

From woman to woman....



Beauty Course for Christian Women

Margaret Elliott



From woman to woman....

Beauty Course for Christian Women

**Jewelry, Hair Styles,
Make-up and
Costly Clothes**

“You sure picked a controversial subject,” I hear you saying. Yes, I know it is controversial but it is something every Christian woman needs to face and make decisions about. And right from the start, I want you to understand that I’m not against women, nor do I lack a knowledge of women’s weaknesses and temptations. **I am a woman myself.** So together let’s look at this subject and try to get a better perspective of what we as Christian women should be doing.

No matter what country or culture you may be living in, you will have to make judgments on one, two or all of these things: jewelry, hair styles, make-up, the cost of clothes. Worldly people usually simply go along with what everybody else is doing in their culture. In fact, they can not bear to be different from everybody else. But when a girl or woman becomes a Christian she is a new person, a follower of Christ. She has put herself in subjection to Christ and left her slavery to Satan. She now wants to please Christ above all, not herself and her peers. She wants to be like Jesus, not the world. So she has to look into the Bible, God’s

2 Beauty

book, to see what it has to say, because her life is now based on a different standard than it was before she became a Christian. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21,22, God says, *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."* Romans 12:2 says, *"And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

As I have visited various churches in different places I have observed Christian women who are more and more decking themselves out in jewelry, make-up and fancy hair styles. Why is this happening? In some cases it is because in many congregations there is absolutely no Bible teaching on this subject. In other cases, Christian women, in spite of the teaching, are listening more to the worldly ideas than to the Bible. They find it awfully hard to look different from their neighbors, friends, and work associates who are not Christians. This thing of adornment is one of our feminine weaknesses and Satan knows it. He makes it as hard as he can for us to resist the temptation to be like everybody else. But God also knows our nature, our weaknesses, our temptations and in His love for us has given us guidelines to follow for our own good so that we will not be trapped by Satan.

So many women have never really prayerfully studied what the Bible says about these things. How about you? Maybe you did study it sometime in the past but have let the teaching slip away. I challenge you to take time now to study this subject with me. Let's ask God to help us to be honest and submissive to His will. Let's ask Him to help us rid ourselves of defensive or rebellious attitudes. Let's ask Him to help us believe and do what He says because He wants us to do it.

God's Commands For Us

What are God's commands for us? What are His instructions in regard to jewelry, hair styles, make-up and the cost of clothes? Can a Christian woman adorn herself, with anything she wants? What are God's guidelines?

There are 2 scriptures in the New Testament written to Christian women on this subject. Let's open the Bible and read with our own eyes what God says in 1 Peter 3:1-6.

Did you notice how Peter, inspired by God, wrote about a contrast? He says:

Negative	—contrasted with—	Positive
"Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold or of putting on apparel (verse 3);"		"but let it be the hidden man (person) of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (verse 4)
		"...be in subjection... behavior..." (verse 1)
		"...holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection..." (verse 5)
		"as Sarah obeyed Abraham..." (verse 6)

Now let's read what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:9-11. How does he, inspired of God, make the contrast?

Negative	—contrasted with—	Positive
"...not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment," (verse 9)		"...that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety;" (verse 9)
		"but, which becometh women professing godliness, through good works." (verse 10)
		"Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection." (verse 11)

What did the scriptures say? Can I adorn (decorate, ornament, beautify) myself as a Christian women? Yes, I can. But how? With what? The answers are in the "positive" column above. I can decorate myself with orderly, neat, decent, quiet clothes that show I have a sense of shame and that show I am serious, subdued and calm. I am to show myself to be a woman who claims to be godly by my outward decorations of good deeds, attitudes and actions of quietness and submission. My inner self is to be so full of a gentle, quiet, submissive spirit that it shows on the outside in my decent quiet clothes that do not hide my good works and actions. Is that not what these scriptures are saying? Read them slowly and carefully again to be sure.

On the other hand, I am plainly told that I am **not** to decorate myself with certain things. God does not want my adornment to deny or contradict my profession of godliness. Both what I say I am and how I decorate myself must agree. If I say I am a Christian my outward adornment should leave no doubt that I am a Christian. This principle is true no matter what the event or occasion for which I am dressing (adorning). Just because I am going on a picnic on a hot summer day or because I am a bridesmaid in a wedding does not make it all right for me to put aside what God says about the way I as a Christian can adorn myself.

God is saying that the most valuable things that I as a Christian woman can show to the world are my godly actions and attitudes. He does not want me to be noticed because of my hair arrangement, my jewelry, my costly clothes or my immodest apparel. These things are a mask or a costume that cover up the real, important me. He wants my inner self to be seen and to attract attention.

Did you notice I said "attract attention"? Did you realize that "to attract attention" is the underlying reason for adornment? Therein lies perhaps the central point—to what am I trying to call attention? Do I want people to notice my body or to see God in my life? What kind of attention do I want to attract? Do I want to attract attention by my Christian actions and attitudes or by the decorations on my body? Which has more lasting value? Which one fulfills the spirit and command of these scriptures? A junior high school teacher told the hygiene class in which our daughter sat, that the way the human female attracts a male is with "short skirts, her walk, perfume and make-up." She was expressing the world's point of view, but God tells the Christian woman to attract attention by her quiet, submissive spirit and her good works. He wants the difference between us and the world to be seen.

What decorations are prohibited to a Christian woman? Paul indicates, *"not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly raiment."* Peter says, *"let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel."* Another version says *"arranging the hair"* and *"putting on fine apparel."* Does this mean that only these things are prohibited? God knew how the fashion of worldly decoration would be always changing so He gave us inspired principles with examples so we would understand what He meant. These inspired men are giving us examples of an underlying principle of how **not** to decorate the outer woman. There are decorations, such as rubies and

diamonds, that are more costly than gold and pearls. There are also decorations that are cheaper than gold or pearls but are gaudier and call even more attention to themselves, such as colored glass beads, brass ornaments and flashy plastic ear rings. Many hair styles are far showier than braiding. Eye shadow, hair coloring, lipstick and nail polish are not mentioned but they obviously have no other purpose except to call attention.

It would seem, however, that a simple watch, ordinary glasses frames and a simple wedding band do not fall under the subject we are discussing because their purpose is not ornamentation. The watch tells time; the glasses help us to see; the wedding band announces, "This body is taken." But the key is simplicity for these also could easily become decorations for the purpose of calling attention to the person if they went beyond simplicity.

Apparel of many types that are inexpensive copies of the latest fashions loudly call attention to the person wearing them. Not only that, but "costly" can also mean spending too much money on many items of clothing as well as a large amount on just one item. Too many rummage sale clothes and the desire to "never be seen" in the same clothes twice can result in a woman spending so much money that her clothes are "costly."

Why Do Women Use Outward Adornment?

The principle in the scripture is that a Christian woman is to call attention to herself by her Christian attitudes, actions and good works, not by outward unnecessary adornment. Why, then, do women wear jewelry, make-up, fancy hairdos and costly clothes?

For one thing, it is much easier to decorate the outside than it is to clean up the problems, the bad attitudes, the rebellion, and the disobedience that come from the inside. By decorating, a woman hopes (consciously or subconsciously) that people will think she is beautiful whether she is or not. The reverse is true also, because the more Christian attitudes a woman has within that produce Christ-like actions, the less of the false decorations she needs outside. When I see a Christian woman begin to decorate wrongly, I think, "Oh, oh. She's announcing that she has a problem."

Perhaps her problem is dissatisfaction with the way God made her face or her body. Perhaps she has been listening to those who sell cosmetics,

jewelry, and hair styles, or to the fashion industry, who are out to persuade women to be unhappy with themselves and therefore to buy their products. They are playing with one of woman's weaknesses. If it were not a weakness their ads would have no effect and God would not have said anything in the Bible about adornment.

To adorn with artificial things such as jewelry, hair ornaments, fancy hairdos and make-up is self-centeredness. It is the result of self-examination only on the outside. It is an attempt to become something that you are not because of a false standard of what true beauty and attractiveness are. But when a woman turns her eyes away from herself and puts her attention on God, her point of view in adornment changes. It is no longer, "How can I make **myself** physically beautiful?" but rather, "How does the way I adorn and act affect **others** for their good and mine?" Look at the kind of adornment which the Bible permits and even commands: decent, neat clothes that show a proper sense of shame, good works which are becoming to a godly woman, submission, obedience, and a gentle, quiet spirit. All these things benefit others in some way whereas the wrong adornment may actually cause others to stumble and sin.

To look in the mirror and say, "What I see is me," will quickly defeat you because physical appearance can change. The real you, the you that matters, is the one on the inside. Take that part of you out and examine it to see if it fits God's command for the Christian woman. How is your "*gentle and quiet spirit*"? Are you in subjection to your husband (your father) and in the church? Is your heart right with God? Are you feeling angry, defensive or rebellious over this subject of adornment? What good works are you involved in? Are you clothing the body God gave you in neat, decent, quiet clothes with a proper sense of shame? "Beauty is as beauty does" is an old saying which says what the scripture is saying. Proverbs 31:30 says it too. "*Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised.*"

Once a neighbor of mine bought a box of detergent at a bargain price from a salesman who came to her door. When she opened it and poured it into her dish water it turned out to be cheap oatmeal, not detergent at all. The salesman said it was detergent; the box said it was detergent; but both lied. In truth it was oatmeal. The same is true of beauty. The ads, the sales people, and the labels on the products claim that make-up, jewelry and clothes will make you beautiful. But they represent the lying beauty of a masked face and the outer woman. What is the false packaging covering up? What is inside: emptiness? self-centeredness? insecurity? bad attitudes? rebellion? Are you trying to buy beauty at a bargain price?

Beauty According to the World

What is the world's standard of beauty? Look carefully at the following sample of phrases from some ads in newspapers and women's magazines:

"potions promise everlasting youth."

"These products...make you look better."

"Hate that gray? Wash it away...Let the world see you as you really are."

"The most exciting thing you'll ever wear...well-dressed eyes are vital to beauty...remember beautiful eyes—exciting woman!"

"...creates the illusion of shy-eyed innocence...pretends girlish innocence while it plays with wild romance."

A cosmetology school claims in classes of cosmetics and hair styling to reveal "the mysteries of making women beautiful."

"products she should use to make herself more attractive."

"If you want to look more glamorous, your make-up must be flattering."

"...gold jewelry...you wear it because...it expresses you."

"Beauty kit" includes lip stick, rouge, eye shadow, mascara, perfume.

Did you notice the claims that beauty comes from changing the outside? Did you catch the lies: hair coloring "lets the world see you as you are"; "pretends innocence"; gold expresses you"? Did you realize the false promises made: "everlasting beauty"; "make you look better"; "exciting woman"; "wild romance"; "more attractive"; "more glamorous"? Did you see how they freely mix being honest with pretending, and having innocence with guilt, as if all these qualities were desirable? The world's ever-changing standard of beauty is the exterior, physical woman.

In God's unchanging standard even a woman who is deformed, crippled or just plain looking can be beautiful if she is adorned from the inside with a gentle, quiet and submissive spirit, and on the outside with good works. What a contrast! One summer in a children's Bible camp, I slept in a girl's cabin whose counselor was a woman with a horribly scarred face. Several years before, she had been burned when she ran into her burning house to rescue her children. She was now repulsive to look at but when she spoke, her loving, kind words and manner made you forget how ugly she was physically. Her outer beauty perished in the flames, giving her scars that would testify for her whole life of her good

deed. The flames could not touch her inner beauty. The campers loved her and constantly surrounded her because the love of Christ radiated from her inner being. Physical beauty can be lost in a moment in a tragic event or at best fades away with time, but inner beauty grows more beautiful with age.

Paul and Peter speak of not braiding the hair. Many believe they are referring to the practice at that time of weaving jewels into the hair. As with the *"gold or pearls,"* Paul and Peter are also giving us an example about hair. The principle is that a Christian woman is not to fix her hair in such a way as to try to make her outward appearance beautiful and thus attract attention. There are many hair styles that call more attention than braiding. There are many hair ornaments that loudly call more attention than gold or pearls. The key is to not adorn so as to call attention to your body.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul talks again about hair from another view. He says, *"...if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him...but if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her..."* (11:14,15). Without getting into everything that this difficult scripture is saying, it seems that these two statements are very clear. God made us to have different hair: men to have short hair and women to have long hair. In God's eyes, the distinction of the two sexes is important. It is a case of whether you believe it or not, whether you think God did the right thing or not. Have you considered that you may be questioning the way God made you if you cut your hair? Are you saying, "God made a mistake in my case so I've got to fix it up. I'll cut it to the latest fashion"? or, "I have to be like other women. Most of them wear their hair short"?

What about gray hair? The ads say, "Hate that gray? Wash it away...Let the world see you as you really are." What they are saying is that no one will know the real, inner you if you have gray hair. The implication is that to look old is awful.

God says, *"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary (gray) head and honor the face of an old man..."* (Leviticus 19:32); *"The hoary (gray) head is a crown of glory..."* (Proverbs 16:31); *"...the beauty of old men is the hoary (gray) head"* (Proverbs 20:29). God is saying that it is beautiful to have gray hair and a person is to be honored who has it. Are you telling God that He does not know what He is talking about? If you tint or color your hair, it surely would seem so. Who is influencing your decisions about your hair: the ad industry, your peers, the hair stylists, or God?

Which of These Women Describes You?

THE WORLDLY WOMAN

My adornments, decorations, trimmings, ornaments and cosmetics are:

- my cut and styled hair,
- my colored or bleached hair,
- my hair ornaments;
- my necklaces, bracelets, earrings, pins, rings, ornamental belts and eye-catching buttons made of gold, glass, brass, silver and plastic;
- my lipstick, eye-shadow, rouge, nail polish and rearranged eyebrows;
- my clothes in the latest styles,
- my clothes in loud colors and gaudy fabrics,
- my sexy clothes;
- the way I walk.

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN

My adornments, decorations, trimmings, ornaments and cosmetics are:

- my quiet, gentle spirit,
- my subjection and obedience,
- my long hair shows I am in subjection;
- my good works, such as: helping the poor, comforting, showing kindness, and many more;
- my ability to blush with a sense of shame;
- my clothes that properly cover my body so that I don't cause someone else to sin,
- my simple, quiet, inexpensive clothes;
- If I am married I wear sexy clothes too, but only in the private presence of my husband.
- If I am a single girl, I have some very special, private things which I'm holding secret for that one special man after we're married. If I can't attract him with my decorations listed above, he is not the right man for me.

Maybe you do not fit either one of these women but are trying to go along with some of the things of both women. But you really can not

have part of both for they just do not mix. Why not go all out for God's way? Remember what He says in Romans 12:1,2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And do not be fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

Paul, Peter, and the Holy Spirit are not opposed to women being attractive. They simply want us to understand what makes the godly woman attractive and what does not make her attractive according to God's standard. We have to choose which we will listen to: the world or to God. We have to decide which we value most: the ever-changing outer decoration of our body as encouraged by the world, or the lasting adornment of *"the hidden man (person) of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price"* (1 Peter 3:4). Which do you choose?

(All Bible quotations are taken from the American Standard Version.)

To request copies of this booklet and a price list of
English and Spanish literature, write to:

Parkville Church of Christ
ZA-18 Calle Nevada
Guaynabo, PR 00969







