



Chapter 8

Image

Truth #3: Boys are visual creatures. The clothing choices you make affect the way they see you.

Okay, my friend, it's time to talk about your body and how you dress it. I realize this may be slightly embarrassing, but it's important to address the topic.

Upfront you should know three things about your body:

- *Your body is good.*
- *Your body is holy.*
- *Your body holds power.*

If you haven't realized your body's power yet, you will. In the coming years, you'll see how your body can make a boy stop what

he's doing and watch you. When this happens, it can feel good. It may make you happy. It may flip on a switch inside that says what you long to hear: *You are pretty. You stand out. You're desirable to the opposite sex.*

What you may also notice is how the fashion choices you make can draw attention from boys. Girls often get misguided here, assuming that all attention is equal. It's not. You see, there is *negative attention* and *positive attention*. While one type hurts you, the other builds you up.

You know the class clown who always interrupts the teacher and thinks he's so funny? That's negative attention. He has an audience, but do they respect him? No, because he's generally rude and annoying. Meanwhile you have the smartest girl in school listening quietly. The room falls silent when she speaks because everyone wonders what she'll say. Is she respected? Yes. And since she doesn't artificially draw the spotlight, the attention she gets is positive.

This same principle applies to clothing. Girls who wear sexy, revealing outfits that make boys do double takes—are they attracting positive attention? Does flashing their skin earn them respect? So many girls interpret this male reaction as a good thing. They think it gives them an upper hand, when really it puts them in a bad position, often leading people to mistakenly devalue them and disregard their true worth.

Using your body to bait boys doesn't enhance their impression of you; it diminishes it. It positions you as a sex symbol

in their mind—someone to lust after and use, not love and cherish.

I'm not saying this is right. I'm not excusing any poor behavior or choices boys may make when their sexual instincts get the best of them. *It is every male's responsibility to control his thoughts and desires. Even when a girl dresses sexy, even when a girl misbehaves, she deserves to be treated with respect.*

But what a girl deserves and what a girl gets don't always mesh. One reason is that we live in an imperfect world. Another reason is that many boys choose to act as predators instead of protectors. They see girls as sexual opportunities. The less clothing a girl wears, the more predators she tends to attract, the bottom of the barrel in terms of recognizing her inherent dignity.

Again, I'm not saying this is right. I'm saying this is reality, a reality of which I want you to be aware.

What you should know is this: *the male brain is wired differently than yours.* While you may feel pretty wearing a short skirt that shows off your legs or a skimpy top that accentuates your tan, boys view this clothing through a different lens.

You see, boys don't admire you the way you admire yourself. While you may simply think you look pretty or fashionable, their mind takes it a step further with questions like, "Wow! I wonder what underwear she's wearing? What does she look like naked? What would she look like naked with me?"

That's right, those tiny clothes you may choose to flaunt your figure can actually trigger sexual fantasies in the males

around you. The reason they stare is because you're the star of a movie playing in their head. In the book *For Young Women Only*, authors Shaunti Feldhahn and Lisa Rice reveal these insights into the male brain based on interviews with young men.⁶ This book is a gem, and I highly recommend it to you.

Here is other food for thought: it isn't just guys your age who may be affected when you flaunt your body. It could be a forty-year-old man—even a sixty-year-old man—who sees you at a football game and suddenly notices you in a new light.

It could be him imagining you naked.

I know, that's disgusting, right? It makes you reconsider what you put on your body.

I know this is uncomfortable to hear, but it's important you understand that these sexual fantasies are common. For a large majority of men, visual temptation is an ongoing struggle. Once a sexual image of you pops into a guy's head, it is stored there. It can come out of his mental file anytime, often involuntarily.

Let's say it together now . . . ewwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww.

Let me throw out that as a teen, I loved miniskirts. I wore them a lot, and my dad didn't like them. I can recall a few times that he told me my skirt was too short and then scowled at it in a way that made me embarrassed. I thought I'd done something wrong, and part of me was angry. I almost wanted to wear my skirt *shorter* just to prove I could.

What I didn't realize was what his scowl meant. It wasn't

me he was thinking about; it was the *reaction* he imagined my skirt might elicit from boys—or even men. That was his fatherly instinct kicking in. He was looking out for his little girl, not wanting anyone to view me as less than I was.

If you, too, have a protective daddy, maybe this helps explain why. Maybe you can understand why he gets upset over your wardrobe choices. It's not so much you he distrusts . . . it's those boys.

And here's the irony: *mothers of boys are equally protective*. Having once been teenagers, they know how girls think. So when girls use their feminine wiles to lure their sons and test them where they may be weak, they know the intention. They see through it, and trust me when I say that is *not* the kind of girl they want their sons to date.

“DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODIES ARE
TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO IS IN YOU,
WHOM YOU HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD? YOU ARE
NOT YOUR OWN; YOU WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE.
THEREFORE HONOR GOD WITH YOUR BODIES.”

(1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20)



RESPECTING YOUR BODY

Now that I've shared reasons to dress appropriately, the questions become: What is a girl to do? Should you swear off shopping? Those great skinny jeans you just saw on sale—are you supposed to look the other way?

Rest assured that you can still have fun with fashion. You can express yourself through clothes and build a stylish wardrobe if you desire. I understand the magic of the right outfit, and I'm not about to take that away from you. After all, taking on the world is easier when you feel you're dressed the part, right?

Just remember your body was made to be celebrated, not flaunted. Your clothes should reflect who you are inside. As a child of God, loved beyond your imagination, you want people to notice your total package—not how much skin you're showing, or how tight your dress is.

Early in this chapter, I gave you three important facts about your body. Two of them override everything you'll hear. No matter who you are, what mistakes you may have made, or how others view you, you can cling to these truths:

- *Your body is good.*
- *Your body is holy.*

Yes, your body has the potential to make men lust. Yes, it can trigger sexual fantasies you have absolutely nothing to do with.

Does this mean your body is bad or something to be ashamed of? NO!

Your body is a miracle. It is a gift. It is the house for an invisible God dwelling inside you through the Holy Spirit. If your friend needs a hug, God can't physically embrace her, but you can. Your body allows you to spread God's love. And when you use your body in beautiful ways, you set your soul in motion. You become a vessel God can work through.

The effect your body may have on a boy is *his battle to fight*. He can't blame you for any urges or fantasy flicks that get stirred. But since boys are your brothers in Christ, you should want to help them. You should have compassion for their struggles just as they should have compassion for yours.

So don't diminish yourself by acting seductive, wearing inappropriate clothes, and throwing yourself on boys. Don't tease them, play games, and make racy comments. This behavior isn't classy, and the strategy will hurt you. When you fail to treat boys like real people, they'll fail to treat you like a real person too.

The battle you must fight is the temptation to use your body and inappropriate clothing to get ahead, get noticed, or get what you want. For too many girls, it's an easy shortcut. But what this path of least resistance leads to is dead ends, disappointment, and the wrong kind of admirers.

The way you dress affects how people perceive you and receive you. When you use your body as God intends, you experience the joy that comes full circle when you're treated the way you deserve.

“FOR EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD—THE LUST
OF THE FLESH, THE LUST OF THE EYES, AND THE
PRIDE OF LIFE—COMES NOT FROM THE FATHER
BUT FROM THE WORLD.”

(1 JOHN 2:16)



QUICK QUIZ: Do Your Friends Influence Your Clothes?

You're on a girls' beach trip and everyone is getting ready for dinner. Throughout the condominium, hair dryers are buzzing.

In a small bathroom, you apply makeup, fix your hair, and smile at your reflection in the mirror. You feel good about your look tonight. The long maxi dress accentuates your height and lean physique.

But as you walk in the den, your heart sinks. Suddenly you don't feel good anymore, because compared to the other girls—all dressed sexy in

metallic short shorts, wedge sandals, and tight tank tops—your look is unexciting.

What do you do?

- A. You rush back into your bedroom and change into the sexiest outfit you can find. Competing with so many beautiful girls is hard enough. How will boys notice you if you don't show off your body too?
- B. You don't change clothes, but you don't bounce back either. Already your night is ruined because you feel insecure and overshadowed.
- C. You stick with what you have on and remember how pretty you felt when you looked in the mirror. If you had confidence then, shouldn't you have confidence now?
- D. You get over it and quit the comparisons. Everybody has their own style, and even if you're the only one dressed modestly, it works for you.

If you answered “C” or “D,” you're on the right track. You understand how the answer isn't less



clothing but more radiance. The best-dressed girls leave something to the imagination. Dare to be different from the trendsetters who bare it all, and let your beauty speak for itself.

"YOUR BEAUTY SHOULD NOT COME FROM
OUTWARD ADORNMENT, SUCH AS ELABORATE
HAIRSTYLES AND THE WEARING OF GOLD
JEWELRY OR FINE CLOTHES. RATHER, 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 3:3-4)



MATCHING YOUR INTERIOR TO YOUR EXTERIOR

How would you feel if you bit into a Reese's cup . . . and it tasted like vinegar?

What if you rented *Pitch Perfect* . . . but saw *The Smurfs* play on the screen instead?

What if you opened a can of sardines . . . and discovered a diamond inside?

How would you react to these scenarios? Would you feel confused? Shocked? Completely caught off-guard?

The package of a product parallels what clothes do for us: They create expectations. They offer hints of what's in store. They tell our story in three seconds or less.

I'm sure you know the saying "You can't judge a book by its cover." The reality, however, is that people do. People look at your presentation to see if your story warrants a closer look. Just as the cover of this book reflects what I've written, your packaging should reflect your true self.

Not who you *want* to be, but who you *are*.

It sounds simple, but what complicates your mission is the degrading trend in girls' clothing. Let me just say, *you're too good for these trends*. You deserve better than low-cut shirts, micro-minis, and dresses not long enough to cover your bottom. You deserve better than the messages these clothes send out and the rash assumptions people make as a result.

Now, you may believe a girl should be able to wear anything she wants and not be judged. You may argue that there's nothing wrong in showing cleavage and wearing skirts that skim your panty line when you bend over. It's a free world, and how you dress is your prerogative.

How you dress is your prerogative. But when you dress

promiscuously, people will assume you're on board with that lifestyle. Guys—particularly predators—will take it as an invitation to be more aggressive and less cautious. They'll talk to you differently, think about you differently, and treat you differently. They'll handle you like a girl whose package screams "Easy" rather than a girl whose package screams "Respect."

Packaging matters, and if you want people to care more about your story than your body, follow this motto when shopping: more class, less skin.

Dressing with class means keeping it tasteful. It means seeking inspiration from icons like Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, and not over-the-top rock stars. It means asking certain questions when testing an outfit:

- Does this make me look *beautiful* or *sexy*?
- Does this represent who I am inside? Is it too tight or too short? Does it *reflect* my inherent dignity or *distract* from it?
- Does this complement my body, or does it seek attention?
- What "story" does this outfit tell? Is that the story I want told?
- Would I want my grandfather/youth leader/preacher to see me wearing this? What about my future employer?

I love a girl with her own flair. I love how some girls wear hats and scarves, while others wear headbands. Some girls favor bold, splashy prints, while others stick with earth tones. Some

like to dress funky and fun, while others keep it conservative and simple.

Style is a personal preference, and there's no one right way. What makes you feel good and comfortable is something you decide for yourself.

But whatever your style is, steer clear of the "barely there" trends. The world's Minimalist Clothing Movement for Girls is based on this lie: *You need skimpy clothes to compete with other girls wearing skimpy clothes. Without them, you can't catch a guy.*

Here is my argument: If you catch a guy because you've revealed your body, you're starting off on the wrong foot. It won't be a healthy relationship, and it won't be long before the novelty of your body wears off and his attention turns to someone else wearing a provocative outfit.

Your body is no different from the bodies of a thousand other girls in short skirts. What it can deliver to a guy, countless other bodies can deliver too. If your body is the foundation you're building upon, you're in for trouble. Expect a rocky ride and lots of insecurity because you've made yourself easy to replace.

If you want to be irreplaceable . . . if you want to shine . . . if you want to distinguish yourself from other girls . . . focus on what no one can compete with: your inner authenticity. You are the only you in the universe; no one comes close to competing with that. Your interior can't be replicated.

And while guys may not realize this yet, that interior—that inner mystery—is what they'll always chase. It is more valuable,

distinctive, and interesting than your short-term package, which may look like the package of thirty other girls.

So let your presentation capture your essence. Make the visible reflect the invisible.

Don't be a diamond hiding inside a can of sardines. Be a diamond hiding inside a velvet box, ready to shine in the big reveal. Your body is good. Your body is holy. Your body holds power. Even if you've made mistakes with your body, it isn't too late to turn it around. Our God is a God of second chances, and He doesn't want anyone to miss out on how incredible you are. Remember, you're His masterpiece, more worthy than all the riches on earth.

Your body was made to glorify God. And when your clothes honor Him, you're dressed to change the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do *you* think when you see a girl in revealing clothes? Do you notice her beauty, or does your mind jump to negative conclusions?

2. Has a guy ever made a disrespectful remark about your body? Has anyone checked you out in a way that made you uncomfortable? How can you remember the big truths about your body—that it's good and holy—when someone treats you like a sex object or chooses to act as a predator instead of a protector?

3. How can a girl have fun with fashion and still look classy?

4. Turning the tables, how should guys dress? Does it enhance your impression when they're showered and shaved? Who would you rather have pick you up for a date, a guy dressed sloppily (grungy T-shirt and jeans) or someone pulled together (button-down and khakis)?

10 ULTIMATE TRUTHS

5. How can you use your body to glorify God? How can you be a vessel of God's love, power, and grace?

