

# West deletes ‘Modest Is Hottest’ video after pushback

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Christian musician Matthew West thought he was poking fun at overprotective dads with a new song “Modest Is Hottest.”

Instead, he stepped into a firestorm about evangelical purity culture.

The song, which he posted on his YouTube channel, featured lyrics like “Modest is hottest, the latest fashion trend. It’s a little more Amish, a little less Kardashian,” and claims that boys really love “a turtleneck and a sensible pair of slacks.”

A video of the song showed West trying to cover up his teenage daughters, who greet his efforts with a series of eye rolls.

The lyrics also include a line about West grounding his daughters for wearing crop tops and a prayer asking God to make them “more like Jesus and less like Cardi B.”

## ‘Demeaning’ according to critics

Critics say the song—which gained attention during the recent Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting—promotes evangelical purity culture that blames women for the inappropriate actions of men and has been used to blame abuse survivors for tempting their abusers.

Singer and songwriter Audrey Assad described the phrase “modest is hottest” as “demeaning to women AND men.”

“‘Modest is hottest’ centers men and their preferences in how women

should look—still sets being found hot by men as the ultimate goal for women—and positions all men as creeps who can't handle seeing a woman's bare skin without turning into out of control monsters," she wrote.

The video for the song has been removed from West's YouTube channel. The song itself can still be found on Spotify.

"I'm blessed to be the father of two amazing girls," he wrote on Twitter after pulling the song. "I wrote a song poking fun at myself for being an over-protective dad and my family thought it was funny. The song was created as satire, and I realize that some people did not receive it as intended. I've taken the feedback to heart. The last thing I want is to distract from the real reason I make music—to spread a message of hope and love to the world."

A well-known Christian songwriter and artist, West has been nominated several times for Grammys and has been named Billboard's Christian songwriter of the year. He played "Modest Is Hottest" at a lunch event during the SEND conference that preceded the SBC annual meeting.

## **Attempted satire**

His 2020 satirical song "Quarantine Life" has been played more than 2 million times on YouTube, and he said that he was trying to make fun of himself in the song.

Christian attempts at satire have backfired in the past, most notably in the case of the Babylon Bee, which started out as an Onion-like publication poking fun of evangelical church culture only to become part of the culture wars and fake news disputes of the Trump era.

Evangelicals long have promoted what critics call the "sexual prosperity

gospel,” which promised that God would bless those who put off sex until marriage. That often involved young women attending “purity balls” and wearing rings to symbolize their promises to abstain from sex.

In recent years, evangelical churches have dealt with a series of abuse scandals in which pastors and other leaders have been accused of sexual misconduct. In one case, a megachurch pastor received a standing ovation after he admitted to past “sins” after being accused of coercing a teenage girl into oral sex when he served as a youth pastor while a college student.

Messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention’s recent annual meeting passed a resolution calling for anyone who commits sexual abuse to be permanently banned from ministry.