

# The Soul of Modesty

Mahaney Sermons

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**Bible Text:** Timothy 2:8-10

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This message by C J Mahaney titled “The Soul of Modesty” is the final message in a six part series titled “In the World, but not of the World,” which is made available to you from Sovereign Grace Ministries. It was recorded at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. C J serves as senior pastor of Covenant Life Church and leads Sovereign Grace Ministries.

Change of Voice:

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter two and I will begin reading in verse eight.

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.<sup>1</sup>

Let’s pray.

*Father, it is certainly not unusual for me to feel so deeply my need for you, my dependence upon you. And I thank you that as the years pass that sense of need and dependence only increases. So here I am again, Lord, announcing publicly what I have already communicated to you privately. I need you. Be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I thank you that over the years not only has my awareness of my need for you and my dependence upon you increased, but my confidence in you has increased as well, my confidence in your character and my confidence in your promises. So, Lord, I proceed not simply dependent. I proceed confident, confident that you are good and desire to do good to your people, confident that you are faithful to your promises, faithful to your Word, faithful to your words when your Word is proclaimed to the Church gathered. So I thank you for the innumerable assurances from your Word of your character and of your promises, of your care for your people and your care for me. And so my heart is filled*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 2:8-10.

*with gratefulness, dependence and confidence and you, by your Spirit, will obtain the attention of each and every person in this auditorium this morning and grant them the gift of illumination that they would hear from you, that they would receive grace from you, that they would be transformed by you and that you would derive much pleasure from what takes place this morning and that it would result in much fruit for your glory. I pray and I thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.*

It was a question I did not anticipate. The occasion was one of the celebration events last year. It was immediately after the morning session had concluded. I had the privilege to then spend lunch and the afternoon with the guest speaker who is also a dear friend. As we drove away from the campus we immediately began our discussion and I did fully anticipate that the hours that lay ahead would be filled with all manner of question, all manner of exploring, all manner of topics both theological and practical. But I didn't anticipate the question he would ask just moments after we drove away from the facility.

He turned to me and he said, "Do you think the women in PDI dress modestly?" An exact quote of the exact question he asked me.

It was a question. It wasn't a conclusion. It was apparent he was concerned. The question immediately arrested my attention. And I sought to draw him out.

Knowing his humility, his care for me, his care for all in PDI, I sought to benefit from his evaluation and to consider his observations. And so I asked and inquired about the origin of his question and his concern.

At one point I said to him, "Have you ever observed my wife in any piece of clothing that you would consider immodest?"

And he violently reacted with an emphatic no.

And I said, "Have you ever observed my daughters in any piece of clothing that you would consider immodest?"

And his reaction was immediate and equally violent in protest.

And I said, "Well, I need to ask you these questions because," I said, "It begins with me. Any evaluation of PDI would begin with me and my wife and should begin with me and my wife and my daughters." I said, "And then it should extend to the pastoral team and their wives." So I said, "Would you have observed in any PDI context among the wives of any pastor immodest dress that has caused you concern?"

And he assured me he had not.

And so the conversation continued as I sought to draw him out and learn from him.

I asked him at one point, “Well, how would you approach the topic? How would you address the subject?”

And, though sincere, I found his suggestions both few and familiar. And I explained to him that from my perspective, I don’t think there is a lack of teaching on modesty in PDI. I said, “I think the challenge is specific application of that teaching.”

Though it is imperative that we teach from Scripture on modesty, it is far more difficult to specifically describe and illustrate immodesty in the context of a message. And he agreed.

I continued to appeal for wise suggestions and finally all he could recommend was, “Well, maybe you could do a fashion show.”

And I sought to seize that for a humorous moment of interaction, not considering that a wise alternative.

Well, I hope this message this morning proves more effective than a fashion show.

During that conversation I realized that I must address this topic at some point, so this morning is my attempt to care for you, to challenge you, to address you on this subject from Scripture as your senior pastor and as a father of three godly daughters to add my voice to Carolyn’s teaching on modesty to the women and to commend the wives of our pastoral team and the majority of women in this church who are, indeed, an example to all of the modesty described here in 1 Timothy. I commend you and I thank you.

Now, ladies, in this message, I am primarily addressing you, though it does have application to men and, sadly, increasingly so in our culture. I want you to be aware that I will be addressing the men on topics relevant to them this Saturday at our men’s meeting and in the fall on our men’s retreat. So I am not ignoring the biblical concerns for men.

But I think, ladies, I think you will agree with me that not only does Scripture isolate this topic as a particular concern for women, but your experience would confirm this as well.

George Knight in the *New International Greek Testament Commentary on 1 Timothy*, writes the following.

“Adornment and dress is an area with which women are often concerned and in which there are dangers immodesty or indiscretion.”

And so motivated by a genuine concern for the women of this church, I will attempt to address this topic this morning. Ladies, I would only ask this morning that you work hard applying this message to your own heart and life. Please do not assume that you are sufficiently mature in heart or modest in dress and please avoid the temptation to busy yourselves applying this message to someone else seated nearby this morning.

The title of today's message is, "The Soul of Modesty." The title is intentional and informed by Scripture. It draws attention, first and foremost, to the heart, not appearance. I will seek to make three points, to draw three points from this passage this morning. Number one, the attitude of the modest woman; number two, the appearance of the modest woman; and, number three, the allegiance of the modest woman.

But we begin, we intentionally begin with the heart. We begin with the attitude of the modest woman.

Any biblical discussion of modesty begins by addressing the heart, not the hemline. And the emphasis upon the heart is undeniably present in this passage. Let me draw your attention to verse nine and let me draw your attention to the phrase, "with modesty and self-control."<sup>2</sup>

The "women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel."<sup>3</sup> That would be her appearance. And her attitude is emphasized, her motive is emphasized in the following, "...with modesty and self-control."<sup>4</sup>

All respectable apparel is the fruit of a godly heart. Ladies, your wardrobe is a public statement of your personal and private motivation. And if you profess godliness, your motivation is to be distinct from our culture as it relates to appearance and dress and fashion. It is to be motivated by modesty and self control.

First, modesty or propriety. It is the avoidance of clothing and adornment that is extravagant, showy, revealing or sexually enticing.

Listen. Immodesty is much more than wearing a low cut skirt or a dress. Immodesty is an expression of arrogance. Immodesty reveals the absence of humility. Immodesty is the act of drawing undue attention to yourself.

A modest heart always precedes modest dress. Modesty is humility expressed in dress, a desire to serve others, particularly men, and not promote or provoke sensuality or lust. Modesty, self control.

This will be the topic and theme of the Titus two classes in April, self control. It means restraint. It means moderation for the purpose of purity.

Now I think you will agree with me that modesty and self control would be foreign to the overly majority of women who walk through at present Lake Forest, Montgomery or White Flint Mall. Modesty and self control are certainly foreign to the fashion designers. Their goal in designing clothes is sensual provocation. That is their motive. That is their

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy 2:9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

purpose. Modesty and self control are distinctly present in the godly woman. And they make a distinct difference in her dress and in her wardrobe.

John MacArthur has written, “How does a woman discern the sometimes fine line between proper dress and dressing to be the center of attention? The answer,” he writes, “starts in the intent of the heart.” That is exactly right, which is where Paul starts here. “The answer starts in the intent of the heart. A woman should examine her motives and goals for the way she dresses. Is her intent to show the grace and beauty of womanhood? Is it to reveal a humble heart devoted to worshipping God? Or is it to call attention to herself and flaunt her beauty, or worse, to attempt to allure men sexually? A woman who focuses on worshipping God will consider carefully how she is dressed, because her heart will dictate her wardrobe and appearance.”

Some questions, ladies, to ask in relation to modesty and self control as the intent of your heart in relation to dress and wardrobe. What statement do your clothes make about your heart? There really is an inseparable relationship between your heart and your clothes.

Number two, is your shopping for clothes and purchase of clothes informed and governed by modesty and self control? Do you take God to the Gap?

Third, in choosing clothing for this morning, whose attention do you desire and whose approval do you crave?

The attitude of the modest woman.

Second, the appearance of the modest woman. Please note, again, in verse nine, “omen should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire.”<sup>5</sup>

Now, it is very important that we note the context of this passage. For beginning in chapter two, concluding at the end of chapter three, Paul is clearly addressing the church gathered. This is the context is addressing the local church and related to the corporate gathering of the church.

Please note in chapter three and verse 15 he writes to Timothy, “If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God.”<sup>6</sup>

Now certainly these restrictions, these directions, these instructions, these commands are not restricted to the corporate gathering of the church, but they are particularly related to the church gathered. When the church gathers, as the church gathers, Paul wants there to be no disruptions and no distractions to worship and prayer and teaching.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 2:9.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15.

So in verse eight he addresses the men. Let there be no disruption by the men due to anger and quarrelling And in verse nine and 10 he addresses the women. Let there be no distraction by the women due to their dress.

He does not want there to be any distraction when the church gathers by the woman through ostentatious or immodest dress. He wants the women to adorn themselves in respectable apparel, not with braided hair, gold, pearls or costly attire.

Now it would appear that the most acute problem Paul is addressing at this time were women who through their dress, thought their ostentatious dress, separated themselves from the poor and identified sinfully with the wealthy. The dress here that is described by Paul, braided hair, pearls, gold, costly attire, would have been part of the cultural caricature of wealthy women or, at worst, part of the attire of prostitutes.

Please don't misunderstand. The issue here isn't braided here or gold or pearls or costly attire in and of themselves. The issue here is the association. The issue here is the association through this attire with values that are clearly worldly and not godly.

At this time dress of this kind was a statement of association, a statement of identification with the world and ultimately drew attention to that individual. So please do not conclude from this passage that there his categorical prohibition against a woman enhancing her appearance. I do not believe that is accurate. I do not believe that can be justified or substantiated from this passage or any other passage.

And, again, to quote Mr. Knight and his commentary he writes, "The reason for Paul's prohibition of elaborate hairstyles, ornate jewelry and extremely expensive clothing becomes clear when one reads in the contemporary literature of the inordinate time, expense and effort that elaborately braided hair and jewels demanded, not just as ostentatious display, but also as the mode of dress of harlots."

So context is clearly important in understanding this passage. And it is not a categorical prohibition for any woman to enhance her beauty. Proverbs 31 woman dressed colorfully and it appears with a high quality of clothing. Undeniably the bride in the Song of Songs adorned herself with jewelry. Esther was involved in 12 months of beauty treatments. You can draw a lot of conclusion from that. We will exercise charitable judgments toward Esther this morning.

Ladies, the issue isn't so much what. It is why. These are illustrations of an association, an identification with the sinful, worldly culture and Paul does not want those associations to characterize the appearance of the godly woman. And they become a distraction, particularly in the context of corporate worship.

Now listen carefully. There is timeless relevance and discernment for us in this passage. Timeless. Because we must do the hard work necessary to discern what statement our hair and our attire is making today.

You must ask yourself. Is your appearance and dress consistent with biblical values of modesty and self control and respectable apparel. Or, does your hairstyle, does your dress reveal an inordinate identification and fascination with sinful cultural values?

Ladies, who inspires your dress? Who through your dress are you identifying with? Are your role models the godly women of Scripture or the worldly women of our culture? Are your role models Esther, Deborah, Sarah? Or are your role models Brittany Spears and Hally Berry?

Ladies, your dress is not to be an identification or association with this sinful culture. It is not to be a distraction to the church gathered and it is not to draw undue attention to you.

Now in this passage there seems to be this through dress association with wealth and, obviously, that is an unacceptable distraction. That would not be my concern for this church. I think the potential for distraction as described here is found far more in immodest sensual dress than ostentatious dress. And it is no small challenge to address this concern, because great potential for misunderstanding exists.

I hope to avoid all misunderstanding. I hope you hear my heart. I hope you feel my care. Most of all I hope you consider and submit to holy Scripture knowing the goodness of God and knowing that it is God's good purpose for you to include this command and provide you with this discernment.

Here would be pastoral remarks, personal remarks. First, I want to thank all the ladies who dress modestly. And that would be the overwhelming majority of ladies in this church. On behalf of the men, we are deeply grateful. And here would be my perspective on those who dress immodestly. In my experience, I am speaking from my experience, in my experience many, most who dress immodestly are ignorant. Now that is a charitable judgment and in many if not most cases, I believe an accurate judgment. Young ladies in particular can be ignorant of the war with lust men daily confront. Young ladies in particular simply don't have a clue about what is actually going in the mid of a man, young or old.

They are often ignorant of the effect of their bodies on the eyes and the hearts of men. They are often ignorant that men are visually stimulated.

But after this message, no lady here can claim ignorance.

And a few months ago, in order to serve you ladies and hopefully persuade you ladies, I asked two of the pastors to provide me with testimonies of men in the church. I wanted you not only to hear my heart and hear this exhortation, most importantly hear from holy Scripture, I wanted you to hear from some men in the church. And these men are to be commended for providing me with their testimony, giving me permission to read their testimony and I just want all the men to know I cannot read from each testimony, but I found myself on holy ground as I read each and every testimony. Your commitment to

purity provoked me and I thank you and I respect you and it is a privilege to serve with you.

Different guys were students and so they would take a section to describe what it was like to be on campus every day prior to transitioning to what it is was like to be in church. One writes, "Each and every day on campus is a battle."

Listen carefully, ladies. This is not an aberration. This is not an unusual testimony. This is the norm.

"Each and every day on campus is a battle, a battle against my sin, a battle against temptation, a battle against my depraved mind. Every morning I have to cry out for mercy, strength and a renewed conviction to flee youthful lusts. The Spirit is faithful to bring me the renewal I need to prepare me to do war against my sin. Yet the temptation still exists. I am thankful God has created me to be attracted to women. However, campus is a loaded minefield. There are girls everywhere and it is guaranteed that I will pass some attractive girls as I walk in between classes. I either have to be actively engaging my mind and my spirit to praying, quoting Scripture, listening to worship music or simply looking at the sidewalk to make it through unscathed. Many days it takes all four to be safe.

"The thing that women do not seem to fully grasp is that the temptation towards lust does not stop for us as men. It is continual. It is aggressive. It does all it can to lead men down to death.

"They have a choice to help or deter its goal."

Consider this message my appeal on behalf of the men for you to help us deter the goal of lust in our lives.

Sometimes when I see a girl provocatively dressed I will say to myself, "She probably doesn't even know that 101 guys are going to devour her in their minds today." But then, again, maybe she does. To be honest, I don't know the truth, the truth of why she chooses to dress the way she does, the way she chooses to walk, the way she chooses to act. I don't know, because I have never sat down with a girl and asked her why. All I need to know is that the way she presents herself to the world is bait for my sinful mind to latch on to and I need to avoid it all costs.

He continues, "For the most part the church serves as a sanctuary from the continual barrage of temptation towards sin. However, the church's members are not free from sin yet and there are girls both ignorant and knowledgeable of men's sinful tendencies. I must confess that even church can have several mines scattered about. To the girls who are ignorant, please serve your brother and have your dad screen your wardrobe. Ask him how you can better choose holiness over worldliness. He is a guy. He knows more than you do on the issue. And to the girls who don't follow the pattern of the world, thank you

a million times over. You are following Scripture's commands and helping your brothers in the process."

Another gentleman writes, "Having said all that, if I could say anything to the women in the church it would be this. First, there is not a man I know that doesn't struggle in some way with lust. If they had any idea what went through guy's minds it would probably vastly change the way they dress. Secondly, and I think most importantly, God has created his Church to be a resting place for Christians, to be a place where people encounter God without all the distractions. It is disappointing when I walk into the church or an event with the church and have to deal with the same temptations that I face in the world. But I rejoice whenever I see a girl or woman that is attempting to serve the Lord and guys by dressing modestly. You have no idea how sweet and challenging it is when I see a woman who has decided not to flaunt her body like the culture shouts for her to do, but rather she has decided that serving the Lord and her brothers is more important. Glory to God for women like that. And let us be a church with men who are committed to purity and women who are committed to modesty."

One more voice I want you to hear.

"At church, the one place where I might think not to have to face temptation is at church, but this is not always the case. When ladies that I am friends with dress immodestly it definitely has a negative effect on our friendship. When she dresses immodestly, it doesn't make it easy to see her as a sister in Christ. There is a constant battle going on as I am talking with her. Communication becomes more difficult because as I am trying to listen to her, I am also trying to fight temptation. I also think some ladies just aren't aware."

I agree. I appreciate the fact that I didn't inform these men of my position and my experience. Please note these testimonies are filled with charitable judgments and these men are assuming ignorance, as I have this morning.

I also think some ladies just aren't aware that even little things can distract guys a lot. Showing even a little part of their stomach, wearing bags that have a strap that goes between their breasts, et cetera.

"I am so grateful," he writes, "for the friendships that God has given me over the past year and a half and for the godly ladies in my care group. I am so appreciative of the sacrifice that these ladies make to glorify God and to serve and care for the guys. I heard a story of one of the ladies in our ministry who went shopping and really liked a shirt she was trying on, but then she thought, no, I can't do this to the guys. That was the first time I had ever heard of anything like that and it made me so grateful. It is such a blessing to have friends who care for me enough to be selfless and sacrifice what might look attractive in order to help me and other guys with sexual lust. When ladies dress modestly it is attractive. Oh, yes it is. There is more attractive than a godly woman dressed modestly and makes me want to hang out with them more. I think modestly is so

attractive and helpful in friendship because it makes it easier of a friendship to be centered around God and for fellowship to be unhindered.”

Now, ladies, because there are many things I can't address, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to address, what I did was I asked my wife Carolyn and she was assisted by my daughter Nicole and Janelle to create this. It is called a modesty check. And it is available for you at the welcome center today as a gift. It is available only for fathers mothers and daughters. It is not available for single men. It is as specific as I think it needs to be and it resolves my frustration that teaching on modesty in general isn't sufficient. Someone must address specifics without fear of Legalism, motivated by grace for the purpose of godliness. And I believe these ladies have done just that. So that is available as well as if you didn't have the most recent copy of *Sovereign Grace* magazine where there are articles by Carolyn on both biblical femininity as well as true beauty, that is available at the welcome center and then another handout, 10 questions to ask myself about modesty. All three of these tools to equip you in ways I cannot in this message are available. Please take advantage of them.

Now, let me continue with some of my desires for this church as it relates to modesty. I want this to be a church where women motivated by grace dress modestly for the glory of God. That is what I want.

Listen carefully now. Listen to the next statement. I also want this to be a church where the unconverted can come dressed immodestly and be warmly welcomed and not self righteously judged.

Recently I was introduced by a member of the church to a guest they had brought and this woman was dressed immodestly. That was immediately obvious. I stood there greeting her, rejoicing in my heart as she enthusiastically communicated how glad she was to be here and how much she benefited from all that took place in our Sunday celebration. I turned from that encounter and I went, “Yes.” I am so grateful that she did not encounter a single individual judging her self righteously or prematurely and unwisely bringing attention to her immodest dress. I am so grateful that instead she was welcomed by fellow sinners who understand there are deeper issues that must be addressed in her heart and life prior to adjusting her wardrobe.

Now eventually if she is converted, if she becomes a part of this church, that needs to be addressed eventually. But it needs to be addressed by humble individuals who understand the priority is first attitude and, secondly, appearance. Let this be a church populated by the unconverted dressing immodestly and warmly welcomed into our midst.

I also want this to be a church where the newly converted, the immature and even the mature, if immodestly dressed, would be cared for through gracious correction. Modesty is the responsibility of the entire church, again, corrected not by self righteous individuals, but by those who consider themselves the worst sinner they know, but corrected nonetheless.

Do you know what I hope one of the effects of this message is? I hope that humble individuals who truly care would be free from the fear of woman and approach other ladies not with condemnation or conclusion, but with an observation either about wardrobe in general or a particular piece of clothing specifically. I will be disappointed if that isn't the fruit or effect of this message.

Who do you need to approach? Probably whoever you are thinking about while I am making this point. And you have avoided it. And you have excused yourself. Excuse yourself no longer. Go. Be a true friend. Demonstrate godly care and courage. Bring your concern to their attention for them to consider. Don't impose it. Don't condemn them. Offer them an observation to consider. If it is accurate, allow the Spirit of God to convict and to speak to their heart.

A few months ago somebody approached my wife and expressed a concern over a particular shirt that she was wearing and whether it was too form fitting. Carolyn immediately informed me and as every piece of clothing that she has ever bought, I had agreed to it. I studied it again. I didn't agree with the assessment and I said, "Listen. Let's draw two or three of the other ladies in." She did. They didn't agree with the individual's assessment of that shirt. What was most important to both of us was to thank that individual for caring enough to communicate her observation.

And when somebody approaches you, even if you don't agree, examine your response and minimally thank them for caring enough to come.

I want this to be a church where fathers lead their daughters in dressing modestly. Fathers, you, we, are essential for the cultivation of modesty in this church. And, fathers, you need to take responsibility for your daughter's dress.

Normally when I observe a young lady dressing immodestly I think that is a father failure. Where is the father? Doesn't he care enough to protect his daughter from the lustful eyes that devour her on a daily basis?

Fathers, it is your responsibility. You are aware of my gratefulness for my three daughters. By God's grace this has not been a difficult area. At an early age we sought to educate them on the importance of modesty, the attitude of modesty, the appearance of modesty. They have the role model in their mother. They also had my leadership. We made it very clear that regardless of how exhausting the process was, we were not going to be purchasing and wearing immodest clothing. It doesn't matter how many hours were spent exploring how many stores over how many months, doesn't matter, no compromise.

And to their credit, my girls, the purchase was never final until they presented it to me. They would put on the outfit and I would observe it from all angles. I would observe it as a man. I would observe it as their father. And they will all tell you that there were a number of outfits where I said, "I am so sorry, love. Thank you for all the time you

invested. I believe the Lord is going to provide. It just means you and mom will have more time together. The exploration will continue and that will be returned.”

I desire a church where fathers take responsibility for the dress of their daughters. And I want a church where the daughters joyfully submit to the father and mother and dress modestly for the glory of God. And over the past few months I was sent two letters which illustrate this attitude in ways I can't improve on.

“Dear Mr. Mahaney, now that I have grown, my clothing size has moved to the junior section. It has been very hard to shop. Practically all the clothes are either too tight, too short, too low or they say something bad on it.”

That is exactly... this is a discerning young lady. This is true. She is discerning that if I buy even if it is a modest piece of clothing from this store what value and I am associating with?

“Recently my mom and I...”

And, ladies, I am sorry that we live in the culture we do. I mean, as I am defining this biblically some of you no doubt are thinking, “Ok, pal, where is a store that exists that is modest and exemplifies self control.”

I am sorry, ladies. I don't know and we do our best to serve you in every way possible, but when you are out shopping or in the mall, you are on your own and you are beyond my pastoral help. We don't go to malls. Men, we don't like malls. It is not where we hang out.

“Practically all the clothes are either too tight, too short, too low or they say something bad on it. Recently my mom and I went shopping for a shirt. We spent two hours trying to find one. We finally found a shirt that thought was modest. I thought it was the cutest shirt. Well, we came home and my dad and mom realized that the shirt was too low.”

Good for dad. Good for mom.

“My parents said we should take it back.”

Good for dad. Good for mom.

“I really struggled a lot, because I liked the shirt. The color looked good on me. It was in style. I argued with my parents about taking it back and at first I didn't want to obey. I knew that the shirt was too low and that it was immodest, but I liked it anyway. Finally I submitted and my mom and I took it back and we tried to find another one. God blessed me. We found three modest in style shirts for the price of the first one. And I just want to encourage other girls to submit to their parents about what they wear. And just like Scripture says in Ephesians six, ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise that it may

go well with you.’<sup>7</sup> I feel like this Scripture relates to what happened to me. Thank you for teaching my parents so they can teach me.”

Now this was a letter I was given by permission from one of the other pastors written by a young lady in the church who writes to this pastor, “Dear Mr. Silard, Thank you so much for being a wonderful pastor to me, my family and the entire church. I am writing this letter for a reason. This reason would be to thank you for talking to Mr. [?] who then talked to my dad about the way I have been dressing. I have been going through a period in my life where I have been falling into looking like the world. This is a terrible sin and I have repented of it and now I am changing. Thanks to your leadership to point this out, my mom and I have come to an agreement of what I am allowed to wear.”

Listen to this last statement.

“If you ever see anything in me that you feel would need to be adjusted, please come and point it out. Thanks again.”

These letters are holy. Holy ground if I read them. I am grateful to God for these daughters and the demonstration they are of godly, wise submission to their parents.

So there are my desires for this church as it relates to modesty and I am happy to say that I believe that is really a description of CLC, that there is always room for growth. And so where do you need to grow?

Questions for application. Was there a man who arrived today desirous of worshiping and serving God who instead found himself distracted by you and your body, because of the way you are dressed?

You know, let me not recommend you not try to take notes. We trust this is being preserved by tape. And though I have never done this before and it is awkward being the individual teaching, any lady who wants this tape, it is a gift to you today.

Was there a man who arrived today desirous of worshiping and serving God who, instead, found himself distracted by you and your body because of the way you are dressed?

Second, is your wardrobe modest, evidencing self control and respectable apparel? Every outfit, no exceptions. But I encourage you not to trust your own evaluation. If you are married, begin by asking your husband, but I would encourage every woman here to invite two or three other women into the evaluation process as well.

Third, do you warmly welcome and interact with those immodestly dressed or do you pass self righteous judgment on them and consider yourself superior to them?

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<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 6:1-2.

Have you been looking forward to this message hoping that a certain friend would finally experience conviction?

Fourth, is there someone you should express an observation to or a concern about their dress in general or a particular outfit? Have you, instead, submitted to the fear of woman and excuse this fear and your disobedience?

The appearance of the modest woman. And actually, the accent in this passage is not so much on modest dress as the adornment of good works. You see, that is Paul's primary burden here in this passage, that godly adornment or the adornment of the godly is good works as he states at the end of verse 10.

In other words, what is to be noticeable about a woman professing godliness is not her wardrobe, but her good works. There is to be this observable lifestyle of serving others. That is the appropriate adornment. That is the godly adornment for women who profess to be Christians. That is, in effect, the transforming effect of the gospel. The transforming effect of the gospel is less time in the bathroom, less time at the mall and more time serving family and church.

And so, ladies, which are you more preoccupied with? Shopping or good works?

What are you noticed for, clothes or good works? What are you known for, fashion or good works? What is most eye catching about you, your clothing or your character?

And, mothers, what is your daughter learning from you? For she is surely studying you. Is she learning the latest fashion? Or is she learning good works?

See, Paul isn't simply advocating modesty in dress. He is insisting that more time be devoted, more energy be devoted to spiritual adornment in the form of good works. And he is warning about excessive attention devoted to appearance to the neglect of good works.

Attitude of the modest woman, the appearance of the modest woman and, finally, the allegiance of the modest woman.

What motivates Paul to write these commands in verses nine and 10? Why is Paul so concerned about modest dress? Why am I so concerned about modest dress? Why should you be so concerned about modest dress?

Paul is concerned. I am concerned. You should be concerned about modest dress because of the gospel. That is why Paul is concerned. That is why I am concerned. That is why you should be concerned. You see, we cannot isolate verse eight from the first seven verses of this chapter. A transition takes place in verse eight. Verse eight proceeds with the assumption that one has read and understood verses one through seven of 1 Timothy chapter two. So Paul writes there, in effect, "Therefore, or I desire then as a result of

previous verses, likewise, as he addresses the woman, you cannot divorce verse eight from verses one through seven.”

And verses one through seven it is clear, it is unarguably clear that it is the gospel that motivates Paul. It is the gospel that informs Paul. It is the gospel that defines Paul. It is the gospel that leads him to express this concern beginning in verse eight to the men, his concerns articulated in verse nine and 10 to the women. It is the gospel. Regardless of topic. Paul teaches every topic in relation to the gospel. For Paul all topics proceed from and are related to the gospel. Please, please do not misinterpret. Do not misunderstand. Do not misapply this message. Paul is not a conservative. This is not some alternative or addition to the book of virtues. This isn't some general appeal for morality. This, modesty, it is about the gospel. That is what this is about, modesty. Modesty in dress, but women characterized by good works. They are the effect of the gospel. That is the transforming effect of the gospel. Modest hearts, respectable apparel, good works.

The woman who loves the Savior avoids modesty because she doesn't want at any time to distract from or reflect poorly upon the gospel. That is her concern. Her concern is verse three.

“This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.”<sup>8</sup>

Verse four.

“...who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>9</sup>

Verse five.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.<sup>10</sup>

That is the godly woman's concern is that her attitude and her appearance reveal her allegiance to this Savior who was her substitute and provided her the ransom from her sin. And so there is to be no contradiction between her profession of godliness and her practice of godliness. She is concerned about the lost. You see, it is not sufficient simply to pray for the lost as Paul commands in verse one. Now, we do need to pray for the lost. But, men and women, we have other responsibilities as well.

Men, in verse eight, we are to be leading spiritually, passionate, hands raised, absence of anger and disputing.

Ladies, you are to be modest, respectable apparel characterized by good works. You are obligated not only to pray for the lost, but to authenticate this gospel by its transforming

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 2:4.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

effect in our lives, apparent in ladies by their modest attitude reflected in their respectable apparel and evident in the good works that populate their lives.

Ultimately it is about the gospel. That is what this is about.

You see, ladies, you are to be distinctly different and non Christians are to come here and not only are they not to be distracted by observing skin that should not be on display, but they are to be undistracted as they realize this place is populated by people who are different and they are distinct, not self righteously, distinct, humbly distinct, but distinct. And in these ways we are to be distinct for our brothers who are saved, for the lost yet to be saved and ultimately for the Savior who saved us. It is about the gospel.

Now here is the good news as well. The gospel provides forgiveness. So for all who have been convicted through this message, I just want to at this moment lead you to the foot of the cross so that you might survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died for the very sins that he has been bringing to your attention during this message so that you might receive forgiveness, so that you might change by grace and for his glory. Let's not wait a moment longer.

Would you bow your head in prayer?

*Father, your Spirit has been active in many ways through your Word today, Lord. And I know that one activity is that of conviction. Lord, thank you for this gift and I pray that all those experiencing conviction would recognize it as a gift, recognize it not as you in anger and frustration communicating your abhorrence, but you as their Father gently, but firmly revealing the nature and the extent of sin so that individuals might flee to the cross and find forgiveness in the Savior that you have already provided.*

*So, Lord, right now we pause because our sin is first and foremost against you. And, therefore, Lord, I ask that there would be confession of sin where appropriate and forsaking of sin as well among both male and female.*

*Now, Lord, for the sake of the gospel, may this message lead to a church motivated by the gospel where women are intent and motivated by modesty and self control, where their apparel is respectable and their lives are filled with good works, where their profession and practice are consistent. May this be a church where the next generation of young ladies would not be seduced by this world and would, instead, serve you, prepare themselves for their future husbands and in no way distract from or reflect poorly on the gospel.*

*Lord, may there be no self righteousness present in our hearts toward any who dress immodestly. Protect us, Lord, please, from Legalism and license like only you can, like I am sure you will, like you have all because of and for the gospel and I thank you for this church and what a joy and privilege it is to serve them in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Change of Voice:

You have been listening to a message by C J Mahaney titled “The Soul of Modesty.” It is the final message in the series, “In the World, but not of the World” and has been made available to you through Sovereign Grace Ministries. Sovereign Grace is primarily devoted to planting and caring for churches. We also hold conferences, train leaders and publish books, music and audio and video messages. For more information, visit [www dot sovereign grace ministries dot org](http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org) or call us at 301-330-7400.

*Moving on down...*

- ☞ Does my midriff (or underwear) show when I bend over or lift my hands? If so, is it because my skirt or my pants are too low? Either my shirt needs to be longer or I need to find a skirt or pants that sit higher.
- ☞ I also have to turn around to see if what I'm wearing is too tight around my back side, or if the outline of my underwear shows. If so, I know what I have to do!
- ☞ And as for shorts – I can't just check them standing up. I need to see how much they reveal when I sit down. If I see too much leg, I need a longer pair.
- ☞ The “sit-down” check applies to my skirt or dress as well. And I must remember to keep my skirt pulled down and my knees together when I'm seated.
- ☞ And speaking of skirts, watch out for those slits! Does it reveal too much when I walk? Pins are also helpful here.
- ☞ Before I leave, I need to give my skirt a sunlight check. Is it see-through? If so, I need a slip.
- ☞ Finally, I must remember to do this modesty check with my shoes on. High-heels make my dress or skirt appear shorter.
- ☞ And don't forget – this applies to formal wear as well.
- ☞ A note on swimwear: It's not easy but you can still strive to be modest at the pool or beach. Look for one-piece bathing suits that aren't cut high on the leg and don't have low necklines.



# *Modesty Heart Check*

by

*Carolyn Mahaney*

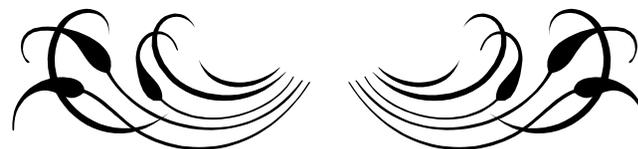
*Nicole Whitacre*

*Kristin Chesemore*

*Janelle Bradshaw*

*“... 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 Timothy 2:9-10*



## *Start with a Heart Check...*

“How does a woman discern the sometimes fine line between proper dress and dressing to be the center of attention? The answer starts in the intent of the heart. A woman should examine her motives and goals for the way she dresses. Is her intent to show the grace and beauty of womanhood? Is it to reveal a humble heart devoted to worshipping God? Or is it to call attention to herself and flaunt her beauty? Or worse, to attempt to lure men sexually? A woman who focuses on worshipping God will consider carefully how she is dressed, because *her heart will dictate her wardrobe and appearance.*” **John MacArthur** [emphasis added]

- ☞ What statement do my clothes make about my heart?
- ☞ In choosing what clothes to wear today, whose attention do I desire and whose approval do I crave? Am I seeking to please God or impress others?
- ☞ Is what I wear consistent with biblical values of modesty, self-control and respectable apparel, or does my dress reveal an inordinate identification and fascination with sinful cultural values?
- ☞ Who am I trying to identify with through my dress? Is the Word of God my standard or is the latest fashion?
- ☞ Have I asked other godly individuals to evaluate my wardrobe?
- ☞ Does my clothing reveal an allegiance to the gospel or is there any contradiction between my profession of faith and my practice of godliness?

*Before you leave the house, do a modesty check. (What are some things you should look for as you stand in front of your mirror?)*

*From the top...*

- ☞ When I am wearing a loose-fitting blouse or scoop-neck, can I see anything when I lean over? If so, I need to remember to place my hand against my neckline when I bend down.
- ☞ If I am wearing a button-down top, I need to turn sideways and move around to see if there are any gaping holes that expose my chest. If there are, I’ve got to grab the sewing box and pin between the buttons.
- ☞ The same check is needed if I am wearing a sleeveless shirt. When I move around, can I see my bra? If I do, I need the pins again.
- ☞ Am I wearing a spaghetti-strap, halter, or sheer blouse? Not even pins will fix this problem! Most guys find these a hindrance in their struggle with lust. It’s time to go back to the closet.
- ☞ Can I see the lace or seam of my bra through my shirt? In this case, seamless bras are a better option.
- ☞ More key questions: Does my shirt reveal any part of my cleavage? Does my midriff show when I raise my hands above my head? Is my shirt just plain too tight? If the answer to any one of these questions is yes, then I need to change my outfit.