

## 1 Timothy 2:9-10: Biblical Modesty

**Intro:** Why am I talking about modesty at all? Especially as a guy!

1) Because as a pastor, I am literally commanded to teach women about godly modesty as Paul makes explicitly clear to Timothy right here! And to teach the whole Bible.

2) Men and women need to know what the Bible says about modesty. It is important personally and as fathers, mothers, and as Christians in general. \*I have a wife, two daughters, oversee our school, and did youth ministry for many years.\*

3) There are a lot of unbiblical ideas about modesty, and the unsaved world is hostile to any form of Christian modesty from an authoritative position. \*We will all give an account to God!\*

--When discussing modesty people often end up in one of two places. Either pulling out their rulers, or throwing their hands in the air and saying: *Let's just wait till God judges the heart.*

What does the Bible say? Neither.

--That said, I want to address the issue of biblical modesty on three levels, ending with our passage in 1 Timothy. We will begin in Genesis, as we see God's intention and heart on a very clear level right from the beginning.

--Both Jesus and Paul turned to Adam and Eve and God's original work in creation when dealing with issues relating to men and women and their various roles.

**\*Genesis 3:7+21: *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. . . Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*\***

--Biblical modesty is not a *guy issue*. It is a *God issue*.

--What do we see here in this passage? When sin enters the picture, Adam and Eve are both immediately aware of their nakedness *before God*, and work to cover their bodies. They are aware that their naked bodies are evidence of their fallen state before a holy God.

--What does God do at the end of the chapter? God covers their nakedness with the skin of an innocent substitute. It was right for Adam and Eve to be covered before God.

--Right from the beginning, God establishes something. Biblical modesty is first and foremost a God issue. Flaunting my body, my nakedness, is flaunting my sin before God. Anyone truly aware of God's presence would be covered, not naked.

--Why is this important to realize? For one, girls get upset when they hear things like: *You need to dress modestly so your brothers in Christ don't lust after you.* We make it a guy issue, but where does the Bible say that? How can my daughter keep a guy from lusting after her?

Another person's lust is outside of her ability to control—modest or not. The Bible never gives that exhortation directly.

--The Bible teaches modesty is always first and foremost a God issue, not a guy issue. We all need to dress in a way our nakedness, our sin, is covered and not flaunted. First, and foremost, we please God with our dress. God cares about our clothing.

--This needs to be the emphasis because women can dress modestly before the Lord, but still have men lust after them. That is not their fault. \*Blind guy in the old building story\*

--If modesty was primarily a guy issue, and not a God issue, Eve wouldn't have needed clothes because her husband was the only other man in the world!

--I'll illustrate this point by asking a question. Would it be okay to dress immodestly around Jesus because He would never lust after you? Certainly not! The Bible teaches us (right from the beginning) that God covered men and women with clothes because we are sinners. Modesty is the humble response of repentant men and women who know that their nakedness should not be shamefully flaunted before a holy God. We are not alone in this world doing and dressing as we like. We are all fallen creatures, accountable to our Creator, whether we realize it or not.

--The first clothes were made by God as a covering for sinful nakedness. So, let's get practical. What does that mean for modest dress? Every woman should be able to stand in front of a mirror and ask: *Would God have cut clothes like this to cover Eve's nakedness?*

--Does this clothing reveal my nakedness? Is this clothing literally designed to accentuate my body instead of cover my body? Did God cut skins as tight as skin, or to show her skin?

--Biblical modesty isn't a guy thing. It is a God thing.

**\*1 Corinthians 11:8-9: For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.\***

--Biblical modesty is not a *fairness issue*. It is a *functional issue*.

--What do we see in this passage? We see that there was an order in God's mind when He made men and women. He did not create them with fairness or bare equality in mind. He created them with equal value but different functions. Modesty isn't fair. It is functional.

--It is sort of like asking, *Why would someone make a fork and a knife? Don't they know the differences between the two are unfair?* No one complains about the unfairness of forks and knives because we understand the aim of utensils is not "fairness" but "function". The same is true in God's creation of men and women. God made men and designed them to do certain things. All men are now responsible to God for those functions. God made women and designed them to do certain things. They are now responsible to God for those functions.

--Of course, everything God created was made with good purposes in mind. God wanted a marriage to be helpful, fulfilling, and multiply humanity. For that greater purpose, God designed Eve to be attractive. She was *designed* that way! God knew physical attraction would be a good and healthy part of a functional marriage and His goal of procreation. When God made men and women, His aim was function—to fulfill His very good purpose—not fairness.

--Why is that important for us to understand? Because God's specific commands to women to dress modestly are not about "fairness" but responsibility.

--Women have been given a gift of beauty and charm, unlike men, that fits into God's designs for companionship in His purpose and procreation. Modesty becomes the responsibility of beauty.

--Because of differences in function and responsibility, God gives different commands to men and women. Those commands are not fair across the board, but they are proper responsibilities for the creation before its Creator. Men are to be responsible with what God has given them. Women with what God has given them.

--God recognizes distinctions between men and women, even in their clothing, and commands a clear distinction in functional clothing between men and women!

**\*Deuteronomy 22:5: A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.\***

--The Bible also recognizes the immodest dress of a woman trying to use her beauty for sinful purposes—selfish purposes other than what God created her for. The harlot dressed provocatively to use her beauty for herself and not God.

**\*Proverbs 7:10: And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.\*** -

--The temptress of **Proverbs 5-7** is another obvious example. God does not warn women about men in the same way. Why? For the same reason, we do not warn people about cutting food with their forks. It is obvious, forks are not designed for cutting. Knives have warnings about how sharp they are *because* they are designed to cut.

--Women are commanded to dress modestly *because* they are designed to attract. Men are not warned about modesty in the same way women are because God did not create men with the same functional gift of beauty and attraction.

--The Word of God directly speaks to men and warns them about lusting after an immoral woman's beauty: **Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids (Proverbs 6:25)**. Again, this shows function. Women are not given a similar warning to beware of a man's beauty because the designed attraction is not the same.

--Women are warned not to tempt because they are created with a greater capacity to attract. Scriptures warn women not to be temptresses, but never warn men the same way. Women are never commanded *not* to be beautiful. They are commanded not to exploit their beauty for their own purposes. The difference is subtle but crucial.

--Godly women should not “dress to impress” sexually—or even just a bit sexually. Once a godly woman dresses modestly before the Lord, she doesn't have to think about men.

--Now, let me make it clear that nothing justifies a man's lust. The Bible does not accuse Tamar of immodesty because of the raging lust of Amnon, who unjustly rapes her. Men who are seduced have no excuse and are likened to foolish animals on their way to the slaughterhouse. Even if a woman is actively pursuing sexual sin, men are called by God to imitate Joseph and say, **How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God (Genesis 39:9)?**

--For men, self-control becomes the responsibility of their functional leadership and strength, given by God. Men *can* take advantage of women because God made them physically stronger. They should not! It is an abuse of their functional advantage.

--For women, modesty becomes the responsibility of their functional beauty and charm, given by God. Women can take advantage of their beauty because of how God made them. They should not! Neither responsibility is about fairness. Both are about function.

--The sad thing about all of this is something divinely beautiful happens when men see women as beautiful. God designed human relationships and attraction. Even the unsaved world acknowledges the inherent beauty of a noble love story. Agur says in the Proverbs that one of the things on earth he cannot understand because it is so wonderful is ***the way of a man with a virgin***. Even in a fallen world, a divine witness remains in the beauty of a romance between a man and a woman. Few things on this earth are more extraordinary for the couple involved, or society in general, than a man taking a woman into the loving covenant of marriage and then remaining faithful to one another in that covenant all their lives.

--Unfortunately, this God-designed function is hampered by sin. Sin has affected men's responsibilities to lead, protect, and love purely and loyally. Sin has twisted their functional relationship with women. In like manner, sin has affected women in their functional responsibilities to influence, help, and respect. Where God has designed something good and life-giving, sin has brought about adultery, rape, pornography, harems, abortion, abuse, prostitution, sex trafficking, divorce, etc.

--*Modesty is not about "fairness" between men and women but our responsibility to recognize how God made us.* Modesty is evidence that a woman is walking in the fear of the Lord and willingly placing every aspect of her life under His authority as Creator. God commands women to dress and live modestly. The world tells them to be free, themselves, and unchained from legalistic demands. The world says: *If you got it, flaunt it!*

--Modesty is a woman's responsible stewardship of her God-given beauty.

--Look at yourself in the mirror and ask: *Whose authority is my beauty under? Does my dress say my beauty is my own? the world's? or my Creator's?*

--Biblical modesty is not a fairness issue. It's a functional issue.

**\*1 Timothy 2:9-10: *In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.\****

--Biblical modesty is not a cultural issue. It's a church issue.

--Another common complaint about modesty centers around culture. People complain that their clothes are culturally accepted. *Everybody wears it!* is the common refrain. If no one in our culture would recognize our dress as immodest, why should the church? In this line of thought, the parents or church insisting on modest dress comes off as the typical legalistic.

--Have certain denominations or fellowships been legalistic about dress? Of course! But just because some Christians have been legalistic about modesty does not mean that all appeals to modesty are legalistic.

--How can we measure what is and what is not legalistic when it comes to modesty? How could you tell if I am teaching something legalistic right now? Not by measuring modesty by the unsaved culture around us. Only by looking at the Word of God! God doesn't look at the culture around us to gauge modesty!

--What does God have to say to women *in the church* about their dress? The most explicit apostolic command is found right here.

--***In like manner also, that the women. . .*** brings us to a command specifically related to the women of the church. Just as the previous command was related to the men. Timothy was to teach women *in the church* modesty, not women in the world. Paul and Timothy were Christ's messengers who laid the foundation for how things should be ordered in the house of God and the Christian community. This command, and everything I am saying tonight, only matters for those who are born again and sincerely desire to honor God with their whole life.

--***adorn themselves with modest apparel. . .*** Notice that this is a pretty general command. Paul does not urge women in the church to measure their modesty by any cultural measuring stick. Christian women are not given an ideal of outer beauty or outer clothing to conform to. How many current people wear a particular style does not come into the equation. What are these Christian women given? How are they to think about ***modest apparel?***

--What does Paul say?

--First their clothes should be ***modest***. The idea is well-arranged or in moderation—not flaunting or alluring. Also, not overly religious and legalistic. Immodesty can run in either direction. We focus on the sexual since that is the primary pressure in our society, but dressing to leverage our social or religious pride is also sinfully immodest. Jesus never made broad His phylacteries (small leather boxes holding Scripture worn by the Pharisees).

--Their dress should be ***with propriety and moderation. . .***

--***propriety*** or your Bible may say *shamefacedness*, is a unique word in the Greek and has the idea of godly reserve. It describes the desire to stay far away from sinful boundary lines.

--***moderation*** means with good sense or sanity. It describes someone dressing maturely and soberminded—not immature or intoxicated with worldly fads as Paul describes next.

--***not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing***. In that day, it was common to plait or decorate braids with wealth like gold or pearls as a status symbol. The braided hair was meant to stand out and sparkle. It was flaunting style. The opposite of moderation.

\*King (1 Timothy: A Leader Led): *“These severe words of the apostle are not to be taken as a plea for frumpishness, but as a warning against immodesty and extravagance. Ladies! Look nice; but for pity's sake be natural!”\**

--A modest woman knows what she is doing when she is dressing before the Lord. She is not thoughtless of God or His purposes. She is a sinner saved by grace. She is reflective of Christ as her Head, her husband, and her place as a member of His body. She knows her purpose is to be salt and light in a wicked and dark generation.

--(10) **but, which proper for women professing godliness.**

--Modest clothing, simple, sober, and well-ordered, fits with our Christian profession. At worst, this means no Christian woman should dress in a manner that would cause the unsaved world around her to be surprised if they discovered she was a Christian. At best, this command instructs a woman to dress in such a way she becomes a living example of what a godly woman should look like. Practically, immature Christian women can look to her as a *proper* or fitting pattern of Godlikeness.

--Maybe a simple way to put it would be like this: If every woman in her church dressed like her, the fellowship would please God and maintain an excellent witness to the world. \*The hypocrisy of in person modesty and online immodest social media is a serious problem.\*

--Now, these general spiritual principles may not seem very helpful. We want people to tell us where the line is, but often, we want specifics for the wrong reasons. We want more particulars so we can get closer to the line. In reality, God is wise, and knows what we need. God did not list particulars when it came to modest clothing. He knew His Church was going to fill the world and touch every tribe, nation, tongue, and culture. A piece-by-piece dress code or uniform for Christians through the ages would have never worked!

--Instead, God inspired the apostle Paul to write 1 Timothy. If these principles are followed, it will be enough for any Christian woman in any day and age until the Lord's return. What does this mean practically? It means what the culture around us is wearing in terms of clothing and style has nothing to do with us! We are not of the world. We are only in it; not of it. **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world (John 17:16).**

--Paul wants every woman in the church to think about the fact she is a witness and ambassador of Christ in this world. The church is the Bride of Christ. The church is not here to represent, express, or fulfill its desires. The church is not here on earth to blend in. The church is not on earth to be comfortable. The church is on earth to be a witness. The church is in this world as salt and light. Our dress—for both men and women—is a part of that witness.

--We are supposed to be seen and recognized as different. We are not here simply to wear comfortable, stylish clothes on the way to heaven. We are certainly not here to draw attention to ourselves. Paul, the apostle, is clear: Christian women must be taught to wear modest clothing to reflect the reality that they are godly witnesses in what they wear and how they act! Paul does not give us the space to be Christians without being salt and light. Christian women should both *profess* godliness and *dress* godliness.

--Now, in a sex-obsessed, attention-obsessed culture, with virtually no moral boundaries, a modest and godly sexuality will look like “sexual repression” or “body shaming”. The unsaved world will never understand those who are born of the Spirit. Their reason for living is in themselves. Our reason for living is in Christ. This tension is why the discussion around modesty can never be cultural. We are called to modesty, whether our culture is modest or not—ours is most definitely not! We are citizens of heaven. We are strangers and pilgrims.

--Now, do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that all godly women need to dress like nuns, in burlap sacks, or like it's the 1800s. That would be legalistic. Paul does not say anything like that. Beautiful and quality clothing is fine, but immodest clothing is not.

--In fact, proper clothing is a sign of a faithful woman, as we see in **Proverbs 31:21-25**. The Bride of Christ will be beautifully adorned (**Rev. 19:7-8**). Godly women reflect their godliness in their clothing, and God created women to reflect His beauty, order, wisdom, influence, and function.

--Yet, Paul makes it clear that godly and modest women should express themselves most clearly through the channel of **good works**. \*How much time & money is spent on the superficial?\*

\*Trapp (New Testament Commentary): "And it is a sure sign of a base mind, to think that one can make himself great with anything that is less than himself; or that he can win more credit by his garments than by his graces."\*

--The heart that sincerely wants to please God through modesty is very precious in His sight. The desire for modesty is reflective of holy desire and genuine faith in Him. **Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands (1 Peter 3:3-5).**

--It is not weird that modesty is sometimes hard to measure. It is not weird that women mess up and sometimes dress immodestly. It is not weird that immature Christians will grow from immodesty to modesty. It is not even weird that Christian men and women fail in matters of sexual purity. What is weird is when Christians ignore God's intention for His church and act like His standard is the same as the unsaved world! The unsaved world is passing away and under God's judgment. That is why assuming or arguing modesty is a cultural thing is foolish. Those who say things like: *Everybody wears it!* or *Everybody posts like that!* are assuming biblical modesty should be determined by worldly cultural standards.

--How should we answer those types of complaints? The same way every faithful father speaks to his daughters about other kids. *Those are not my kids. You are.* God orders His house on the values of heaven. We are to have our homes under the same banner. We are to live our lives as the Bride of Christ. To organize our lives or homes based on culture, and not our identity and character as the church, is confusion at best and compromise at worst. No wonder so many Christians are more ashamed to dress modestly than to dress worldly!

--You may have heard someone say something like this: *God does not care about what we wear. He only cares about our hearts.* I get what they mean when the sentiment is said in the context of coming to Christ for salvation, but that statement is clearly not true after we are saved. Yes, God is more concerned with the inner motives of our hearts than our wardrobes, but God knows a godly, regenerated heart living in the Holy Spirit will necessitate major wardrobe changes. Once we have new life, God expects that new life to grow and mature in Christlikeness.

--In the Old Testament, a change in clothing for the people of Israel reflected a change in their hearts. Foreign clothing was outward evidence of shifting heart loyalty. ***And it shall be, in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel (Zephaniah 1:8)***. Sadly, Israel's adoption of foreign apparel was an outward sign of the inward reality they had also adopted foreign gods. They no longer wanted to be known or recognized in the style and attire of the common Hebrew, and God sent a prophet to rebuke them for it.

--Jesus knows our hearts, and that is *why* He cares about our clothes. Clothing is not meant to draw attention to us. Remember, clothing was given as a covering for the shameful nakedness caused by sin. Employing clothing to draw attention to ourselves is the opposite of what God did with that first pair of clothes. God is displeased when clothing is worn pridefully.

--God was not happy with the prideful attire of the women in Jerusalem, and His displeasure was made known through the prophet Isaiah.

***\*Isaiah 3:16-24: Moreover the LORD says: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a jingling with their feet, therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will uncover their secret parts." In that day the Lord will take away the finery: the jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; the headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; the perfume boxes, the charms, and the rings; the nose jewels, the festal apparel, and the mantles; the outer garments, the purses, and the mirrors; the fine linen, the turbans, and the robes. And so it shall be: instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.\****

--*Because* Jesus knew the hearts of all men, He condemned the dress of the Pharisees, which was outwardly modest in terms of sexual allure but immodest in terms of religious pride. He rebuked them, saying: ***But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments (Matthew 23:5)***.

--Jesus also warned: ***Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive the greater condemnation (Luke 20:46-47)***.

--Clearly, God cares about *what* His people wear and *how* we wear it. Instead of being clothed like the world or clothed to be seen by men, the church should be clothed with humility. ***Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility (1 Peter 5:5)***. Are we dressing with the express aim of drawing the attention of others? Jesus knows if we are dressing *to be seen by men* or *if seen by men*. There is a world of difference between those two motives!



--The humble woman does not dress to accentuate her sexual appeal or collect attention. The humble man is not dressed to project position, power, or to establish a higher societal status.

--God commands His daughters through the apostle Paul, to dress in modest apparel, which is proper for *women* professing godliness. This command has nothing to do with our current worldly culture. It has to do with the culture of heaven. It concerns His church, which He bought with His own blood. You don't own yourself. Your body is His. ***For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6:20).***

--If the temple is His, then so are the tapestries.

--Who is the Bride of Christ called to glorify and please? God! Modesty is one of the easiest ways for Christian women to be a witness. If the world sees Christian women dressed modestly in person, online, and living godly, they will ask why they are different, especially when they used to be like the world but are now washed, cleansed, and sanctified!

--If you have recently been saved, all your unsaved friends should notice that your establishment is under new management and that the decorations reflect a new CEO and His holy character.

--The path of modesty is narrow, and only a remnant walks that way. The path of immodesty is broad, and many are walking that way. But remember, dear sisters, in the end, when you step into glory, you will join a much larger fellowship of modest, godly women with whom God will be so, so pleased. Eternally pleased! ***But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised (Proverbs 31:30).***

--Look at yourself in the mirror and ask: *Am I dressed in a way that represents my place in the church of God or my place in the current worldly culture?*

--Biblical modesty is a church issue. Not a cultural issue.