

*Godly Men and Women: 1 Timothy 2:8-10*  
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One of the things I love about expository preaching through books of the Bible is that it regularly puts me in somewhat awkward and stretching situations. It forces me to study and think and pray over matters that I wouldn't otherwise gravitate toward, because I am faced with various biblical passages that I would never select for myself if I was putting together a topical series of sermons. I remember the uncomfortable feeling of preparing and preaching a sermon on James 3:1, which says, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." I just wanted to read the verse and then shut my mouth and sit down. But the beauty of preaching through these books is that we are all stretched and refined as we consider the whole counsel of God, not just the parts that we might select for ourselves. Something I take great comfort in is the fact that when I preach on a particular passage, the effectiveness of the sermon does not rely on any authority or expertise that I might (or might not) have, but it is based on the authority and truthfulness of God's Word. So my task in preaching is not to be an expert on every issue that we discuss, but simply to proclaim what the Bible says about each issue that we come to in the text. And then it's the responsibility of all of us to apply that truth to our lives and submit to God's Word and obey it.

Well, this morning I find myself in another somewhat awkward situation, because the passage we come to in 1 Timothy 2 has to do with how women ought to dress. Needless to say, I have no authority or expertise with respect to this topic. So I feel sorely inadequate to stand here and talk to you this morning about the issue of modesty. At the same time, though, I know that this is an extremely important thing for all of us to learn about. Of course, it is directly applicable for women, but it is also important for men to understand the teaching of this passage. As husbands, we need to be able to encourage our wives with respect to modesty. As fathers, we need to shepherd and instruct our daughters concerning what's appropriate and what's not appropriate for them to wear. And this is also important for single men, because you need to understand the kind of characteristics you should be looking for in a wife. And we all need to be reminded that true beauty does not consist in flashy clothing or suggestive attire or expensive jewelry. True beauty consists in a godly and pure heart that shows itself in good works.

That's the truth that I hope will be impressed upon all of us as we study this passage. These verses do not only address the

issue of modesty in the way women dress, however. We will start in verse 8 with some instruction specifically to men. And then in verses 9-10 women are addressed, and next week we'll look at the remaining verses in this paragraph which have to do with women as well.

### I. Godly Men (verse 8)

Paul exhorts men in two specific ways in this verse. First, men ought to be prayerful, and secondly, they ought to be peaceful.

#### Prayerful

First of all, prayerful. "I desire then that in every place the men should pray." Remember the universal scope of last week's passage. Paul urges that prayers be made for all people. And now he states that he desires that *in every place* the men should pray. And he connects the two with the word "then" (or "therefore") at the beginning of verse 8. From the exhortation to pray for all people, and the reality that God desires all people to be saved, comes the further instruction that in every place the men should pray. In this context the word "men" is not generic. Paul is not just saying that he wants people to pray. He is saying that he wants the *men* to pray. In the next verse and following he is going to give specific instructions to the women, and here he is instructing the men.

There are unique roles that God has assigned to men and to women, and we're going to talk about that a lot more in verses 11-15 which we'll study next week. And we'll continue to talk about in the discussion of elders in the next chapter. But we already see an indication of these roles here in verse 8, for Paul desires that the men of the church take an active leadership role in prayer. This does not mean that women cannot pray. First Corinthians 11 clearly implies that it's appropriate for women to pray in corporate worship services, as long as they are dressed appropriately. So I don't think Paul's exhortation to men here in 1 Timothy 2:8 in any way prohibits women from praying publicly in the gathering of the church. The point, rather, is that the men must take the primary leadership role in this aspect of the church. Next, Paul will address an issue that is particularly relevant for women—the issue of modesty. And here he addresses two issues that are particularly relevant for men—being prayerful and peaceful. So he's not calling the men to pray because he thinks only men can pray. He's calling men to pray because he wants men to lead in this way, and he also knows that too many men are weak and passive and will gladly dismiss this responsibility if permitted to do so. This is precisely what has happened in so many churches. The women are more spiritually engaged and are motivated to have their children

involved at church, and the husbands are less engaged and less motivated (if at all). And what ends up happening is the men fail to lead or refuse to lead, and therefore the women pick up the slack and end up being the primary spiritual leaders for the congregation. Someone might say, Well what's wrong with that? It's not the way God designed it to be. And next week we'll see in more detail exactly how God designed it to be. But the simple fact that needs to be mentioned here is that God intends for men to be sacrificial, humble, loving leaders in their homes and in the church. Because of this design for male leadership in the church, Paul exhorts the men specifically to pray.

This is a convicting word for us, men. I'm sure many of us can look to our wives or to others in the congregation who are more spiritually mature than we are and more capable of leading in prayer. But that's not the point! That's where so much confusion enters these discussions of manhood and womanhood and the issues of leadership roles in the church. Because it's not just a matter of aptitude and giftedness, but a matter of God-ordained roles which were established in creation. Therefore, husbands, it doesn't matter if your wife is more spiritually mature than you are, or if she knows more about the Bible than you do, or if she has a more fervent prayer life than you do—none of those things absolve you of your God-given responsibility to lead. So let's lead, men, and let us lead well. For those of you who read Scripture and pray in these Sunday morning services, give some thought and preparation to that leadership role. Take that seriously. In your home, be the one to initiate prayer and lead in prayer before meals and at other times with your wife and with your family. That doesn't even mean that you always have to be the one to pray, but you should at least be the one to say, Let's pray.

This leadership role that men are to take in the home and in the church is not some out-dated tradition, as many assume. It is part of a glorious design that was established in creation and is taught throughout God's Word. And the significance of this design is seen very clearly in the instructions to wives and husbands in Ephesians 5, where we see that the marriage relationship is to be a picture of Christ's relationship to His bride, the church. Therefore, men, as we strive to become humble, sacrificial leaders, it's not just a matter of having a healthier marriage or a more fulfilling marriage. This is about the Gospel! We are putting the Gospel on display, either in a positive way or a negative way, in how we relate to our wives and to our families. It's my prayer and my deep desire that the marriages of this church would be honoring to God—that Christ would be exalted as men emulate Christ's sacrificial love. So for the glory of Christ, I pray that we will be the spiritual leaders in our homes and in the life of

the church. “I desire then that in every place the men should pray . . .”

### **Peaceful**

The other half of this statement has to do with the manner in which men should pray. Because it’s not just about standing up and saying a nice prayer. There has to be certain character traits that are true of the men who pray. First he says, “lifting holy hands,” which has more to do with the holiness of one’s heart than the position of one’s hands. We find many different postures of prayer in Scripture. Standing, sitting, kneeling, even prostrating oneself face-down on the ground. The point, though, is that one’s heart ought to be pure and holy, authentically expressing one’s dependence upon the Lord. Psalm 24:3-4 provides some background of what Paul had in mind with the expression “holy hands.” David writes, “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.” So the prayers that men ought to pray as they humbly lead the church need to be prayers that arise from a heart that has been changed by God’s grace. These prayers must not be intended to impress others or to manipulate others or to lead others astray. Instead, they should be honest, humble, heart-felt prayers.

Finally, then, the men should pray *without anger or quarreling*. Men need to be prayerful, and also peaceful. We must fight against the anger that can so easily rise up in our hearts, and we must resist the temptation to quarrel with one another, because if we are not peaceful then we cannot be prayerful with any kind of effectiveness. Another verse that addresses men and also speaks of prayer is 1 Peter 3:7, where Peter writes, “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” This is a grave warning for us. If we don’t honor and cherish our wives as we ought to, our prayers will be hindered. That’s the case in the family, and it’s also true in the church family. We need to understand that anger and quarreling don’t mix with effectively leading the church in prayer.

So as we’ve considered godly men in verse 8 we see that godly men are prayerful and peaceful. And now that we’ve seen these characteristics of godly men, let’s move on now to verses 9-10 and examine some of the characteristics of godly women.

## II. Godly Women (verses 9-10)

Paul says, “likewise also,” at the beginning of verse 9, and as we see the connection with verse 8 we understand that he is now expressing what he wants to be true of the women. He said he desires that the men should pray. And now, transitioning to the women, his desire is that they “should adorn themselves in respectable apparel.” The first thing to observe here is that Paul affirms women in their desire to adorn themselves. He’s not prohibiting women from adorning themselves. He’s saying that women *should* adorn themselves, but in a particular way. There’s a balance to this verse, and it’s possible to err on either side. On the one side is immodesty, but on the other side is a lack of attention to one’s appearance. John Stott writes, “There is no biblical warrant in these verses for women to neglect their appearance, conceal their beauty or become dowdy or frumpish.” I had to look up the word “dowdy.” It means “not neat or becoming in appearance, shabby.” So, ladies, don’t read these verses as a prohibition against adornment or as an excuse to not take care of yourself or to neglect your appearance. The point, rather, is that your adornment must be respectable and modest and exhibit self-control. You should adorn yourself and give attention to your appearance, but it must be in the right way—in an appropriate and respectable way. You must adorn yourself with modesty and self-control.

Paul states it positively first, and then negatively. He then says, “not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire.” The question comes up here, Is it a sin to braid your hair or to wear jewelry? I don’t think that’s the point of Paul’s statement. And the reason I think that is the similar passage in 1 Peter 3:3-4, which says, “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.” Notice what Peter speaks against: the braiding of hair, the putting on of gold jewelry, and the wearing of clothes. If we read that passage in a wooden way, it would prohibit wearing clothes. But, of course, that is not the point. The point is that the clothes shouldn’t be the main thing. And, likewise, the braided hair shouldn’t be the main thing (or whatever way you fix your hair). And the gold jewelry shouldn’t be the main thing (or whatever other kind of jewelry you might wear). Do you see the point? It’s not to strictly prohibit a certain kind of hair-do or specific kinds of jewelry. The point is that your outward appearance should not be the focus of your life. That’s not the most important thing. That’s not what you should be known for.

Instead, what you should be known for is your Christ-exalting life. In the passage I just read from 1 Peter, it says, “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.” And in our passage for this morning, Paul says that women should adorn themselves “with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

Women, I pray that this will land on you with fresh conviction and impact this morning. Consider these verses. Do you want your life to be about appearances? Do you want to pour your time and energy and money and thoughts into external appearances? That is a wasted life! And it will become painfully clear what a waste you’ve made of your life when you’re old and wrinkled and there’s no way to make yourself look good anymore, and you’ll have to stand in front of the mirror and ask yourself, Where is my beauty now? If your life has been all about externals, then your beauty will fade and disappear. But if your life is centered on the wonder of the Gospel and the forgiveness you have in Christ and the excitement of the Great Commission and the joy of knowing God, then you will have a beauty that never fades and never disappears. You will have a beauty that grows more and more attractive and that brings you and those around you more and more delight. “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” (Proverbs 31:30) Don’t waste your life pursuing outward appearances, but make your life count for Christ as you pursue the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious (1 Peter 3:4). Adorn yourself with the good works that flow from faith. Let that be your beauty. Let that be the focus of your life.

May your life draw attention to Christ. May your actions and attitudes, the way you interact with others and the way you dress, all be a means of pointing people to Christ. Our ultimate desire in life ought to be to exalt Christ in everything we do. When we’re in the world among unbelievers, and when we come together in corporate worship, we want the focus to be on exalting Christ. All the attention and admiration should be directed toward Jesus Christ. And the issue of modesty is so relevant to this point because it is all too common for women to dress in ways that detract from this goal. There are women who profess Christ and profess godliness, and yet the way they dress when they go to work or when they go out with their friends or even when they come to church, serves to draw attention to themselves rather than to Christ.

This can happen in various ways. There are at least two issues which these verses confront. One is immodest dress, and the other is costly attire. It’s possible for women to dress in ways that draw attention to themselves, either by dressing immodestly in

a way that is sexually suggestive and alluring, or by dressing in flashy expensive clothing that may not necessarily be immodest, but is showy. Both are a danger. Both are rebuked in this passage. So, ladies, examine your hearts and examine your closets, and ask the Lord for discernment in how you can glorify God in the way you dress. It may be that you're not sure exactly what constitutes immodest clothing, in which case you should talk to a mature Christian woman who can help give you some concrete guidance.

The main issue, though, is your heart. What motivates you to wear what you wear? Are you trying to draw attention to yourself by wearing suggestive clothing? If you're single, are you hoping to find a husband by dressing immodestly? Maybe you're just trying to fit in with your friends so you wear the same kinds of things they wear, without really thinking about it.

First, I'll tell you from a man's perspective that the fight against lust is a very real and ongoing battle, and you will serve your Christian brothers well by adorning yourself in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control. Secondly, if you're a single woman looking for a spouse, let me say to you that the kind of man you'll attract by dressing immodestly is not the kind of man you want to marry. The kind of man you want to marry—a godly man—will be attracted to a woman who exhibits modesty and self-control. C. J. Mahaney has written some very helpful things on modesty, and in one article he quotes from a young man who says, “When ladies dress modestly, it's attractive and it makes me want to hang out with them. I think modesty is so attractive and helpful in friendships; it makes it easier for a friendship to be centered around God and for fellowship to be unhindered.” (from “Modesty: A Pastor's Concern,” accessed on [www.sovereigngraceministries.org/Blog](http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/Blog)) And, thirdly, if you're just going along with the crowd and dressing the way the world does, then you need to seriously consider what the primary influences are in your life. Maybe the media has too much influence over you. Maybe you have friends who are having a negative impact on you.

The most helpful and insightful thing C. J. Mahaney wrote about modesty in the articles I read is the way he connects modesty and immodesty with humility and pride. He writes, “Modesty is humility expressed in dress. It's a desire to serve others, particularly men, by not promoting or provoking sensuality. Immodesty, then, is much more than wearing a short skirt or low-cut top; it's the act of drawing undue attention to yourself. It's pride, on display in what you wear.” (from “Modesty: The Attitude

of the Modest Woman)<sup>1</sup> It is a heart issue, and one that every woman must wrestle with.

There are so many ways that these truths need to be applied, and not only for women. I think fathers should also be exhorted to instruct and lead their daughters concerning the issue of modesty. As the leader in the home, it is our responsibility, fathers, to shepherd the hearts of your daughter in a way that will promote humility and modesty and self-control and a Christ-honoring life. There is also application here for single men, who may be seeking a wife. Realize that modesty is an extremely important virtue, and one that is increasingly rare. Look for a woman who honors the Lord, not just in her words, but in the way she dresses.

It is our fervent desire as a church to magnify the Name of Christ in this city, and I believe the things we've studied this morning can be either very significant ways in which this vision is promoted or very significant ways in which it is undermined and contradicted. Weak and passive men who are unholy, angry and quarrelsome, will not magnify the Name of Christ. And women who are dressed to draw attention to themselves will not draw attention to Christ. But when godly men lead with humility and holiness, being prayerful and peaceful, and when women dress modestly and adorn themselves with good works, then the glory of Christ will be put on display and He will receive the attention and adoration that is due Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Both of the articles I have cited were part of a series of 7. They can also be found in the book *Woldliness*, edited by C. J. Mahaney.