

Jewelry/Outward Adornment

Sarah Leads the Way

Since the beginning of time, men and women have sought to enhance their appearance through the use of jewelry, makeup, ornamented clothing and other adornments. Looking at ancient art found in the tombs and other buildings of various kingdoms and especially that of Egypt, one can see that the use of gold and paint was commonplace. Ornaments sometimes symbolized wealth or favor, or were worn as amulets by pagans.

In almost all Christian churches today, the use of jewelry or makeup and its appropriateness for Christians is being discussed. As our culture has dropped most of its taboos against its use and even advocates it, so has the church. It is rare to see a woman today in the United States that is not wearing earrings or some other pieces of jewelry.

Culture, for a Christian, has never been the standard or norm for behavior. Because society's norms change like the wind, a Christian must look for an absolute standard upon which to build and fashion their life. The Bible would be the only place. What does the Bible have to say about jewelry/outward adornment?

Paul's counsel to Timothy was very clear. "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; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Timothy 2:9, 10

We have found that the word sobriety denotes a mental attitude of self-control, an attitude that determines all other virtues. Paul recognized that self-control is indispensable for a Christian to be able to dress modestly and decently. The reason is that modest and decent attire derives from the exercise of self-control. Paul pictures the converted Christian woman as one who dresses soberly by restraining her desire to exhibit herself through wearing *elaborate hair styles, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes* (1 Tim 2:9). Her appearance does not say, 'Look at me; admire me,' but rather, "Look at how Christ has changed me from the inside out." The apostle's call to dress soberly by shunning elaborate hair styles, glittering jewelry, and

extravagant clothes is particularly relevant today, when fashion reigns supreme and many worship at her altar. Ellen White reminded us that "those who worship at fashion's altar have but little force of character They live for no greater purpose, and their lives accomplish no worthy end. We meet everywhere women whose mind and heart are absorbed in their love of dress and display. The soul of womanhood is dwarfed and belittled, and her thoughts are centered upon her poor, despicable self." *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California, 1948), vol. 4, p. 644.

The apostle is including in his statement the wedding ring. Notice the following, pointed statement. "Here the Lord, through His apostle, speaks expressly against the wearing of gold [1 Timothy 2:9-10]. Let those who have had experience see to it that they do not lead others astray on this point by their example. That ring encircling your finger may be very plain, but it is useless, and the wearing of it has a wrong influence upon others." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California, 1948), vol. 4, p. 630.

It is interesting to note that women are enjoined to dress a certain way. It is not that men shouldn't dress modestly, but men and women are made differently and respond differently to one another. Since the Lord knows that men and women are made differently; women are attracted by touch and emotion from a man; men are attracted by what they see! How important that men and women understand this and dress accordingly!!!

Whether we like it or not, we send a message by how we dress. If we have outward adornment, be it make-up or jewelry, we are calling on people to look at it and show their admiration for the person wearing it. We carry a distinct atmosphere by our dress and outward adornment. "A person's character is judged by his style of dress. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and appropriate attire. Chaste simplicity in dress, when united with modesty of demeanor, will go far toward surrounding a young woman with that atmosphere of sacred reserve which will be to her a shield from a thousand perils."—*Education*, p. 248.

The outward appearance of a woman, be it her jewelry, make-up, or clothing, go a long way in determining and revealing what is going on inside. Peter spoke to this. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your

chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, **which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.**

Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are,” **1 Peter 3:1-6**

That which is most becoming in a woman is that which is inside!! A meek and quiet spirit is to be the most attractive aspect of a woman. Peter cites Sarah as an exemplary woman who used her quiet spirit to bless her family, her husband, and her home. This is Peter’s testimony of Sarah. Even though the Bible says that Sarah was a very beautiful woman, she did not seek to attract men by the wearing of outward adornment. Obviously, she didn’t flaunt her beauty or anything else to gain attention or appreciation!

The Old Testament is equally explicit and forceful when discussing outward adornment. “Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet*, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.” Isaiah 3:17-23

"Some have had a burden in regard to the wearing of a marriage ring, feeling that the wives of our American ministers should conform to this custom. All this is unnecessary. Let the ministers’ wives have the golden link which binds their souls to Jesus Christ, a pure and holy character, the true love and meekness and godliness that are the fruit borne upon the Christian tree, and their influence will be secure anywhere. The fact that disregard of the custom occasions remark is no good reason for adopting it. Americans can make their position understood by plainly stating that the custom is not regarded as obligatory in our country. We need not wear the sign, for we are not untrue to our marriage vow, and the wearing of the ring would be no evidence that we were true. I feel deeply over this leavening process which seems to be going on among us, in conformity to custom and fashion. Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married." Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (note 63), pp. 180,181.

While the above statement is dealing with the wedding ring, the general counsel is very clear. The customs of those around us should never be criteria for our lifestyle. If we embrace one thing based on the prevailing fashion, most likely we will then be able to justify other customs and eventually will be just like the world in our dress and outward adornment. May God strengthen us to take no steps onto the devil’s enchanting ground of fashion!!!

