

Teacher's Guide for Living Holy

Theme: Holiness in Our Appearance

Life Application:

Recognizing that if we are walking in purity and humility before God, the inevitable result will be spiritual beauty and a modest, discreet, and wholesome outward appearance.

Key Verse for Meditation:

Give unto the LORD the glory due His name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. - 1 Chronicles 16:29

Focus Scriptures:

Proverbs 31:30; Isaiah 61:10; Romans 14:13; 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:1-5; 5:5; Revelation 19:7

Lesson Key:

Outward appearance reflects one's inward condition. For that reason, as holy and devoted people of God, we take care that our appearance, dress, and demeanor speak of Christ and are appropriate for one who represents Him.

Introduction:

The decision to dedicate ourselves to God entirely and to live holy lives before Him will require some prayerful choices, and those choices will include matters related to our outward appearance and attire. As godly individuals, we want to reflect Him in these matters, as in all others.

The outward appearance of a Christian, male or female, should be *modest*, meaning "having a regard for decencies of behavior and dress, moderate, and free from ostentation." Another word to describe a Christian's appearance might be *proper*, indicating a manner of look, dress, and personal deportment that is "suitable, conforming to an accepted standard, right, decent." The word *discreet*, meaning "lacking pretension or showiness, cautious, careful" could also be appropriately used.

Worldly appearance and attire would be described with a whole different set of words. The world teaches us that to be loved, we must be beautiful, sensual, and alluring. To a great extent, worldly dress is designed to draw attention to the wearer rather than to reflect the image and ownership of God. God does not think beauty is evil; He invented it! However, God sees through to the inner man, and the things that are beautiful to Him are not always visible to the common eye. As holy people who are set apart for His purposes, we want to be sure that our outward appearance is appropriate for one who represents Him.

Opener Ideas/Activities:

Bring pictures of people dressed in various types of clothing that indicate their professions (firefighter, mailman, doctor, etc.). Have your class identify the occupations. Then point out that people often make assumptions about us based on appearances.

Have someone come to your classroom wearing the native attire of a foreign country. Explain to your class that if you traveled to a different country, you would notice that the people there wear clothing styles that reflect their culture. We would expect them to do so. As Christians, we do not belong to this world. We are members of another kingdom—the Kingdom of God. Our culture is a culture of holiness. Our clothing and manner of dress should reflect that culture, and our real home.

Bring a selection of advertisements to class featuring worldly clothing, makeup, etc. Discuss the focus in our society on appearance, looking good, staying young, etc. It is almost an obsession! It might be interesting to go through a ladies' magazine and figure out what percentage of the advertisements relate to personal appearance. Point out that magazines, movies, TV advertising, and billboards depict a perspective of fashion and style that is entirely different from God's point of view.

Bring a company dress code policy and discuss it with your class. A sample can be found at http://www.elinfont.com/blog/index/wiki/Sample_Dress_Code_Policy. Just as a company implements a dress code to reflect an efficient, orderly, and professionally operated organization, so should we as Christians be sure that our appearance is a good representation of holiness and Christianity.

There are some very well-done quizzes, questions, and discussion ideas in the paperback booklet, "The Look: Does God Really Care What I wear?" by Nancy Leigh DeMoss that could be adapted for class use. This book is available through <http://www.amazon.com>.

For adult classes, consider addressing the topic of how to teach our children about modesty.

Questions from Student Handout:

1. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, Paul challenged believers in the Early Church to "come out from among them [those of the world], and be ye separate." How should a Christian differ in appearance from a non-Christian?

Much attire in our society today is aimed at drawing improper attention to the person wearing it, and many non-Christians dress this way. As holy people, however, we want everything about us, including our appearance, to point to Christ. Thus, we would dress and act more conservatively than most non-Christians. Our appearance should not draw undue attention to us, and it should lend credibility to our testimonies.

2. Whether we are aware of it or not, our appearance conveys messages about us to those around us. If our ultimate goal is to win souls, what can we do to make sure we are sending positive messages?

The basis for a holy appearance and attitude is a holy heart. We want to ask God to so fill us with love for Him and for others that it will shine through our appearance, attire, and demeanor, whether we are male or female. Since others cannot see our hearts, it is very important that our external appearance properly represents what is on the inside.

3. In Proverbs 11:22, what does God say about being indiscreet—whether by words, actions, or dress?

This verse indicates that a beautiful woman without discretion is like a jewel of gold in a pig's nose. What a picture! Webster says that the word indiscreet means one who is "lacking prudence, as in speech or action; unwise." By contrast, some of the synonyms for discretion are: good judgment, prudence, caution, maturity.

Christian men and women, as holy and dedicated individuals, should be discreet in their appearance and attire, for discretion brings honor to God.

4. In what way is beauty an attitude? 1 Peter 3:3-4

1 Peter 3:3-4 says that women's adorning should not be the "putting on of apparel" but "a meek and quiet spirit." Class discussion should bring out that meek in this context means "mild, humble." Quiet means "peaceable, undisturbed, undisturbing." Meekness and weakness are not the same thing; sometimes being meek may take a great deal of spiritual strength. The last part of 1 Peter 3:4 says that a meek and quiet spirit are "in the sight of God of great price." This is in direct contrast to the mindset of

the world, which promotes a manner of dress that highlights and draws attention to the physical body.

There is an old saying, “Pretty is as pretty does.” Physical attractiveness can be quickly overshadowed by a poor attitude. The beauty that shines out through a gracious, loving, humble, caring heart far surpasses any external features. Most of us can probably think of individuals who might not be deemed “beautiful” by the world’s standards, but who possess a truly beautiful spirit.

Christian modesty—what we wear and how we look—is really a way of thinking about God, about others, and about ourselves. The way we dress, talk, and behave ourselves displays our inner attitudes. To be uncaring or unconcerned about the effect our manner of dress might have upon others is clearly selfishness, and that attitude should not be a part of a Christian life.

5. How does dressing modestly show concern for the spiritual well-being of our brothers and sisters in the Lord? See Romans 14:13 and Philippians 2:4.

Our appearance does impact others. While holy men do not struggle like ungodly men do, immodest attire can attract attention or provoke thoughts in the opposite gender that should not be provoked. We should have a desire to help our Christian brothers and sisters, and not to cause them to stumble. One way we can do this is to be careful in how we dress so as not to encourage—even unintentionally—the wrong kind of thoughts.

While the world would tell us to dress so people will notice us, our desire should be to dress to please God and reflect His glory.

6. In 1 Timothy 2:9-10, Paul said that women were to “adorn themselves in modest apparel.” How would you define “modest dress”? How would you define “immodest dress”?

Webster defines modest as, “behaving, dressing, speaking, etc. in a way that is considered proper or decorous; decent; moderate or reasonable; not extreme; not pretentious.”

Ephesus, where Timothy was leader of the church, was a very wealthy city. Many of the women there competed with each other, showing off how much they had acquired by adorning themselves with costly apparel and gold. Paul wanted the women to recognize that this was not appropriate for those who were following the teachings of Christ. He instructed Timothy to point the women toward balance and propriety, with an emphasis on modesty and holy character.

The dictionary defines immodest as “lacking in the reserve or restraint which decency requires; indecent.”

In some classes it might be appropriate to suggest that we look at our outfits and ask ourselves the following questions.

- *Does this draw attention to me or point others to Christ?*
- *Does this distract from my Christianity?*
- *Does this lend credibility to my testimony?*

Additional Questions:

What principle related to attire is established in 1 Timothy 2:9-10?

The principle established by this verse is that women should dress modestly, with decency and propriety. The Apostle clearly states that such dress “becometh [is suitable or proper for] women professing godliness.”

Our society as a whole seems to place little value on modesty. This is evidenced by the preponderance of immodest attire we see today. God, however, places great value on modesty. The Scriptural references in much of this lesson’s material point out that our appearance is a reflection of our attitudes and inner person. The inner person is what God wants to possess. When He does, this will be reflected in our appearance. Our attire, along with everything else about us, will be appropriate for one who represents Him.

What might people assume by looking at our clothing?

Class discussion should bring out that people will make many assumptions by looking at how we dress. These may include our gender, age, level of education, line of work, economic status, nationality, and character. It may also lead to some assumptions about our moral values or our testimony.

If we feel we have the right to wear what we want and we are resistant to suggestions about modesty, what might that indicate?

It could indicate a self-centered mindset. We must remember that the outward appearance is a reflection of the motives of the heart. If our supreme motive is to please God, we will want to be sure that we look godly. We will put pleasing Him ahead of any other consideration.

The Bible Background in the student handout for this lesson talks about role reversals and how the manner of dress could lead to a blurring of the distinction between male and female. Because of current conditions in our society, it is important to be aware of God's attitude toward the switching of sexual roles. Read the following verses and explain what is brought out by each verse. Genesis 1:27; Leviticus 20:13; Deuteronomy 22:5; Romans 1:27

- Genesis 1:27—*God created men and women as distinct sexual beings.*
- Leviticus 20:13—*Homosexuality is an abomination to God. The word abomination means “disgusting” or “abhorred.” God hates and is repulsed by homosexual activities.*
- Deuteronomy 22:5—*We should not dress in a way that blurs gender.*
- Romans 1:27—*Homosexuality will incur God's judgment. The word unseemly means “shameful; an indecency.”*

Bible Background:

We read in Deuteronomy 22:5, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.”

This verse commands men and women not to switch sexual roles. The wearing by one sex of clothing peculiar to the other is forbidden as a blurring of the distinction between male and female. In pagan practice, this led to gross moral improprieties.

The Hebrew word *kaeliy* used for “that which pertaineth unto a man” specifically refers to armor, while the word *simlah* translated as “woman's garment” refers to any type of a woman's clothing. Distinctions in dress do more than reveal gender; they also indicate our God-ordained roles. So we must take care that our clothing is a correct portrayal of who we are—whether male or female.

Today, role reversals are common. There are men who want to become women and women who want to become men. However, the word *abomination* is unequivocal. It means “disgusting” or “abhorred.” In other words, God hates it when men and women use their mode of dress to act out a different sex role. He had a purpose in making us uniquely male and female, and we want to be sure our dress as Christians portrays our commitment to God's values.

Word Search:

Philippians 4:5 gives the instruction to “let your moderation be known unto all men.” The word *moderation* not only means “temperate,” but also “appropriate.” The same thought is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:25, “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” The admonition to be “temperate in all things” would include being temperate in our external appearance and attire. Based on these verses, it is clear that extreme, ostentatious, or gaudy clothing, hairstyles, accessories and body markings are not appropriate.

Supplemental Resources:

“Modesty Matters” by Dixie Mathews, *Higher Way* Vol.97-4

“Dare to Be Different” by Karen Barrett, *Light of Hope* Vol.84-5

“The Clothing of a Christian” by Dr. S. M. Davis, Pastor, Lincoln, Illinois