



# The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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## Modesty: New Wave For an Old Virtue

By Linda J. White

Editor's note: *Our society has become very lax in attitudes towards dress, and in far too many cases, Christians have followed the world. This is an editorial taken from a daily newspaper back in May of this year. Please prayerfully consider its message.*

MAY, prom season, will be followed quickly by wedding season, beach week, and summer--when battles over teen clothing choices get really hot. From decorated bra straps designed to be seen to plunging necklines, belly rings, and tiny little bikinis, what's a mother to do? What's fair? What's not? And why even enter this land-mined terrain?

For many teens today, "sexy" is the goal--make that obsession--when picking out clothes. Attracting attention, Britney-style, is the adolescent brass ring. "Clothing like this makes me feel confident," one D.C.-area teen told her local newspaper. "People are looking at me, not another girl." Not since the Indians sold

Manhattan for beads has something so precious been traded so cheaply.

Whatever happened to modesty? Some people are beginning to take a new look at that ancient virtue, not out of prudery, but because they've discovered a secret.

Wendy Shalit, author of a book called "A Return to Modesty," looks at our sex-saturated culture and says the decline in modesty has diminished respect for women. "It's no accident that harassment, stalking, and rape all increased when we decided to let everything hang out," says Shalit.

At the same time, a false view of sexuality has made "no" seem abnormal. Restraint has been rendered quaint.

The result? An epidemic of disrespect for females--and an increase in bleak behaviors among young women, including eating disorders, self-mutilation, and depression. Free love, it seems, isn't quite so free after all.

The secret that Shalit and others describe is this: Modesty declares that a woman's body is precious, for when something is precious it is protected.

Modesty, therefore, enhances self-respect--and actually increases legitimate sensual pleasure when the time is appropriate.

"You may think you see me, the modestly dressed woman announces," writes Shalit, "but you do not see the real me. The real me is only for my beloved to see."

"Modesty in dress," she says, "which today is considered evidence of being 'hung up' about sex, actually permits women precisely not to be hung up about sex. It allows me to be taken seriously as a woman, without having to be desperate about it or, on the other hand, having to pretend to be a man. It gives me the freedom to think about things other than 'Do I look OK?'"

Shalit, who is Jewish, describes the Jewish principle of tzniut, which promotes modesty. Orthodox believers, for example, don't even touch before marriage; but the forced separation actually enhances attraction and leads to mutual respect and honor.

Truthfully, isn't that exactly what we want for our daughters? To be more than sexual objects? To be respected?

Dannah Gresh, author of "And the Bride Wore White," is the founder, along with her husband, of purefreedom.org, which presents retreats on modesty and purity. She says that "fashion today is all about sex and [girls] being told their bodies are for show." While admitting that it can feel good to grab a boy's attention, girls need to know it's attention for all the wrong reasons.

Teaching modesty isn't about invoking shame or promoting ignorance about one's body. Gresh, a Christian, agrees with Shalit when she says modesty should be presented as a positive force. She says the Bible is clear that feminine allure is very powerful: The writer of Proverbs 5:19's wish for a husband is "may you ever be captivated by her love."

Affirming your daughter's allure while teaching her to save it for her "beloved" will go a long way toward protecting her from the physical and emotional fallout of random sexual involvement.

Gresh believes mothers should start teaching their girls about "the delicate power of modesty" at about age 8 or 10, before they begin to develop curves--and before adolescent angst kicks in. But what if your kids are older, and fully engaged in the halter top, low-rider jeans lifestyle? One of the wisest things anyone ever said to me was, "It's never too late to do the right thing."

We may not be able to

change the sleaze factor in our culture, but teaching modesty is a choice each one of us can make. After all, our daughters are worth it.

Linda J. White is an editorial writer and columnist for The Free Lance-Star.

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## ***How Committed Are You to Your Marriage?***

Few would question that loyalty is in decline. Employees rarely work 40 years for the same company. Those same companies offer little incentive for their workers to stay and often cut "promised" benefits. Shoppers purchase products based on price and service rather than long-term relationships. Even churches find members swapping congregations to have their needs better met.

I believe there has been a carryover of this attitude into marriage. High divorce rates, increased cohabitation, and prenuptial agreements all confirm this. Typical wedding vows often omit the traditional, "for better, for worse till death do us part."

One of the keys to marital success is a mutual commitment on the part of a man and a woman. They enter into this new stage of their lives planning to succeed and committed at all costs to succeed. This high level of commitment offers three significant benefits.

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First, it helps couples keep a proper focus when problems arise. All marriages have ups and downs; every relationship will face its share of struggles. Commitment keeps us looking for solutions rather than escapes. Most divorced people look back and wish they had tried harder to make their relationship work.

Secondly, commitment is the motivation to "go the second mile." We typically take better care of houses we own than one we rent, because we have a long-term investment. Looking at sharing 50 years with the person we just married encourages us to serve and bless them in every way possible.

Finally, commitment provides the security for us to grow. Honesty and trust flourish in settings where we feel safe and secure. Short-term relationships seldom foster true intimacy or transparent communication.

When was the last time you assured your mate of your 100% commitment to your marriage? Let him or her know that your love is stronger than cancer, bankruptcy, or an empty nest. It is that way because you have committed your life to your marriage!!

—**Don Loftis** (Don is the preacher for Old Hickory church of Christ in Old Hickroy, TN. This article appeared in their journal, **Families 2000—& Beyond.**)