

Genesis 2:25; 3:6-10, 21

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

21 And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." (1 Sam 16:7)

Just as it is with sexual purity, quite often when it comes to modesty, the tendency is to ask the question, "What can I get away with?", when instead we should be asking, "How can I best glorify God in this area of my life?" Today we're going to look beyond the hemline to the heart. As we have discussed in previous months, our external behaviours are the outworkings of what is going on in our hearts. When it comes to the subject of dress, if the heart behind the clothes is truly in pursuit of holiness, it will be concerned to honour God, honour the fellow believer, and be a testimony to the world. The main goal will not be to draw attention to oneself, but to glorify God. As C.J. Mahaney puts it, ***"Modesty is humility in dress"*** (1).

In order to provide a helpful background for this discussion, let's briefly remind ourselves of why we wear clothes. Read Genesis 2:25 and 3:6-10,21.

What does Genesis 2:25 tell us about the state of nakedness before the Fall?

What did Adam and Eve do once their eyes were "opened" to their nakedness?

How did God address their nakedness?

We can see here that it is God's will for us in our fallen human condition to be clothed.

As John Piper puts it:

*"Those who wish to reverse this divine decision in search of the primal innocence of the Garden of Eden are putting the cart before the horse. Until all sin is gone from our souls and from the world, being clothed is God's will for a witness to our fall. **Taking your clothes off does not put you back into pre-Fall paradise; it puts you into post-Fall shame. That's God's will. It's why modesty is a crucial post-Fall virtue.**"(2)*

1 Timothy 2:9,10

“...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 Peter 3:3,4

“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.”

So we need to wear clothes, but what does the Bible say about what to wear? Let's take a careful look at 1 Timothy 2:9 &10 to find out.

First, we should understand the context of 1 Timothy.

Paul states in 1 Timothy 3:14,15 that he is writing this letter to address how the children of God ought to behave in the church setting. Why? Because they were *not* behaving within the church setting in the areas addressed. He speaks about the men before focusing on the women, saying they must stop poisoning their worship with anger and quarrelling, and then he turns his attention to the women – telling them they should not be flaunting their wealth, beauty or sensuality, since this would be very distracting in the worship service. These female worshippers were imitating the dress of women in the Roman court, and of prostitutes. Those flaunting wealth would heap jewels and gold in their hair, and dress in extravagant garments. So the women to whom Paul is referring were showing up to church displaying either an association with the wealthy or with the seductresses. They were associating more with what the world valued than with what ought to have been valued by the children of God as they gathered to worship Him. They were putting undue emphasis on their external appearance, instead of concerning themselves with the state of their hearts (1,5).

In response to this, Paul lays out how women should adorn and carry themselves. The Greek word for adorn is *kosmos*, which basically means order, or to put in order (2,3,5).

The Greek word that Paul uses to describe godly apparel is *kosmio*, a descriptive form of kosmos. It conveys the idea that what we wear and/or how we carry ourselves should reflect and be in harmony with the orderliness of our whole being (2). In other words: if we are Christians, our external appearance and behaviour should be in keeping with a heart for God. It should identify us as belonging to Him, not to the world.

Our clothes need to fit our character first and foremost. What are some others things we should consider when choosing our wardrobe?

This addresses those who put undue emphasis on their appearance *as well as those who neglect it*. It corrects the extravagant, the seductive *and* the frumpy dresser. Many people wrongly assume that dressing respectably and modestly undermines beauty, but it is important to remember that God created beauty, and He delights in His creation! The Bible does not tell us that we can't wear nice clothes, jewelry and makeup. The Proverbs 31 woman dressed in fine clothing. The wife in Song of Solomon wore beautiful jewelry. Striving to humbly model beauty with our dress is a means of glorifying God, whereas striving to flaunt our beauty is a means of glorifying self.

The Greek word that is translated into the English word *modesty* (v.9) is **aidous** – which is based on the Greek word for shame and disgrace (2,3,5). It is a blend of modesty and humility, but is often translated as modesty. “It suggests shame, but also a corresponding sense of reverence and honour toward rightful authority. It’s the opposite of insolence, imprudence, disrespect, or audacity.” (2)

What does this mean as it relates to our clothing?

The Greek word translated as *self-control* is **sophrosune**, which means being of sound mind, curbing one’s desires and impulses, being self-controlled, temperate, showing restraint. (1,2,3,5)

How should this inform the way in which we dress?

What does Paul identify as the proper adornment of the woman who professes godliness? (in 1 Tim 2:10 and 1 Pet 3:4)

“There’s an inseparable link between your heart and your clothes. Your clothes say something about your attitude. If they don’t express a heart that is humble, that desires to please God, that longs to serve others, that’s modest, that exercises self-control, then change must begin in the heart.” (1)

Modesty Checklist**To determine if what I'm wearing is respectable:**

- Does it fit with who I am as a child of God?
- Does it fit with Christlikeness?
- Does it fit and flatter my body?
- Does it fit and flatter my femininity?
- Does it fit my age and stage of life?
- Does it fit my wardrobe?
- Does it fit my budget?
- Does it fit my needs?
- Does it fit the occasion?
- Does it fit the place I intend to wear it?

To determine if what I'm wearing is modest:

- Do these clothes properly cover me up? (make sure the answer is yes for ALL positions and actions – standing, sitting, bending, raising your arms, etc..)
- Do these clothes showcase my underlying nakedness?
- Could the way I look in these clothes tempt my brothers in Christ towards lust?

(2)

For more specific suggestions about how to examine yourself for modesty, here is a link to the **Modesty Heart Check** published by the Mahaneys: http://girltalk.blogs.com/girltalk/files/modesty_heart_check3.pdf

References:

1. C.J. Mahaney, *Wordliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World*, 2008; pp. 117-138
2. Mary Kassian, *Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*, 2010: pp.105-107
3. Greek Lexicon
4. ESV Study Bible
5. John MacArthur, *God's High Calling For Women, Part 1* – sermon on 1 Timothy 2:9; summarized in Bible Study format here: http://www.gtycanada.org/Resources/Study+Guides/40-5152_Gods-High-Calling-for-Women

Other Resources:

Lydia Brownback, *Purity: A Godly Woman's Adornment*, 2010

Lauren Winner, *Real Sex*, 2005