“Why Are Bikinis and Short Skirts Immoral?”

Sue, do you ever wear a bikini? Or have you ever worn one? And couldn’t a lot of the old biblical rules for dress be mostly for those people back in biblical times? And please tell me this: Is there a certain length when a woman’s dress or skirt becomes immoral? For example, are all skirts and dresses above the knee immoral? Just curious.

> *Sue, do you ever wear a bikini? Or have you ever worn one?*

I take it you ask such an intensely personal question because of my answer to email Is It a Sin to Wear a Bikini?. No, I don’t wear a bikini, and I never have.

> *And couldn’t a lot of the old biblical rules for dress be mostly for those people back in biblical times?*

What “old biblical rules for dress” would those be?

Actually, what we find in terms of “biblical rules for dress” are principles that transcend time and culture. Basically,

1) Men should dress like men and women should dress like women, and not blur the lines of gender (Deut. 22:5).

2) Women should dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:9-10). (For great insight into the transcending principle behind Paul’s prohibition on braided hair, gold, pearls or expensive clothes from this verse, see this recent post by my friend and fellow Tapestry blogger Sandra Glahn: blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sandra_glahn/not_with_braided_hair…or_pearls__)

3) We should do everything in love, which includes choosing

dress and behavior that will not cause each other to stumble. Causing a brother to stumble by lusting is not loving.

There is nothing about these principles that is limited to biblical times.

> *And please tell me this: Is there a certain length when a woman's dress or skirt becomes immoral? For example, are all skirts and dresses above the knee immoral?*

People wiser than me have said that the answer to this question depends on the culture, because styles and morals changes over time and geography. There are moral absolutes (like not murdering) and there are relative morals, which would include dress. For example, some monks at the University of Dallas related to my colleague Todd Kappelman that several of them were teaching in Papua New Guinea where both the temperature and the humidity were very high. The young women students sat in the classroom dressed only in some kind of skirt. Toplessness would have been shameful in the U.S., but in a stifling tropical location, the natives thought nothing of it.

The men, too, wore only abbreviated loincloths and strings. On one occasion, the monks went to visit a group of men who were "doing laundry"—their loincloths were hanging on the line and they were lounging around naked. Like our response to being caught in the shower when someone comes to the door, they each quickly grabbed a cord and wrapped it around his waist. Then they were no longer embarrassed, even though their genitals were exposed. That's the way that culture works.

So, since styles and times change, we have to look at the heart issue that reveals one's motive in choosing the way we dress. If a woman chooses garments in hopes of making men look at her admiringly in a sexual way, or if she chooses clothes in hopes of making other women compare themselves to her and be jealous, then I would say that is sinful because it falls

short of God's desire for us to honor Him and love each other.

That means there is no absolute line, particularly in relation to the knee, that defines morality.

I would also point you to an excellent answer on the "Got Questions" website:

> *Whether or not to wear a bikini is a question many women struggle with, but for a Christian woman, the issue takes on additional implications. The Bible tells us that God calls women to modesty, which means to not draw attention to themselves: "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (1 Timothy 2:9-10). God also calls us to purity: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). The question is whether or not a bikini is consistent with modesty and purity.*
>
> *Another issue to consider is that God calls all people to control their thought lives, so as women, we should not cause men to lust: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-29). When we cause men to look upon our bodies lustfully, we are inducing them to commit the sin of lust and this is displeasing to God.*
>
> *A further consideration is that our bodies, like our minds and hearts, belong to God and are to be used for His glory, not our own. Romans 12:1 tells us, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship." When we offer our bodies to God as*

> *"living sacrifices," we are saying in effect, "My body is yours, Lord. Use it for your glory." It's hard to imagine a bikini-clad body being used for God's glory. [Sue's note: This is not talking about the husband-wife relationship, where there is total freedom to dress to please and arouse one's spouse in private. See the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament.]*

> *Or course, wearing a bikini in a private location, like a fenced-in back yard is probably acceptable, providing there is no visual access to the yard by the neighbors. According to the verses above, we have the responsibility not to put the males around us in a position that they might lust or have impure thoughts (see also Matthew 18:7).*

www.gotquestions.org/Christian-bikini.html

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"Is It OK to Look Down My Girlfriend's Top?"

Im a 17 year old male and have been going out with my girlfriend, who I truly love, for almost two and a half years. We are both Christians and have set boundaries that will ensure that sex will only happen after marriage (which could be a possibility for us in a few years). She is a modest girl, unlike the many around who have no problem showing too much

skin. I know it is wrong to look at females dressed like this and do my best to keep my eyes off (which I have become pretty good at). I have been trying to determine whether it is OK by God, for me to look at my girlfriend when she wears a top that can be seen down. She is OK with it and appreciates that I don't look at other girls that way. Is it OK for me to look at the one girl I love in this way as long at it is not lustful and I don't get addicted to looking at her. I don't want to be sinning. But, if it's OK by God I want to be able to enjoy looking at the wonderful girl he has sent to me (God gave her to me after I stopped masturbating). Looking at her helps me to not look at other females when they pass by which is great, but is it OK to look at her this way before marriage.

Dear _____,

The real question is, "Does looking down my girlfriend's top so I can help myself visually to her breasts, help me or hinder me in my walk with God?" Another important question is, "Does it honor her?"

I would suggest that helping yourself to the breasts of a girl you are not married to is 1) outside the boundaries of marriage, which is the only place where you have a right to gaze at a woman's breasts, and 2) very effectively pulling your attention off God and holy thoughts, and thus is NOT helping your walk with God.

You may intend to marry your girlfriend, but nothing can guarantee that it will happen until you've said "I do." Couples often break up before marriage despite their hopes and intentions. Furthermore, it is VERY unusual for 17-year-old couples to end up marrying each other, which means that the chances are, you've been looking down the top of another man's future wife, and there is some girl out there that you WILL marry, hoping that you will keep your eyes and all other body parts to yourself as you wait for her.

I know I’ve been very blunt here, but in the interest of giving you direction that will best help everyone involved, both now and in the future, I want to encourage you to exercise self-control in where you look, and don’t deliberately put yourself in a position where you are able to look down anyone’s top.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
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