**“Pretty Is As Pretty Does”**

Joanne Beckley – Part #1

All the time I was growing up I wanted to be beautiful. I was impatient to finally be allowed to wear makeup, stylish clothing, and high-heeled shoes. I would go to the mirror – but I would never see the beautiful woman I longed to see. Instead, my father and mother kept talking to me about developing a beautiful heart. If I would do this, then everyone would see beauty in my face. Mother would say, “***Pretty is as pretty does***.” I know she meant that what we DO is more important that how we look – but I still kept checking my mirror, anyway. Even though I kept thinking of that mirror, I also listened to my mother and father. What did they teach me? How to live for Jesus. Simple, isn’t it. Just learn to please Jesus.

One of the ways my mother taught me to love Jesus was by the way she dressed, what she said and what she did. She remained modestly dressed even within the family home and taught me to do the same in front of my brother and father. What standard did she use to make her decisions? God’s standard, of course! Because she dressed modestly, I wanted to copy her. But when I grew older and wanted to be like the other girls, to feel like I belonged, I began to desire more than my mother was willing to let me do. I now had to make a choice. I had to ask myself some questions: Who has the right to rule my life? Did God make it impossible to obey him? Why not? Do I return His love? Am I thankful for His love? Can I obey him in the way HE wanted me to dress and act?

Young ladies, yes, you have to make a choice in how you dress. Dress is not neutral! Everyone has a dress code – either because you thought carefully about your choice from a moral, God-driven standpoint, or because you let someone else think for you and you have accepted their choice. You say, never? Hmmm, when you pop into clothing stores, what are you looking for but for “fashion” clothes designed by ungodly men and women whose god is big money. What makes big money? S.E.X! What kind of fashion clothing? To reveal the body! “One fashion designer (J Pollard) said, “The deliberate concealment of certain parts of the body originated not as a way of discouraging sexual interest, but as a clever device for arousing – covering the body in such a way as to exaggerate and draw attention to the naked body underneath.”

So the real choice over our standards of dress is between man as lawgiver (Sex! Pride! Money!) or God as lawgiver (modest clothing). God has always cared about how women AND men dress (**Gen 3:6-11, 21**). When Adam and Eve sinned they recognized that their naked bodies must be covered, but God had to give them guidance about how much of their bodies must be covered. What God provided we KNOW is modest in His eyes. When we read of God’s design for his priests’ clothing, it can give us even more understanding of modest clothing (**Exodus 28:40-42**). **1 Timothy 2:9-10** says, “*In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel,(well ordered, honourable, respectable, tasteful, presenting themselves as children of God) with propriety (with a sense of shame toward nakedness, thus standing respectfully before God) and moderation (to be of sound mind, thinking reasonably and rationally), not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works*.” **1 Peter 3:3-4** states, “*Do not let your adornment be merely outward (misplaced focus, example Isaiah 3:16-24)--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”*

Modesty is not just about clothing. It is an attitude, a way of behavior and therefore tied together with purity, humility, moderation, propriety, shamefacedness, and reverence. Thus, modesty also includes consideration of how we walk and sit. Notice how the Scriptures describe a prostitute’s walk, **Isaiah 3:16**. **1 Timothy 2:9-10** and **1 Peter 3:3-6** teach us how we are not to focus on how we might dress ourselves in an expensive, stand out, showy manner, but instead we must focus on our service to God - good works performed with humility. Until we settle this matter of who is going to set the standard of dress in our hearts, we will not allow the Scriptures to teach us to wisely apply the many principles that must guide our choice of dress code.

Yes, modesty is an issue of the heart. And if the heart is true and right with God, it will exercise inner self-government before God, with outward evidence of humility and purity from a genuine love for Christ. People will read your heart by looking at the clothes you wear! Make sure Jesus is shining within you. We are in a battle against Satan in our culture. The lust of the flesh (**1 John 2:16**) is one of Satan’s strongest tools. We are bombarded with messages of sexuality - TV, newspapers. magazines, billboards, radio. We can rarely find modest clothing in the shops... all of these things numbs and dulls our senses as to what is appropriate dress.

Young ladies, you are not alone. There are other good young women who are trying to live for Jesus. I know it will take extra effort to consider what you wear and the difficulty you will have in finding modest clothing. It might even cost more if you make your clothing yourself or have it made. Yes, it will be really hard to stand out, to be different, to not be part of the “in” crowd, to not be accepted. But you CAN make the right choice. It is worth going against the crowd. You will be developing true beauty of the heart and you will be a beautiful woman long after your friends have shriveled up and are looking like old ladies. You are going to be full of life. So pay the price now, and watch how God will bless you with good fruit. (Part #2 – next bulletin)