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Part 1

Making a Cape Dress Pattern

After taking a brief look at the Christian woman's goals in clothing, this part of the book will give direction for choosing and altering a pattern. It will show you how to construct a practice bodice called a *sloper* to check the fit of your altered pattern and how to use the bodice pattern to create a cape pattern. It will also give guidance for planning a modest skirt pattern and choosing a modest collar that will complement the shape of your face.

You will need the following sewing aids:

- A basic shirtwaist dress pattern in the correct bust size.
(Read "Choosing a Pattern" on pages 5-13 before choosing one.)
- Sewing shears (use for fabric only)
- Paper shears, for cutting pattern or tissue paper
- Measuring tape
- Clear or magic tape
- Sewing pins
- Marking pens or pencils for fabric
- About 1½ yards of muslin or other nonstretch remnant fabric for sloper
- Sewing machine
- Thread
- Table for measuring, marking, and cutting pattern and fabric
- Several yards of blank pattern tissue paper or nonwoven pattern fabric for tracing and altering a basic commercial pattern. (Newspaper or paper grocery bags may also be used until your alterations are complete.)





1. *The Modest Christian Woman's Dress*

As you plan to make a new dress pattern, prayerfully consider the principles in this chapter. They provide an important basis for choosing a dress pattern and deciding what really is a proper fit.

The Christian Woman's Goals

The goal of many non-Christian women, as well as pattern makers, is to display the female body attractively to men. The Christian woman has other goals.

Her first goal should be to obey the commandments of God. Paul in 1 Timothy 2:9 directs Christian women to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.” The word *modest* in the original language means “orderly; of good behavior.” So the Christian woman's clothing must convey the clear message that she will not tolerate disorderliness or misbehavior in her life. This does not mean a Christian woman can never do work that will cause her dress to become dirty or wrinkled, but that her dress will show her commitment to good and orderly conduct.

The standard signal to the world that a woman is open to misbehavior is nakedness. The more a woman's leg is uncovered or her neckline plunges, the more the world understands she is advertising her availability for misbehavior.

Fallen man has corrupted concepts of acceptable appearance and behavior. God corrected Adam and Eve's misunderstanding of acceptable body coverage when He replaced their *aprons* with *coats* of skins. Thus God provided a pattern for mankind's outer dress, but unregenerate men continue to assume that the apron concept is sufficient.

Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness even while they were clothed with their aprons (Genesis 3:10). God has given a number of Scriptures that reinforce the truth that man's *shame* is directly proportional to his *degree of nakedness*. Please examine these now.

Exodus 32:25

Isaiah 47:1-3

Revelation 3:18

Isaiah 20:4

Micah 1:11

Revelation 16:15

The second goal of a Christian woman in relation to her dress is purity—its promotion in the world and its safeguarding within the church. A Christian woman is responsible to protect the consciences of others. She is capable of severely harming the spiritual health of others if she presents or conducts herself carelessly (Romans 14:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:6).

One of the three basic types of temptation experienced in this life is *lust of the flesh* (1 John 2:16). Since God says lustful thoughts are equal to immoral actions (Matthew 5:28), the Christian woman will want to be careful not to contribute to men's temptations. She will be

sensitive to ways she can promote purity and protect those who see her. It is not sufficient to say that a man “shouldn’t be thinking those thoughts” when she has displayed her body in an immodest way.

The Fourfold Sin of Immodesty

The professing Christian woman who does not dress modestly bears guilt in four areas:

1. She has openly disobeyed God’s clear command (1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:1-4).
2. She may provide ungodly men an opportunity to sin by lusting in their hearts and may be a source of temptation to brethren in the church (Matthew 5:28).
3. She perverts the Gospel and gives a false hope by conveying that salvation does not require a forsaking of the world’s standards (2 Timothy 2:19; James 1:27).
4. She is misleading others by setting an bad example and providing negative peer pressure (Romans 14:13).

Modest and Immodest Patterns

What is a cape dress? The cape is an extra piece of material added to the front and back of a dress bodice. Its purpose is to increase the modesty of the dress by covering and helping to conceal the contours of the body. Many plain churches require a cape dress as the standard apparel of the sisters. They have found that this type of dress is a practical one, and that it helps women to make modest dresses.

Does adding a cape insure that your dress will be modest? No. A woman with a worldly heart can make a cape dress so that it is even more immodest than some other styles. But a godly woman will welcome help to make her dresses modestly. She will make sure the cape serves its purpose and that other parts of her dress harmonize with it.

Avoid the following things that make a dress immodest:

- ✂ tight or skimpy cape
- ✂ tight or wide belt
- ✂ tight sleeves or back
- ✂ tight skirt
- ✂ short skirt
- ✂ pointed or unnaturally placed waistline
- ✂ gaudy colors or prints
- ✂ deep neckline
- ✂ pointed or scalloped yoke
- ✂ added lace or ruffles (especially on the bodice)
- ✂ thin, extra-stretchy, or shimmering fabrics

The first part of this book will help you fit a pattern so you can avoid these trouble spots. There are other types of dress construction or patterns a Christian woman should avoid. If your church has specific dress guidelines, recognize that they were established to help you follow Bible principles and support them gladly. Discuss this area with your parents, your pastor's wife, other mature Christian sisters, and with your husband if you are married.

Your Impact

Be alert to trends and peer pressures that lead to compromises of modesty. Remember, too, that as your body continues to change, you will occasionally need to alter your pattern in order to maintain modesty. Satan's aim is to confuse and damage the witness of God's children. One effective way to accomplish his aim is to lull or deceive Christian women into negligence relating to modesty.

Your life and example either build up Christ's church in holiness or tear it down with carelessness. Make sure your manner of dress supports, not hinders, holiness.



2. *Choosing a Pattern*

How well a dress fits depends largely on how carefully you fit the pattern. Therefore, choosing and fitting a pattern is a basic and necessary step to a properly fitted dress. It is much easier to alter a pattern than it is to tear a completed dress apart and try to alter shoulders that are too wide or bust darts that are too tight. Fitting a pattern properly begins with measuring yourself and choosing a pattern for your particular body type.

This section discusses how commercial dress patterns are constructed. It will tell you how to measure yourself to determine your pattern size, to read and to use standard measurement charts, and to choose a commercial pattern for your figure type.

Understanding Pattern Construction

The National Bureau of Standards sets standards for all kinds of weights and measurements, including measurements for average body types of men and women in the United States. Clothing manufacturers and pattern companies use these average body measurements in designing clothes and assigning sizes. Ideally, this means that a size 12 dress in a Simplicity pattern should fit the same as a size 12 in a McCall's pattern. While this is generally true, variations among companies occur.

And what woman has the "average" build, exactly as described by statisticians in Washington, D. C.? Probably none. We are each unique and our body types are almost as personal as our thumbprints. Any pattern you choose will likely need to be altered in some way to fit you properly.

Measuring for Pattern Size

Before selecting a pattern, you have some very important work to do. You must make some careful measurements of yourself, preferably with the help of a female friend. This should be done over your normal underwear, without a dress.

Be honest in taking measurements. Accept yourself as you really are, including your bony shoulders or waist bulges or long neck! Don't write measurements in the chart as you *wish* you were. Don't tell yourself you plan to lose fifteen pounds. Take the measurements as you really are. If you lose (or gain) weight, you can make necessary adjustments then. In all measurements the tape should be snug but not tight. Refer to the illustrations on pages 7 and 8.

WAISTLINE :: Tie a string of some type snugly around your waist and position it at your natural waistline. This will be a reference point for other measurements. Use the