

Feminine Virtue - Part 2

Review

Women are particularly called to be adorned with good works. It is in this quiet and chaste arena that women are to have their influence on the world (1 Tim 1:18-2:10). Not an indiscriminate busyness but a particularly feminine brand of works;

- Directed toward a husband (woman is created for and to the glory of man) - 1 Cor 11
- Directed toward children (Titus 2 and 1 Tim 5)
- Directed toward the home (Titus 2)
- Directed toward others (Proverbs 31, 1 Tim 5)

Women without husbands

1 Corinthians 7:25-35 - If God has set you apart for himself alone, it is to serve Him in an exceptional manner. It is not so that you can pursue pleasures. See this same principal invoked with regard to widows (1 Tim 5:3-7). In so far as women are particularly called to adorn themselves with good works, how much more the woman who has been called to God in a special and exclusive manner..

Just because you don't have a husband now...

Doesn't mean that God is calling you to a life of celibacy. As Paul says having a desire to marry is not a sin. The strength of his statement against prudence of marriage is qualified by the particular distress that the early Christian church was facing - intense and often violent persecution from both the Jews and the Romans. 1 Tim 5 in Paul's instruction to the younger widows. What was the issue? The "desire to marry" and thus Paul instructed them to do so as a group.

How to prepare for a husband... Titus 2:

Seek out the fellowship and instruction of older women who can model and teach the specifically feminine elements of sound doctrine enumerated in Titus 2. Seek out the younger ladies as well with all the children who can give you the practical experience of loving children. Another good way to adorn yourself with good works. Prepare for a husband by adorning yourself with feminine virtue. Make yourself precious in the sight of God and you will attract to yourself the type of husband who thinks like your God. What is precious in the sight of God? 1 Peter 3:1-6

Women without children

This is a sensitive area. Sensitivity is a wonderful loving instinct that can become a harmful thing when it results in fellowship barriers. If love is the object of sensitivity, the result should be fervent love, not fervent avoidance of one another.

The particular aspects of feminine virtue that are derived directly related to childbearing are generally not going to apply (certainly not to the same degree). Yet your child bearing status does not fundamentally alter the elements of feminine virtue. The word of God is what defines femininity and it is the standard that govern your conduct. Whether you have children or not, your primary focus should be on serving your husband's interest, in managing the character of your home, and in serving others (particularly the ladies) around you. This does not preclude you from working outside the home, but it does preclude you from pursuing your own career aspirations in the same way that a faithful man could and should. To the extent that God has not given you the responsibility of raising children, it should make you think of additional ways that you might serve the Lord more vigorously. And you should do this as a woman. You should vigorously seek out opportunities to excel in feminine virtues. 1 Cor 7:32-35).

Practical and theological challenge - widows roll?

What sort of character traits should this woman be seeking to develop to insure that she would be eligible for the widows roll if that need arose? (1 Tim 5:9,10). Whether you ultimately needed the assistance is not relevant. Give yourselves to these things.

Don't Avoid Fellowship With Other Ladies - Hebrews 10:24. Women are instructed to gather together to talk about feminine things and whether you have children or a husband, these gatherings provide great opportunities to serve the other women in the body and for them to learn how they can serve you.

Feminine Beauty / Apparel

1 Tim 2:8-10 , 1 Peter 3:1-6 Instruction contains both substantive principle and exemplar method. Important that we separate the two. Neither of these texts is establishing an absolute principal against the wearing of gold, fine apparel or of the braiding of the hair. Proverbs 31:21-22. The virtuous wife is defined in part by fine linen and purple clothing. God's standards were not one thing in the Old Testament and the opposite thing in the New Testament. Also, Paul addressing a culture steeped in temple prostitution and Diana worship which encouraged a gaudy, showy, tawdry dress code for its followers.

Let's not miss the main point - Women Adorned with Good Works

If you are a Christian woman, your obsession should be your spiritual wardrobe. One of the reasons we focus on the lesser thing is that externals are always easier. Which is easier - to put on frumpy clothing or to excel in good works? The main point is that women should be adorn themselves with good works to such an extent that it defines them above all other things.

The lesser (but still relevant) matters of external dress.

Propriety and Moderation - not synonyms. Propriety addresses the temptation to depart from chastity and moderation a temptation to luxuriant or immoderate expense. Both of these are enjoined.

Immodesty- A woman's physical adornment should be governed by moderation. Women should resist the temptation to *define themselves* by extravagant dress. In spite of clearly external implications (i.e., what you wear) this remains a principle that defies reduction to a simpletons dress code of do's and don'ts. It is ultimately still a matter of the heart and a matter of circumstance. It is not violated by dressing nicely as the woman in Proverbs informs us. Conversely, just because it remains a matter of the heart doesn't mean that it is a matter immune from brotherly or sisterly admonition and encouragement. Examine your heart - and perhaps take a peek at your coffee too. Examine your faith in light of the things you surround yourself with. Nothing wrong with many magazines in and of themselves and if you are going to be clothed in fine linen and purple like King Lemeul's woman of virtue, your going to need to have some idea as to what is considered fine. Just need to step back to see how much time you are devoting to following the latest fashion trends versus laboring for others.

Impropriety - Proverbs 7:10 - Ultimately still primarily an issue of the heart first and of the externals later. The main issue here is not to dress with the intent to seduce like a harlot. The temptation to depart from mental or physical chastity. We have a little more objectivity in identifying improper clothing which is tied back to the instruction in 1 Cor 12 related to distinctions within the body. Doesn't mean we slip into the relativistic quagmire of anything goes either. There are objective ethical

principals. Regarding propriety, God has given some parts of the body greater modesty than others. (1 Corinthians 12:23). Some body parts are more presentable than others.

Propriety and Moderation doesn't mean Maximum Frumpiness

1 Peter 3:1-6 - Sarah is supplied as the quintessential virtuous woman. Instruction comes to us in the context of affirming the priority of character. Sarah was a show stopper. Kings would kill for her - hence Abraham's repeated ruse whenever he entered a new kingdom with her (she is my sister). Genesis 20:1,2,11. She is the quintessential "holy woman of old" spoken of in the scriptures and she was beautiful. This is a good thing.