

Modesty

Series: Set Apart

January 18, 2009

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1 Timothy 2:8-9

Sermon Summary

I. Introduce Message

- A sensitive message because of fears of legalism.
- We don't want to be so afraid of legalism that we drift to license.
- This church is about celebrating the Gospel, proclaiming the Gospel and intentionally applying God's Word.
- This message is a reflection of the value of applying God's Word.
- This message is primarily but not exclusively addressed to ladies.
- We all to some degree are concerned about our appearance.

II. Opening Illustration

I was introduced to a man in his early thirties with a “hang dog” look. His life was not cutting it. He wore ill-fitting clothes, ten years out of date. His face had a pasty look. His eyes were furtive and ashamed, and dark, puffy circles under his eyes accentuated the unwholesome impression he made. Long, thin strands of hair from the side of his head were combed up over the top in a wholly unsuccessful attempt to cover his baldness.

I soon learned that he was depressed. He talked about how his self-esteem had plummeted in recent years as he had lost his hair and his youthful appearance. He hadn't had a date in months, so his weekends were lonely. He was a salesman, but business had been bad. He hadn't been making sales, so his weekdays were an exercise in frustration. The underlying cause of all his problems? His progressive baldness.

The clincher was that he used to love to go to the beach, but didn't dare go anymore. When he would come out of the water, the strands of hair with which he attempted to hide his baldness would either plaster over the top of his bald head or would smear down over his ears and his neck. The effect—illustrated before my wondering eyes—was loathsome.

The camera then shifted to the sales representative for the show's sponsor. He had a full head of well-groomed hair, and explained in articulate detail a new hair restoration procedure that could solve the problems of male-pattern baldness. An 800 number flashed on the screen, where operators were standing by to sign up all who called in.

Finally, the show returned to the man who had previously told his "before" story. The "after" story was a glowing testimony, portraying a man made new. He now looked like Mr. Hair. A black-and-white "before" picture was displayed next to the video of a tanned, confident man with a full head of hair. He was wearing the latest clothes, well cut. His shoulders were squared; he stood tall and looked listeners in the eye. He said he'd never felt better about himself. He'd been on a winning streak in sales lately, and was in the running for salesman of the year. His social life? Words could not adequately describe it. Instead, I watched him running down the beach with not one, but two girls in bathing suits, one on each arm! A new head of hair had done all this for him. The final scene of the testimonial showed him diving into the waves and coming up out of the water with his mane of glory glistening. He had left his problems behind, and exuded life and vigor.

From Your Looks: What the Voices Say and the Images Portray By David Powlison

- POINT: You couldn't run those infomercials if people weren't buying these products.
- We live in a culture obsessed by appearance.
- There are endless examples of this obsession (Warren gave more examples)
- Question: Who is shaping your worldview concerning appearance? Is it culture or Scripture?
- We must understand, we all to some degree are shaped by our culture. Materialism is a prime example. We should just assume we are all materialistic.
- When it comes to our worldview related to appearance, assume you've been impacted by culture – that there is some level of influence.

III. Cultural Context of Passage

- In the Roman world appearance was an issue of social status.

- Paul is saying, “it shouldn’t be this way in the church.”

“Dressing modestly means wearing clothes that do not arouse thoughts or actions that promote sensuality.” - R. Kent Hughes

- Sin introduces shame, therefore there are things that need to be covered.
- If Paul was writing to us, he probably wouldn’t say, “don’t wear pearls” or don’t wear “braided hair” but likely he would say, “be careful that you don’t wear clothes that are revealing or accentuate the form of your body.”
- Not a corrective word, but we should be considering “what is shaping my worldview with regards to appearance?”

IV. Three Points

A. The Heart of Modesty

- Modesty is a heart issue.
- Uniforms may work institutionally (like for schools), but don’t address the heart. Uniforms wouldn’t work in the church! God looks at the heart.
- Immodesty is wrong because its an expression of vanity/self-absorption.

“How does a woman discern the sometimes fine line between proper dress and dressing to be the center of attention? 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 worshiping God? Or is it to call attention to herself, and flaunt her...beauty? Or worse, to attempt to allure men sexually? A woman who focuses on worshiping God will consider carefully how she is dressed because her heart will dictate her wardrobe and appearance.” - John MacArthur

- Nobody is doing this on the red-carpet.
- Question: What does your dress reveal about your heart? This question is addressed to both men and women.
 - Example: guys in the gym obsessed with their physique.
- Question: Do you take “God to the Gap” (reference CJ). Does my dress honor God?
- Its easier to have a dress code, but God wants us to address our hearts.

B. Appearance of Modesty

- It's ok to enhance your appearance – not to draw attention to your appearance.
- The culture comes at women in particular in this area. Even women's magazines promote keeping women in a mindset/stereotype that doesn't treat women as people but as objects.

In this particular area—"What do you look like?" —women typically have it even tougher than men. Women are bombarded with voices saying that your looks define you as a person. The mass media culture has had a huge impact here. The temptation to be preoccupied with physical appearance has always existed, but today the vehicles of temptation are far more intense and intentional. Women in the 1890s might have compared themselves with the other ten girls their age in the village. Women in the 1990s must compare themselves with pictures of the cream of the worldwide modeling industry. The images peer out from *every* magazine cover: men's magazines teach men what to look *for*, and women's magazines teach women what to look *like*. – David Powlison

- This kind of pressure is tragic.

"Immodesty...promotes a devaluation of sexuality and marriage. When a woman's worth is determined by her visual appeal, she is reduced to an object. Her value is determined in a way akin to livestock at the county fair. Immodesty is demeaning both to the onlooker and the one looked upon." - R. Kent Hughes

- Of all places, the church is where women should be honored.
- Women are daughters of the living God.

How does Scripture describe true beauty?

1 Peter 3:3-4

³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

- Warren illustrates true beauty through his mother, his mother in law and his wife.
- Appearance needs to be regularly evaluated. Fathers/husbands assume it's your responsibility to give input to your wives/daughters. Wives ask for your husband's input into what you wear.

- The church should be a place of refuge for both women and men.

C. The Mission of Modesty

- Paul's concern: how does this reflect the Gospel? He wants to make sure that our appearance honors the Gospel and doesn't dishonor the Gospel.
- 1 Peter 1:14-16 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
- We dress for the Savior's applause and not the world's acceptance.

Questions For Reflection/Discussion:

1. Warren made the point that we live in a culture obsessed by appearance. He also made the point that the culture influences us more than we tend to think it does and that we should assume some level of cultural influence in our lives.
 - a. What is the message the culture sends us about what defines true beauty?
 - b. In what ways has culture shaped your own worldview concerning appearance?
2. What does it mean that immodesty promotes a "devaluation of sexuality and marriage" (R. Kent Hughes)? How does modesty promote sexuality and marriage?
3. Warren talked a lot about modesty being primarily a heart issue. What did he mean by that?
4. Warren made the distinction between enhancing your appearance and drawing attention to your appearance. What is the difference? Why is one sinful and the other not sinful?
5. What is modesty and why is it a virtue to be pursued? What is immodesty and why should it be avoided?
6. Re-read 1 Peter 3:3-4. What does this passage teach us about true beauty?

7. Practically speaking, what does it mean to dress for the Savior's applause and not the world's acceptance?
8. Do you conscientiously "dress for Savior's applause and not the world's acceptance?" Consider taking a moment to pray and to freshly resolve before the Lord to both live and to dress in such a way as to please God in all things. Freshly resolve to "take God to the Gap."
9. Near the end of his message, Warren exhorted us that "the church of all places should be a refuge for men and women." Along these lines, he encouraged wives and mothers to seek input from their husbands and other godly ladies regarding whether particular items of clothing are modest or not. He also encouraged husbands and fathers to help insure that what their wives and daughters wear is modest. Men, consider "what does it mean practically for me to embrace this responsibility?" And ladies consider, "what will it look like for me to invite the input of my husband and when necessary, another godly woman into this area of what I wear and how I dress?"