

Dear _____,

I wanted to write to you and to ask _____ to teach the virtue of modesty to the congregation. It struck me to suggest this subject, after hearing passing remarks that one does not need to dress exactly like the Amish to be holy. Of course, that is true. One can seek holiness diligently without dressing exactly like the Amish. However, taken out of any broader context, the comment sounds a bit dismissive of modesty. It saddens me that I hear similar comments in the Body of Messiah, as well as much worse ones, which treat modesty with mockery.

Therefore, I would ask that _____ and others openly promote it. After all, modesty is a holy virtue. I don't think anyone would disagree on that. If one DID disagree, then one would have no real problem with having everyone go about naked, or having everyone go about in a body stocking. However, I am presuming that everyone recognizes that modesty is a virtue.

Just to briefly peruse the main points about dress in scripture, we have teachings specifically about dress, as well as attitudes which will naturally reflect in dress. The Word teaches that we should not dress with great adornment, that men and women should not wear each other's form of dress, that we should not seek to tempt another, that we should seek the inner and not the outer beauty. We also have teaching by example, such as the priests who would cover up beneath their robes, so as not to be immodest when walking up steps, along with the frequent linguistic connection between immodesty and sin in that the phrase to "uncover the nakedness" is almost synonymous with sexual immorality.

Furthermore, modesty exists in scripture through typology, and as many would point out, in a sense represents the Gospel. Our nakedness is our shame, and reveals our sin. Clothing covers it up. In fact the Bride of Messiah will receive the ultimate clothing at Yeshua's return, which are the deeds of the saints. Hence, clothing is a covering, it represents atonement and covering for sin, and finally represents our righteous deeds.

Therefore, since we are the Bride of Messiah, we can't take modesty as a passé thing to be scorned but as a holy thing to be sought after; that is why I am suggesting openly teaching modesty and giving clear instructions on the subject. While they may be a subject of mockery for some, traditional Mennonites are a true godsend for believers who want to seek the holy virtue of modesty, especially as it pertains to women. If you go to your average clothing shop, or look at what you can order online, you will find little which is modest. You'll find short skirts, belt-like skirts, and "dresses" which appear to be missing half of their substance, perhaps revealing a side, a leg, a back, as if someone fell asleep at the factory and their forehead bumped the wrong switch. In contrast, traditional Mennonites, may the Lord bless them, sell long skirts, dresses, blouses and accessories which actually cover the female form.

So while it is not true that one must dress exactly like a Mennonite to be holy, it IS true that modesty is a holy virtue, and in seeking it we naturally dress quite a lot like them. I mean, why not? Would one seek the holy virtue of modesty by dressing much like the world? Egads. Let's meditate on "modest" and then think about how many females dress today in America, and furthermore think about how traditional Mennonites dress. Which one of the two images is

CLOSER to modesty? Do you see what I mean? If we are seeking modesty, we will at least be in the arena of the Amish.

There is plenty more to say about the subject. Just to briefly touch on a few of them, we all know that modesty is an attitude as well as an outward appearance, and requires much of its own discipline. I'd think everyone also recognizes that modesty is not only for women, although most of us view it as somewhat lighter for men, because men and women are different creatures. Then there is the obvious question of what accounts for the right "covering" and I suggest standing with the traditional understanding that it means covering up the body, though not referring to face or hands and not in form-revealing tight clothing for women. Liberals might see shorter sleeves in the summer as well.

So there is my Amish letter for you. Not only do I want to reiterate that modesty is a part of holiness, but to also broaden the scope, and remind that we'd likely be doing a much better job establishing a godly culture and fighting against an ungodly one, if we actually cared about modesty and lived accordingly. It does seem kind of funny to see people preaching a restoration of marriage and godly relationships while themselves being only partially-dressed. Modesty might not be the same as moral relationships, but it definitely helps. For all these reasons and more, I am asking for open instructions on modesty in this congregation and others. If one is uncertain exactly what "modesty" means, consider how people like the Amish dress.

Yours truly,

Here's a link to an excellent sermon by Scott Brown about modest dress:

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=428112016278>

Here's a link to ordering traditional Mennonite clothing:

http://www.quakerjane.com/spirit.friends/plain_dress-plain.html