



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 64 - What We Get Wrong About Modesty

Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy

Elisa: I think what you were goin' at Eryn with... with you know just what's on the inside. What's our inner motivation for how we are clothing ourselves? And if it comes from this appreciation of the beauty that we hold because we're made in the image of our creator because we possess God's divine stamp upon our being. You know that... that is what's going to shine forth from the inside out, and then that does actually call us to lay aside all that shaming stuff and be unapologetic about our beauty, our femininity, our... our curve, our being as female, not to flaunt it, but to embrace it.

[Music]

Intro: You're listening to *God Hears Her*, a podcast for women where we explore the stunning truth that God Hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His. Find out how these realities free you today on *God Hears Her*.

[Music]

Elisa: Welcome to *God Hears Her*. I'm Elisa Morgan.

Eryn: And I'm Eryn Eddy.

Elisa: Today we're talking about a sensitive topic for women that often doesn't get talked about enough, and that's what we get wrong about modesty. Since it's just you and me, Eryn, lets dive right into the conversation. This is *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Elisa, I am excited about this topic. I know that this topic is so big. And, I know that we're not going to cover every complexity of it, so I just want to go ahead and give us some of that... that freedom.

Elisa: That little disclaimer right there at the beginning, yeah.

Eryn: But I do hope that this conversation will bring some relief, maybe some closure, and maybe some healing to the woman that is listening to it today. And that is, you know, we are going to be talking about



modesty. What we get wrong about it. And, this is gonna be fun because we both come from different... even just different time periods of what modesty is now, in my generation and your generation. And I'm curious, like what is your relationship with modesty?

Elisa: Well, I go straight to that moment when I'm probably in sixth grade, and I think I look so darling. And I'm headed out the door in my crop top, and my hip hunger, if anybody remembers those, bell bottoms, you know so my midriff's bare. And, my mom goes, "What are you wearing? You're going out in that?" And... and, you know, honestly, my mom was not like at all puritanical. I mean we... I grew up in a home that rarely talked about Jesus and, you know, I kinda snuck out to church kinda thing. So... it... but still, there was a... it was in the... the late sixties, early seventies when I began to experiment with my looks, and, you know, the miniskirts, the go go boots, the hip huggers, the crop tops, the, you know, the halters, the... you know, all of that. So, there was a lot goin' on, a lot of skin goin' on in that era, and... so there was some push back, you know, we had all kinds of rules at school about what you could and couldn't wear. Remember tunics and they had to be finger tipped length or whatever. Anyway, so, that's where I go on this topic.

Eryn: I love that. You know, my parents weren't very strict about my appearance. They let me express creatively how I wanted to dress. Every now and then though. My mom would say, "you can't wear that," or "This skirt's too short," or "You outgrew this." And... cause she was the one buying the clothes, so she knew what my wardrobe consisted of, but I do remember a time or two where I would put a tank top or a skirt in my bag, and I would change, so... I... I would change later on, you know at the...

Elisa: You sneaky thing.

Eryn: ...I would! I would go to the bathroom and change! [laughs] And, you know, I think it was because I didn't want anybody to tell me... I didn't want anybody to control the way that I looked. Like I... I wanted to wear what I wanted to wear cause I thought it was cute, and that was kind of like where I stood in that. And...I... but I do remember when I... I went to a... a private school, and they, you know, before they turned into where we had to wear uniforms, it was very strict on, even like our cheerleading outfits and how many inches from our knee, you know, the three fingers, the four fingers from our knee. The tank tops had to be like certain amount... dimension cause if our bra showed, that would be tempting... like our bra strap would show would be inappropriate for a boy to see. Those types of things delivered messages to me that it was very, very important that what I wore I could be held responsible for



somebody else in the way that they respond, I guess. I'm responsible for how somebody responds to the way that I wear. That was at a very young age. Did you experience that?

Elisa: Yeah you're hitting on some really big topics there in terms of what's behind the what are you wearing question that we might've gotten from our parents, you know. But, one of them is the question of, am I wearing this to express myself, maybe, but I think when I dig around, I was wearing it because I thought the in crowd around me was wearing it, and I wanted to fit in. So, there's that, you know, it's like self-expression versus being accepted expression, and now you're bring it up a whole other one of, you know, I can't look a certain way because I'm responsible for how people respond to how I look.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: All those... all those elements fit into the whole topic of modesty, don't they?

Eryn: Mmm, they do.

Elisa: Wow.

Eryn: So, I looked up the definition of modesty cause I was like you know what I didn't even know if I know, I mean, I know what the definition of modesty is from just what I know about it and my upbringing. But... but what the dictionary says about modesty... I decided to look it up. And so the dictionary... Meriam Webster dictionary says "It is the quality or state of being unassuming. An appearance intended to avoid indecency."

Elisa: Oof. There you got a really bad word right there in the definition, avoiding indecency.

Eryn: Indecency. So then, I was like well what is indecency really mean?

Elisa: Yeah, yeah.

Eryn: So, I went into indecency...into... a... the definition of indecent is "Not conforming with generally accepted standards of behavior." And then it also says, "Not appropriate or fitting." And another word is "obscene."

Elisa: Oh boy.



Eryn: So, that was what I found on the definition of...

Elisa: That's... that's uplifting. You... you... "What are you wearing? You're indecent." "What are you wearing? You're obscene."

Eryn: Right. And I always had heard modesty is the best policy, growing up. And in the schools that I went to, modesty is the best policy, so, you know, indecency is such a shaming word. It's like, indecent, don't be obscene? There's not really much room for... for grace in... in that word. What have you defined modesty for you, and what've you read about modesty?

Elisa: Yeah. B... b...before we get to that, because you're making me think of a scripture I want to go to, but before we get to that, you've also just linked modesty to shame. And, so when we're immodest, "What are you wearing?" "How dare you go out in that," shame rises up, and, oh my gosh Eryn, le... let's camp there for just a second. I can think back really early in my life to feeling ashamed about something about my body. Okay, he... here... I'm going to share this, it's maybe over the top, so back in sixth grade, girls were starting to wear bras, some in fifth grade, okay. And, I wasn't quite ready, so I wore this slip, okay, because it had straps. And everybody would wear like these shear kinds of shirts so that you could see that somebody was ready for a bra or the back you know you could see and they'd lean forward in their seat on their desks and stretched the fabric over their back and say, "See I have a bra on." And I was like oh I'd love to do that but I knew I wasn't ready, so I wore this slip. But one day I went to the restroom... the girls room and I noticed that the strap of the slip had broken, and it had fallen down.

Eryn: Oh no.

Elisa: And I was mortified that I had been so proud of my pretend bra, you know, but it really wasn't working. And I just all... all I could do was hold my books in front of my chest, you know, and... and get through the day somehow. And... and sometimes I look at my adult life and I'll feel the same kind of shame. I... if... if I have a... a panty line showing, or... or something ridiculous... or...are... use...we used to wear, what are they called, shoulder pads. And if one... if one slipped, oh my gosh, I'd fill all this incredible shame like I just had to go hide in a bathroom stall. Hide my body from that. Okay, so that, to me, is you were talking about there's not much room for grace there. There's all this shame that... that gets hooked in with the call to be modest, and if we're not, we're indecent, and we're obscene, and we self-identify and label that way. And that is so graphic and humiliating isn't it?



Eryn: Yes. Yes. Well, I identify with that little girl that you're talking about. What you experienced cause I... authority figures would... they would say certain statements that, you know, as a... as a... young girl that's developing and, you know, I was always a late bloomer so let's just, you know, ...

Elisa: I'm still waiting honestly.

Eryn: ...I'm still waiting to hit puberty. [laughs]

Elisa: Me too, me too. It's like yep! Nope.

[laughs]

Eryn: But... wha... it... was... there... certain things that were said about my appearance made me feel like I was responsible for making sure somebody else doesn't fall. Like making sure boys don't give into temptation. By... I am responsible for that my... tho.... How tight my shirt is or how high or low my jeans are, or how tight they are, or... even the way that my swim suit was, you know, one piece, two piece., those types of things that... that... they communicated to me. Like I am responsible... and I... and then I would deal with if I decided to wear a two piece there was shame of me walking around in a two piece versus a one piece and... and I just started realizing, I am walking on egg shells. I'm making these choices of what my body is dressed like based on what other people think because I believe I'm responsible for if they fall in temptation. And that was why I was making choices. So, you know, there is so much to unpack with this, but I do think that modesty really under all of it is just what is the motivation of your heart for why you wear what you wear? What is the motivation of the heart? Doctor Henry Cloud says that that's like where not responsible for other people's responses, but we are responsible for our choices and our actions, and... and our thoughts and... and I'm responsible for what I wear. What is the motivation of my heart for why I wear the things that I do? When I started thinking through that filter it started breaking off the shame that I felt, like that I was responsible, but I would shame myself of like my dress is it too... like I get too self-conscious and insecure and.... Then that thought pattern... or that spiral, you know, you go on this spiral, it's like zrooom, zrooom.

Elisa: Yes. Yes. Yes. Down, down, down.

Eryn: low it's like a vortex. Down.



Elisa: Yeah. Y...y...you know, you're really hitting on it. It... we feel this incredible shame about our bodies, and yet we're not supposed to elicit certain responses. But, then we look in the mirror and we think, *how could this ever elicit any response?*

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: So, then we shame and evaluate ourselves. And then we stuff that because we're not supposed to care about other's response. It goes on and on, and we're in this kind of self-perpetuating, okay I'm not supposed to make somebody tempt, but how could I ever make anybody tempt look at me? And I'm so ugly. And then, well, I better cover this up. And we are so locked in that. And... and Eryn, this is what I was thinking about as we were talkin' a few minutes ago, and this is from 1 Corinthians 12 where the apostle Paul is actually talking about all the parts of the body, and their roles in the body. And he uses a word that is translated as our English word modesty. And it caught my attention because y... you... when you read from Webster... it's obscene, and what was the other word? Indecent? Is that it?

Eryn: Indecent.

Elisa: Okay, so those are horrific words to us. But Paul talks about this, I'm going to pick it up in verse 21, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet 'I don't need you.'" Now hear, "On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor." And that word is often translated "modesty." "...the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no such special treatment. But God has put the body together giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it [...]." And so what Paul's talking about is really our... our sexual elements... our sexual parts; they deserve special modesty. And that word, scripturally, I mean in the Greek is translated, get this, a state of beauty. A fine appearance. It implies being attractive and well suited. And then the word special means extraordinary, more than normal. So you're gonna give the sexual parts of your body, all of us, are to give the sexual parts of our body, our sexual beings, special modesty. More than normal beauty; more than normal appreciation and care. That turns my attention and helps me go, I don't need to worry about everybody else's response. How am I responding to those less presentable special parts of myself? Do I treat them with... with what they deserve? An eye that sees them as having special beauty.

Eryn: That just made me like emotional.



Elisa: I know.

Eryn: Cause that's so beautiful. And that's so healing to hear. Ah there's no shame living in any of that. You know, I... I think about in Proverbs 31 where it talks about strength and honor are her clothing. And that's what you're saying is that, like am I honoring myself? Am I valuing myself in the way that I dress? Am I treating those sacred parts of me as sacred and special and with strength? It's a different way to think about modesty.

Elisa: It is and... and I think some of our ideas of shame, or of we're not supposed to make somebody stumble is the word that was always heaped on me, sometimes those come from other scriptural passages. Like in 1 Corinthians 11, the chapter before this, Paul is talking about worship, and how, you know, what's appropriate attire in worship. And he talks about women covering their heads and etcetera. And we... we go all modern day and... y... there is a kernel of absolute understanding that we are to worship in a kind of a purity. And with an understanding of those around us. But, i... in the 1 Corinthian culture, or the Corinthian church, there were those who were like kinda showin' off their wealth among others. And... and some of the I think the women especially who had finally been included to use their voice in a culture where women were completely dis-included where maybe talkin' a little bit too much so that everybody didn't have a voice. And then, Peter wrote a letter to listeners and church goers in his area, and he talked about how women need to not be dressed with pearls and braided hair but instead with a gentle and quiet spirit. And we interpret that of okay we can't wear jewelry. But... but really what he's talking about is I think what you were goin' at Eryn w... with... you know, just what's on the inside? What's are inner motivation for how we are clothing ourselves? And, if it comes from this appreciation of the beauty that we hold because we're made in the image of our creator, because we possess God's divine stamp upon our being, you know, that... that is what's going to shine forth from the inside out. And then that does actually call us to lay aside all that shaming stuff. And be unapologetic about our beauty, our femininity, our... our curve, our being as female, not to flaunt it, but to embrace it.

Eryn: Yes.

[Musical interlude]

Elisa: When we come back, Eryn and I will talk through how God sees us and views us as His beautiful children. This and more is up next on *God Hears Her*.



[Eryn speaks with music]: Loneliness is a struggle for people, especially during a global pandemic that has forced us into isolation, but the truth is we are never really alone. God has made a promise to be with us. In Elisa's new book *You Are Not Alone*, she shares reminders about God's person, His plan, presence, provision, promise, and purpose. My prayer is that as you read this, it speaks to your heart and helps you see that you are not alone. Go to store.ourdailybread.org to get your copy. That's store.ourdailybread.org. Now, back to *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: What is it... the... it's a... terminology in therapy that I learned that your thoughts become your beliefs and your beliefs become your actions. I know we've discussed that before in other podcasts, and I... I think it is what's the motivator what is... wha... what's the condition of our hearts because our body will reflect that, even just through... through our eyes is in the scripture of Matthew 6:22 where it says "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light." And I love that scripture cause it's... it is true. It's what is... what is going on inside is going to reflect outwardly to the world, and, you know, I think the question I've asked myself over and over again, like how would I talk to myself... how would I talk to my body, how would I talk to the way. I'm even just representing myself, Eryn, in the world, clothes, jewelry, no jewelry, extensions, no extensions, whatever it may be.

Elisa: Right, right.

Eryn: But, how would I talk to myself if the world didn't have a conversation about it. You know, and I... I really lived the way that God saw me... God loved me, and how would I talk to myself?

Elisa: Yeah. I...I think if... y... y... as with so many of the conversations we have Eryn, didn't it boil down to getting inside our beings and listening in. What am I saying? And where does that come from? Is... is...is... is this self-talk, or are these driving motivations from God or from somethin' else. You know, and... and when you get to modesty, this topic of how I view my being and especially my... my womanhood being because men aren't usually talked to about modesty, okay. They maybe should be, but...

Eryn: That's true! It's so true.

Elisa: Yeah. But, how am I talking to myself? And as with just our whole body image, are we seeing ourselves the way God sees us? Do we get in... inside ourselves and... and turn around and look at



ourselves and see ourselves from God's eyes? And... and see wow, you know, He sees us through Jesus; He sees us the way He made us. And so, when He sees us, He embraces us. I'm going give this illustration, we'll probably get letters, but okay. I was on a plane, and I was flying to a South American country for a mission trip. And there was nobody in my row. Our group was spread out around the plane. It was an odd hour, so it was very unpopulated. The flight attendant, a beautiful Hispanic man, came down with the cokes and stuff and stopped, and he bent down next to me where I was sitting and he was reaching into the bottom tray and he looked up at me. He was 30 years younger than me, okay let's put that out there. And he had this sweet smile on his face, and he goes, you are a very sexy woman. And I went... I mean I was just like flabbergasted, there was no one around. I looked into his eyes, I knew he kne... he meant nothing inappropriate about it. I think in his culture that was a totally normal thing to say, like, you know, you're... you're... you're very beautiful, you're attractive or something. And I felt in that moment, of course we always have to keep our boundaries up and be smart women okay, but I felt in that moment God's eyes and voice, just affirming who he made me to be. I... I don't really look at myself as a very sexy woman. Whatever. But you know what I... I...I my...my tendency is to just push that away, and go, ah chucks, you know kinda thing. But I felt like really in that moment I was to pause and consider that God created even this part of me. This...this... this...this woman Elisa. And in that moment I just received that compliment and said thank you. And he pushed his cart on back to the plane, and I didn't even really see him the rest of the flight. But that... that compliment... that... that reflection of how God sees me warmed my being. And... and... I think that's what God invites us into, don't you?

Eryn: Yes. Oh I love... I love that you received that compliment because I think often times we do deflect... we don't receive compliments... we don't receive.... specially if it could air on the side of it being inappropriate or like we just become cynical to, I think, just God using people around us to speak and reflect back what they see in us. And our femininity is something to celebrate, and it's something to embrace and to not shame, and..., you know, there was a time in my life where I wore clothes for attention, and I wanted a man to see me as beautiful because I truly didn't see myself as beautiful. I would put clothes on knowing that I looked good in them, but I wanted people to affirm that I looked good in them and I...

Elisa: Yeah. You're going for it. Yeah.

Eryn: And the motivation of my heart was that I wanted to be validated, and I wanted the... I wanted the attention. Deep down if I was honest, which is just... that's a really hard to...



Elisa: It is hard to be honest.

Eryn: ...especially in a recording. [laughs]

Elisa: Go Eryn. Go Eryn. Yes.

Eryn: But, now I know the difference between expression of knowing how God celebrates my beauty, and I have confidence in that. And I am not responsible for somebody else's temptations, struggle, stumble, as... as long as the motivation... and I'm... I am st... a... tending to the sacred parts of me that you were talking about...

Elisa: Yeah. It goes back to what Paul was saying, you know, to give special honor, which means more than normal appreciation of the beauty or the fine appearance. Okay, that doesn't mean I idolize it. It means I care for it. It means I... I dress it in a loving way. It... it means I look in the mirror at it and hold it as sacred. And that which is sacred is set a part for a certain reason. It's not for everybody, it's for God, and it maybe for my... my husband, but you know, so I... I'm being responsible, no not for anybody else's responses to me, but I'm responsible for God and how I dress and how I care for that part of me. And if... if someone does respond in an extraordinary way, I do hold up my boundary. I don't make eye contact. I don't sweeten my hips. I... I... I don't flash my hair, flip it back because I hold that special care for this part of me. That's what modesty is. Both appreciation and care that comes from an eternal understanding of how special God has made me to be.

Eryn: You know, Elisa, I have... I have a lot of grace towards myself when I look back on choices that I made. When I was making choices out of the way I dressed, you know. I would wear skirts too short or skirts very short, and... or shirts very low, and I did it to seek attention and acceptance. And, when I look back, you know, there's this temptation of going like [sound effect] like that's embarrassing. Or, that I so desperately wanted to be seen that I would, you know, wear this... this outfit or behave this way or talk this way. And, I just... there's just so much grace for that... that woman that I was. And... I... and anybody that's listening that's like... they're like [sound effect] like I... I feel like I do that... like I do wear these clothes for attention because I want attention, and now I feel icky about myself, hearing you guys talk about it and unpack it. I just want to give encouragement that there's just so much grace, and, just, it's... it's an opportunity just to kind of reflect on inwardly of... of again like the motivation of the heart. And seeing that as an opportunity to grow and evolve in the woman that you continue to become. And... and to not be so hard on yourself. And so I just ... I wanna give encouragement that if, you know, you hear us



talking and we're... you're starting to feel a little bit of a shame... shame pop up. I just wanna dissipate that opportunity that the enemy has to put... to put more lies in the minds of any women that's listening that identifies with that.

Elisa: I'm so glad you said that, and I think I wanna just lay in there as well, Eryn, that the desire to be seen and accepted is very normal. And, so, maybe to recognize that that's at the root of the attention seeking if you will, and can I just suggest that maybe we recognize that need and go to the mirror and learn to see ourselves the way God does and receive His love for us over that. Instead of dismissing it because that's really tempting is oh I'm just so bad now and the reality is is we're human and we were made to be seen. And... and so, if we can accept that and see ourselves with grace, the way you're sayin' Eryn, and see ourselves the way God sees us and receive His love, Healing comes there. We don't have to just stuff that desire we can actually embrace it and take it to a different source to receive what we need.

[Musical interlude]

Eryn: Modesty is an important and tricky topic within our church and culture today, but most importantly, we should all remember that we are made in the image of God and He sees our beauty. In fact, He made us beautiful.

Elisa: I'm really glad we took some time to talk about this topic today. As women we are told so many different things. We need to create healthy places to talk about these topics. And be open about things, like modesty. And even to disagree with one another.

Eryn: I agree Elisa. Well before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we wanna remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but they also contain links to connect with Elisa and me on social. And a link for Elisa's book *You Are Not Alone*. You can visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks for Joining us, and don't forget, God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Music]



Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. Today we also wanna recognize Cathy and Gabby for their help in creating and promoting the *God Hears Her Podcast*. Thank you.

Elisa: *God Hears Her* is a production of Our Daily Bread Ministries.