

The Inner Quality

1000 B.C. BATHSHEBA ON A ROOFTOP

Up on the rooftop, she tilted the clay pot, splashing her bare arms and hands. Laying the pot to her side, she loosened the tight belt around her waist, allowing her light cotton robe to blow in the breeze. She stood there with her head tilted and her eyes closed, enjoying the sensual feeling it gave her to stand in a loose garment. Had she been seen in the streets like this she'd have been punished, as a man or woman without his or her belt was considered nude.

She could've bathed like this. She often did, but it was just too tempting to let herself enjoy just a bit more freedom. Turning her front toward the wall, she slipped the robe off of her shoulders, allowing it to dangle around her waist, accentuating the fullness of her hips and the curving frailty of her waist. She lifted the pot and poured the cool water, enjoying the rush of it as it wetted her bare back. She brought the pot to her chin and released the remaining liquid across her breasts, carefully bared to only the clay wall in front of her. She stroked herself gently, enjoying the refreshing cleansing of her bare skin.

She was beautiful.

She stood there drying in the breeze enjoying the freedom.

Someone might be watching.



A.D. 2011 LADY GAGA ON A BALCONY

She stepped into the ballpark for a game cloaked in an over-sized unbuttoned flannel shirt, some fishnet stockings, bikini panties, and a studded black bra. Her manner is matter-of-fact, though any average person appearing at a game dressed like this may be banned. She commandeers a box seat with a balcony, swigs some whiskey, and gropes at her breasts. She could have watched like this, but it was just too tempting to allow herself a bit more freedom. She pulls the flannel shirt off of her bare shoulders, allowing it to drop to the ground. She stands, allowing her full frame to be studied by the crowd. Angered at the glares she has invited, she shoves her middle fingers high into the air.

She is sexual.

She stands in defense of her freedom.

People are watching.

people are watching } GAGA

We often hear of King David's sin. Adultery. It's a "biggie." He missed the target altogether. But he was not alone. Why don't we talk about Bathsheba's sin?

We don't know that she bathed nude. In fact, it's often suggested that she didn't. Many fifteenth-century expressions of art show Bathsheba dressed. It was not that the clothes she wore or did not were immodest. It wasn't because she was being careful to hide the secret power of her allure that David's body was aroused. It could have been that Bathsheba, in a state of loneliness caused by a husband gone to battle, desired spectators.

Thousands of years later, women still commit this sin of thoughtless and careless exposure—some more than others. Lady Gaga pushes the line, constantly finding new ways to exploit herself and the female body. And it's not just the clothes—or lack thereof. Even in a "meat" dress she is consuming the attention of everyone with her immodest attitude. Her greater sin is not in what she wears, but that she desires spectators to lust after her.

♥ **MY POINT IS THIS, FRIEND.** We must look past the clothes. Fashion trends change from culture to culture. In Madagascar, a woman's exposed arms are considered very sexual. Doesn't that sound ridiculous?

REBEKAH

A WOMAN OF FASHION AND DISCRETION

Rebekah accepted Isaac's nose ring. You will find lots of today's teens donning the same "fashion." But watch Rebekah after she receives that nose ring. She's taken toward Isaac in a field, and as she seems him coming toward her, she covers her face with a veil. This display of modesty, saving the secrets of her beauty, comes just hours before she is alone with him in a tent to consummate their marriage. Rebekah knew how to wear the fashion of the day and how to protect her virtue. The challenge for us today is to know when we can wear the fashion and when we should cover up!

I've mentioned that Isaac sent a nose ring to Rebekah as a sort of engagement ring. It said more than "marry me." It also said, "I'm rich." A nose ring was reserved for the upper class and was a sign of royalty. You won't find Michelle Obama wearing a nose ring because they don't have the same appeal among the upper crust in our culture today.

Today in Western culture, the bare belly button is a raving statement of sensuality (as if you hadn't noticed). I mean, think about it! It's a belly button! It even sounds funny: belly button. But our culture has trained us to find it sexy—at least for now.

Culture can train us to be sensitive to different fashions. So, you can't measure modesty simply by what is or is not on the body. You must also analyze what is in the heart.

Contemporary American culture, by our language, tends to limit modesty to dress.

We have one word for modesty and expect it to bear the weight of both the visual modesty as well as the type we can't see. Other languages, including contemporary French, use at least two words to speak of both sexual, physical modesty and that of inner modesty. The Greek culture had four words for modesty to differentiate between that which was external and that which was internal. Are we missing something in our culture?

Peter challenges you and me to be careful about inner modesty. He says, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."¹

Peter is not so much dissing the fashions as he is calling women to a higher and much more challenging presentation of modesty, that of inner confidence.

Queen Vashti, Esther's predecessor, is the Bible's hidden hero. The king called her to flaunt herself. He and his friends were drunk, and she knew it was inappropriate for a woman in her culture to flaunt her beauty in front of a man, let alone a room full of drunken men. By refusing, she lost her crown but not her honor. She oozed with inner confidence!

Queen Vashti understood that the power of her allure was protected not only by what she wore but also by where she went, when she went

there, and how she acted. She held the power of inner modesty in the palm of her hand. She wasn't about to forfeit that power—not even at the command of the king.

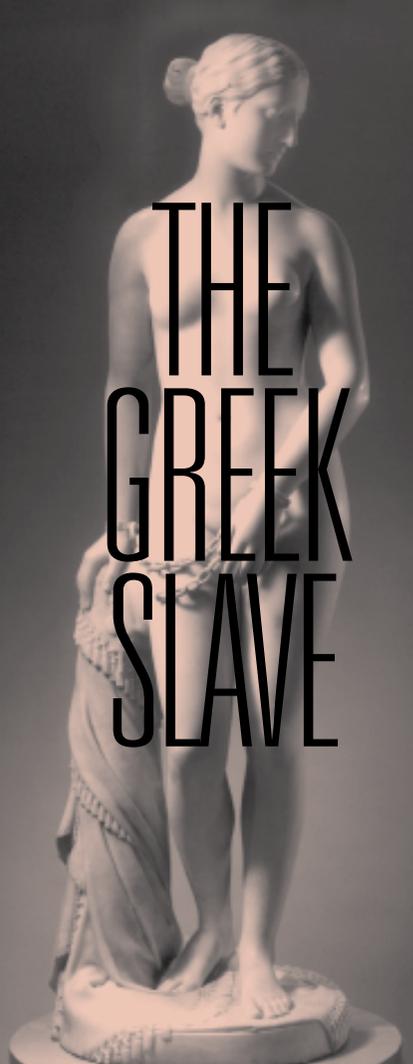
How you act can be something as simple as how you hug a guy. A “side hug” is a good idea, avoiding the weakness that your chest against a guy's could awaken in him. In doing this, you display your inner modesty in approaching a guy. Pretty cool, huh?

You cannot limit the power of your modesty to just what you wear. It's also controlled or forfeited by where you are willing to go with guys, when you go there, and how you act. I bet you can think of a girl whose reputation as a flirt precedes her. Perhaps she does not dress to show off the secrets of her beauty, but the way she invades a guy's personal space or flirts with him issues an unspoken challenge concerning her sexuality.

What's so strangely twisted about immodesty is that such exhibitionism is really masked insecurity. It's like the girl who can't stop talking about herself. Have you ever been around one of those types? Within minutes you can see right past all the bragging to the insecure girl she really is. The girl who is confident in herself finds no need to flaunt and flirt around guys.

she is simply called

} THE GREEK SLAVE



♥ WHICH BRINGS ME BACK TO THE NAKED STATUE. Remember her from the first chapter? She's simply called *The Greek Slave*. She has no name, and yet she has become a dear symbol to me of inner modesty. The sculptor, Hiram Powers, says the young woman represented by the statue was the last member of her family left alive after the Greek islands were attacked by the Turks. Her beauty and youth made her valuable to the Turks, and so she was to be kept and sold as a sex slave. As we see her, she stands fully nude with just her hand covering her most intimate parts. A cross and locket, visible among the drapery she's been required to remove, indicate she is a Christian. Her downward gaze does not say what Bathsheba's did, nor what Lady Gaga's often does. Instead her inner confidence shines through, and she seems

to rise above her degradation with an inner purity and character. (That confidence is certainly not about what she's wearing!)

More than one hundred thousand people traveled to see her during her 1847–48 American tour. Protestant ministers applauded the work despite her sensational situation—that of a woman on sale as a sex slave—because her inward purity is evident. That is the great paradox of Hiram's work.

**MODESTY
IS A GREAT
PARADOX.**

Modesty is a great paradox. Though an immodest woman creates insatiable curiosity in a guy, it is the modest girl whose heart he most desires. Her modesty is first noted by her external presentation, but if it's not followed by the confidence of internal modesty, she forfeits the power of her virtue. Crazy, isn't it?

How can I explain what internal modesty looks like? It's seen in the girl who doesn't hang all over guys but acknowledges them nonchalantly as she might another girl. Internal modesty is seen in the girl whose morning dress routine helps her reflect God's beauty but does not find her obsessing in front of the mirror. It's seen in the girl who requires a guy to do the pursuing, in the girl whose conversation revolves more around other people than herself, in the girl who's obviously more in love with Jesus than with the idea of a boyfriend.

Have you ever met a beautiful girl only to find that her stunning looks fade as her personality comes through? Ever heard about the girl whose

reputation precedes her as the class flirt? Have you sat quietly watching the girl who consistently boasts and hangs on guys? Then you've seen the girl who lacks inner modesty.

Ever met a girl who becomes more and more attractive as you get to know her? Then you've seen internal modesty. This is the girl who's so confident in her value that she has no reason to immodestly flaunt herself but confidently blesses you and others when she is around.

SO WHICH GIRL ARE YOU? Have you taken time to consider not only what you wear but where you go, when you go there, and how you act when you are there?

GET THIS!

A girl's modesty is first noted by her external presentation, but if it's not followed by the confidence of inner modesty, she still forfeits the power of her virtue.

Note

1. 1 Peter 3:3–4.