

Does the Modern Definition of “Modesty” Match the Biblical Definition?



Is “Wearing Your Sunday Best” what the Bible is really talking about in I Timothy?

Is it possible that we have gone the opposite direction while claiming a biblical standard?

Would you all agree with me that when someone says that you ladies need to dress like a godly Christian woman the look in the pictures from above is largely what they're referring to?

Notice also that this teaching pervades all cultures of Christianity...young and old...black and white...and from every corner of the globe, the look is nearly identical.

Hopefully you will also agree that these ladies look absolutely beautiful, but just because they look beautiful all dressed up does not mean that is what the Bible is teaching that they should look like going to church. Just because they look beautiful does not mean that they are obedient to what the Apostle Paul, through the power of the Holy Spirit was trying to teach.

Let's take an in-depth look at I Timothy 2:9 to see what it's really teaching.

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;”

So, let's break it down:

1. Modest Apparel
2. Shamefacedness
3. Sobriety
4. Not with broided hair
5. Not with gold
6. Not with pearls
7. Not with costly array

Can we tell from the verse what the context and intent is?

Is dressing in our “Sunday Best” the intent?

Let's take them one at a time:

1. Modest Apparel

The Greek word used here for “modest” is *kosmios* and its definition is of good behaviour.

When you look the word up in the 1828 Webster dictionary you find this definition: Properly, restrained by a sense of propriety (this is the “of good behavior” part); hence, not forward or bold; not presumptuous or arrogant; not boastful; as a *modest* youth; a *modest* man. This is where it defines what the good behavior would be in this situation...it literally means “humble” as in a modest home or he makes a modest income. The behavior and the apparel that goes with the behavior that is being encouraged in I Timothy 2:9 is a humble spirit, and humble clothes to reflect that spirit. We will put this in context in a moment.

2. Shamefacedness

The Greek word used here for “shamefacedness” is *aidōs* and its definition is a sense of shame or honour, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others and respect displayed through the idea of downcast eyes. So, we are now adding a layer here in the thought process...the verse is literally teaching the ladies in the church to dress in humble clothing and now it’s saying that the reason for dressing in humble clothing is in “regard for others.”

3. Sobriety

The Greek word used here for “sobriety” is *sophrosyne* and its definition is self-control.

4. Braided Hair, Gold, Pearls & Costly Array or Display

These are all pretty self-explanatory...

Now on to a little context...have you noticed the similarities with the “look” that is taught today as the godly Christian lady look? Very nice dress, usually expensive...hair all done up and curled or braided or wavy...makeup, lipstick, eyelashes and eyeliner applied...earrings and necklaces are common so as to look our very best for the Lord!

Does this look actually match what I Timothy is teaching? Humble apparel, in regard of others, use some self-control, not fancy hair, not jewelry, not costly display...it is my humble opinion that we are now teaching the opposite of the Bible’s teaching and calling it superior.

Once again Satan has managed to have the church on the opposite side of scripture and “proud” of themselves for their “higher standard.”

The problem they were having in the church is that the poor in the church had nothing to wear. No, I don't mean the modern definition of “nothing to wear.” I mean that they actually didn't have anything to wear. The poor of Jesus' day had to choose between food and shelter, or clothing and clothing was extremely expensive in the day due to the scarcity of available product. It took a long time to make clothing, so it cost a lot. If you were poor and had to choose between clothes and food...I am guessing that you'd choose food. The poor were getting saved like others and they wanted to attend church. The wealthy women were wearing their Sunday best to display their wealth like they did Monday through Friday and the poor with nothing to wear were being looked down upon and made to feel uncomfortable.

Paul's teaching was that the wealthy women should be considering the implications of their clothing and were taught to wear “modesty” clothing...in other words, “humble” clothing. Of low estate...what the poor might wear. They were being taught to not put their hair all up fancy like. They were being taught not to wear makeup (shamefaced), not to wear jewelry...not to put themselves on display (array). They were being taught humility and appropriateness, not some sort of non-lust, neck to knees, don't let the boys look at your body and wear your Sunday best teaching. For Pete sake there were women coming to church with nothing on but a smile as that's all they could afford, and you're worried about a boy seeing your knee!

How in the world was Satan so successful at taking a verse talking about making the poor feel comfortable in church when they had little or nothing to wear and turn that into the ego driven, I'm more modest, I'm better dressed than you contest we have today?

I'd say the same way he has been so successful at teaching the entire world to cover the image and likeness of God in shame as if the body is something dirty. Satan is an expert at the counterfeit. He takes what is good and reverses the image. Save the whales...but kill the babies? An amoeba on Mars is life, but a heartbeat in the womb is just tissue? We must accept all lifestyle choices and we must be tolerant of any who disagree with us, but we don't have to accept the Christian viewpoint because they disagree with us. The cops who enforce the law are bad,

but criminals who break the law are good. The sexual deviants are good and those who believe in traditional marriage are perverse.

Why are we surprised that the church got naturism wrong, when the entire world is upside down? You may not be able to make sense of it, you may not be able to change the world...but, you can do something about these things in your own life and the life of you family.