

Modest: Men and Women Clothed in the Gospel by RW Glenn and Tim Challies, Cruciform Press, Adelphi, Maryland, 2012. (20 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Modesty Flows from the Gospel.

We want to see your heart so gripped by the gospel of grace that modesty becomes beautiful and desirable to you, not just in your wardrobe but in all of life. We want you to understand that modesty isn't just *motivated* by the gospel, it's an *entailment* of the gospel—it flows naturally from a solid grasp of the good news of the gospel. [page 6]

2. Christian Modesty Rooted in the Gospel.

Even though modesty is a legitimate virtue outside of a Christian context, a distinctly *Christian* modesty must be rooted in the gospel of grace. [page 10]

3. Without the Gospel, Modesty Is a Religion.

Modesty, apart from the gospel, becomes a self-made religion that can give some appearance of being the genuine article but that is in the end of *no value* (none!) in our battle with the sinful and inordinate desires of our hearts. If we reduce modesty to certain rules of dress, we are completely separating the concept of modesty from the person and work of Jesus Christ. As a result, we may have the appearance of godliness, but not a whole lot more. [page 12-13]

4. Willfulness or Ignorance.

When people break the rule of propriety current in their own time and place, if they do so in order to excite lust in themselves or others, then they are offending against chastity. But if they break it through ignorance or carelessness they are guilty only of bad manners. When, as often happens, they break it defiantly in order to shock or embarrass others, they are not necessarily being unchaste, but they are being uncharitable. [pages 20-21]

5. Ignorance and Disobedience.

There are only two possible reasons for immodesty: ignorance (where you simply did not know that you were being immodest and therefore have not sinned) or disobedience (where you did know, but just didn't care). [pages 21-22]

6. Virtue, Respect, and Result.

Modesty is *not* what you wear or say or do. Instead modesty has three component parts:

- **Virtue**. Modesty is first and foremost a *virtue* – an *inner attitude* that may be internalized and largely unconscious, or very intentional.

- **Respect.** This virtue is grounded in *respect* for an *appropriate cultural standard* (the broader, general context) and *appropriate situational standards* (the narrower, specific contexts).
- **Result.** This respect is ultimately made evident in dress, speech, and behavior that willingly conforms to these standards.

We sum it up this way:

Modesty is that virtue which is respectful of a culture's rules for appropriate and inappropriate dress, speech, and behavior in a given situation. [pages 22-23]

7. God Does Not Let Us Continue in What Is Not Good for Us.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14)

Precisely because God is full of grace, he is not content to let us continue in attitudes or behaviors that are not good for us. The grace of God doesn't cease after bringing salvation—it goes on to instruct us to live a certain way. This is where the edge comes in: grace makes us deny ungodliness and worldly desires because we should live sensibly, righteously, and godly. God cares about how we live, which means that he cares about modesty. [page 29]

8. God Has Accepted You.

But when the gospel controls your modesty, everything changes. You want to be modest because God sent His son, Jesus, to *die* for your immodesty and especially because Jesus *willingly* died for it. When the gospel controls your modesty, you won't see it as a way of putting God in your debt because you don't need to twist God's arm to accept you—he already accepts you freely and fully in Jesus Christ. This gives you both the ability and the desire to respond to him joyfully being modest in appearance and character. [page 35]

9. Definition of Modesty.

Modesty is that virtue which is respectful of a culture's rules for appropriate and inappropriate dress, speech, and behavior in a given situation. [page 44-45]

10. The Gospel Position.

In order to say *sic et non* (yes and no) about everything, we must analyze our culture faithfully. We must observe it carefully with a view to respecting its rules for

appropriate and inappropriate dress, speech, and behavior in given situations, but we must do this without walling it out or welcoming it all in. The only way we can do this is if we have a robust faith in the gospel of grace. This puts us in “the gospel position”—the position from which we can live sensibly, respectfully, and lovingly within our culture’s rules for modesty but also object conscientiously to immodesty when we see it. [page 49]

11. When We Worship Other Things than God, It Is Idolatry.

When we set our desire and passion and affection on something or someone other than God, we actually commit adultery against Him. And all of us are capable—we know this too well—of transferring our affection from God to someone or something else. Almost anything else!

Whatever draws our worship away from the one true and living God qualifies as an idol. Metaphorically speaking, we still manufacture and offer sacrifices to all sorts of things other than God. In light of this truth and from the perspective of those who are guilty, we ought to see our idolatry from four perspectives:

- Idolatry is vain
- Idolatry is violent
- Idolatry is vile
- Idolatry is vindictive

[page 59]

12. Sinful Immodesty – A Question of the Heart.

Sinful immodesty is always a question of the heart. For example, if you could come to know that a brother or sister in Christ is dressing immodestly for the sake of arousing lust in the opposite sex, his or her immodesty has moved from the arena of immorality. Or if you come to know that a person is using questionable language for the sake of “getting prudes to relax,” his or her immodesty has moved from the arena of immodesty to the arena of lovelessness. [page 71]

13. Extending Grace to Others.

The grace of God makes us willing to give up our rights for the sake of weaker members of the body of Christ. Knowing how much grace you received, and at what cost, makes you willing to extend that grace to other people. [page 73]

14. Keep the Gospel First in Your Life.

Preach the gospel to yourself every day. Keep the gospel front-and-center in your life—this is the only way you will avoid seeing adherence to cultural conventions as an oppressive straightjacket on the one hand or as a ground for acceptance with God on

the other. As we said earlier, when the gospel controls your modesty, everything changes.

When the gospel controls your modesty, you want to be modest because God sent His son, Jesus, to *die* for your immodesty, and especially because Jesus *willingly* died for it.

When the gospel controls your modesty, you no longer see it as a way of putting God in your debt, because you don't need to twist God's arm to accept you—he already accepts you freely and fully in Jesus Christ! [page 74]

15. Modesty and Speech.

Modesty is a virtue that allows us to control our speech. The implications of the gospel reach to the farthest extent of our character, touching our words, our topics of conversation, and even the ways in which we converse: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17). Modest speech is speech that draws attention to God rather than attention to ourselves; modest speech serves others and stays aware of the contexts in which we find ourselves. [page 80]

16. Modesty Considers What Is Appropriate.

A topic of conversation may be appropriate at certain times but not at other times; learn to discern what “fits the occasion.” Modesty compels us to consider what is appropriate for any given situation, but immodesty draws us into discussing certain topics for their shock value, so that eyes and minds will be drawn to us, and we will be known for our bold, outside-the-box manner. [page 80]

17. Drawing Attention to Self.

We may be immodest when we speak about inappropriate topics, but we may also be immodest when we speak too loudly or forcefully. This is a genuine temptation for the preacher or public speaker who wants to impress with his style. When we draw attention to the way we say things instead of to what we say, we step over the line into immodest speech. “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). [page 83]

18. Showing Courtesy Is Modesty.

Some customs long regarded as “gentlemanly” are nearly always consistent with modest behavior, like holding open a door or willingly and quickly giving up your seat to a woman or an elderly person. Courtesy is another gentlemanly expression of modesty, one that refuses to ignore others, whether actively (because you think too

highly of yourself) or passively (because you are engrossed with your smart phone). [pages 83-84]

19. Men and Women Need to Use Self-control.

Men can contribute to immodesty (or modesty) of others—especially women—by *where they look* and *how they talk*. Women certainly bear their own responsibility for dressing modestly: they need to remember that God has designed men to be drawn to what is visually appealing and therefore it can actually be difficult for a man to look away instantly when he encounters an immodestly dressed woman. At the same time, no Christian man has an excuse for ogling the women around him: the fruit of the Holy Spirit, after all, includes self-control. [page 84]

20. Living as Lights in a Dark World.

You can do your part in creating a culture of modesty and honor for the women around you by guarding your heart and your eyes. When we regard women in the church first and foremost as sisters in Christ—not objects for us to gaze upon or lust after—we create a safe place for them to be women God has made them to be. This is true regardless of the context and regardless of the context and regardless of what they choose to wear. When we behave modestly outside the church, we stand apart from others and live as lights in a dark world where all kinds of immodesty flourish. Modest behavior is a lifestyle of service, getting out of the way in order to point others to Jesus. [page 85]