

What Makes A Woman Beautiful?

*If Beauty is Truly "Found on the Inside," Why Do We Concentrate So Much on Our Appearance
and the Clothes that We Wear?*

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Introduction

“What should I wear today? I could wear this shirt with those pants. No, maybe I should wear this shirt with that skirt. Well, what am I doing today? Oh! I bet I will run into Scott today. Maybe I’d better wear this tank top with these pants. He’ll think I look good in that. Actually, I bet I would look better if I wore this skirt with that tank top. Scott *has to* notice me if I wear that!”

Have you ever had a similar conversation with yourself? Be honest. I have. Most of us want to look good so that we can impress other people. We carefully consider what clothes we should buy. We spend hours in front of the mirror deciding what looks best on us. Our day is ruined if we feel like we don’t look good that day. As we go about this incessant routine, it is doubtful that many of us stop and think about what God may want us to wear that day. Think about it...have you *ever* considered what God may want you to wear? Most of us simply listen to what the world around us is saying. What is really going on in these situations? Does God even care what we wear? If He does, do we really care what He says? Are we willing to submit to Him even in the way we dress? Rather than simply being concerned about what Scott (or anyone else for that matter) may think, we need to begin to ask ourselves what God says about the way we dress.

The World's Perspective

Before we look at the Bible to see what God may have to say about the way we dress, let's look at what the world is saying. All we really have to do is open our eyes. What kind of clothes are sold in the most fashionable stores? What do you see when you look at billboards? What are people wearing in the movies? Just take a quick look at the magazines at the checkout stand of your local grocery store. It becomes clear that in the eyes of the world, physical appearance is *everything*. The world exalts the seductively-dressed woman. In most cases, the goal is to attract and maintain the attention of others by outward appearance, often by showing more and more skin. There is an underlying attitude that if you don't look a certain way, you are missing out on what is really important in life.

Movies, magazines, and television, all bear constant witness to this external obsession.¹ Purity or modesty in dress is something at which the world simply laughs. If we choose to think as the world thinks, we will find ourselves choosing clothes that are seductive and revealing as we cling to the thought that our outward appearance is everything. In our own lives, we will fall prey to this "external obsession," and it will be displayed in the clothing that we choose to wear.

Sexual Lust

You may be asking yourself, "Why does it even matter what I put on my body? Who cares if I am seductively dressed? It's my body. I'm not affecting anyone else." Is that really true? Job made a covenant with *his eyes* to not look at a girl lustfully (Job 31:1). David *saw* Bathsheba unclothed on her roof, and he lusted after her (2 Sam 11:2-4). It is clear from these biblical accounts, and many others, that God designed males to be aroused at the sight of the

female body. Whether we like it or not, when we dress seductively, we are contributing to the lustful desires of men.

What is lust anyway? In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (NIV). The word translated “lustfully” in this verse is the Greek word *epithumia* which simply means “desire”² or “a longing (especially for what is forbidden).”³ Lust, in its most basic form, is longing after something that does not belong to you. “What’s wrong,” you may ask, “with wanting a guy to want me?” The answer is very clear. When you contribute to the stimulation of lustful thoughts in a man, you are contributing to his desire to want something that God designed to be shared only between a husband and a wife. In essence, according to Jesus, you are contributing to an act of adultery.

Although the Bible paints a horrid picture of lust, seeing it as deadly serious, the world sees lust as “inevitable and healthy, even fun.”⁴ What about you? How do you view lust? Do you want a man to lust after you? Or do you, seeing the seriousness of the matter, cringe at the thought? We must ask ourselves whether we will go the way of the world or whether we will submit to what God says to us in His Word as we choose to believe *Him*.

What Some Christians are Saying

Before we move on, let me ask you another question. Have you ever wondered what guys are thinking? I have. It’s easy to see what the world thinks about the clothes that women wear, but I wanted to know what men in the Body of Christ think about what women wear, so, I

¹ Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Woman*, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1977), 13.

² Tim Stafford, “Getting Serious About Lust in an Age of Smirks,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 13:3 (Spring, 1995): 4.

asked them. Those who have fallen prey to the world's thinking may be surprised. Here is what some of the men I interviewed said: "I don't respect a woman who dresses immodestly. I wonder about her reputation." "I would make a judgment call on where her heart is. I don't have a lot of respect for people who dress like that (i.e., immodestly). They are trying to get attention in a bad way. I feel bad for them." "It's not helping you attract quality guys by showing skin. The guys who are attracted to that are the kind of guys you don't want to be in a relationship with." "If you are a Christian and are looking for a Christian guy who will love you and show you biblical love, then you won't find that guy by dressing that way." "It (i.e., dressing immodestly) makes me not attracted to her. It makes me angry." "Do you know that you are making yourself an object?" One of the men suggested that a woman should ask herself, "Do I really believe my body is more important than my heart?"

The Biblical Perspective

Think again about the last statement listed above: "Do I really believe my body is more important than my heart?" The world would say, "Of course it is!" Is that what God would say? Before you continue reading, take a minute to really consider whether or not you care what God says. Will you believe what *He* says? Or will you believe what the world says? We know what the world thinks, and we know what some Christian guys think. Now, we need to examine God's Word to see what *He* thinks.

³ James Strong, *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 621.

⁴ Stafford, "Getting Serious About Lust," 4.

Titus 2:4-5

"Then they [the older women] can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

Although this passage is not specifically dealing with clothing, it teaches us a valuable lesson that should impact the way we dress. According to this passage, one of the areas in which the older women in the church are supposed to train the younger women is the area of purity. God values purity so much that he commands this teaching to take place. What does it mean to be pure? After doing a study on the word in the New Testament, I came up with the following definition: at its most foundational level, purity is *seeking to reflect Christ* in all aspects of life. God wants us to be pure; He wants us to seek to reflect Christ in *all* aspects of our lives. In light of this truth, we must begin to ask ourselves if we are seeking to reflect Christ or the world - even in the clothes that we choose to wear.

Proverbs 11:22

"Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion."

This passage likens a beautiful woman who shows no discretion to a gold ring in a pig's snout. Outward beauty is a gift from God, but when it is displayed without discretion, it is as unbecoming as a ring in a pig's snout. Think about the image that is being portrayed. Imagine a filthy pig wallowing in the mud. Hear him snorting as he thrusts his face into a pile of rotting food. He looks up as rotten food and mud drips from his face. As he turns you are surprised to see a small golden ring hanging from his nose. That little golden ring does not make the filthy pig beautiful does it? Absolutely not. Likewise, outward beauty does not make an indiscreet woman beautiful. George Santa, in commenting on this passage, states that "all the charms of beauty are lost upon a foolish woman. Instead of attaining "honor," she only brings disgrace

upon herself.”⁵ George Lawson states that “a beautiful woman may be admired for a time, but when her vanity and folly are detected, admiration is turned into loathing.”⁶ Lawson continues to warn women about men who will flatter them because of their indiscreet attire. “When their flatterers compare them to angels, and speak of their lilies and their roses, let them remember that a wiser and more honest man compares beauty, without discretion, to a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout.”⁷ Will we believe men who proclaim our “beauty” because we are seductively dressed, or will we believe the wise man Solomon, who says that dressing in such a way is unbecoming, unnatural, and disgusting?

Proverbs 7:6-27

“At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house. . . Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. . . All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life. . . Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.”

This passage tells the story of a man who commits adultery with a married woman. This woman is seen coming out of her house “dressed like a prostitute” (v.10). She uses her appearance as a lure to sexual sin. Part of her seductive act included the clothing she wore. How serious was this situation? The woman’s house is described as “a highway to the grave” (v.27). As she seduced him, the man followed her, “little knowing it would cost him his life” (v.23). Lawson, in commenting on this passage, states that “the dress of the female is like the sign post hung out before the house, telling what is within. . . Modesty is the lovely ornament of the female sex, and nothing can be more hateful than a woman who has renounced it. When this fence of

⁵ George F. Santa, *A Modern Study in the Book of Proverb- Charles Bridges’ Classic Revised for Today’s Reader*, (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1978), 149-150.

⁶ George Lawson, *Commentary on Proverbs*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1980), 142.

virtue is demolished, profligacy is the natural and unavoidable consequence.”⁸ Are we, in any way, attempting to lure men by our appearance? Do we realize that in doing so we are following in the footsteps of a prostitute?

1 Timothy 2:9-10

“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.”

In this passage, Paul is not saying (as some accuse him of saying) that a woman cannot braid her hair or wear jewelry or nice clothing. Rather, he is prohibiting the excessive use of these things as a substitute for true inner beauty. Women of the day used to display themselves in such a manner in order to draw attention to themselves. In essence, Paul is saying that women should not seek to draw attention to themselves by the way they look. Rather, they should focus on doing good for others - that which is appropriate or expected from a woman who professes to worship God. John MacArthur notes that “a godly woman would be ashamed and feel guilt if she distracted someone from worshiping God, or contributed to someone’s lustful thought. A woman characterized by this attitude will dress so as not to be the source of any temptation.”⁹ Donald Guthrie comments that “Paul was shrewd enough to know that a woman’s dress is a mirror of her mind.”¹⁰ According to Paul, “true beauty comes from within. Modesty must begin with a woman’s attitude, after which it will manifest

⁷ Lawson, *Proverbs*, 142.

⁸ Lawson, *Proverbs*, 92.

⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 81.

¹⁰ Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – The Pastoral Epistles*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 74.

itself in her dress and demeanor...”¹¹ Are we, like the women Paul is alluding to, focusing our attention on external appearance, trying to draw attention to ourselves? In the way that we choose to dress, are we distracting anyone from worshiping God or contributing to someone’s lustful thought?

1 Peter 3:3-5

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.”

Peter sounds much like Paul in this passage. Although Peter is primarily speaking to women who are married to unsaved men, the principle applies to all women. We are to focus our attention on beautifying our inner person. Do you see a contrast here? The world wants us to “beautify” our outward body, but God wants us to beautify our inward person. We are to strive to have a gentle and quiet spirit. What does all of this mean? Peter makes it clear in verse five. He says that we are to beautify ourselves by putting our hope in God.¹² When our hope is truly in God, in all areas of our lives, our attitudes and demeanor will reflect our trust in God. This is true beauty. Take a minute to think about where you are putting your hope? Is it in the God of the Universe or the clothes in your closet? Do we really believe what God is saying? When a woman’s heart is reverently submitted to God, it is *precious* in His sight. The word “heart” biblically refers to everything a person is, other than the physical body. It is the entire inward self. It is the place where we feel, think, make decisions, desire, etc. The heart is “the real you.” According to God, this, not the outward body, is the wellspring of a woman’s beauty. A woman

¹¹ Beverly LaHaye, *I Am a Woman By God’s Design*, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 75.

who focuses all of her attention on her external appearance has her priorities misplaced. We must ask ourselves if our own priorities are misplaced. Are we seeking to beautify ourselves by putting our hope in God or by trying to fit into the world's definition of beauty?

Proverbs 31:30

"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

This passage closely reflects what Peter is saying in the previous passage. Like Peter and Paul, the author of this proverb knew that internal beauty is what really matters. Outward beauty is fleeting; it will disappear. Why would we want to rely on something that will last only a short time? God wants us to focus our attention on our relationship with Him. It is not the woman who is beautiful externally who is to be praised, but rather the woman who *fears the Lord*. As Peter said, such a woman will place her hope in God. Jay Adams, in commenting on this passage, states that, "beauty, or physical attractiveness, can become a curse to those who depend on it."¹³ Are we depending on our outward appearance or are we depending on God?

1 Samuel 16:7

"But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'"

This passage emphasizes the fact that God is ultimately concerned with our hearts. Although man is consistently concerned with outward appearance, God is consistently concerned

¹² Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary – Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, Jude*, (Woodruff, South Carolina: Timeless Texts, 1996), 264.

¹³ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary – Proverbs*, (Woodruff, South Carolina: Timeless Texts, 1997), 230.

with our hearts. Do we want to be concerned with what God thinks or with what man thinks?

Do we want a man, like God, to be interested in our hearts, or merely in our bodies?

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

This passage states that we are to "flee from sexual immorality," that our "body is a temple of the Holy Spirit," and that we are to "honor God" with our bodies. If a woman is dressing seductively, she is not *fleeing* from sexual immorality. As stated earlier, she may even be contributing to an act of adultery in the hearts of men who see her. In addition to the fact that we must not be a possible source of temptation to others, we cannot wear whatever we want because our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. MacArthur states that "Paul calls for sexual purity not only because of the way sexual sin affects the body, but because the body it affects is not even the believer's own...Christians' bodies are God's temple, and a temple is for worship. Our bodies, therefore, have one supreme purpose: to glorify God."¹⁴ Can we honestly say that we are glorifying and honoring God by what we wear?

1 Corinthians 10:31

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

This passage states that "*whatever*" we do, we should do it "for the glory of God." The term "*whatever*" includes *everything*, and that includes what we choose to put on our bodies. When we are deciding what clothes we will wear, are we even considering the glory of God? It

is my guess that most of us are considering our own glory when we choose the clothing we will wear. If we seek to draw attention to ourselves by what we wear, we are dressing for our own glory. What are we really thinking when we choose what clothes we will wear? Whose glory are we seeking?

Consider again the question: “Do I really believe my body is more important than my heart?” We saw that the world would say, “Of course!” We see now, however, that God considers the heart to be more important than the body. If God is so concerned about our hearts, shouldn’t we be just as concerned? If God wants us to dress modestly, what is it saying about our hearts if we refuse to do so?

Idolatry – the Heart Issues

If it is our hearts that God is really concerned about, we need to look at what our clothes reveal about our heart. Do you remember our discussion on sexual lust? Dressing seductively is a very serious matter because it may contribute to lust in the minds of the men looking at us. Remember that lusting is longing after something that does not belong to you. When it comes to our own hearts and the way we dress, we must realize that lust is not only an issue for the people who may be looking at us. In reality, we, too, are lusting when we dress seductively.

“Me? Lusting? What do you mean?!” If we are dressing provocatively in order to draw attention to ourselves, we are lusting after things that we believe we need but do not have. We may simply be lusting for attention. We may be lusting after acceptance, believing that our appearance will gain approval from both men and women. We may believe that we will be able to attract a future husband with our bodies. In this case, we are lusting after a relationship or

¹⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary- 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 152.

marriage. We may think that dressing seductively is the way to win the love of a man. Again, we are lusting after something that we believe we do not currently possess.

The dangerous thing about lust is that it “turns good things into objects of worship.”¹⁵ It is not necessarily wrong to desire things like the love of a man or acceptance from others, but the moment we are willing to turn away from God in sin in order to achieve those things, we have turned and worshiped those things rather than God. In our lust, we are not content with what God has already given us. At its most wicked core, lust is shaking our fists at God and screaming, “I demand more!” As we worship the things that we believe other people can give us (such as love, sexual satisfaction, acceptance, approval, etc.), we are in turn worshipping those people because we believe that they have the power to give us what we are lusting after.¹⁶

When we examine our hearts, we realize that the ugliness goes even deeper. As we worship other people and what we think they can give us, we are really attempting to set ourselves on God’s throne in pride and arrogance. Rather than worshiping God and serving Him and others in an attitude of love and humility, we are placing ourselves in God’s rightful place and bowing down to our own selfishness. What does God think about all of this? Proverbs 8:13 says that God *hates* pride and arrogance. According to Isaiah 3:16-26, God said He would destroy the beauty in which the proud women of Zion were trusting. What did God say would become of these women who once walked in pride with “outstretched necks” and “flirting” eyes? “Instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction; instead of a belt, a rope; instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp; instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty” (Isa 3:24, NASB). Rather than walking about in their pride, these women will sit destitute on the ground (Isa 3:26). Our pride is an abomination in the sight of God.

¹⁵ Stafford, “Getting Serious About Lust,” 5.

The matter only gets worse. At the very core of the issue, it becomes clear that we are guilty of idolatry. You may be thinking, “Idolatry!! I don’t bow down to any little wooden statues! I am not an idolater!” To be guilty of idolatry, however, is to be guilty of worshiping anything other than God – even things like appearance, attention, the love of a man, etc. Rather than bowing in worship to the Almighty Creator of the Universe, we bow in worship to His creation. We worship and serve created things rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). Rather than trusting in our loving Father, who holds everything in His hands, we trust in ourselves and in other people. We do not realize the utter foolishness of what we are doing. Why would we possibly want to trust in man when God’s thoughts and ways are infinitely higher than our own (Isa 55:9)? “Cursed is the one who trusts in man...But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him” (Jer 17:5,7, NIV). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7, NIV). “A wise man fears the LORD...” (Prov 14:16, NIV). “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life...” (Prov 14:27, NIV). “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence...” (Prov 14:26, NASB). In our pride, arrogance, and foolishness, we have turned away from fearing God, and we have bowed down to the many idols we have set up in our own hearts.

Is this really what is going on in the heart of a woman who chooses to dress seductively? If she understands that God wants her to dress modestly, yet she continues to dress immodestly, the answer is clearly “yes.” We saw, from the biblical passages that we examined, that God *does* want women to dress modestly. He wants them to focus their attention on their relationship with Him. He does not want them to draw attention away from Him to their own bodies. In Luke 6:46, Jesus says, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” How can we

¹⁶ Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God is Small*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1997), 45.

call Him Lord and refuse to submit to what He says regarding the way we dress? We cannot. If Christ is truly our Lord, we must be willing to submit to biblical principles when we choose what we will and will not wear. If we refuse to do so, we are replacing our fear of God with a fear of man. We do not realize that “the person who fears God will fear nothing else.”¹⁷ As we choose to trust in God, we do not have to fear such things as what other people think of us or whether we will attract a spouse. We will know that “no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless” (Ps 84:11, NIV). God alone knows what is best for us. As we choose to trust in God, we can rest assured that He will provide us with whatever is best. We do not need to strive at desperately grabbing onto that which we think we need or desire. God is our Father, and He will provide for us. What He wants from us is absolute and irrevocable trust and obedience.

Loving Our Brothers in Christ

It should be clear from God’s Word that if we are truly seeking to obey Him, we will make it our goal to dress modestly simply because He says that is what we should do. In addition, however, we must follow Christ’s command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39, NIV). What does this command have to do with the way in which we dress? It means that we must be respectful of the feelings and thoughts of men. If something we wear leads a man to struggle with lust, then we should not wear it. We seem to forget that life is a war (Rom 7:21-24). We struggle continuously with sin. This is particularly true for men when it comes to sexual lust. Dressing in a seductive manner, even to the smallest degree, is like putting explosive mines at our brothers’ feet. This is a serious issue. Sexual lust is one of the most prevalent tactics that Satan uses to win the war for man’s soul.¹⁸ We must guard against anything that

¹⁷ Welch, *When People Are Big*, 96.

¹⁸ Mel White, *Lust- The Other Side of Love*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1978), 152.

could be a stimulus to impure thoughts. We must be careful that we are not a source of temptation to others.¹⁹ Never, in any way, even in the smallest way, should we seduce any man into sexual temptation or sexual thought. We must not lead our brothers in Christ (or any man for that matter) astray. We cannot blame lust on men, saying that they just shouldn't look at us. "It is an inadequate argument to claim that lust is the problem of the male. The Bible instructs women to show concern for them by being modestly adorned."²⁰ Are we truly seeking to follow Christ and submit to God in all areas of our lives? If we are, then we will seriously heed God's commands concerning the clothes that we wear.

Someone may still protest, "It (i.e., dressing in a revealing manner) is just the style now." Yes, indeed it is. But will we bow to the style of the day and disregard the struggle that men face because of it? One of the guys I spoke with emphasized that "Sometimes a dress that is loose and covers everything is hard enough for guys. Girls don't seem to even come close to understanding how bad it is for guys." Are we willing to help our brothers in the struggle against sexual lust? Are we truly willing to love our neighbor as ourselves?

Guarding the Treasure that is to be Your Husband's

There is one more issue that we should consider when it comes to deciding what we will wear. Consider the fact that someday you may be married (if you are not married already). What do you think your husband would think if he could see you dressing provocatively in order to gain the attention of others? It is my guess (and the response of several men with whom I have talked) that your husband would want to fiercely guard against the exposure of your body to

¹⁹ Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1978), 118.

²⁰ Lahaye, *I Am a Woman*, 75.

other men. Your body is a gift that you can give to your husband. It is a treasure that you will be able to present to him. Do you really want to allow other men to snatch away pieces of this treasure? Undoubtedly, your husband will not want that to happen. That is, however, exactly what is happening when you dress in a seductive manner, revealing parts of your body that should be enjoyed only by your husband. Rather than seeking to reveal our bodies so that others will notice us, we must fiercely guard the treasure that we will someday present to our husbands.

How Then Shall I Dress?

Even after examining all of these biblical principles, we may still be asking ourselves what is okay to wear and what is not okay to wear. Part of our struggle stems from the fact that we cannot turn to any portion of Scripture to find an exact list of acceptable clothing styles. That would make things much easier, I suspect, but God has not chosen to deal with this subject in that manner. God expects us, rather, to take the principles of Scripture and to prudently apply them to our own lives.

Remember that God wants us to focus on beautifying our inner selves while we clothe our bodies modestly and discreetly. As we seek to do this, we must remember that there is a “certain cultural relativity in determining what is proper and improper in dress.”²¹ America emphasizes a great deal of cultural freedom when it comes to clothing. Remember the magazines at the checkout stands? If I choose to wear something that is not quite as revealing as what the world is wearing, but it still violates biblical standards, then it is not acceptable. MacArthur provides good insight into the matter of discerning what we should and should not wear.

²¹ Getz, *The Measure*, 98.

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 wealth and beauty? Or worse, to attempt to allure men sexually.²²

What are your motives? Do they include going as close as possible to some line of “acceptable” versus “unacceptable” clothing or do they include striving after purity? When you are choosing your clothing, are you asking, “How far can I go?” or are you asking, “How pure can I be?”

Let me ask that last question again. When you are considering what you will wear, are you asking, “How pure can I be?” Remember that for some men it is difficult to resist sexual lust even when a woman wears something that is loose and covers everything. If that is true, imagine the struggle that some men face when they see our cleavage, or our underwear, or our curves revealed by tight –fitting shirts. I remember learning once that some men struggle even if they see a bra strap. “What?” I thought, “What’s attractive about a bra strap?” I began to realize how serious the issue really is and I determined to show love to the men around me by purposefully dressing discreetly. We cannot take this issue lightly. I have heard many men discouraged because of the battle they must face even when they go to church.

How then shall we dress? We each must carefully and prayerfully think through the issues that have been raised as we seek to carefully apply the biblical principles that God has given to guide us. One of the men whom I interviewed suggested that a woman should evaluate her own clothing from the perspective of whether she would want her boyfriend looking at someone else who was wearing the same thing. As we think through these issues, we must bear in mind that it is our hearts that dictate our wardrobe. Will we choose to fear people or to fear God? Will we choose to chase after our own lusts or will we choose to reverently submit to our

²² MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 80-81.

Father? Will we seek that which is acceptable in the eyes of people or that which is acceptable in the eyes of God? Will we choose our clothing for the day because “Scott” will notice us or because we know that *whatever* we do, we should do it “for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31)?

Evaluating Your Own Life

*"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."
1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV*

1) Make a list of all of the things that influence your choice in what clothes you purchase and wear. Some example are: what friends are wearing, what people are wearing in fashion magazines, what people say you look good in, what you feel like you look good in, etc.

2) In what ways do you think the "world" is influencing your clothing choices?

3) If God has something to say about what you wear, are you willing to submit to what He says?

4) What does 1 Timothy 2:9 have to say about how a woman should dress?

5) According to Proverbs 7:6-27, what are some of the ways in which women seduce men?

6) Where should our beauty as women come from according to 1 Peter 3:3-4?

7) What does Proverbs 31:30 say about outward, physical beauty? What kind of a woman does God say should be praised?

8) According to 1 Samuel 16:7, is God more concerned with our appearance or with our hearts?

9) What does God have to say about sexual lust in Matthew 5:28?

10) In what ways could dressing in a revealing manner contribute to lustful thoughts in the minds of men who may be looking at you?

Prayerfully consider the following questions and answer them honestly:

1) Are you currently dressing in a way that is pleasing to God?

2) Do you ever wear clothing that may stimulate lustful thoughts in the minds of men?

3) Do you believe your body is more important than your heart? Why or why not?

4) Are you, in any way, attempting to lure men by your appearance?

5) Are you trying to draw attention to yourself by the way you dress?

6) Are you willing to trust God to provide you with a spouse (if that is His will) rather than taking the matter into your own hands, trying to draw one in through your outward appearance?

7) Are you distracting anyone from worshiping God by the way you dress?

8) What are you really thinking when you choose your clothing styles? (Are you seeking your own glory or God's?)

9) Are you spending more time in front of the mirror than you are studying and reading God's Word?

10) Are you lusting after anything? If so, what does God want you to do about that?

11) What are some ways in which you can work on developing a gentle and quiet spirit?

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- In Luke 6:46, Jesus says, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” In reality, we cannot call Jesus our Lord if we are not willing to submit to His commands. In what ways do you need to change your wardrobe so that what you wear will be honoring to God? List specific clothing items of which you need to rid yourself.

- According to Ephesians 4:20-32, you cannot simply get rid of clothes that may be potentially seductive. You must also put on an attitude of humility that seeks to glorify God and serve others. If you do not follow through with this second step, you will likely return to your old manner of dressing in order to draw attention to yourself. In what ways can you specifically put on an attitude that seeks to glorify God and serve others? (You may, for example, spend time each morning before you get dressed thanking God for what He is doing in your life. You may make it a point to share with your brothers in Christ what God is teaching you.)

- Jerry Bridges, in his book *The Pursuit of Holiness*, states that, “frequent contemplation on the holiness of God and His constant hatred of sin is a strong deterrent against trifling with sin.”²³ Spend some time in prayer right now, focusing your mind on the holiness of God. Ask God to help you alter both your attitude and your external appearance so that they will both be more glorifying to God.

²³ Bridges, *Holiness*, 33.

- It is only as we come to fear God that we will walk in a way pleasing to Him. List some ways in which you can grow in your fear of God. One suggestion is that you read Edward Welch's book, *When People are Big and God is Small*.²⁴
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- According to Proverbs 15:22, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." Be willing to enlist the help of godly women who can help you discern what clothing styles may or may not be glorifying to God. Ask others to keep you accountable for your commitment to dress in a manner that is pleasing to God. As you seek to do these things, remember that *whatever* you do, you should do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

²⁴ Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God is Small*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1997).

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