

Christian Parents and Christian Kids – Family Series 2026

#4 – A Theology of Clothing and Modesty – 1 Tim 2:9-10

Introduction – As your children grow up into those teen years (and before), the issue of dress, modesty must be a topic of conversation. How you dress is not an isolated individual act because how you dress, what you wear, speaks to others. We live in community, we worship together, and therefore how we dress is an indicator of whether or not we, as a Christian people, understand who we are. Avoiding sexual immorality as a culture includes thinking about how we dress. Being made male and female as a society and living in submission to God’s truth includes thinking about how we dress. Recognizing the glory of feminine beauty requires thinking about how your daughter dresses.

Eyes are Supposed to Notice – Before we deal with the details of our passage, let’s simply notice that the teaching exists because eyes notice. Men know this. Women know this. Men love to notice and women love to be noticed. And, when handled appropriately, there is nothing wrong with this. Ultimately, in the marriage relationship, this “noticing” leads to sexual intimacy (Song of Solomon 4:1-7). He notices her body, her garments, her jewelry, her perfumes (vv9-11). Sarah and Rebekah were both very beautiful women (Gen 12:14, 24:16) as was Abigail (1 Sam 25:3) and the world, along with the inspired Word of God, noticed.

Beautiful Adornment is From the Lord – In fact, to be dressed beautifully is an expression of God’s covenant love upon His people. In Isaiah 61:10 we see that salvation is glorious and wonderful; salvation is like jewelry. In Rev 21:2 we see the New Jerusalem “*coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*” Clothing, jewelry, perfumes, and hairstyles that accentuate feminine beauty are not necessarily worldly. In both of those passages, note that God has done the adorning; the Father has taken responsibility for the dressing of the bride.

Attractive or Seductive? (Isaiah 3:16-4:1) – Instead of God praising, delighting, and describing His love over His people with adornment, He is appalled at their seductiveness, immorality, and arrogance. There is a profound difference between seeking to be attractive and seeking to be seductive, yet both are using garments, makeup, jewelry and perfumes. However, these women want to strut their stuff like New York models or today’s social media sites. In the eyes of the Lord, they lack discretion like a ring of gold in a swine’s snout (Prov 11:22).

The Signs of God’s Wrath – Public lewdness, rampant immorality, over-sexualized dress, these are not signs that God will bring His judgment upon us. This is the judgment of the Lord. He regularly uses language of public nakedness and exposure as signs of His judgment (Isaiah 47:1-3, Nah 3:5, Ezek 16:37-39). There comes a time where “*even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature*” (Rom 1:26), because “*God gave them up to vile passions.*” Women become as foul as men, like the harlot in Proverbs who wipes her mouth and says, “*I have done no wickedness*” (Prov 30:20). Such a society no longer is simply noticing. Given over to the flesh, now the boys love to lust and the girls love to be lusted after.

God Speaks with Clothing - He saves and uses clothing as a metaphor. He curses and uses clothing as a metaphor. But more than a metaphor, He clothes obedience and disobedience with clothing. And we, image-bearers, do the same thing. Clothing speaks. What are you saying?

Do you want to give yourself to what is being displayed as the very judgment of God? Do you want to find God’s judgment enticing? Do you see how thinking this way can provide a stronger stand against personal temptations? And when you want to just choose what you want to wear autonomously to express your individuality, do you see how that is simply not possible while living in a community?

Modesty from the Heart (1 Tim 2:9-10) – When it comes to discussing modesty, we cannot start with hemlines; we must start with the heart. But notice first, women are to adorn themselves. There is a glory in feminine beauty and women are to honor what God has created. Consider the meaning of the words Paul uses.

Modesty, *kosmios* - The word means “respectable, honorable”. Modern definitions of “modesty” include “having or showing a moderate estimation of one’s own talents, abilities and value,” “reserve or propriety in speech, dress, or behavior,” “proceeding from a disinclination to call attention to oneself,” “free from showiness or ostentation.”

Propriety, *airos* – It means “a sense of shame or honor, reverence, regard for others,” “a shrinking away from trespassing the boundaries of propriety.” Modesty, therefore, does not seek to find the edge of the envelope. It understands the boundaries and desires to stay well within them.

Moderation, Sobriety, *sophrosune* – The word meant “soundness of mind, self-control,” “reasonableness, good-judgment.” Towards women, it had the idea of self-mastery in the physical appetites with a particular sexual nuance.

Applications for Christian Women – What you wear matters and what you wear communicates, whether you intend for it to do so or not. Because our culture is under judgment in this area, young girls especially need to commit themselves to be skeptical of the world’s fashion opinions. Instead, they should trust, unreservedly, in their mother’s and especially their father’s opinion. He knows far better what that top is saying to young men than you do. “*Strength and honor are her clothing*” (Prov 31:25) it says of the virtuous woman. Don’t ruin that strength by dishonoring what God thinks adornment should be. Do not bind yourself to the lusts of the world which are passing away (1 John 2:15-17). That is not freedom; that is slavery.

Applications for Christian Men –The sin of our culture, the worldliness of the media, none of this gives young men license to lust (Job 31:1, Matt 5:27-30). We may not, in the name of Christian liberty, watch all that the media allows us to watch, nor what our neighbor’s wife or daughter allow us to see. One of the ways that a young man shows himself to be ready to be a man, establishing his own household and taking his own wife, is that they have already set standards and said “no” to every other woman not his wife. He must learn what it means to treat young women as sisters in the Lord (1 Tim 5:2). Young men, are you already taking a stand among your peers to not give yourself to the folly they might be choosing (1 Thess 4:1-8)?

Application for Parents – Our daughters must be taught that it is no sin at all to be shaped like a woman. You must teach them that there is a glory to feminine beauty and at the same time that virginity is honorable until marriage. Both parents must provide security for the daughter to be free to come to them with any questions, doubts, or confusions. And it will take training to teach what it means to dress modestly and why – and why to trust you. Your son may stumble because of a self-control problem over fleshly appetites. Your daughter may stumble but it will be more likely over a desire for male attention, protection, and security in a pleasant relationship.

An Issue of the Heart – The outworkings of how a young woman dresses flows from a decision in her heart to be pleasing to the Lord, or not, in everything. A legalistic code will solve none of this. But if the heart is right, one cannot dress (for long) lavishly and sensually. 1 Tim 2:10 stresses that godly women are to be first adorned with good works. Calvin wrote, “*Undoubtedly, the dress of a virtuous and godly woman must differ from that of a strumpet....piety must be testified by works, this profession ought also to be visible in chaste and becoming dress.*” Calvin, a great pastor and theologian, had a practical theology of clothing, based on the Word of God. So did St. Paul. So must we.