

# WHAT DOES A GODLY WOMAN LOOK LIKE?

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*By the Book™* A Chapter by  
Chapter Bible Study Series  
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## Let's Begin

*The Christian church through its long history is filled with dedicated men who were chiefly influenced by godly women. For example, consider from the Biblical record characters like Moses, Samuel, and Timothy. Think of the powerful influence of men like Augustine, John Newton, and Charles and John Wesley. These men were products of godly women.*

*What does the godly woman look like? Is she dull witted, drearily dressed, and hair in a beehive? What does the Bible mean when it calls women to godliness?*

*Today's lesson focuses on womanly godliness. And, while the first part of the chapter focuses on the prayer life of believers in general, since Paul's concern in the remainder of the chapter focuses on women, we will apply the entire chapter to the context of womanly godliness.*

*As we begin our study of chapter two, let's follow the outline below:*

- I. The Spirituality of a Godly Woman (vv. 1-8)**
- II. The Style of a Godly Woman (vv. 9-10)**
- III. The Silence of a Godly Woman (vv. 11-14)**
- IV. The Safety of a Godly Woman (v. 15)**

## I. The Spirituality of a Godly Woman (vv. 1-8)

As we noted earlier, the Apostle's focus on the believer's prayer life is applicable to all followers of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, because Paul emphasizes a Christian woman's godliness in chapter two, we will make application specifically to the godly woman's life. With that in mind, note the Apostle's words, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (vv. 1-2).

In this passage, Paul issues his *first* call to prayer. He "exhorts" prayer to be made "first of all." Furthermore, note the many types of prayer he lists:

- *Supplications*: these are prayers for personal needs
- *Prayers*: these are praises devoted to God
- *Intercessions*: prayers which appeal on the behalf of others
- *Thanksgiving*: always giving God honor and glory for meeting one's needs
- *National prayers*: prayers for government leaders

It has well been said behind every great male leader there is a great female, especially those women disciples who make prayer a priority in their own spirituality. And, Paul is clear as to the purpose for the development of the spiritual life of prayer. Prayer is so we can "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." A Christian woman's godliness begins when she learns by experience what Paul means by a quiet peace in Jesus Christ. Godliness begins in Christ and nowhere else.

Second, Paul issues a *further* call to prayer. He gets very specific, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (vv. 3-7). On one hand, prayer is speaking to God on the behalf of men, and on the other, prayer is speaking to men on behalf of God.



### Reflection Connection

*What contribution to the prayer-life of your church may women make?*

Godly Christian women learn well how to speak to others on God's behalf. What do they say on God's behalf? First, they learn God's *plan* for "all men" to "be saved." Salvation pleases God. In fact, Scripture teaches God is not willing that any should perish in hell but that all should come to repentance and new life in Jesus Christ (cp. 2 Pet. 3:9). Not to say people do not tragically go to hell. The unfortunate reality is, people naturally love darkness rather than light (cp. John 3:16-18). In addition, godly women learn God's *provision* (vv. 5-6). Only "one mediator" exists between God and sinful humanity—the Lord Jesus Christ. There remains no other. Jesus Christ is the only way a person may escape eternal death and separation from God. Finally, the godly woman learns God's *procedure* (v. 7). How does the message of the Gospel survive? It only survives through God's servants. A godly woman becomes like the woman at the well whom Jesus saved. "Come see," she told her neighbors, "Is He not the Messiah?" (John 4:29).

Third, Paul issues a *final* call to prayer. He writes, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (v. 8). Jews stood with their hands lifted, palms up and outstretched toward heaven (cp. 1 Kings 18:44). In the Bible, many postures are described as people prayed. The worthiness of prayer is not posture but the Person to Whom we pray. The absence of sin, quarreling, and doubt are marks of sincere prayer.

## II. The Style of a Godly Woman (vv. 9-10)

Paul moves from spirituality in general to a godly woman's *style*. He writes, "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" (vv. 9-10). The key phrase Paul uses is "women professing godliness." We asked the question earlier: what does a godly woman look like? Paul's first reply is, a godly woman develops her spirituality; she prays. Paul now temporarily focuses on the outward rather than the inward.

Two concepts are vital to understand if we grasp what Paul means by a godly woman's *style*. The first concept concerns what

is *attractive*. Paul appeals to women of the church to "adorn themselves" with "modest apparel." The Greek term translated "adorn" is *kosmeō* which literally means "to arrange," or "to put in order." The usage was very broad from trimming lamps (Matt. 25:7) to decorating tombs (Matt. 23:29). Hence, the godly woman's apparel, Paul implies, decorates and orders her physical appearance.

In addition, Paul gets fairly detailed in precisely what he means by "modest" dress. For example, on the negative side, modesty does not include "broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." At the outset, we must insist Paul was not absolutely forbidding these items (cp. 1 Pet. 3:3). He is, however, making a strong contrast between the reality of inner beauty and false dependence on outer appearance. Paul's counsel offers no comfort for the woman who wants

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### Reflection Connection

*Do you think there is too much focus in the church on physical beauty? Why or why not?*



to appear shabby, unkempt, and overall dull. Neither does Paul affirm those who place high price on outward physical attraction. To be “modest” is to be balanced.

The second concept concerns what is *appropriate* (v. 10). The Apostle clearly refers to “professing godliness.” In other words, Paul is dealing with what looks good on a woman who wants to be godly. His initial response is “good works.” Real adornment of the godly woman is located in her charitable deeds, not in her physical beauty. Like Dorcas, a properly dressed Christian lady is known for her loving acts. Her community will always remember; her influence lives on (Acts 9:36).

### III. The Silence of a Godly Woman (vv. 11-14)

Paul pens in these verses some of the most controversial elements of Biblical interpretation. The Apostle writes, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (vv. 11-14). As we think through this passage, we must keep certain truths in mind.

First, we must be guided by what the Bible says not what we want the Bible to teach. It is very easy to make the Bible into a wax nose to mold and shape any way we please. Nor is it acceptable to bend the Scripture to our contemporary culture. Rather, culture should be judged by Scripture.

Second, Paul was addressing a local situation. For Timothy, women immersed in pagan religions was a common phenomenon. The Temple of Diana stood in Ephesus. The women prostitutes were loud, gaudy, and immoral. The cultural context plays a role in understanding what Paul and Timothy faced.

Third, we must be careful to discern properly between abiding principles which transcend time, and temporary customs which pass in time. For example, it was customary in the first century to give a “holy kiss” in formal greetings (some eastern cultures still observe this custom). In western cultures, however, a handshake is customary.

Finally, Paul is referring to conducting public services for the church. Hence, “learn in silence” does not mean “never open your mouth.” Paul had another meaning in mind when he spoke of silence. In fact, the silence of a godly woman implies at least a crucial distinction in *role assignment* (vv. 11-12).

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#### Reflection Connection

*Do you count silence as a virtue? Explain.*



Concerning *role assignment*, Paul speaks of learning “with all subjection.” The Apostle is chiefly speaking about obedience, being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he is stating the principle of Biblical submission. In both home (Eph. 5:23) and church (1 Cor. 11:3) leadership responsibility is placed in the hands of men. Note, however, the Biblical “headship” of men by no stretch implies inequality (cp. Gal. 3:28). Rather it is equality with a difference.

Consequently, when Paul writes “I suffer not a woman to teach,” he is not forbidding all teaching. Indeed we find ample proof to the contrary in the New Testament (1 Cor. 5; Acts 18:26). However, the teaching women perform in the church should be under the “authority” of the pastor who is always a male. Moreover, the fact that Adam was created first and Eve sinned first remains an important theological principle for Paul.

#### IV. The Safety of a Godly Woman (v. 15)

Finally, Paul refers to the *safety* of a godly woman. He writes, “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety” (v. 15). First, we must understand Paul’s phrase “shall be saved.” Contrary to a first reading, Paul is not referring to soul salvation. Instead he is concerned with fulfillment and safety. In other words, the Apostle is sharing how a godly woman may find real happiness.

*First, real happiness and fulfillment is found in conforming to God’s plan.* While being childless is not viewed negatively or sinful in Scripture, “childbearing” surely implies marriage and motherhood. Paul’s ultimate point is, however, the caring and nurture given to her children is a godly woman’s primary responsibility. If she fails here, she fails. Indeed it would not be too much to question whether she could be referred to as godly at all!

A woman’s influence is not from the top down but from the bottom up. Godly women are naturally gifted for the purpose of motherly care. No one can wipe away tears like mom. No one can treat a skinned knee like mom. No one can sooth a hurt like mom.

*Second, real happiness and fulfillment is found in continuing in God’s pattern.* Paul piles one growth marker upon another as he reveals the pattern God has for godly women. “Faith” pertains to *upward* growth. It is the one sure instrument which connects us to God. Faith looks heavenward and keeps life filled with the Divine.

Also, “love” reveals the pattern further as *outward* growth. Love reveals a godly spirit expressed in good works toward other people. The goal is to bring people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Finally, “holiness” is a part of the pattern

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which reveals *inward* growth. The inner life of a believer determines in large part the outward behavior of believers. Growth in holiness can never be sacrificed by the godly woman.

### Golden Greek Nugget

Twice the Apostle speaks of “sobriety” in the context of godly women (vv. 9,15). The Greek term translated “sobriety” is *sôphrosynê*, which denotes a “soundness of mind.” It is the mind cleared of emotional debris which easily hinders sound thinking.

### Wrap Up

*In this study, Paul focused on the life of a godly woman. Her godliness is impossible without a satisfying life of prayer. However, not only is her inner spirit significant, but her outward appearance is significant as well. Hence, the Apostle counseled godly women to dress “modestly.” Godliness also includes a quiet spirit and a sense of fulfilled purpose in mothering God’s precious blessings—children.*

