

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

11-18-2015

Lead Me Not Into Temptation

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Recommended Citation

DeRoo, N. (2015). Lead Me Not Into Temptation. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/383

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Lead Me Not Into Temptation

Abstract

"What is it about sexuality that makes us so afraid of leading people into this kind of temptation?"

Posting about a healthy appreciation of sexuality from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/lead-me-not-into-temptation/>

Keywords

In All Things, clothing and dress, sex, temptation

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Lead Me Not into Temptation

 [all in allthings.org/lead-me-not-into-temptation/](http://allinallthings.org/lead-me-not-into-temptation/)

Neal DeRoo

My colleague (and friend) Valorie Zonnefeld raised a number of very important questions regarding modesty, clothing choices, and mutual responsibility. I wholeheartedly agree with Val that we have a responsibility, not just for how we look, but for how we look *to others*. As I said recently, as image bearers of God [we are not just responsible for what we do, but also for how that appears to others](#). We have to be sensitive to how our actions look to the other creatures with which we are interacting. This is as true in regards to sexuality and our clothing as it is to anything else.

But I do wonder what it is about sexuality and clothing that makes us focus on this particular line of temptation so much. After all, sexual sin is not the only thing we can be tempted toward. In fact, I imagine we are at least as likely to be tempted to be envious of a neighbor's financial success or to covet a friend's brand new truck as we are to lust after someone with bulging biceps or a plunging neckline. But if I were to approach my church council and say "Excuse me, but people's nice clothes are tempting me, and others, to envy. Do you think we could start asking people to wear shabbier clothes to church from here on out?" I doubt that would get very far. Nor have I heard of any high schools telling students "Sorry, but new vehicles are really making others covet, so our school is instituting some new 'vehicle codes' from now on: no vehicles allowed in the parking lot that are newer than 2013, and none that cost more than \$20,000. After all, we do not want to lead others into temptation."

So dress codes can't be *just* about trying not to lead people into temptation, or we'd see all kinds of other rules centered around trying to prevent us from leading each other into a variety of temptations. Then what is it about sexuality that makes us so afraid of leading people into this kind of temptation? Could it be, perhaps, that we are afraid not just of leading people into sexual temptation, but of sexuality itself? Perhaps we need dress codes to do double-protection: protecting some people (usually men) from being lead into sin and temptation by other people (usually women), while at the same time protecting some people (usually women) from the dangers associated with enflaming desire in other people (usually men)? If sexuality is dangerous,¹ as the thinking seems to go, then people (mainly women, but also perhaps children, if the sexuality is pedophilic) must be protected from that sexuality. Phrases like "You don't want to put yourself in a position where something bad could happen" tend to be based on this kind of thinking.

But since God created sexuality and deemed it good and "very good," as Christians we cannot think that sexuality itself is dangerous or something to be avoided. [God loves sexuality](#). It is something to be celebrated (appropriately), not feared.

Granted, some might say that sexuality *was* good, in God's original creation — but now, in our fallen situation, it is so no longer. The problem is not, then, sexuality per se, but its perversion in our contemporary culture. In this case, we need dress codes to protect people from being led into temptation, even if those codes might unduly pertain to women,² because sexuality, perhaps especially male sexuality, is so distorted and in need of control.

If this is our reasoning, then dress codes must be viewed merely as a stop-gap measure: something that is needed only for a while, as we are trying to teach people a better view of sexuality. If we all agree that the ideal is that people learn to control their eyes, for example, rather than forcing other people to cover their bodies, then while covering bodies might be necessary in the short term, it should be so only as long as

we are training people to control their eyes.

In this case, every dress code should be accompanied by a plan to address how we plan on ‘fixing’ the perverted sexuality. What is the plan for teaching and training in self-control? When do we expect that plan to be successful, such that the dress code will no longer be necessary (not because people will stop wearing clothes like that, but because we will be able to properly appreciate the human body)?

What is the expiry date on the dress code? Such an ‘expiry’ date is necessary to remind us that we need to recover a healthy sexuality (in students, ourselves, and our culture), rather than just hiding it under baggier clothes. As Christians, we should all have, and help others to get, a God-given appreciation for the beauty (and even the sexiness!) of the human body. That is how the perversion of sexuality is to be challenged and ultimately redeemed.

If sexuality is good, then needing to hide it is as much a temptation to sin as is over-indulging in it. Again, covering over our sexuality *might* be the *lesser* of two evils in our current climate, but it is still an evil. If we continue to communicate to our girls “your sexuality is seductive and tempting” and to our boys “your sexuality is dangerous and uncontrollable,” we are as guilty of leading them into sexual sin as is any person who causes someone else’s eyes to wander. If our message (implicitly or explicitly) is that sexual desire is equivalent to lust, we are as sexually sinful as any pornographic website, which feeds off the exact same message — but adds pictures.

Dress codes may be a band-aid that is needed for our current sexually wounded society, but we can’t think that bandaging the wound is the same thing as treating the disease. If our dress codes communicate to people that sexual desire is the disease we need to be protected from, then they are as much symptoms of the disease as they are a method of cure.

So here I invite any school or other institution that uses “lead not into temptation” as a justification for their dress code to publish, alongside your dress code, a clear, concise statement that communicates the steps the institution is taking to help all people gain a healthy appreciation for the God-given gift of sexuality. Clearly state that, while we may need to cover bodies now, we want a world in which all of us can appreciate beautiful bodies, and lay out what your institution is doing to help people learn to see bodies, even sexual ones, with the eyes of the God who spends time, in his Word, appreciating the beauty of a woman’s stomach, waist, and breasts (Song of Solomon 7:2-3) and a man’s arms, legs, and body (Song of Solomon 5:14-15).

Footnotes

1. And current [rape statistics](#) certainly show that sexuality isn’t what I would call ‘safe’ in our culture. ↩
2. I’m not saying that dress codes are sexist necessarily — but I’ve heard a lot more rules (and a lot more enforcement of the rules) in relation to girls showing too much leg, [too much cleavage](#), or [too much collarbone](#), then I have rules about showing, for example, too much bicep or tricep muscle (which, on some men, is at least as sexually interesting as a collarbone). For that matter, a number of schools have started to ban yoga pants — yet many still allow boys to wear Under Armour shirts (or football pants) that are, by and large, at least as tight. ↩