue the lustful thoughts that continually plague his mind, so must every godly woman subdue her natural urge to enhance and accentuate her physical assets. Many men are wicked and will lust after you in spite of anything you do to prevent it. They have "eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:14). Should you therefore help them to sin? Should you put further temptation in their way? Will God excuse you if you do?

Other men, godly men, are not wicked but only weak. David was not wicked. He was a man after God's own heart. But in the presence of an unclothed woman, he was weak—and it would be a rare man who is not vulnerable in this area. Your brothers in Christ are not wicked, but they may be weak. And the devil does all that he can to weaken them further. They are forced to live in a world where they are continually bombarded with sights designed by the enemy of their souls to weaken their morals and destroy their purity of heart.

And must Christian women help the devil do his work? Must they make themselves a temptation to their brethren even in the congregation of God? Oh, that you could understand the fierce and bitter conflict in the souls of your brethren when you arouse their desires by the careless display of your feminine beauty. Oh, that you could hear their pleadings with God for deliverance from the power of these temptations. Oh, that you could see their tears of shame and repentance when the temptation has overcome them, and they have sinned with eyes and heart and mind. Never again would you plead for your right to dress as you please.

The fact is, you have no such right. You have no right to destroy by your careless dress the brother for whom Christ died. You are bought with a price and you are not your own. You are duty-bound to glorify God in your body—to clothe that body, not as you will but as God wills. And a little of real love for the souls of your brethren would remove forever from your heart the desire to dress as you please. For "we then that are strong ought to bear with the infirmities [that is, the weaknesses] of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself, but

as it is written, ‘The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me’”
(Romans 15:1-3).

Christ was willing to deny Himself the glories of heaven and bear the reproach of the ungodly for your sake, in order to save your soul. And will you plead for your right to please yourself in your dress? Can you not deny yourself a little of comfort to save another man’s soul? Can you not bear a little reproach for being “old-fashioned” or “out of style” in order to help your brother in his battle against sin?

Am I Making Too Much Of This?

You may think I am making too much of too little. You may suppose the case is not so serious as I have represented it to be. But consider: you are a woman and cannot experience the passions of a man. You have your own passions, but they are not the same as a man’s. They are (generally speaking) not so strong as a man’s. Neither are they so easily excited or inflamed as a man’s. Nor are they excited in the same manner as a man’s. If you would understand the workings of a man’s passions towards a woman, you must take a man’s word for it. You cannot experience it yourself. And the plain fact is, a man’s passions are easily excited by the sight of a woman’s body, as was plainly the case with David when he beheld Bathsheba bathing.

Most men, it is true, will be better able to resist your allurements than David did Bathsheba’s. They will not go so far as to seduce or rape you. But how do you know that they can resist the thought and desire of it? How do you know they do not sin with their eyes and heart and imagination? There is great pleasure to a man in merely looking and lusting, even though he goes no farther. You know very well the Bible says, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart”(Matthew 5:28). And will you say that this is not a serious matter? It is serious, for it is sin, and sin is serious. Sin blights and deforms and ruins and destroys and damns. And if you would know just how serious a matter this is, you need only read the next verse, which says, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell.” Here is probably the most solemn statement in the Bible concerning the seriousness of sin, and it is spoken with reference to the very sin which you may so lightly and thoughtlessly occasion by your careless dress. This is not a light matter and you dare not treat it lightly.

At this point, you may say, “Amen, all true. But I do not need to hear it, for I already dress modestly.” Are you quite sure of it? If you follow the practices and fashions of this age, you assuredly do not dress modestly, for modesty is ignored

by many of them and purposely thrown to the wind by many others. And it may be that you, being a woman, and not able to see yourself through a man's eyes, are unable to perceive that which may be tempting and provocative in your own dress. God would have you to be "as wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). But if you unthinkingly dress as the rest of the world does, you are assuredly neither wise nor harmless. Not wise, for however ignorant and innocent you may be, you are following a system of fashion which is designed by wicked men and devils to break down and destroy the morals of men. Not harmless, for however little you may intend it, you thus make yourself a fiery dart in the hands of the wicked one to tempt every man who sees you. You will pardon my plain speaking then if I give you some specific instructions in order to make you wise. That being done, I have confidence that the godliness of your own heart will make you harmless.

As said before, the obvious design of God in making clothes for Adam and Eve was to cover their nakedness, and any clothing which fails to do so cannot be right. Bare backs, bare midriffs, bare legs and thighs, are wrong—wrong in the sight of the same God who clothed Adam and Eve with coats to cover their bare bodies. Shorts, halter tops, swim suits, and anything and everything else which intentionally leaves you partially nude or is so tight that it explicitly reveals your feminine form have no place in the dress of a woman professing godliness.

Whatever the rest of the world may do, you are bound to do right. And whatever the rest of the church may do, you are bound to do right. And the things which I just mentioned are so obvious and so flagrant a violation of the purpose of God in clothing you that there ought not to be a moment's question as to what is right.

But, alas, the standards of the church are sunk so low in our day that there are actually Christians and preachers who will defend such things. They will actually defend what is called "mixed bathing"—that is, men and women freely mixing together in a state of near nudity. Have they no shame? Have they no sense? I do not believe they will defend such things when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ. If they have no shame now, they will have some then. Meanwhile, we will say no more about forms of dress which so obviously thwart the purpose of God. Let us turn our thoughts to some things which, while less flagrant, nevertheless violate the evident purpose of clothing.

Short Dresses

You need no one to tell you that these are wrong. The whole world knows they are provocative to a man's eyes. But women who profess godliness, women who ought to know better, will simply follow the current fashions of the world, long or short, without any reference to what is right. Others will quibble about how short

is too short. Rather than making very sure their dresses are plenty long, they will make them as short as they dare, while still persuading themselves they are long enough. You may stand at attention in front of your mirror and persuade yourself that your too-short dress reveals nothing, but only let you sit down, only let you bend over, only let you get in or out of a car, and what a spectacle of nudity you present. And whether you design it or not, and whether you like it or not, those nude legs and thighs of yours are a provocation to lust in the eyes of men.

For the same reason you ought to have nothing to do with those skirts which are slit half-way up the sides. Who cannot see the design of such a fashion is to expose your thighs to view? Or is it to enable you to walk? So much the worse it is. If your skirt is so tight, that you cannot walk without cutting the sides, by all means throw it away, and get something with a little more material. We shall have more to say about tight clothing later on.

Do you ask how long your dresses ought to be? See that your legs are well covered below the knee, front and back, while you are bending over and sitting down, and you will be safe enough.

But be careful here: it is not enough that your legs should be covered only from the vantage point of your own eyeballs. When you bend over or sit down, the front of your dress will be naturally hang lower so as to cover more of your legs, but the back will be drawn up so as to cover less. Very often I have seen women sit down and carefully arrange the front of their skirt so as to cover the topside of their thighs from their own view, while leaving the sides and undersides of their thighs completely exposed to the view of anyone sitting across from them. And this will be unavoidable if your dresses are so short that they only cover you down to the knees while you are standing erect. If you would be safe, your dresses should cover you well below the knee in all postures.

A helpful guideline is this: If you find yourself making any effort at all, no matter how slight, to persuade yourself that what you propose to wear is okay, then more than likely it is not.

Tight Clothing

Clothing which explicitly reveals your form is as bad as that which reveals your nakedness. The whole world knows that such dress is provocative—notoriously and proverbially so—and when a man sees a woman dressed in tight clothing that reveals and displays every curve of her form, his passions will certainly be excited by the sight—perhaps not so quickly or strongly as they would be by the sight of your naked form, but excited nonetheless. The world calls tight clothing “revealing,” which is exactly what it is. And as such it is an obvious violation of the purpose of God in clothing you. Every woman who professes godliness,

therefore, ought to refuse every form of dress which reveals and displays her figure, no matter how tempting it may be to be thought of as attractive.

Specifically, you should avoid sweaters, sweat shirts, tee shirts, and anything made of knit, stretchy, or soft, clinging material, unless perhaps the fit is very loose. Woven material, with some stiffness and body to it, will conceal your form much better. There is no sight on earth which will surely attract a man's eyes and so quickly inflame his passions as the sight of a woman's breasts—whether they are actually exposed or their form displayed by tight or clinging clothing. This is a fact which the world knows very well. Twenty-five years ago the world was singing a popular song about the pleasure of seeing a woman in a sweater and a tight skirt, and the natures of men have not changed in the past twenty-five years.

When a man looks at you he should see your clothing, not the shape and form of everything inside it. Sweaters, tees shirts, and knit blouses in their very nature cling to your body and reveal and display the shape and form of it. And you must take a man's word for it that the shape and form of a woman's body, even though it is covered with clothing, will draw his eyes, inflame his passions, or arouse his imagination, just about as quickly and surely as the sight of her actual skin. I do not say it is impossible for a woman to wear a sweater or knit shirt which is not too revealing. What I do say is that the sweaters and knit tops which American women usually wear are almost always too tight. They might do better if they would wear their sweaters several sizes larger than they usually do. If you recoil at this thought, then you must examine your heart. Why is it so important to you to display your body? Why do you seek to attract the eyes of every man?

I cannot emphasize this too much or insist upon it too strongly. A woman must understand, must take a man's word for it, that the sight of her bust may take away a man's heart in a moment. If she would please her God and help her brother in this fight against sin, she must dress in such a way as to hide and conceal the form of her breasts. She must therefore wear loose-fitting blouses of woven (not stretchy or knit) material. If she wishes to wear a sweater for warmth, she can easily wear a loose-fitting one. True, this may not be as fashionable, but no matter about that. I am writing for godly women who would rather please God than the world.

Understand also that you will accomplish little by exchanging tight sweaters for tight blouses. A blouse of woven material in its very nature will conceal your form better than a sweater, but it may still be provocative enough if it is too tight. Your blouse should never be stretched tight across your bosom, but should have enough slack in the fit that when a man looks at you he sees the blouse and not the form of what is inside of it.

For this reason you should also learn to avoid provocative positions and postures. By this I mean any position which makes your bust prominent or stretches your clothing tight over it, such as standing with your hands on your hips and your elbows thrown back, or yawning and stretching with your back arched. You should likewise refuse dresses or shirts with what is called and “empress waistline.” This is designed to gird the garment around your body immediately below the bust instead of at the waist. The unavoidable effect of this is to prominently display your bust. Again I tell you, I am a man and know very well what it is to be tempted by such sights—and it may take only a moment’s involuntary sight to turn a man’s heart into the wrong channels.

Low Necklines

Again, the whole world knows very well that these are a great temptation to the eyes of a man. And if you are a godly woman, no doubt you would never dream of purposely wearing a neckline too low. But you may be doing it nevertheless, through thoughtlessness or ignorance. It is not only low necklines which offend, but also large or loose ones. You stand erect in front of your mirror wearing a large or loose neckline, and think it perfectly modest. But only bend over a little, so that the material of your blouse falls away from your body, and immediately the most provocative and tempting part of your anatomy is exposed to the view of any man who happens to be standing in front of you.

The same is true, of course, when you dress with the top two or three of your buttons of your blouse unbuttoned. This looks provocative, even if nothing were actually exposed by it. This looks seductive. It looks to a man as though you must design to expose yourself and tantalize his passions. What else can he think? For what other purpose could you leave two or three buttons of your blouse unbuttoned? Do you say it is for comfort? Because you cannot bear a tight, choking collar? I believe you could learn to bear it, as the men of the world do in order to display their stylish neckties. But waive that. It may be legitimate to leave your blouse open at the neck for comfort’s sake, and it may even be modest (depending upon the garment), provided you unbutton one button only. There can be no possible reason or excuse for leaving two or three buttons open. It will not add to your comfort. It is simply following a wicked fashion of a wicked world. Your collar will no more choke you with one button open than it will with three.

One button open will always be a great plenty for comfort’s sake, and with some blouses it will be too much. If you can leave your top button open, yet not expose your breasts when you bend over and the material of your blouse falls away from your bosom, very well. This may depend upon the nature of the blouse, as well as the size of your bust. But if there is any danger of exposing yourself, you had better button all your buttons. You might set the top button down an inch or so,

and make another buttonhole for it, and thus provide for both comfort and modesty. You can scarcely be too careful here, for there is no part of a woman's body so alluring to a man as her breasts, and when a man sees a woman with the top two or three of her buttons open, he will probably conclude it is her intention to tempt and tantalize men. Is this the impression you wish to give? If not, button your buttons, snap your snaps, and zip your zippers.

And if you happen to bend over a little in front of a man, and he sees your breasts actually exposed because of your large, loose, low, or open necklines, unless he is a very rare man, he will be tantalized by the sight, whatever you may think or intend. Therefore you cannot do as the rest of the world does. Let your neckline be high enough and small enough to in fact be a neckline, and not a chest or shoulder line, and you will be safe. Note well: this means if the neck hole of your garment is large enough to slip over your head, it is probably too large. Your necklines should be of the sort that you can close up with buttons or snaps after you put the garment on.

Sleeveless Blouses and Cap Sleeves

Sleeveless blouses always reveal too much. Little as you may be able to understand it, your underarms and the parts of your chest or back which immediately adjoin them are very attractive to a man; and a sleeveless blouse cannot help but display these parts. You must also bear in mind that others will see you at all angles and in all positions, and the armholes of a sleeveless blouse will often allow a man to see inside of the blouse, especially when your arms are uplifted or outstretched, thus displaying part of your chest, and probably some of your breast. The same is true of a short-sleeved blouse which has very large or loose sleeves. This may be perfectly modest as long as you keep your elbows at your sides, but as soon as you raise your arms, you create an portal through which a man may see inside your blouse, and this is a great snare to his heart. The same effect may be rendered by a cap sleeve which is so short that it barely qualifies to be called a sleeve. Remember, you are a woman and cannot see yourself as a man sees you. I am a man, and I know what it is to be tempted by such sights. And if only the weakest of your brethren might be tempted by your sleeveless or loose-sleeve blouses, ought you not deny yourself a little of comfort or of fashion and conceal your body a little better for his good?

Sheer Clothing

It ought to be unnecessary to say anything about clothing which is so light or sheer that a man may see through it. The obvious and undeniable purpose of such clothing is to thwart the purpose of clothing and expose your body rather than cover it. This you cannot help but realize. Everyone else knows it also, and when

a man sees you thus attired, what can he think but that is your intention to display your body in his sight? And yet, the standards in many churches today are so low that it is not uncommon to see Christian women wearing see-through clothing. If you have been guilty of this, your first business is to repent, to reject anything which is obviously and purposely sheer. You ought to be careful also not to wear any material which is so light or so thin that it may be seen through when you are in direct light, such as in front of a window. Finally, reject any material of a very coarse weave: wear clothing, not netting.

Slacks

Here we have come to a bone of contention which divides churches, families, and friends. The background is this: historically in our culture, the men have worn pants and the women dresses. This is an undisputed fact, which is embodied in the proverbial expression that a wife who runs the house “wears the pants in the family.” The *Women’s Liberation Movement*, which is more than a century old, has sought to put the pants on all the women, figuratively speaking. It has sought to “liberate” the woman from her God-appointed place of subjection to the man and to give her “equal rights” to do whatever the man may do. The spirit of this movement has also put upon the woman’s body the man’s clothing—namely slacks. And the church has followed the world in so doing.

Many of the older and stricter men of God, less influenced by the world, take a strong stand against women wearing pants. Slacks, they say, are men’s clothing, and (on the basis of Deuteronomy 22:5) it is an abomination for a woman to wear them. The younger set, most of whom have grown up wearing slacks themselves and who probably know nothing of the historical background of the question, can see no point in the stand which their elders take and so regard it as narrow-minded and petty. “The slacks I wear,” they say, “were made for women and are not men’s clothing”.

On the one side it may be urged that God made neither slacks for Adam nor a dress for Eve, but coats for both of them. Yet Deuteronomy 22:5 certainly assumes that the same clothing is not to be worn by both men and women, and it is also certain that historically in our country the slacks have been the men’s clothing. Or it may be urged that the culture has changed, so that slacks are now acceptable clothing for women also. Yet when we consider the sinister forces which have wrought this change, we may plead that the change is in no way recognized by God but is an abomination to Him. I say no more than this, for it is outside the purpose of this article to settle this controversy. I do not ask here, is it wrong in the eyes of God to wear slacks? I ask, what effect are her slacks likely to have on the eyes of men?

And first, in their very nature, slacks are apt to reveal and display your form. Women contend for modest slacks, but who wears them? In the very nature of the case it is difficult to make a pair of slacks that are truly modest (especially for a woman who has a full figure). And as a matter of fact, it is an extremely rare thing to see a woman in slacks which are not too tight. Why is this? Why may men wear slacks which fit loosely, while the slacks of women must cling to every inch of their thighs, hips, and buttocks? Verily it is because the prince of this world who inspires these styles knows his business all too well. He knows that it is a snare to a man's heart to have displayed before his eyes the form of a woman's body. Sisters, your so-called "private parts" ought to by all means keep be carefully concealed at all times, and there is nothing that will do this so well as a dress. A loose-fitting skirt or dress, provided it is not too short, is also the best possible clothing with which to conceal all of the tempting parts of the anatomy which reside between your waist and your knees.

But some women suppose that because their slacks are not skin-tight they are therefore modest. Well now, suppose that your slacks are loose enough that they leave a little space between the material and your skin. Even then, they display the basic form of your legs and thighs and buttocks. This is the nature of the garment and can hardly be avoided. And further, as soon as you bend over or sit or squat, those "modest" slacks of yours will be stretched just as tight over parts of your body as the skin-tight slacks which other women wear. So you had best leave slacks alone.

Though you may not be able to understand it (for the sight of a man will probably not affect you in the same way), it is the sight of the form which will arouse a man's passions. What a man's touch is to a woman, the sight of a woman is to a man. This is plain enough in the Bible account of David and Bathsheba, and every honest man will tell you the same thing. You must believe it on the word of a man, though you may not be able to understand it. The sight of the form of your thighs and buttocks and crotch will tempt the heart of a man, and it is the nature of slacks to display the form of those parts.

Answering Objections

Enough for specific instructions. Let us now answer some common objections. First: "What right has this fellow to prescribe all of these legalistic rules for women?" I answer, if we lived without sin in the garden of Eden, you could dress any way that you please, or not at all for that matter. And you would hurt no one by so doing. But in this world you cannot. And if you do, you will only be contributing to the swelling of the tide of sin. I write for godly women who want to do what is right but are not likely to know how without instruction from a man. I seek only to give you some instruction, which only a man can give, concerning

the effects your dress will have on the men who see you. And I suppose that truly godly women will be happy to receive such instruction. It is usually the worldly who are not willing to do right at any cost, who raise the cry of “legalism.”

“But this is a small matter, unworthy of so much ado. We ought to be occupied with the weightier matters of the heart and not make such a fuss over these little outward things.” This may be an outward thing, but it is not a little one. Can you read Matthew 5:28-29 and yet contend that this is a small matter? But suppose it is a small matter: can you therefore lightly pass over it or ignore it? Not so, for “he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). The Lord did not rebuke the Jews because they gave careful attention to the small matters; it was because they did so to the neglect of the weightier matters. “These [the weightier matters] ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other [the small matters] undone” (Luke 11:42).

“But any man who views women this way must be perverted.” Yes, be it known to you that men are perverted. All men. We are sinners. Our pristine purity is lost, and our hearts are natural and strongly inclined to sin, especially the sin of lust. Sin easily besets us (Hebrews 12:1). But understand, though all men are perverted from their original purity, and though the passions of all men (except those who are perverted in a worse way) are alike in this matter, I would not want to leave you with the impression that the practices of all men are alike, or with feelings of uneasiness in the presence of men. If you but dress right and act right and associate with the right kinds of men in the right kinds of situations, there will be little occasion for you to be uneasy or uncomfortable.

But there will be plenty of occasion for you to be careful, even in the presence of the best men. Why? Because even though the godly “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” and have renounced the unlawful indulgence of those desires, the natural desires of the flesh nevertheless remain (Galatians 5:24). It is in the godly that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Galatians 5:17). Men may strive hard to mortify these passions, but it is a matter of plain historical fact, attested also by universal experience, that the most sincere and diligent endeavors to mortify them do not eliminate them; they only subjugate them.

Even the finest of men are likely to be overcome by these passions if they are not careful. Remember, it was a man after God’s own heart who was overcome by the allurements of Bathsheba. And since these passions are not to be eliminated by mortification, God himself prescribes a more effectual method, which is satisfaction. As Paul counseled, “It is better to marry than to burn” (1 Corinthians 7:9), and, “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (v.2). He further advised to those who are married

that they should freely and frequently indulge in the satisfaction of those passions, “that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (v. 5). “Incontinency” is lack of self-control. In plain English, Paul is speaking of the lack of ability to control the human passions.

Writing by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Paul assumed that even the godly are likely to be “incontinent” when it comes to the matter of sexual desire. And history and experience unite to prove that many of the godliest of men—including men who are godly and married—have a very hard struggle against the unlawful indulgence of those passions, in both look or in thought. Why is this? I believe it is most often to be accounted for in the fact that their passions have never been laid to rest by the satisfaction which marriage is designed to give them. Their own marriage, for whatever reason, is not what a marriage is designed to be. Mere physical gratification can never satisfy the heart of a man (any more than it can the heart of a woman).

Proverbs 5:19 says, “Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou always ravished with her love.” There are two kinds of satisfaction spoken of here, the one “by her breasts” and the other “by her love.” The former is obviously physical, the latter is, for lack of a better term, emotional. The first engages the body; the second engages the soul. Every normal man’s sexual desire embraces both of these things. (And so also, by the way, do every normal woman’s.) The physical desires may often predominate in men, while the emotional may predominate in women; but neither man nor woman can be satisfied without the fulfillment of both. No man’s passions are ever satisfied and laid to rest until he possesses both of these things together in the same woman.

You know very well that the most ravishing love on earth will never satisfy a man until he actually possesses the object of his affections in physical lovemaking. But it is equally true that physical gratification alone, without a deep and delightful romantic love, will never satisfy a man either. He must have both together. If he lacks one or the other (or both), he will find his passions still persistently longing for fulfillment, in spite of all his endeavors to subdue them. And those desires are easily excited by the sight of the feminine form.

The battle is a difficult one. A man who is very strong spiritually but lacks the fulfillment of those desires may in fact fare worse in the struggle than a much weaker man who has found the fulfillment which every man craves. Throughout the Old Testament histories David is held up as a standard of godliness by which all of his successors are judged. But the fact that he took many wives is a pretty sure indicator that he never found that complete satisfaction in one, which every man craves and which is the strength of every man who possesses it. Therefore, his desires still burned, and David was weak.

For a man to be fully satisfied and his passions fixed upon a single object (and so be laid to rest), he must be “ravished always with love” (Proverbs 5:19). And yet if you go through life with your eyes open, you must be well aware that this ravishing love is the very thing which is missing in many marriages, among both the ungodly and the godly. Some have been led into marriage without ever possessing that kind of love in the first place. Others had it when they were married, but due to various causes have lost it. Now whether you wish to pity such persons or blame them (or both), the fact remains that there are many marriages which fall short of providing that ravishing romantic fulfillment which will satisfy a man’s passions and lay them to rest. And it is another fact that a man who finds himself in such a position, however he may have gotten there, will have a very bitter struggle to try to subdue those passions, which are still longing for fulfillment but cannot obtain it.

To return to the original question: whether men are perverted or not is really beside the point. How far his desires are normal and right, or how far they are the result of his sinfulness, may be difficult to determine. But what difference does it make? You must deal with the facts as they are, not as you wish they were. The real facts are: many men do not possess the ravishing romantic fulfillment which they cannot help but crave, and they are therefore weak, and easily tempted by the sight of the feminine form.

Suppose that some men were so strong, or so fully satisfied in their own marriage, that you could not tempt them even if you would, what then? The fact remains that many men are weak and unsatisfied and burning. With the strong you need not concern yourself, but you are bound by duty (as you ought to be moved by love) to “bear the weaknesses of the weak”—yes, even of the weakest—and not to put a stumbling block in their way (Romans 15:1; 14:13).

“But if a man looks on me to lust, that is his sin, not mine.” Nay, for “you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food [or physical appearance] the one for whom Christ died...It is good neither to...do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (Romans 14:15,21 NKJV). David was made weak, David was made to stumble, by Bathsheba’s careless exposure of her body. And your displays of your feminine beauty will have the same effect upon your brethren.

After reading this article you can hardly plead that you do not know this, and “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). If you were completely ignorant of the effects your dress might have upon a man, you might dress as you please without sin, but not otherwise. Every man is fully responsible for his own sin, but you will certainly be held in some sense responsible for another man’s sin if you provoke him to it. To Ezekiel God

warned, “When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezekiel 33:8). The wicked is fully responsible for his own sin and shall surely die for it. But the watchman is held accountable also, merely because he failed to do what he could have done to turn the other man from sin. How much more will you be held accountable if you put stumbling blocks in another man’s way and actually provoke him to sin?

“But if I were to follow all of these instructions, I would have to buy a whole new wardrobe, and I cannot afford that.” My sister, you can not afford to sin. If you are a real Christian, you came to Christ resolving to forsake every sin and do the whole will of God at any cost. If you have a will to do right, you will find a way. Certainly God is able to provide for those who wish to please Him. Sister, you can afford to change the way you dress, but you cannot afford to sin or to provoke others to sin.

“But I am not attractive or shapely. No man is likely to be tempted by the sight of me. Therefore I may dress however I please.” In the first place, you are no proper judge of what is attractive to a man. It is of course true that a shapely and beautiful woman is more likely to be a temptation to a man, but it is also true that a woman who is not attractive to one man will be to another. But just suppose that you are actually so misshapen that no man would ever look twice at you. What about your example to other women? What about your example to babes in Christ, who have dressed improperly throughout all their ungodly life and who may now be looking to you to teach them and lead them in the right way? Do you want them to look at you, and excuse their own improper dress on the basis of your example?

Finally, some women are so naive, so ignorant of the nature of men, that they suppose that because no men are actually making advances or propositions to them, they must be no temptation to any man. Let them understand that a man derives great pleasure from merely looking at women, especially from looking at very attractive women. Why do you suppose that men spend millions of dollars a year for pornographic pictures? Let the pictures be left out of the pornographic magazines and see how many copies they would sell! What pleasure is it that men continually purchase at so great an expense? What pleasure can pictures afford them, except the pleasure of looking? It is looking at a woman’s body which inflames a man’s passions and incites his imagination, and there is great pleasure in that looking.

Most worldly men freely indulge in that pleasure with little or no restraint. They feast their eyes upon the feminine form wherever they may find it, and this of

course will include your form if you dress so as to expose and display it. A godly man will recognize that pleasure as sinful except when it is confined to his own wife, and he will fight hard to resist the temptation and conquer the sin. But because of the extreme strength and intensity of male passions, he will find this to be a very difficult battle indeed. The spirit is willing, but in the face of strong temptations, the flesh is weak. To will is present with him, but sometimes how to perform he finds not. In spite of all his determination and praying and striving, he may find his eyes seemingly involuntarily drawn to the sight of a beautiful and shapely woman. And one moment's involuntary sight may be enough to take the heart away.

A man who has gained some mastery over this kind of temptation may easily resist the initial onslaught, but constant exposure to such allurements may weaken and break down even the strongest. Therefore, we are told to “flee youthful lusts”(2 Timothy 2:22). In other words, to flee from the very presence of such temptations. But whither shall we flee in this wicked world? Must we flee from the very congregation of God in order to keep our hearts pure? Shame! Shame! If we cannot find a safe asylum there, then where?

To conclude, there is nothing at all evil or wrong about your physical beauty. It is the creation of God. And like all that God has created, it is “very good.” It was designed by God for a specific purpose: The Bible says the woman was made “for the man”(1 Corinthians 11:9). The perfectly obvious design of your beauty is to ravish and satisfy the heart of a man—but only one man, not every man. If God has joined you to that one man, then by all means give that beauty to him with all your heart and say to him, “Make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices” (Song of Solomon 8:14). Let him be, as God commands him, satisfied with you at all times and always ravished with your love (Proverbs 5:19). Thus satisfied, he will be less susceptible to the beauty and charms of other women. And thus used, the beauty of your body will glorify the God who gave it to you and serve the man for who it was given. But if you put it on display and prostitute it to the gaze of the whole world, you only glorify yourself, serve the devil, and further perpetuate the sin of Bathsheba.

Postscript

If you are as most woman are, much of the material in this article may be new and strange to you. You may not be able to understand it and may be disinclined to believe it. Some of the women who have read this manuscript can scarcely be persuaded to believe that the male passions are as I have represented them, but the men to whom I have submitted it have fully endorsed it. One of them (a godly man and a preacher) said, “I wish I had about 2 million copies!” I beg you therefore to believe these things, though you may not be able to fully understand

them. I also beg you not to be content with a single reading of this paper, but rather to study it thoroughly several times through so that you may more fully grasp and remember all that it says. Then, by all means, act upon what it teaches you. And do everything in your power to teach these principles to your sisters in Christ. In so doing you will very much bless the Kingdom of God.

Your Brother in Christ

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