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Everybody Has a Line

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In discussions about immodest clothing and how we should define that, brethren have generally fallen into two camps:

1. Those who draw a line between what is modest and immodest.
2. Those who reject the practice of drawing such lines.

Those in the second group are often very critical of those in the first. They may describe the idea of a line between modest and immodest clothing as being “legalistic.” They might say that those who try to define a line are making rules that God never made.

However, the reality is that **everybody has a line**.

No one goes out in public naked. Even those who are critical of brethren who “draw lines” do not walk around in their underwear.

So if someone would not do that, then *they have a line*, at least subconsciously, between what is appropriate and inappropriate. Even if they have not thought this through, they have a line somewhere.

If we were to attempt to use the Bible to draw these lines, there are a few passages that can be used:

“You shall make for them linen breeches to cover their bare flesh [nakedness, KJV]; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs” (Exodus 28:42).

“Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, uncover the leg [thigh, KJV], cross the rivers. Your nakedness will be uncovered, your shame also will be exposed; I will take vengeance and will not spare a man” (Isaiah 47:2-3).

These verses talk about covering the thigh (above the knee) in order to cover one’s “nakedness.”

Also, notice what is said about the clothing God provided to Adam and Eve in the Garden after they sinned: *“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).*

The Hebrew term for the garments given to Adam and Eve (*kutonet*) refers to a “tunic...generally with sleeves, coming down to the knees, rarely to the ankles” (Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon). At the minimum, this would have covered them from the shoulders to the knees.

Many Christians believe that we should not use these lines to distinguish between modest and immodest clothing. However, as we have already noticed, **everybody has a line**. If their line is three inches above the knee, rather than covering the thigh to the knee, it is reasonable to ask where they got their line. Are they using culture as their standard? Or is their level of comfort their authority? Is it wise to use either of these and ignore the definitions found in God’s word?

In the New Testament, we have Paul’s words to Timothy about “proper clothing”:

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

Some may argue that *immodest* apparel has more to do with *overdressing* than *underdressing*. One can indeed *overdress* and be immodest, but that does not mean we give no thought to *underdressing*.

Others may argue that they are not causing anyone to lust. Even if this could be true, in reality, there is no way to know that. Remember the principle stated by Paul in his first letter to Corinth: *“For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the spirit of the man which is in him?”* (1 Corinthians 2:11). We do not know anyone’s thoughts unless they truthfully tell us what they are thinking.

However, some clothing does invite lust. The wise man warned of the woman who was *“dressed as a harlot”* (Proverbs 7:10). Even though her outfit was not described any further, we certainly have an idea of what it could have been since her intention was to arouse the men around her and entice them to commit adultery with her. It could be that someone may not have the same *intention*, but thoughtlessly wears the same type of clothing anyway.

Some may argue that short shorts, tight clothing, and so on are so common today that it does not cause people to lust. Even if that were true, how we dress is not just about preventing lust. After all, someone can lust after someone else even if that person is fully clothed. Similarly, it is possible for our clothing to be inappropriate even if no one lusts after us. Perhaps some of the confusion on this topic has come because we have equated *immodesty* with *causing lust* when it is not limited to that.

The Bible talks about *nakedness* (not necessarily *nudity*) as being *shameful*. We noticed this in the passages above. To have our nakedness exposed should elicit a sense of *shame*. When Jesus was stripped of His clothing during His crucifixion, it was done to humiliate Him. However, when one *chooses* to expose oneself (as is done by wearing clothing that exposes what ought to be covered), that should be considered *shameful*. Sadly, many have forgotten *“how to blush”* (Jeremiah 6:15).

When Paul wrote to Timothy about how women were to dress, he said they should do so as *“women making a claim to godliness”* (1 Timothy 2:10). What claim are we making with our clothing?

- Are we *“making a claim to godliness”* when we wear clothing that flaunts our wealth?
- Are we *“making a claim to godliness”* when we wear clothing that invites lust?
- Are we *“making a claim to godliness”* when we choose to dress in a way that exposes what the Bible calls nakedness?

Following Christ is not about the *least* we can do or the *most* we can get away with. It is about bringing honor and glory to Him. Rather than trying to get as close as possible to a “line,” we should exercise wisdom as we apply the principles found in God’s word. Plainbibleteaching.com 8/16/26

Illusions Of Permanence

Dan S. Shipley

An illusion of permanence is the senior citizen of seventy-five negotiating for a thirty-year home loan. It is the combat soldier who **knows** nothing can happen to him because his guaranteed-for-life pen is still writing like new. It is the aging grand- mother who exchanges her dignity for the fashion of miniskirts and gaudy paint. It is the wealthy farmer of Luke 12 who, shortly before his unexpected demise, was thinking in terms of many years while planning a future that did not include God. It is every Felix who seeks a more convenient season in which to obey the Lord. It is all who live as if they anticipated an almost indefinite earthly existence. Few escape the beguiling effects wrought by these illusions of permanence.

But the Bible dispels these illusions. God describes mans earthly tenure in such terms as shadow, season, and vapor — words calculated to discourage our feeling at home in the body. As One more concerned with our eternal welfare than with our earthly comforts and prosperity, He teaches that a mans life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which

he possesseth (Lk. 12:15); that here we are but pilgrims without an abiding city (1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 13: 14). Davids perspective is essential: Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am (Ps. 39:4).

However, many, though professing otherwise, seemingly prefer illusions to truth. They remind me of the merchant who erects a large and expensive neon sign to advertise his Going- Out- Of- Business sale — you doubt that he is. Similarly, some who talk of preparing for eternity show big signs of planning to be in business on this old earth for many years. Investments of time, talents and resources reveal where ones treasure is — and his heart (Matt. 6:19-21).

The farmers illusions of permanence were shattered with these words: Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. ... The time of this day is best redeemed in remembering that this night is never far from any mortal. Plain Talk Vol 8 No. 1 1971