

God cares about the way we dress! 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Why? Our clothing, or lack thereof, affects other people, sometimes profoundly, and God wants the way we dress to effect people for good, not evil.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 gives us the three keys to adorning ourselves with proper clothing. We must ...

1. **Dress modestly.** In English “modestly” means “dressing or behaving so as to avoid impropriety or indecency, esp. to avoid attracting sexual attention.” In Greek *aidos* means to dress with a “sense of shame” (Thayer). The KJV has shamefacedness, the ASV shamefastness. *Aidos* “implies an innate moral repugnance to the performance of dishonorable acts...*Aidos*...is self-motivated and implies reverence for the good as good, not merely as that to which honor and reputation are attached...Thus *aidos*...is...a reverence before God’s majesty and holiness that leads one to be careful not to offend God...[that] always restrain[s] a good man from an unworthy act...In 1 Timothy 2:9, *aidos* refers to that ‘shamefastness’ or modesty that shrinks from exceeding the limits of womanly reserve, as well as from the dishonor that would justly attach to doing so” (Trench). There are two types of shame. First, the shame of getting caught doing wrong. Second, the shame that keeps people from doing wrong in the first place. *Aidos* is the latter. A young woman once wore short shorts to an airport. She unexpectedly ran into a preacher she knew and was immediately ashamed of her clothing. If she had dressed with modesty or *aidos*, a scriptural sense of shame, she wouldn’t have bought the short shorts much less have worn them in public. Why is dressing modestly a key to adorning ourselves with proper clothing? Offending God must be so abhorrent to us that dressing improperly is not an option even when the fashion industry, our peers, and our own personal preferences strongly tempt us to do so. Unfortunately, modesty does not govern how many people dress—even members of the church. The mini-skirt example. The first key forces us to ask and answer the question, “Who decides what we wear?”
2. **Dress discreetly.** Dressing “discreetly” means being “careful, judicious, circumspect” in our choice of clothing. “Careful” means “done with or showing thought or attention.” “Judicious” means “having, showing, or done with good judgment or sense.” “Circumspect” means “to be watchful in all directions and with regard to all possible consequences.” The Greek *sophrosune* means to dress with “good sense ... literally soundness of mind ... sanity” (Lenski). “Inherent in this...word is the use of ‘good judgment’ in the matter of dress” (Fee). Why is discreetness a key to adorning ourselves with proper clothing? Because we can’t just “throw something on” and hope to dress properly. We must THINK and THINK WELL. The second key forces us to ask and answer the question, “What are we thinking when we decide what to wear?”
3. **Put far more emphasis on inward than outward beauty.** Our text, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, is a “not, but” passage similar to John 6:27. John 6:27 does not forbid us to work for food that feeds our body as required by 2 Thess 3:10. Rather, it commands us to work much harder for food that feeds our soul. Similarly, 1 Tim 2:9-10 and 1 Ptr 3:3-4 don’t forbid styling hair, wearing jewelry, or putting on expensive clothes. Rather, they teach us to put far more emphasis on good works. God is not anti-fashion or anti-attractiveness. Prov 31:10, 22, 30. Why is putting far more emphasis on inward than outward beauty a key to adorning ourselves with proper clothing? Because dressing for spiritual success requires more than modesty and discreetness. It also requires us to keep clothes, even modest and discreet clothes, in their proper place. If we focus on adorning our body to the neglect of more important matters, we are still far from properly dressed. “If most of us are shamed of shabby clothes...let us be more ashamed of shabby ideas and shoddy philosophies...It would be a sad situation if the wrapper were better than the meat wrapped inside it” (Einstein). Interestingly 1 Tim 2:9-10, while applicable to provocative clothing, is really about not turning worship into a fashion show. See also James 2:1-13. The third key forces us to ask and answer the question, “Are we more concerned about how we look on the inside or the outside?”

Some Biblical principles about proper clothing.

1. **Nakedness is shameful.** Genesis 2:25; 3:7, 18; Revelation 3:18. Spiritual nakedness is shameful because physical nakedness is shameful. Nakedness goes hand in hand with demon possession. Luke 8:27, 35. “When driven by the devils, the demoniac was naked; when in his right mind by the power and grace of Jesus Christ, he was covered ... God covered man in the Garden; it appears that Satan and the devils have been trying to strip him ever since. And quite successfully” (Pollard).
2. **God gave us animals and plants to cover our nakedness.** Hosea 2:9.
3. **Nakedness is inadequate clothing, not necessarily nudity.** Why did Adam and Eve hide from the presence of the Lord? Though wearing loincloths, they were still naked! Gen 3:8-11. God later clothed each with a garment of skin. Gen 3:21). The garment “was a long covering from the shoulders to the knees. This was God’s definition of being clothed” (Christian Chronicle). And so it has remained. God used this standard when He clothed the Levitical priests (Exodus 28:42). “Linen breeches ... such as we see worn by the Egyptians generally, reaching from the waist to a little above the knee ... Unto the thighs—i.e., to the bottom of the thighs where they adjoin on the knee” (Rawlinson). From all indications, He used this standard when He clothed Himself on earth. He used this standard when picturing saints in heaven (Rev 6:11; 7:9, 13-14). This is an infallible standard for proper covering. If we reject it, what standard will we use instead? The world’s? Our own? Wouldn’t that be presumptuous and dangerous? Proverbs 3:5-7. I’m not saying we must wear robes. I am saying there is no better pattern for deciding what to cover than what God covered.
4. **Our clothing must be proper in all situations.** Exodus 20:26. Our clothes must be modest when we bend over, sit down, cross our legs, lift our arms; when someone is standing over us, under us; etc.
5. **We can be covered but still shamefully dressed.** Gen 38:14-15. Proper clothing is not transparent, too tight, etc.
6. **What we see tremendously effects us.** 2 Samuel 11:2-5, 14-17; Mark 6:21-28.
7. **It is sinful to look to lust.** Matthew 5:27-29.
8. **It is tempting to look to lust.** God made women attractive to men and visa-versa. We can appreciate beauty without looking to lust, but it’s a challenge. We need Job’s determination. Job 31:1.

9. **We must not tempt people to look to lust.** We must not dress provocatively, i.e. in a way that arouses inappropriate sexual desire or interest. Matt 18:6-7. Women must especially be aware of how their clothing impacts men. "Modesty isn't just agreeing that sex is wrong; it's agreeing that guys are visual creatures and that you have a huge responsibility in protecting them from your body. You can't claim to be modest and be showing guys certain parts of your body. It just doesn't work that way" (DiMarco). Ladies, when it comes to men you "must not lay a stumbling-block in their way, nor blow up the fire of their lust, nor make your ornaments their snares; but you must walk among sinful persons, as you would do with a candle among straw or gunpowder " (Baxter). "It is quite rare to find a woman who actually understands the affect her clothing has on others. Many truly do not grasp that they are candles among gunpowder...David's horrible sin with Bathsheba was clearly his fault; yet Bathsheba's unwise and imprudent public nakedness certainly fueled the fires of David's lust...Bathsheba failed to govern her modesty; David failed to govern his eyes...Sisters, you are indeed candles among gunpowder" (Pollard). This principle equally applies to the placement of piercings and tattoos. "Any piercing or tattoo that is strategically placed on a sexual part of your body achieves only one thing: it gets sexual attention" (Haley).
10. **We can know what to cover, how to avoid dressing provocatively, etc.** The Bible tells us. Ezekiel 16:7-10; etc. Human beings tell us. Fashion magazines and catalogs, advertising, prison visitation standards, men, etc.
11. **We must err on the side of safety.** Clothing is either clearly modest, clearly immodest, or somewhere in between. Given the value of souls (Matt 16:26), sensible people wear clothes that are clearly modest. When in doubt, they don't (Rom 14:23). Questions we should ask. Would we want to appear before Jesus on the day of judgment wearing it? Would we want to die wearing it? Would we want to have to defend wearing it to Jesus?
12. **Miscellaneous matters.** Applies equally to men. John 21:7. People desperately need good examples—please set one! Don't needlessly harm your influence for good. "People draw conclusions about other people by the way they dress. Your outfit is your presentation to the rest of the world of who you think you are...Consider what your wardrobe says to the world and if that's who you truly want to be" (DiMarco). Parents, instill these principles in your children at the earliest possible age. Children, trust and appreciate your parents. Girls, your dad understands boys better than you do. Fathers, be firm. Mothers, support your husband. Drink and you may undress (Gen 9:20-21; 19:30-36; Lam 4:21B; Hab 2:15). "A lot of good girls go bad when alcohol is involved. Time and time again, girls who wouldn't normally fool around with a guy at a party are suddenly open to it when they drink a little ... As many as 70% of college students admit to having engaged in sexual activity primarily as a result of being under the influence of alcohol, or to having sex they wouldn't have had if they had been sober" (DiMarco).

There is no excuse for improper clothing. Here are some common but failed rationalizations.

1. **Some people will lust after us no matter what we wear.** True, but some people will only lust after us if we wear immodest clothing. People trying not to lust need all the help they can get. If we needlessly tempt people to lust, we are just as guilty as people who lust (Matthew 18:6-7).
2. **Modesty is determined by cultural standards.** Without question, some things may be provocative in one culture but not another. For example, ankles. However, given the way God made men and women, it's also without question that some things are provocative regardless of place or time. Whether modesty is dictated by human nature or culture, Christians must not dress provocatively. They must always respect the boundaries of human nature and not push the boundaries of cultural acceptability.
3. **It is just a matter of judgment.** Given the word of God and human nature, it's not entirely a matter of judgment. However, even when judgment is involved, we must still use good judgment. No, we do not have to answer to other people in matters of judgment, but we will have to answer to God.
4. **You are not my judge.** In matters of faith, we must judge. In matters of judgment, we cannot be so tolerant that we render the word of God meaningless. If some things are modest, then everything is modest. If our liberties work spiritual harm, we must yield our personal preferences out of love for God and other people.
5. **No one will lust after me.** Don't be naïve. If we don't look twice at people that doesn't mean people don't look twice at us. Why is the Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition so popular? People look! And yes, even at us. All people are attractive to some people. Here's what's really happening. "The fact is that our generation has been so bombarded with sexual stimuli that we have about reached the condition described by Jeremiah...we are not at all ashamed, neither can we blush (Jer 6:15; 8:12). It is not that we think nothing lustful; it is that we think nothing of the sinfulness of thinking lustfully" (Sewell Hall). I think Christians of both genders can enjoy going to the lake or ocean together, but they must clothe themselves in ways the world would consider anything but fashionable.
6. **I have to wear it to participate, excel, etc.** True, but that just means you cannot participate. Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader example. Yes, being a Christian means we can't do certain things. But, God promises us we'll do even better things (Mark 10:28-30). If we compromise, we lose far more than we can ever hope to gain (Matthew 16:26). Fortunately, some activities, if pushed, will accommodate modesty concerns. Modest uniforms may invite abuse (1 Ptr 4:4), but they may also invite respect for the courage of our convictions and embolden less courageous people to stand with us for what's right.
7. **I have to wear it to attract the opposite sex.** Not true. Modest apparel will attract people who are more interested in us as a people than sex objects, whose primary concern is pleasing God, etc. There are two different types of girls—the kind men want to date and the kind they want to marry. Both attract men's attention. A woman's clothing has everything to do with the kind of attention she will attract.
8. **It is too hot to be modest.** God does not ask the impossible. Pioneer women and Muslim women examples.
9. **Everyone dresses this way.** If it is not proper, people who want to go to heaven don't. Exodus 23:2.
10. **Stores do not sell any other kind of clothes.** No, modesty is not the fashion industry's highest priority, but we can usually find decent apparel if we look hard and if need be we can use creativity to make what is available decent.
11. **I only dress this way around close friends.** Naive!
12. **I only dress this way when I am around people I do not know.** Irrelevant!