

A Strategy for Modesty

1 Tim. 2:8-10

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life

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livinghopechurch.net

“Although women are vulnerable to wearing lavish or sensual apparel, their fathers and husbands are ultimately responsible for what the women in their homes wear. Christian men and women need to study this matter and fervently pray about it, for we truly need a return to a Biblical modesty.”

– Jeff Pollard

Announcements

1. Welcome to visitors / welcome packet
2. No expositor’s class today, but we do have 5pm service.
3. Sunday School Marriage Enrichment Class in the Spring, sign up if you are interested

If you don’t have a Bible, there should be one in the seat in front of you. Open your Bible to **1 Timothy 2**. The title of our message this morning is “A Strategy for Modesty.”

Risks in Talking about Modesty

There are several risks to teaching about modesty. It is a risk we take with all doctrine. It’s easy to preach godliness, but when you get to specific applications, it is much more difficult. This is where the rubber meets the road.

I guess the first one is that, when you teach about modesty, basically what you are doing is inviting every person that hears you to scrutinize your wardrobe and the wardrobe of your family for the next 20 years. So that is one negative to this.

Another risk that is actually much more significant is this: I may offend someone, and I hate to do that. I love each of you, but if we are going to be consistent Christians, this is the type of thing that simply needs to be addressed from time to time.

I don’t want to be the clothing police or the Modesty Mafia.

Chrysostom and the Controversial Passage

The passage sometimes has drawn ministers into conflict. John Chrysostom, the golden-tongued bishop of Constantinople, was regarded as the greatest preacher of his times—**until**, that is, he started preaching against the lifestyles of the rich and famous and specifically on our present text.

As soon as he began to preach on modesty, it is said that the Empress Eudoxia ran him out of town, and he later died in exile. What Chrysostom preached, in part, were the words of the

apostle Paul: “I desire likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works” (1 Tim. 2:8–10).

No wonder Eudoxia was upset! Nearly every word clashed with her worldly values. Modesty? Self-control? Propriety?¹ What is the Gospel if it is not lived out in our spirit resulting in modesty and meekness and self-control?

Holy Scripture

1 Timothy 2:8-10, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

Outline

Five Strategies for Modesty

- Be submitted in your **Allegiance**, 1 Tim. 2:8-9.
- Be respectful with your **Appearance**, Jms. 1:14-15; 1 Jn. 2:16.
- Be humble with your **Attitude**, Prov. 31:25.
- Be careful in your **Association**, Rom. 12:2.
- Be joyful in your **Approval**, Gal. 1:10.

I. Be submitted in your **Allegiance**, 1 Tim. 2:8-9.

Allegiance to God

Call attention to God

The context of 1 Timothy 2 is worship. Paul addresses our attitudes and our clothing as both being our apparel that should show allegiance to our great God. Men should not be clothed in anger, but in prayer, lifting up holy hands instead of throwing punches. Women should not be clothed like the luxuriously overdressed temple courtesans (prostitutes), but instead be modest and respectable in their clothing.

We are to show our worship and allegiance to God by realizing that our worship context is not simply on Sunday mornings, but every day. Men show worship to God by adorning themselves with prayer instead of anger!

1 Timothy 2:8, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.”

Respectable Apparel

1 Timothy 2:9, “likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel...” The word “likewise” is significant because it sets the context. Paul is still addressing the subject of public worship. He assumes that women will be present in the assembly to praise God, and perhaps even to pray aloud (see 1 Cor. 11:5). His point is that while men are to pray

¹ Ryken, P. G. (2007). *1 Timothy*. (R. D. Phillips, D. M. Doriani, & P. G. Ryken, Eds.) (pp. 80–81). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

without argumentation, women are to pray without ostentation.² Women are not to draw attention to themselves, but to the Lord.

Women, and all people are to wear “respectable apparel.” Our clothing speaks of reverence or carelessness. We could be underdressed or overdressed. It ought to be appropriate apparel. We want others to reverence the Lord.

We live in the presence of God. Worship is not just at church, it’s in the workplace – it’s on display at all times.

Here it helps to know something about Hellenistic society, in which elaborately braided hair was a sign of extravagant luxury. Paul’s wording is significant: “not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire” (1 Tim. 2:9).

James Hurley helps us understand the social context:³

“The sculpture and literature of the period make it clear that women often wore their hair in enormously elaborate arrangements with braids and curls interwoven or piled high like towers and decorated with gems and/or gold and/or pearls. The prostitutes wore their hair in numerous small pendant braids with gold droplets or pearls or gems every inch or so, making a shimmering screen of their locks.”⁴

Allegiance to the Family

Modesty is not a lone ranger affair. To really be successful and represent God rightly with clothing, you need the help, if you are a young person, of your parents. Wives need the help of their husbands. Husbands need the help of their wives.

Arthur Pink Quote

I like how A. W. Pink put it in the 1930s and 40s. “If lustful looking be so grievous a sin, then those who dress and expose themselves with desires to be looked at and lusted after are not less, but even more guilty. In this matter it is only too often the case that men sin, but it is also true that women tempt them so to do. How great, then, must be the guilt of the great majority of the modern misses who deliberately seek to arouse the sexual passions of our young men. And how much greater still is the guilt of most of their fathers and mothers for allowing them to become lascivious temptresses.”

Allegiance to the Church

In this area of modesty, we must never have a lone ranger mentality. None of us is an island to ourselves. We are part of the Body of Christ. We are all collectively the “Temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). In our character and how we conduct ourselves and present ourselves to this world, we ought to have allegiance to the Body of Christ, of which Christ is the federal Head.

In other words, you are your brother’s and your sister’s keeper. You need to dress in such a way that guards others from temptation to lust or to worldliness.

Ladies, you might have the temptation to say, “Well my brother in Christ is responsible to God to control his thoughts,” and that is right. So you may say, “Well, they don’t have to look.”

² Ryken, 81.

³ Ryken, 81.

⁴ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 199.

The Bible also tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:6 that you must not “defraud your brother in any matter.” To “defraud” means to “**create within someone a desire that cannot be righteously satisfied.**” The context in this passage is sexual temptation.

Am I My Brother’s Keeper?

When Cain wanted to get out of his own responsibility after murdering his brother Abel, he asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” What is the answer to that? Of course, we are all to guard and keep our brothers and sisters. We are responsible to look out for their physical and social and spiritual well-being. Love your neighbor as yourself!

II. Be respectful with your Appearance, James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:16

1 Timothy 2:9-10, “likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

Addressing Women

Paul obviously is addressing women’s clothing in this passage. Why does he not address both men and women’s attire? It is because though men and women are the same in some ways, we are also very different from one another.

Respectable Clothing

St. Paul directs us to “adorn themselves in respectable clothing.” **Adorn** is from *kosmeō*, from which the English word “cosmetic” derives. It means “to arrange,” “to put in order,” or “to make ready.” A woman must arrange herself appropriately to join God’s people as they worship.

Part of that important preparation involves the outside, the wearing of **respectable clothing**. **Respectable** translates *kosmiō*, which, like *kosmeō*, derives from the noun *kosmos*. *Kosmos* is often translated “world,” but it really means “order,” or “system.”⁵ It is the antonym of “chaos.”

John MacArthur Quote

John MacArthur clarifies what it means to have “respectable clothing”: “

The clothing encompasses not only the fabric itself, but also the look—the whole demeanor. Women are to come to the corporate worship ready to face the Lord. They must not come in slovenly disarray or personal display because of an unbecoming wardrobe or demeanor. There is a place for lovely clothes that reflect the humble grace of a woman, as evidenced in Proverbs 31:22, “Her clothing is fine linen and purple.” Proper adornment on the outside reflects a properly adorned heart.”⁶

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The Similarities between Men and Women

Men and women are both fallen. We all go down the road to temptation the same way – through our fleshly fallen nature. These are the habits and patterns of thinking left over from the old life.

⁵ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 77–78). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁶ Ibid.

- In **James 1:14-15**, it says this, “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”
- In **1 John 2:16**, it says this, “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”

These scriptures tell us how men and women are similar in their temptation to sin. These things affect both of us: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Both men and women have to be on guard against those things.

But there is one more very important reason that modesty is necessary and that’s because of the **differences** between men and women.

The Differences between Men and Women

I don’t know if you’ve noticed yet but men and women are different—they are very different. And one of the main differences that is crucial here, is that God has designed men to be more visual. Women tend to be more verbal—men tend to be more visual.

Nancy DeMoss, in her book “The Look,” says this, “What a man’s touch is to a woman, the sight of a woman is to a man.” That’s how important it is and how powerful it is. The husbands, sons, and fathers of our congregation—are tempted everywhere they look—the Internet, TV, movies, billboards, and magazines.

Satan knows that men are tempted visually, and so many women may not understand this struggle. Remember what Job said, in **Job 31:1**, he said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” The covenant with our eyes is an extension of our covenant with Jesus Christ. Jesus is master over every part of us. But men have to be especially careful with their eyes.

I think of King David. When did all his trouble start with Bathsheba? What was he doing? Remember it tells us, he was walking on his roof one evening and “he saw” Bathsheba. He saw her bathing and he was tempted through what he saw.

The Attire of a Harlot

In **Proverbs 7:10** (NKJV), it says this, “And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.” Look at that phrase, “the attire of a harlot”—the Bible specifically calls attention to the way an immoral woman dresses. Why? Why does it do that? Because that is one of the main ways that men are tempted. Now think about it, the Bible never talks about how an immoral man dresses—why not? Because *for most women sight is not a major avenue of temptation, but for men it is a different story, because men are tempted by what they see.*

A GARMENT THAT COVERS

1 Timothy 2:9-10, “likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

The Greek word for “clothing” in this text (*katastole*), means a flowing garment that covers or wraps.

Modesty: Definition

Modesty in our 21st-century context typically means “not revealing too much skin.” Today, a burqa-clad woman encrusted head-to-toe in pricey designer goods is considered more modest than a homeless teenager wearing a handout tank top and running shorts. But the New Testament’s original audience would have understood the word modesty as “unassuming or moderate.” That is, you should not be underdressed, but you should also not be overdressed.

OVERDRESSING

The Problem in Ephesus was Overdressing for Church

The context in 1 Tim. 2 is that the Ephesians who had been newly converted were coming to church overdressed. They were drawing attention to themselves.

In Ephesus where Timothy was pastoring, some of the new converts were likely ladies coming from the temple. Almost all the pagan women in Ephesus worked at one time or another as Temple prostitutes. This was something sadly that was highly esteemed in Ephesus – to work at the Temple for the goddess of fertility, Diana.

And so the style for the courtesans or temple prostitutes was a braided hair that would be done up like a beehive with costly jewels and then very luxurious clothing.

In other words, the problem in Ephesus was overdressing to church. These newly saved ladies I’m sure wanted to give honor to Jesus Christ in the same way they gave honor to Diana. But they needed to know that the true and living God calls for modesty.

Wasn’t Forbidding Hairstyles

1 Timothy 2:9, “likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire.”

So St. Paul starts with commenting about **braided hair**, a term that can generally mean “hair styles.” His point is not that women should be indifferent to their hair. That would contradict what he had just said about careful preparation to put oneself in order. Paul’s intent is not to forbid certain kinds of hairdos, as if some reflected a more worshipful attitude than others. He is confronting any gaudy, ostentatious hairdo that would distract attention from the Lord and the purposes that are holy. Women in that culture often wove **gold, pearls**, or other jewelry through their hairdos to call attention to themselves and their wealth or beauty.⁷

A woman is instead to cloth herself with “good works.” **1 Timothy 2:9**, “women should adorn themselves... with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

John Owen on Overdressing

Listen to Puritan John Owen preach against overdressing:

“Recently some of our congregants have added vanity in apparel, with foolish, light, lascivious modes and dressings therein, and an immodest boldness in behavior among men and women.

These corruptions, which, being borrowed from our neighbor nation [of England]...have brought forth the fruit of vanity and pride in abundance. And it is the most manifest evidence of a degenerate people, when they are prone to imitate the vices of the unregenerate among them...

Consider London. There is among many professors of the gospel... too great a conformity to the fashions of the world. How many professing men in that great city were dressed up like

⁷ Ibid.

fantastical buffoons, and women like fashion dolls to the dishonor of God, the shame of religion, the hardening of the wicked, the grieving of the weak, and the provoking of divine justice!...[Zephaniah 1:8].

It is a stinging and flaming mark against the church that many of Christ's people bow to fashion-mongers, and seem to have consulted with French, Italian, Persian, and all outlandish worldlings, to get advice from them of all their several modes and fashions of vice. Certainly, if ever such wantons be saved, it will be by fire. Strange apparel is part of the old man, that must be put off, if ever men or women intend to go to heaven... Cyrian and Augustine draw up this conclusion: that superfluous apparel is worse than whoredom, because whoredom only corrupts our self-control, but this corrupts our very hearts and nature."⁸

The Puritans Didn't Mince Words!

Wow! The Puritans didn't mince words. It is true that if a person has no sense of immodesty and continues to imitate the world, how can we say the divine fingerprints of the Holy Spirit are in their heart?

When we are born again everything changes. Most importantly, our hearts change, but that transformation touches everything in life, from the joy on our faces, to the modesty of our clothing.

The Immodesty of Overdressing / Too Much Make-up

Sometimes, as in this passage, overdressing can be immodest. A lady can draw attention to herself by overdoing her hair, her makeup, etc.

I was trying to be lighthearted, but the truth is I think most of us men would not know the difference if you did or didn't wear make-up because you are all "fearfully and wonderfully made."

And it should be said that a sister in Christ may have too much make-up on where it draws attention to yourself. So let me be clear. Makeup is not needed. It's fine if you wear it. If you do, don't overdo it. My wife does not wear makeup most of the time. If you do wear it, it ought to accent your God-given features. It's not a necessity. **Let the beauty and purity of Christ be the most important make-up that you wear.**

Comfort and Fashion are not the Most Important

We need to have the right motive for our appearance. We all want to be comfortable and we also don't want to draw attention to ourselves by underdress or overdressing. But what is most important is not "comfort" or because it "makes you feel good." We would never make decisions about God's will using that method in any other area of our lives.

We dress to please God. It is not wrong to be dress in a complimentary way. If you consider the Proverbs 31 woman. Prov. 31:21-22, "She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. 22 She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple."

She is both practical (dressing for the snow) and complimentary (fine linen and purple) with her clothing.

⁸ John Owen, The Nature and Causes of Apostasy, in The Works of John Owen, W. H. Goold ed. Vol. VII (Johnstone & Hunter 1850-53; reprint ed., Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust), 207.

UNDERDRESSING

Underdressing in the USA

In our paganized Western culture, it is not mostly overdressing that is the problem. It is underdressing. Your body is the temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). That means it's sacred.

In the USA, and really in the world, the trend for the last hundred years has been underdressing. The emphasis is on immodestly scant clothing: clothing which is too revealing, whether too low, too thin, too transparent, too tight. Much of the clothing sold today calls improper attention to sexuality.

The human drive to show off in the area of clothing is immensely strong – driving the market for cosmetics, fashionable clothes, and perfumes, many of which are intended to be overtly sensual.

No longer is it just lipstick, but lip gloss, lip wax, and lip liner, all to make the lips appear fuller for kissing.

Clothes, originally intended to cover, are today meant to reveal. Spaghetti straps are now a common sight along with body-hugging outfits. Men are as culpable, if not responsible. Somewhere in the last ten years, pumping iron has given rise to tighter shirts.

Being Modest is Going to be Hard

Being a modest godly woman is going to be hard in this culture. It was certainly hard in Timothy's culture. Paul could have decided not to address it in Ephesus with Timothy. But he did. It's uncomfortable to address it. But it must be addressed.

RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS

Modesty should be Addressed by the Parents

Pastor Jeff Pollard said this in his book on Christian Modesty:

“Although women are vulnerable to wearing lavish or sensual apparel, their fathers and husbands are ultimately responsible for what the women in their homes wear. Christian men and women need to study this matter and fervently pray about it, for we truly need a return to a Biblical modesty.”

It's Going to be Hard!

Obviously, modesty should be addressed by our churches. It should be addressed by our leaders. But most importantly, it should be addressed by our mothers and fathers.

It is the responsibility of Christian moms and dads to oversee the wardrobe of their children. I can tell you my children's mother and grandmother are very much involved in my daughters' wardrobes.

It's always been hard, especially with the invention of “skinny jeans.” I can tell you my wife and daughters are often in the store for hours before they find something that might be acceptable.

And even then, sometimes the clothing has to be altered by Grandma. And even after all that, my girls come to their father and ask if one thing or another is acceptable.

My wife and I sometimes have to say no. Parents, as long as your children are living under your roof, whether 5 or 25, you should have a say in how they present themselves. And daughters (and sons) should want to have their parents godly input.

Layers of Clothing

Sometimes you are not going to be able to find the right kind of clothing, or you don't have the money, expertise or friends to help you modify an outfit. That means that sometimes you are going to have to dress in layers.

A scooping neckline can be taken care of by a layer of clothing underneath. A tight fitting pair of pants or jeans might need to be covered by a longer shirt.

Use discretion and wisdom. Honor God with how you present yourself. Be creative. But be modest. Cover that which needs to be covered.

Muhammad Ali's Talk with His Daughter

Here is how Muhammad Ali, one of the most famous boxers of all time, described the concept to his daughter when he returned home from a trip and saw that his daughter's clothes were immodest. Here is the story as told by one of his daughters in his book "More than a Hero":

"My father took a good look at us. Then he sat me down on his lap and said something that I will never forget. He looked me straight in the eyes and said, "Hana, everything that God made valuable in the world is covered and hard to get to. Where do you find diamonds? Deep down in the ground, covered and protected. Where do you find pearls? Deep down at the bottom of the ocean, covered up and protected in a beautiful shell. Where do you find gold? Way down in the mine, covered over with layers and layers of rock. You've got to work hard to get to them."

He looked at me with serious eyes. "Your body is sacred. You're far more precious than diamonds and pearls, and you should be covered too."⁹

While Ali is not a Christian, even the common grace of God teaches us that those things that are sacred and precious should be covered.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Wear Respectable / Appropriate Apparel

- Wear clothes that match
- Wear colors that compliment your complexion
- Wear clothes that fit properly
- Wear clothes that are up to date but not necessarily the latest fashion or trendy.
- Wear clothes that are clean, tidy, and neat (iron if necessary).

STEWARDSHIP

What about Stewardship?

We also need to be good stewards with our money. **Matthew 6:21**, says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Is your wardrobe worth more than what you give to the Lord or to missions? What you spend your money shows exactly where your heart is.

And truly, to be in style these days is often a luxury proposition. A pair of 501 Levi's? Those cost an average of \$40. Certain shoes you cannot get for less than \$100.

We ought to be careful stewards of our money. One of the things I like to do is shop at second hand shops. There is a "Savers" right down the street from the church where I buy almost all my clothing.

⁹ Taken from the book: *More Than A Hero: Muhammad Ali's Life Lessons Through His Daughter's Eyes*

We are called to be good stewards of all that God gives us. We don't need to spend a lot of money to dress appropriately as God's people. Let us not be "conformed" to this world, but instead be "transformed by the renewing of our mind" (Rom. 12:1).

III. Be humble with your **Attitude**, Prov. 31:25

1 Timothy 2:9-10, "likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works."

What is proper for women who profess godliness – you should be clothed in modesty, self-control, and good works! This begins with the attitude of the heart.

John Calvin on Modesty of the Heart

John Calvin said this about this modesty of clothing: "This at least will be settled beyond all controversy, that everything in dress which is not in accordance with modesty and sobriety must be disapproved. Yet we must always begin with a person's heart attitude; for where corruption reigns within, there will be no self-control; and where a desire for attention reigns within, there will be little or no modesty in the outward dress."

The Proverbs 31 Woman

Of the Proverbs 31 woman it is said, "Strength and Honor are her clothing" (v. 25). While she does dress in purple and fine linen, the secret to true modesty is deep down in the heart.

1. Modesty

According to St. Paul, "women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control" (1 Tim. 2:9). These two attitudes of "modesty" and "self-control" are to characterize a woman's approach to her appearance in worship.

The word "modesty" appears only here in the New Testament. It refers to modesty mixed with humility. At its core is the idea of shame (cf. the Authorized Version's translation "shamefacedness").

A godly woman would be ashamed and feel guilt if she distracted someone from worshiping God, or contributed to someone's lustful thought. A woman characterized by this attitude will dress so as not to be the source of any temptation. The word also has the connotation of rejecting anything dishonorable to God. Some would even suggest the meaning of the term as grief over a sense of sin.

Don't be Like the Forbidden Woman of Proverbs

Solomon addresses his son, and tells him to be wise and stay far away from the forbidden woman who dresses "like a prostitute."

Proverbs 7:4-10, "Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
and call insight your intimate friend,
⁵to keep you from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with her smooth words.

⁶For at the window of my house
I have looked out through my lattice,
⁷and I have seen among the simple,

I have perceived among the youths,
a young man lacking sense,
8 passing along the street near her corner,
taking the road to her house
9 in the twilight, in the evening,
at the time of night and darkness.
10 And behold, the woman meets him,
dressed as a prostitute, wily [crafty] of heart.”

The way we dress communicates something about our hearts. Let’s take careful note of Solomon’s warnings. A godly woman will not dress in such a way that tempts her brothers in Christ.

A Godly Woman Will Not Tempt Her Brothers

A godly woman hates sin so much that she would avoid anything that would engender sin in anyone. This is certainly consistent with the words of our Lord, who said in Matthew 18:6-7, “... whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”⁷ “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!”

Now look at verse 10, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.” Better to be dead and drown in the most remote part of the deepest sea than lead another believer into sin!¹⁰

2. Self Control

Women are to exercise control so that neither their passions nor anyone else’s are excited.¹¹ The basic sense of the word “self-control” is discretion with controlling how one presents themselves – **especially self-control over sexual passions.**

The Greeks valued this virtue highly. Euripides, a 5th century Greek playwright, called it “the fairest gift of the gods.”¹² Plato, in *The Republic*, called it one of the four cardinal virtues.¹³

3. True Beauty: a Testimony of Good Works

St. Paul goes on to say that ultimately a woman should be known not for her outward appearance, but for her godly testimony: a life of “good works.”

1 Timothy 2:9-10, “likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel... (vs. 10) with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

True Beauty: More than Skin Deep

So true beauty is more than skin deep! God’s standards for feminine beauty stand diametrically opposed to the standards of modern culture. How often do ordinary-looking women appear in television advertisements?

¹⁰ MacArthur, 80.

¹¹ Ibid, 81.

¹² Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946], 4:224.

¹³ MacArthur, 80-81.

How many fashion magazines feature tips for inward beauty? The world says beauty is indeed skin deep, but they are dead wrong! God turns things inside out. He says that beauty comes from the inner spiritual life of the soul.¹⁴

A Call for Husbands and Fathers

Husbands and fathers, where is your family at spiritually? How are your sons and daughters with God? How is your wife? Is she walking humbly with God?

What is their view of themselves? Do they have to impress through clothing, or are they focused on the inner attitudes of humility and self-control of the heart. Do they have the true beauty and testimony of service for Christ and a life of good works?

Let our attitudes be humble – let that humility be expressed from our heart and yea, even from our clothing.

IV. Be careful in your Association, Rom. 12:2.

The Association of Particular Fashions

Fashions often have particular associations.

- If you wear a Sox shirt, you are displaying good taste for the best baseball team in Chicago.
- If you wear black clothes and put on dark lipstick, you may be expressing that you are part of the “Goth” movement.
- A woman who puts on a wedding dress is expressing something important
- Sweat pants may mean that you are ready to work out or you just want to be comfortable.
- Clothing means something.

The Fashion in Ephesus

In Timothy’s time, ‘braided hair’ and costly ‘pearls’ were associated with prostitutes. The city of Ephesus was home to the temple of Aphrodite (the Greek goddess of love). Every evening hundreds of prostitutes emerged from the temple. They would be recognized by their elaborate hairstyles and ornate jewelry. It seems as if some of the Christian women had started to dress in a similar way. This was sending the wrong message and damaging the reputation of the Christian community.¹⁵

Don’t Go for the Latest Styles

Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” We should not be slaves to the lascivious fashion designers in New York City. We are slaves of Christ. We are not taking our cues from Sodom and Gomorrah but from our Father in Heaven!

¹⁴ Ryken, P. G. (2007). *1 Timothy*. (R. D. Phillips, D. M. Doriani, & P. G. Ryken, Eds.) (p. 84). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

¹⁵ Robinson, S. J. (2004). *Opening up 1 Timothy* (p. 44). Leominster: Day One Publications.

V. Be joyful in your **Approval**, Gal. 1:10.

We should not be seeking approval from the world in our clothing. Paul said in **Galatians 1:10**, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

When godly men and women seek to honor God in all things, including apparel and clothing, they are approved by God.

There is great joy to have a clean conscience that you are not hurting hindering the spiritual growth of your brothers and sisters because of lack of modesty in your clothing.

There is great blessing that comes from submitting your whole self – even your wardrobe to God.

CONCLUSION

Blessings of Modesty (by Nancy Leigh DeMoss)

- **Peace** – You’ll know that you are obedient to God.
- **Power** – You’ll be free from enslavement to fashion, fads, and others’ opinions.
- **Protection** – You’ll be guarded from the wrong kind of attention from the wrong kind of men. (Dressing modestly doesn’t guarantee that the “wrong kind of men” will never give you unwanted attention, but it sure helps!)
- **Purity** – You’ll attract the right kind of attention from the right kind of guys.
- **Privilege** – You’ll experience greater freedom in marriage as your body is reserved only for your husband.
- **Praise** – You’ll be valued for spiritual and heart qualities more than physical characteristics. “. . . a woman that fears the LORD, she shall be praised.” ~ Proverbs 31:30.

Modesty Heart Check

by Carolyn Mahaney Nicole Whitacre Kristin Chesemore Janelle Bradshaw

“... Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.” ~1 Timothy 2:9-10

“How does a woman discern the sometimes fine line between proper dress and dressing to be the center of attention? The answer starts in the intent of the heart. A woman should examine her motives and goals for the way she dresses. Is her intent to show the grace and beauty of womanhood? Is it to reveal a humble heart devoted to worshipping God? Or is it to call attention to herself and flaunt her beauty? Or worse, to attempt to lure men sexually? A woman who focuses on worshipping God will consider carefully how she is dressed, because her heart will dictate her wardrobe and appearance.” John MacArthur

Start with a Heart Check...

- What statement do my clothes make about my heart?
- In choosing what clothes to wear today, whose attention do I desire and whose approval do I crave? Am I seeking to please God or impress others?
- Is what I wear consistent with biblical values of modesty, self-control and respectable apparel, or does my dress reveal an inordinate identification and fascination with sinful cultural values?
- Who am I trying to identify with through my dress? Is the Word of God my standard or is the latest fashion?
- Have I asked other godly individuals to evaluate my wardrobe?
- Does my clothing reveal an allegiance to the gospel or is there any contradiction between my profession of faith and my practice of godliness?
- Before you leave the house, do a modesty check. (What are some things you should look for as you stand in front of your mirror?)

From the top...

- When I am wearing a loose-fitting blouse or scoop-neck, can I see anything when I lean over? If so, I need to remember to place my hand against my neckline when I bend down.
- If I am wearing a button-down top, I need to turn sideways and move around to see if there are any gaping holes that expose my chest. If there are, I've got to grab the sewing

box and pin between the buttons.

- The same check is needed if I am wearing a sleeveless shirt. When I move around, can I see my bra? If I do, I need the pins again.
- Am I wearing a spaghetti-strap, halter, or sheer blouse? Not even pins will fix this problem! Most guys find these a hindrance in their struggle with lust. It's time to go back to the closet.
- Can I see the lace or seam of my bra through my shirt? In this case, seamless bras are a better option.
- Does my shirt reveal any part of my cleavage?

Moving Down...

- Does my midriff show when I raise my hands above my head? Is my shirt just plain too tight? If the answer to any one of these questions is yes, then I need to change my outfit.
- Does my midriff (or underwear) show when I bend over or lift my hands? If so, is it because my skirt or my pants are too low? Either my shirt needs to be longer or I need to find a skirt or pants that sit higher.
- I also have to turn around to see if what I'm wearing is too tight around my back side, or if the outline of my underwear shows. If so, I know what I have to do!
- And as for shorts – I can't just check them standing up. I need to see how much they reveal when I sit down. If I see too much leg, I need a longer pair.
- The "sit-down" check applies to my skirt or dress as well. And I must remember to keep my skirt pulled down and my knees together when I'm seated.
- And speaking of skirts, watch out for those slits! Does it reveal too much when I walk? Pins are also helpful here.
- Before I leave, I need to give my skirt a sunlight check. Is it see-through? If so, I need a slip.
- Finally, I must remember to do this modesty check with my shoes on. High-heels make my dress or skirt appear shorter.
- And don't forget – this applies to formal wear as well.

Swimwear

A note on swimwear: It's not easy but you can still strive to be modest at the pool or beach. Look for one-piece bathing suits that aren't cut high on the leg and don't have low necklines.