

SCREAMING FLESH

By Jayme-Dawn Kryskow (October 2003)

**"Let all flesh be silent at the presence of the Lord;
for He has risen out of His holy habitation."**

Zechariah 2:13

As women, are we aware of the ways our bodies speak or even scream as we encounter men? Do we want our bodies to scream at men or praise God?

The issue of modesty has always been a struggle for me. "Clothes are just clothes and men should control their eyes, self-control is a virtue, DUH!" is what I thought. The over-indulgent attitude of our society, that our lives and our bodies are our own, has had a great impact on me. We all live in our own bubble and as long as we are not being harmed we must not be doing anything wrong. It is crazy how many of us have been deceived.

When I had entered high school, I became acutely aware of the power of the female body. The power present was not just the idle reality of what the female body looks like, there is also a great power in the way that the body moves and is dressed. I took advantage of this power at times and was amazed at the response, the ability to turn a guy's head was exciting and fun and all I had to do was walk by them. Ironically, I often got mad at guys when I felt like they were treating me like "a piece of meat", not realizing that I was putting myself on the meat shelf,

Then, my sister spoke....

My sister had gone through a very powerful conversion and this had a big impact on her role as a big sister. I remember one of the first things she ever taught me was about modesty. She explained that as women, we are responsible for the men around us. If we wear clothing that causes a man to sin in his thoughts, we as women are held responsible. Yes they are also responsible for what they choose to look at and think. Our responsibility is in not teasing them with a sinful pleasure. The clothes that we wear may even affect the destination of the men around us for eternity. In other words, if a man is going to hell because of lustful thoughts nurtured by an immodestly dressed woman, we will have to face the consequence of placing the temptation before them.

This was my first lesson on modesty. My immediate reaction to this news was a sense of excitement and power. Wow! We truly hold much power in our hands and we are the only ones who can really help protect men from the monster of lust.

The robotic words "WE MUST PROTECT" went through my head;
we are their "body-guards".

But, honestly, the issue of modesty still annoys me. Why do I have to worry about men, why don't they just deal with their lack of control? It is a selfish annoyance, selfish because I have to sacrifice my comfort and fashion faves.

Modesty is obviously an issue for men but now I see it as an issue for myself as a woman. If I am to expect a man to have self-control with his eyes and his thoughts, then I too must have self-control with my thoughts and actions. Did you catch that? Women have to watch their thoughts too, but for different reasons, I'll explain later.

Now, on a different note, I want to explain my purpose. With this essay I wish to accomplish a minimum of three things. The first thing I want to do is give you a list of things to watch out for. Next, I will try to explain the brain waves of the men around us as explained to me from them. (I have been in contact with about 20 men ages 18 to 26 on this topic.) Finally, I will share the importance of the brain waves of the woman by explaining... well... me.

Here we go....

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THE LIST OF "BEWARE"

- tight anything---watch for tight chest areas or butt areas
- low cut shirts---watch that when leaning over that no secrets are told
- short anything
 - **Shirts**---guys have problems with the stomach area, even if only 1cm shows, it can be trouble ("When you can see the way that a girl's stomach muscles are moving, don't ask why, but for some reason this is a turn on for most guys.")
 - **shorts**---as a general rule, no shorter than 3 hand widths above the knee when sitting
- low-rise pants---watch that between your pants and shirt, skin doesn't show. Especially watch your lower back, this area tends to be another problem area especially when there is a funky tattoo.
- hide the underwear---underwear covers private area hence underwear will turn a guy's thoughts to the south... got it? (And a huge majority of guys thinks it is just plain gross to see a thong.)
- skirts with super high slits---watch for slits that reveal the upper thigh... upper thigh is close to other stuff just north of it... got it again?
- hide the bra straps--- just like underwear, the guy's mind turns to what is being covered up, especially watch out for clear, red, black straps.
- avoid straps on bags that cut between the breast---these drew undue focus to the chest.
- pants with writing on the butt---guys will naturally read what is there and be tempted to continue to look. (Watch the sayings on the shirts and pants... any potentially sexual innuendos are not good.)
- skimpy bathing-suits-DUH!

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THE MAN'S MIND

"Sometimes even in Christian circles [modesty] is a problem because some girls simply don't get it. I guess they just don't understand that guys are visually oriented."

The body has been molded in a certain way in order to give glory to God. One form of glory is a baby. Yup, God likes babies and therefore wants us to make them. In order for Him to be sure we make these wonderful babies, God made our bodies attractive and sometimes just plain Hot! Beautiful bodies means men and women will want to come together and... POOF! make babies. The crazy thing we forget about is that our bodies are sending out silent messages about babies. One guy explained it like this: "The problem lies in the fact that many women 'broadcast' sexual readiness unintentionally through posture, clothing, interactions etc. while not actually wanting a sexual response." The way we dress influences a guy's thoughts by stimulating the desire to ...umm, make babies.

It is important to remember that babies are meant to come from a marriage relationship. So, modesty is especially important when around those we are not able to make babies with.

The problem we as women must deal with is that men get their engines warmed up by getting the eyes warmed up. See, unlike women who get their engines turned on quickly by physical touch, guys 'get going' when they see something 'good'. Some guys get turned on more easily than others and have a harder time controlling how fast their engine will go VROOM.

I was fortunate to have some guys explain what is so difficult about women's clothing. One guy said: "Underwear lines or short skirts draw a guy's imagination to things that they are not supposed to see" and by "draw[ing]" a guy's imagination, the guy faces the difficulty of controlling the direction his imagination is wanting to go. So when we tease a guy by showing him a hint of something they are not supposed to see, the natural response for them is to start using their imaginations to show them the rest. They change from using their physical eyes to using their mind's eye to enjoy the secret treasures that only marriage is supposed to give.

So in others words, the man's eye is a dangerous body part. It is what guys have to deal with most as they pursue holiness. It is a huge stumbling block that has caused many a man to fall.

Another guy said, "If I see a woman with [a] ...plunging neckline, for example, the automatic reaction is to make an object of her sexuality." There are many shirts that are cut to reveal just a bit of cleavage (the line between the breasts), this is dangerous because the guy will tend to look for possible sneak-a-peaks. This is a natural reaction that women's fashion takes advantage of. Not good.

...hey, check this out...

"The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is clear, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkened, what darkness that will be!" Matthew 6:22-23

What we as humans look at will affect who we are on the inside. If we use our eyes purely, we will be pure. And if we choose for guys to only see purity in us, so too will they be led towards purity.

THE WOMAN'S MIND

As I started the research on this topic of modesty, I very early came to realize that modesty is more than the way we dress. True modesty is an attitude, a way of life. It is included in every moment of our day, and affects the choices we make.

Every choice we make can be guided by one question. As Christians do we want others to see us, or do we want them to see Jesus. If we are serious about our faith, we will answer the latter. It is our role as Christ bearers to let Jesus shine and Jesus IS ultimate modesty.

When I am getting ready in the morning is when I struggle the most with modesty. As I said before, modesty is an attitude. Many times when I get dressed I get caught with wanting to look, not nice but GOOOD. I want to dress feminine and my mind likes to think feminine is sexy. NOPE IT'S NOT! Feminine is an aspect of God but sexy is an aspect of lust.

The sources of my morning struggle are due to the fact that I used to take dance lessons. In these classes, I learned the details of moving the body: how to roll the hips, strut with attitude, be sassy and sexy, and how to try and captivate the audience. With these lessons we also had costumes that accented our movements. These lessons overflowed into my daily life. I see how clothes add to certain feminine movements, which ultimately aim to please the male eye. How low rise pants accent the movements of the hips, low rise shirts show off the abs which are the intersection of the chest and lower abdomen, how slits allow the legs to be sexy, etc.

So when I get ready in the morning and am choosing my clothes, I try and observe my attitude. If I notice I change my walk to more of a strut, I fix the outfit; if my outfit make me feel sexy.... I fix it.

But, don't get me wrong, we don't have to remove style from our wardrobe but rather remove the excess skin. Style is a good thing because it shows that we care about our bodies, which are the **temples** of the Holy Spirit. We are walking tabernacles and should be sure that we are dressed appropriately to hold Jesus. As spoken by a guy, "There is nothing wrong with a woman wearing clothes that displays the shape of her body if the intention and context are correct... To cover it completely would be to deny [the body's] worth." Guys appreciate when girls take care of their appearance and allow their clothes to express their self-image. Check out these various comments:

-"[Immodesty] leads men's minds to wander and not focus on what's really important, the person behind the clothes, instead they're worried about the body behind the clothes."

-"[Immodest clothing] makes them look unsophisticated and it cheapens them by making them look rather easy for guys."

"There is a big difference between who men check out and who they date."

So from the guys themselves, they say that immodest clothing is in general a turn off (except for the few who are generally twisted). Don't we as women want guys to truly cherish us, if so we must present ourselves by cherishing ourselves. The female body is one of the greatest gifts from God and therefore must be treated and dealt with in the most gentle and loving of ways.

So, with the words of our most Holy Church herself I shall conclude:

Purity requires modesty, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships.... Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evidence of risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2521-2522

The following is the email I sent out:

Hi Guys,

I need your help. I was driving to work a few months ago and found myself having a mini-crisis. I was not sure whether what I was wearing was modest or not.... I still question it.... Anyways. So my request is this: Will you type up a list/summary of things that you would like girls not to wear because you find them immodest. And also, would you mind explaining why you find it immodest. See, most girls, especially myself, do not understand what the big deal is with clothes. We don't understand how you guys struggle with what you see. I know that guys are visual and your eyes lead you into temptation easily.... But we don't get it. Could you help explain what you go through? Now, my goal for this information is to compile an essay that girls (and guys) could read in order to understand the issue of modesty in a more real way. I will keep your responses confidential. The only possibility is that I may quote you but the quote will remain anonymous. When the essay is done I will be sure to get you the final results (especially if you choose to respond), as well as share it with all those who want to learn more. Please email me your responses and I will do the rest. Thank-you so much for your help and if you have any questions, feel free to write me.

Yours in His Strength, Jayme-Dawn.