

Family Issues #7 – Biblical Modesty (1 Tim 2:9-10)

Introduction - Modesty may not cross your mind as *the* important issue facing the families in our church. It may be that, compared to many other fellowships, we lean on the modest side to begin with. But our standard is not the world or the modern church. Our standard is Christ and His two greatest commandments, both of which apply to the issue at hand. In addition, as we seek to raise up godly children who are *quickly* becoming young men and women, we need to hear the scriptures on this topic, apply them to ourselves, and learn how to teach this subject to our families in ways that will most likely be the very antithesis of what the world is teaching....and wearing. This is a pressing issue in our culture today, and therefore, it cannot help but become a pressing issue in your home.

Developing a Theology of Dress - As we consider this topic, and the verses at hand, we must consider all of scripture, and the topics of dress, beauty, creation, sexuality, and femininity.

Adorned and Adornment - God was the first tailor, and after the Fall, He covered Adam and Eve's nakedness. We know from the use of '*nakedness*' and '*covering*' in other passages of scripture that God was particularly covering their genitals, buttocks, and her breasts. Paul is clear that there are parts of our body that are not '*presentable*' (1 Cor 12:23f). Sexual modesty is assumed even when redeemed.

Honorable Adornment - "that the women *adorn* themselves..." is a very important phrase. To be adorned is much more than simply to be covered. The word means "to put in order, trim, decorate, make beautiful - to embellish with honor." The admonishment in 1 Tim 2:9-10 is not a call to hide everything nor to look frumpy. The particular admonishment is to avoid the ostentatiousness of the day.

Creation and Adornment - God created us male and female; so our adornment ought to accentuate our differences with honor. A woman dressed well is a sign of virtue (Prov 31:22) and how she wears her long hair displays the glory of her husband (1 Cor 11:5-16). It is rebellious to think that modesty is a call to ignore loveliness. Sarah is given as an example to women as to how to '*adorn*' themselves (1 Pet 3:1-6), and one can tell from the stories of Abraham that Sarah was so attractive he knew that she would catch the eyes of kings.

Adornment From the Inside Out - Here is the point of both the 1 Peter and 1 Timothy passages. True biblical adornment is external, incarnate and lovely because it flows out of an internal, lovely, God-loving heart. Her good works and her dress say the same thing as her words of profession - she loves God and is in full submission to Him.

Your Dress is Speaking - You cannot avoid talking with your clothes. This means we must learn the cultural language of clothes.

"Modest Apparel" - *kosmios* means 'respectable, honorable.' It is translated "of good behavior" in 1 Tim 3:2. Your clothes are to match/proclaim/adorn your godly behavior.

"Propriety" - *aidos* has an interesting sense of both shame and honor, bashfulness and reverence (Heb 12:28).

"Moderation" - *sophrosune* means 'sobriety, soundness of mind, self-control, and reasonableness.' Again, the context doesn't allow for a girl to say, "but I don't mean that when I wear this..."

Putting This Together - We learn that adornment is a powerful thing (which is also proven by the huge apparel industry) and women know it. Much of what our culture tells young women to wear sends messages a godly woman should never want to send. What is said with each garment particularly? To make that practical application requires wisdom, and the first thing a young woman must learn is that she does not have more wisdom than her mother and father.

Wisdom and Applications - There are many places where thoughtful applications need to be made by all members of the family.

Fathers - You are not jealous enough for your wife and daughters (2 Cor 11:1-2). Men need to take responsibility (and it must not be wooden) for their daughters' adornment, inside and out. We need to recover the category of virgin as a place of virtue and dignity.

Mothers - Much of this you may not have learned growing up and you may need to rethink what you wear and what it is saying. You need to think this through with your husband so that you can speak with one voice to your daughters.

Daughters - You must begin with a heart resolved by the grace of God to honor your mother and father, cultivate *aidos* and *sophrosune*, and learn good works from your mother. You must doubt your own sense of wisdom. You must listen to your father - you have no idea what that blouse or skirt or swimsuit or high heel is doing to the boys - and if you do - so much the worse.

Sons - This sermon has emphasized feminine modesty. Normally, there is little that needs to be said to young men about their own immodesty. Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case today. Most young men, however, simply need to keep their own mouths shut and to keep their eyes elsewhere when necessary.

Shooting Straight and Practical - As a community of saints, we are not looking for a 'dress code' but principles where our

theology meets our closets.

Sexual Attention – So much of what is worn (and when so little is worn) is simply crying out for provocative, sexual attention. Men in their flesh love to lust, and women in their flesh love to be lusted after. Harlotry has a uniform (Prov 7:10).

Immodesty is an Invitation – A woman may never intend to follow up with the invitation she is sending, but she must realize that she is sending it. In the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19) adultery and fornication are particular acts, but uncleanness and lewdness are garments one can wear. God will judge women who strut their stuff (Isaiah 3:16ff). In fact, the growing open sexual perversion in our country is the very judgment of God.

The Men Should Talk – If you are aware of a problem, and you do not think that love can cover it (and on many occasions we should simply *cover* her with love), then have the husband or father speak to her husband or father. We must see to it that our wives and daughters are protected, adorned with godly beauty, falling neither to Gnostic pietism nor licentious display.

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