

Issacharian Daughters

Fellowship • Encouragement • Exhortation

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Monday, 22 September 2008

Dear Girls,

WEDDING INVITATION

*Mr Henk and Mrs Sue de Deugd
together with
Mr Craig and Mrs Barbara Smith
invite*

*to join them in coming before the Lord and
celebrating the marriage of*

*Peter Alexander de Deugd
to
Genevieve Elizabeth Smith*

*at All Saints Church,
Cnr of Church Street and the Square,
Palmerston North, New Zealand
on Saturday, 16 February 2008 at 10:00am*

*and to a dinner reception
at 4:00pm until 7:30pm at the
Ashhurst Village Valley Centre
on Guildford Street, Ashhurst, New Zealand
(venue open from 3:00pm until 9:00pm)*

RSVP: 16 December 2007

Address: Barbara Smith, 4 Tawa Street, Palmerston North 4414, New Zealand

Phone: ++64 6 357 4399

Email: barbara@hef.org.nz

Dress: Semi-formal and modest



What a delight it is to be able to send out such an invitation to friends far and near! As a side note, my family and I were very thankful that we added that word, “modest” at the end of the invitation. We had some queries from folks as to what we meant—friendly queries and we responded in kind. It meant on the day however that we could all celebrate and enjoy one another without the discomfort (for men and women) of immodesty in dress in one another. Pete and I discussed at

length with our families the tone we wanted both during the ceremony and at the reception. We concluded we wanted these events to be ones of reverence, of acknowledging all that God had done, of giving Him all the glory and of rejoicing in His goodness. Asking guests to dress modestly helped greatly in creating an environment of reverence. Guests gracefully acquiesced to our request and we were grateful to them for it.

After the wedding we had some encouraging comments about how nicely everyone was dressed. One young lady emailed me and said that the Holy Spirit had been dealing with her on this issue ever since the wedding. She wanted to ask me some questions about modesty. Here are some of her comments:

I've grown up in an environment (home, school and church) where modesty isn't exactly valued, although saying that, the topic of modesty did and does get raised occasionally (although seemingly less and less) so it wasn't entirely absent. My parents think that a lot of what you would call immodest is not immodest and is quite ridiculous to make a fuss over. When I was making the swap into secondary school, for example, my school dress had quite a low slit on the chest, and I was very embarrassed and wanted to pin it up—but was told off for it (although I pinned it up anyway).

Whilst I quite insistently clung to what I considered to be modest for quite a long time, I eventually "got over it" (as most people around me were telling me to do) and just started to wear whatever everyone else was wearing. [Although raised in a Christian home I didn't become a Christian until my teen years. After that I read] the Bible cover-to-cover and had read the Scripture in the New Testament about needing to be modest, so I was extremely careful to wear only what I considered to be modest.

During this time, large numbers of my friends were wearing less and less (starting to wear bikinis, short-shorts, lower and lower tops etc.—Christian friends mind you) but I very insistently clung to wearing clothes that were extremely modest compared to my friends, family etc. because of my convictions and the fact that I wanted to obey God in EVERYTHING I did. Hence I was pretty much convinced that I was the epitome of modesty.

Which is VERY ironic, because that brings us to the start of 2008. My normal clothing consisted of extremely tight jeans, tops that didn't show cleavage but that were well below the collarbone, some very tight tops etc. I also started to wear dresses when they came into fashion, and wouldn't mind if they were a bit short, as long as I was wearing fairly opaque skin-tight leggings with them. But generally everything I'd wear would be at least knee-length. Then when [my friend] asked me to come [to your wedding I was told I should] get a new wardrobe [for the events and helping at the wedding and that] I should be wearing mostly dresses and skirts, not jeans, and that my tops shouldn't be tight—but should cover chest, back etc. Which is when I started to feel quite uncomfortable, and lots of questions were raised in my mind.

I guess what really bothered me was that I had considered myself to be extremely modest—and didn't really realise that there was a totally different definition of modesty (which I now realise is reasonably common amongst the right circles). Not only that, as I gave it some thought, and talked it through with [my friend], I realised that the standard that you and your community uphold is by no means the "most" modest that girls can be. I was convinced that I was living by modest standards until I was challenged in my thinking by [my friend], and then you obviously want to live modestly, so you have developed your own standards. I wanted to and still want to dress to please God (although obviously the way we dress is a minor thing compared to a lot of other issues) but I find it rather daunting trying to work out what is actually modest.

My friend went on to raise the issue of how people around the world and in different cultures and different time periods have all assumed that they were being modest. The muslim in the Burka as well as the 17th century lady who won't expose her ankles but will expose rather a lot of cleavage. Everyone is modest in their own eyes.

I thought this was a rather astute observation. As Christians seeking to be modest, by what standard can we measure ourselves to know if we are being modest?

As I have studied this issue over the years it has been born in upon me that there is only one standard in this area (as in every other!). It is God's standard as recorded for us in Scripture.

I'm not at the bottom of my study of Scripture on this issue and I'll never be able to say that I've attained perfect modesty or reached the pinnacle. However, in my study I have discovered that the Lord leaves what one might call hints all through Scripture which we can be guided by as we seek to dress modestly.

Here are just a few references here:

Genesis 3v7,21

Jeff Pollard the author of *Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America* (the best book on modesty I've ever read) says in relation to the cloaks that God made for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that:

"Although Adam covered his loins, God covered him from his neck to his knees."

SM Davis in his DVD, *The Language of the Christian's Clothing* (which is excellent) comments that what was true for Adam and Eve is true very often that what we deem to be sufficient is not sufficient in the eyes of the Lord. This does make it important that we don't use our own wisdom or common sense or our culture to determine what is modest or not, but rather that we seek God's wisdom.

Isaiah 47v1-3

This passage talks about making bare the leg and uncovering the thigh as being a shameful thing.

Proverbs 5v18-19

In this passage God says that there is a part of our anatomy which is to *satisfy* our husbands. As I meditated on this passage I thought to myself, "this implies that they shouldn't satisfy other men...just my husband which in turn implies that I should keep them covered when around anyone except my husband."

Next week, Lord willing, I will share Pete's and my Wedding Ceremony Order of Service with you.

For the Greater Glory of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Genevieve de Deugd
Issacharian Wife