

FOREVER 21 MANEQUINS and other impossible dreams:

Image, modesty and purity

Barb Pagel

IMAGE

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

The Message Version:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:1-2

“We’re all living on this side of the fall, clothing ourselves with fig-leaf, false identities in a vain effort to make ourselves more presentable. We sew and sew, but just can’t seem to get it right. So we give up sewing for a while, and then we begin all over again. We don’t want people to see us as we are because we are both proud and ashamed; we’re too proud to admit our sin; we’re too ashamed to say we still need a Savior. We aren’t seeing ourselves as we are. We’ve forgotten His love and the gospel and our true identity.”

Elyse Fitzpatrick, Because He Loves Me

Chuck Colson says, “The church is in almost as much trouble as the culture, for the church has bought into the same value system: fame, success, materialism.... We watch the leading churches and the leading Christians for our cues.

Romans 10:2-3

For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalm 118:8

It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.

Psalm 40:4

How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, and has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

Colossians 2:8 says,

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Psalm 119:161-168

***Princes persecute me without cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your words.
I rejoice at Your word,
As one who finds great spoil.
I hate and despise falsehood,
But I love Your law.
Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of Your righteous ordinances.
Those who love Your law have great peace,
And nothing causes them to stumble.
I hope for Your salvation, O LORD,
And I do Your commandments.
My soul keeps Your testimonies,
And I love them exceedingly.
I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
For all my ways are before You.***

“Grasping the reality of God’s love will provide every answer to every question we have about Him and ourselves. It will tell us who we are, why we’re here, and how we’re supposed to do what we’re supposed to be doing. Delighting in God’s love will transform everything about us, including who we are, or our identity. This love is illustrated for us in Scripture, and particularly in the story we call “the gospel”. Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Because He Loves Me*

“...may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.” Ephesians 3:18

Your growth in holiness is firmly bound to your appreciation of the gospel and God’s love, for it is ONLY an appreciation of His love that can motivate genuine obedience. Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Because He Loves Me*

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to

James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8

Rather than defining ourselves as we used to, we've got to define ourselves according to the truths of the gospel. Who are we? We're women who are so sinful and flawed that we deserve hell, but we've been so loved and welcomed that every spiritual blessing, adoption, tender fellowship with our Father and each other, forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life is ours. Christ's accomplishments and perfections are ours now. Everything about us is different. Elyse Fitzpatrick, Because He Loves Me

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

MERCIES OF GOD:

Romans 1:1: Called, set apart

Romans 1:5: we have received grace so we can obey by faith

Romans 5:1: justified by faith/peace with God

Romans 5:5: the Holy Spirit was given to us

Romans 5:6: while we were helpless, at the right time Christ died for us

Romans 6:6: no longer slaves to sin

Romans 6:14: grace

Romans 6:23: eternal life

Romans 8:1: no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Romans 8:29: predestined to ***become conformed to the image of His Son...***

Ephesians

1:3 He has blessed us with EVERY spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

1:4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world

1:4 Because of Christ we are holy and blameless before Him

1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus

1:7 REDEMPTION, FORGIVENESS, GRACE which He LAVISHED ON US

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..... Ephesians 4:1

“The time is coming, when we will no longer be concerned about whether to worship the Father here or in Jerusalem. For it's not where we worship that counts, but how we worship. Is our worship spiritual and real? Do we have the Holy Spirit's help? For God is Spirit, and we must have His help to worship as we should. The Father wants this kind of worship from us. But you Samaritans know so little about Him, worshiping blindly,.....”

“[worship] is a cherishing of Christ...being satisfied with God in all that He is for us in Jesus....The key to praising Christ is prizing Christ. Christ is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” John Piper

“True worship is to be so personally and hopelessly in love with God that the idea of a transfer of affection never even remotely exists.” A.W. Tozer

“God’s intent in *establishing* the church was to bear witness to Himself and to His character....Every Christian has a role in making visible the gospel of the invisible God. Mark Dever

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us....” 2 Corinthians 5:20

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship....

12:2...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The world is simply fallen thinking...fallen ideas, ideas that belong to the kingdom of darkness. It is the floating mass of ungodly ideas and behaviors that are separated from and hostile to the will of God. You will never worship the way you should worship if you are being conformed, molded to, stamped with the image of the world. John MacArthur

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

MODESTY

“Modesty and self-control has broader implications than merely externals— what we wear. It goes right to the heart of WHY we wear what we wear. Our clothes, whether we realize it or not, say something. They give us away. They reveal the heart behind the clothes we wear.” Carolyn Mahaney, GIRLTALK:

- (1) What would we discover if we met your closet before we met you?
- (2) So what do YOUR clothes say about your heart?
- (3) Do they reveal a heart of modesty and self-control?

Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by

means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. 1 Timothy 2:9-10

You show me a woman with a beautiful character, you show me a woman with a meek and quiet spirit, you show me a woman who has an incorruptible heart, you show me a woman who comes to worship God and I'll show you a woman whose wardrobe you don't have to worry about because the heart dictates that issue. John MacArthur:

The gospel message is the motivation for modest dress. The woman who loves the Savior avoids immodesty because she doesn't want to distract from or reflect poorly upon the gospel. C.J. Mahaney says:

We need to be SO CAREFUL NOT to compromise the gospel message by the clothes we wear. In the way we clothe ourselves (spiritually and physically), we need to be a witness to the One who gave Himself as a ransom for all. Nicole Whitaker

"... whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me [i.e. a Christian brother] to stumble, it would be better for [her] to have a heavy millstone hung around [her] neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! Matthew 18:6-7

"And though it be their sin that is the cause [of lust], it is nevertheless your sin to be the unnecessary occasion... You must not lay a stumbling-block in their way, nor blow up the fire of their lust... You must walk among sinful persons as you would do with a candle among straw or gunpowder; or else you may see the flame which you did not foresee, when it is too late to quench it." Richard Baxter

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise [women] men but as wise. Ephesians 5:15

Joshua Harris says this to young women:

Ask God to help you see how selfish and uncaring it is to want to use your body to encourage your brothers to lust. It might make you feel good about yourself, but it could encourage them to sin. The way you dress can either help or hinder the men around you who are trying to resist lust.

Jack: "I am so grateful for the friendships that God has given me with the ladies in my church. I am so appreciative of the sacrifices that these ladies make to glorify God and to serve and care for the guys. I heard of one girl who went shopping and really liked the shirt she was trying on. But then she thought, 'No, I can't do this to the guys.' That was the first time I had ever heard of anything like that and it made me so grateful. It is such a blessing to have friends who care for me enough to be selfless and sacrifice what might look attractive in order to help me and other guys with sexual lust. When ladies dress modestly, it's attractive and makes me want to hang out with them more. I think modesty is so attractive in friendships because it makes it easier for a friendship to be centered around God and for fellowship to be unhindered."

Kevin: *“To the girls who don’t follow the pattern of the world: thank you a million times over. You are following Scripture’s commands and helping your brothers in the process. Despite all that godly men are doing to defeat the sin of lust, they still need help, and they need you to provide it.”*

We have a gospel mission: not only to preach Christ but to live in a way consistent with our profession of faith. As women, you can actually detract from the gospel mission by dressing immodestly, or you can enhance the gospel mission by dressing in a way that reflects the transforming power of the gospel at work in you. The humble woman, the modest woman, is concerned about the lost. And her dress reflects that concern.
Worldliness, Edited by C. J. Mahaney

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. Romans 8:12-14

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Colossians 3:17

PURITY

Paul Tripp says, “There is a war going on in our everyday life. On one side is a jealous God...[and] He will not rest until our hearts are completely His. He will not deny the covenant He has made. On the other side is a devious enemy, who allures us with the attractions of the creation. He knows our weaknesses all too well. He knows that we are prone to wander, prone to replace God. He whispers in our ears the lie of lies, that life can be found apart from God.

Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your hearts with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

“The heart is the source of all human motivation. It is the root that determines whether the fruit will be good or bad.” It is our true self. When changed by God, the heart’s selfish anti-God motives are not erased, but they are gradually replaced by a desire to love God and live for Him alone. Ed Welsh

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Proverbs 28:13

He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

Psalms 119:9-11 (New American Standard Bible)

⁹*How can a young man keep his way pure?*

By keeping it according to Your word.

¹⁰*With all my heart I have sought You;*

*Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
11 Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.*

James 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

***And In Isaiah 66:2:
But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word.***

C.J. Mahaney says, “Humility draws the gaze of our sovereign God...He is DECISIVELY drawn to humility...”

...be TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

***John MacArthur in talking about Romans 12:1-2 says:
Most Christians never really come to that place fully. They flirt with the world, they flirt with the flesh. They flirt with their own personal indulgences and desires. They become victims of the philosophy and psychology of the world around them. They buy into the world's bag. They entertain themselves with the world's mode of entertainment. They think along the lines the world thinks. And so they never really come to the place of total commitment that is discussed in these two verses and therefore they forfeit the fullness of the blessing that God would have for them.***

***2 Timothy 2:22 tells us:
Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.***

***New Living Translation - 2 Timothy 2:22
Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.***

***Proverbs 6:27-29
Can a man take fire in his bosom
And his clothes not be burned?
Or can a man walk on hot coals
And his feet not be scorched?***

“It does not take much for a man or a woman to become sexually aroused, so it is better not to start anything.” Martha Peace

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Colossians 2:6-8

How much lust or ANYTHING that stimulates lust does God want us to allow in our lives?

Ephesians 5:3

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (New American Standard Bible)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Transgress = [HUPERBAINO] – to sin against; stepping over the line, to go too far, beyond what is right.

Defraud = [PLEONEKTEO] – to selfishly, greedily take something for personal gain; to take advantage of someone – to covet or take something that doesn't belong to you. This also includes “emotional” defraud....

Colossians 3:2-8 in THE NEW LIVING:

Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

Romans 13:14:

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (New Living Translation)

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

Joshua Harris says, “[God’s high standard] is not because [He] is heavy-handed, or strict for the sake of strictness. It’s because He loves us— and because we are HIS. It’s because He is wise and His wisdom exceeds our understanding.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

1 Corinthians 7:34-35

The woman who is unmarried...is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit...This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:32

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how [she] may please the Lord;

Song of Solomon 2:7

Oh, let me warn you, sisters in Jerusalem....don't excite love, don't stir it up, until the time is ripe—and you're ready.

Proverbs 18:22

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

Don't you ultimately want a guy who is attracted enough to pursue you, without needing hints from you? Carolyn Mahaney, GIRLTALK

We must trust that His sovereignty is more than powerful enough, His love is more than true enough, and His wisdom more than knowledgeable enough to fulfill His perfect plan for us....Waiting and responding instead of initiating romantic relationships is not some kind of manipulative trick. It is the path to true attractiveness, the miraculous kind that only comes by the grace of God producing trust in God. For truly blessed is the woman who does not sinfully strive after a relationship, but quietly rests in the goodness of God!
GIRLTALK

Psalms 101:2-4 (New Living Translation)

² *I will be careful to live a blameless life—
when will you come to help me?*

*I will lead a life of integrity
in my own home.*

³ *I will refuse to look at
anything vile and vulgar.*

*I hate all who deal crookedly;
I will have nothing to do with them.*

⁴ *I will reject perverse ideas
and stay away from every evil.*

Romans 12

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.