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# Modest or Prude? Redeeming Our Wardrobes

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# Modest or Prude? Redeeming Our Wardrobes

## **Abstract**

"We live in a sex-saturated society which bombards us with images and innuendos at every turn."

Posting about appropriate clothing choices in a fallen world from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/modest-or-prude-redeeming-our-wardrobes/>

## **Keywords**

In All Things, modesty, clothing and dress, body image

## **Disciplines**

Christianity

## **Comments**

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

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 [inallthings.org/modest-or-prude-redeeming-our-wardrobes/](http://inallthings.org/modest-or-prude-redeeming-our-wardrobes/)

Valorie Zonnefeld

I hate turtle necks. I always have. I feel like I'm choking when I wear a turtle neck. I can even get that constricted feeling in a crew neck. I realize this is irrational, but I much prefer a V-neck or collared shirt (with the top button loose of course). God definitely knew what he was doing making me a female since a necktie might push me over the edge.

So why this talk about collars? I've noticed more frequent posts on social media regarding dress codes and body shaming which got me to think about what should guide wardrobe choices both personally and for our children. I guess that explains the turtle-neck opening, I want you to know that I'm not a prude. Really, I'm not, even if I have been thinking a lot more about modesty lately.

A word of warning is necessary at this point. I have more questions than I have answers, but one thing I know is that our bodies are beautiful. Being made in God's image insures it (Gen. 1:27). And if that's not enough, God straight-up says in the creation account that everything he made was "very good." Did you hear that? Not just "good," but "very good."

Unfortunately the fall into sin tainted everything including our body image, interactions between genders, and our perspective. We live in a sex-saturated society which bombards us with images and innuendos at every turn. So how does a Christian respond in the year 2015? Maybe I should wear a turtle neck every day? Or invest in a wetsuit for my next day at the beach? Those choices certainly are modest, but also seem a bit reactionary....and uncomfortable.

Another reaction might be to focus on God's words of "very good" and celebrate the beauty of our bodies. Recently, more women have embraced the beauty of their bodies by posting selfies on social media of themselves clad in bikinis or underwear. While I question why the term "underwear" doesn't imply that it's "under" something, I wonder if there is something both healthy and unhealthy in this trend.

Many of these scanty selfies are an act of defiance against fat shaming or ageism. Fat shaming refers to the subtle, and not so subtle, prejudices shown towards individuals above optimal weight levels. I like the confidence and the bravery shown by these individuals choosing not to live in fear of what others think. No one should be demeaned because of their physical attributes. That being said, I wonder if a photographic statement is the best way to celebrate the "goodness" of our bodies? On a similar note, what role does modesty play in this? Our bodies are beautiful, yet God also created unpresentable parts that should be treated with greater modesty (1 Cor. 12:23). How does modesty play out in this setting?

Another trend that I've noticed is equating school dress codes with body shaming. I'll admit that dress code is a sensitive spot for me as an educator. Hands down nothing is more unpleasant to deal with than dress code; however, as a junior high and high school teacher I've also seen how students' eyes can wander when a classmate of the opposite gender passes by. I agree that each individual should work to control his or her eyes; however, as part of a community, and fully aware of the temptations that exist, should we also take care in dressing ourselves in ways that don't encourage others eyes to wander? Now this too can be taken to an extreme as there's no doubt that incidents have occurred where the onus for wandering eyes was placed on females, yet I wonder if the pendulum has swung too far? Is modesty also a recognition of the beauty of our bodies? In this line of thinking, we practice modesty *because* our bodies are beautiful and special.

As promised, I've raised more questions than I've answered. Yet I hope I've spurred you to a "good think" about how modesty and the beauty of our bodies can coincide. I guess my overarching question is how can we as Christians inhabiting beautifully created bodies in a fallen world redeem our clothing choices? Today that meant a boat-necked striped shirt and capris for me, how about you?