

Clothed For Christ

A brother asked me to discuss modesty during our time together. He expressed concern over what he sees online. I appreciate how he mentioned a concern for both men and women. This shouldn't come as a surprise to you, brethren. That our world struggles with modesty shouldn't shock anyone. However, we also struggle with this from time to time within the body. It's not unusual to see someone pulled from the darkness into the marvelous light, but their dress may not reflect that just yet. We don't need to rush to judgment - as you know, it's a process. Not everyone who comes to Jesus has the same background. What seems normal to you is not normal to your neighbor, and vice versa. The more we're part of the world, the more normal it feels. In other words, the changes often required when following Jesus are not always as obvious. Example: someone who practiced lying, stealing from time to time, or using obscene language may quickly identify it as sinful, but wondering whether what they're wearing is appropriate may not be as obvious. Some clothing would be, but not all of it. They understand that wearing a bikini to services probably wouldn't be a stellar idea, but have never been challenged about wearing one at the beach.

So, I'm happy to talk about this, and as always, will do my best to honor God's word and speak truthfully - no more or less. I looked at my sermon the last time I preached on this. There are certain elements that I don't care to spend as much time on, but suffice it to say that we understand that dress communicates. It certainly did for Israel. If you were a priest, your dress was unique, holy, meant for beauty, and hid your nakedness. Or a man wasn't supposed to dress like a woman and vice versa. That was an abomination to God. They didn't mix wool and linen, and they had tassels on the corners to separate them from other nations. Sometimes their garments communicated they were widows, and sometimes they could cover their faces in a way that communicated they were prostitutes. And [Proverbs 7:10-12](#) not only speaks of a woman dressed as a prostitute, but also of her "loud" behavior. There are other examples, but you get the idea. Jesus would use dress in His parables, like being dressed for a wedding and wearing the right garments. What you wear says something about you. Brethren, I'm not saying anything you don't know.

Let's get to the point. Here's what you're looking for:

- [1 Timothy 2:8-10](#) I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that 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 3:3-6](#) 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. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

- **Proverbs 31:24-26** She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
- **Isaiah 3:18-23** In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.
- **Matthew 23:5-7** They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

Brethren: this goes beyond what we're wearing. Oddly enough, we're concerned about what people are taking off, and these passages deal with what they're putting on! Not to say we shouldn't be concerned about others taking too much off and it being immodest. What's the principle? What's it about? It's about character. A modest character dresses with modesty, self-control, and respect because it expresses WHO they are. It's good to ask, "What should I wear?", but it needs to go deeper, because the New Testament principally addresses this topic in a bigger way. We understand that God isn't telling us all to wear inner and outer garments at all times, though that was the typical dress. I think we know we're not asking for a precise length. If I said they typically went below the knees and the tunic was typically half-sleeved, is that the answer? We understand there are cultural considerations in this discussion, so how should we navigate them?

- **What is it?**

- It's the need to be seen.
- It's the opposite of humility and meekness.
- It's the lack of self-control.
- It's the desires of the flesh.
- One way is how you dress (putting on or taking off).

- **Consider your neighbor?**

- If your neighbor, who may not serve God, judges it as immodest, let's at least begin there.
 - School dress code? Maybe "casual Fridays" at work? I picked this because it's everyday wear. If the "world" criticizes it, then let's take note. The world wouldn't say, "Well, as long as you're not naked." That doesn't cut it for them, and it shouldn't for you either. In the Bible, nakedness is shameful. I think the world, for the most part, gets this as well.
- Your neighbor doesn't need a stumbling block. They've got enough traps to avoid as it is. This goes for men and women. "Control your thoughts" is a fool's comment. How about controlling yourself? Why? Because . . .

- **Consider yourself!**

- **1 Peter 2:9-12** You're not of the world. You're a priest of God.
- **Titus 2:9-14** Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so

that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.

- **1 Peter 5:5** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- God shouldn't have to twist our arms, brethren. We should be mature at this point. We should seek, not only to know what offends God, but what pleases Him. We should not only ask, "Is this wrong for my neighbor, but does it help my neighbor?" We should care about how we present ourselves. We should want to exercise self-control.
- If you're not sure - ask someone you believe walks with God and exercises self-control, modesty, and wisdom.