

# Church Ladies: The Most Powerful Women in the World, p.1

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**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 2:9-15  
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1 Timothy 2. Let's go there together as we continue preaching through this New Testament epistle. Beautifying the bride, that's what we're calling this. Paul wrote this letter to his young understudy Timothy. He has left Timothy behind in the city of Ephesus to function as the pastor of that local church, so he's writing instructions to Timothy about how to structure and how to function within the church. We call it her fashion structure and her function, how she is to carry out her role, and that's the way every local church should be. We should be about pleasing God in the local church, honoring his word, that the wisdom and the power and the beauty of God is seen in us, his church.

Now two things to keep in mind. Paul is writing this to a specific pastor about the situation in this specific church in this time so it has application to them specifically, but the truths apply to all of us at all times. So we come now to 1 Timothy 2:9-15, an exposition that I am entitling "Church Ladies: The Most Powerful Women in the World." Can I just add that there's a lot being talked about in evangelical circles about empowering women but these folks are too late, they're 2,000 years too late. God empowered them 2,000 years ago and, ah, we're gonna see much of that as Paul unfolds here the role of women and primarily the role of women in the local church.

Verse 9, 1 Timothy 2,

9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, 10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. 11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

Biblical womanhood and biblical motherhood is under attack. It's been going on in a very feverish way for many decades now, actually I can think of no area of Christian discipleship that is attacked more forcefully and unrelentingly than the biblical doctrine of womanhood and motherhood. Satan has been far too successful at intimidating us and undermining our convictions and consequently changing our behavior when it comes to the areas of womanhood and motherhood.

Think for a second. How often out in the neighborhood, in the community centers, even in our churches, do you recall hearing women gladly conversing about how they embrace centering their lives in honoring their husbands, keeping their homes, and raising their children? Think for a moment. When's the last time you stumbled upon a group of women and they were cheerfully speaking of how they enjoy centering their lives in honoring their husbands, keeping their homes, and raising their children? The reason why you don't hear that is because we're intimidated. The attack is fierce in this area. Even those ladies who believe these things and even joy in these things, are very careful in the community. They're very careful in circles of other Christian women because Satan has gained more than a beachhead, he's claimed a lot of real territory here.

In New York City recently, as in other states, they have now passed the most aggressive abortion laws ever established in Western civilization. Under some of these laws, you now can kill the unborn child up until a moment before birth. Actually you can even partially deliver the baby and crush the brain in a way so that the baby comes out dead, and in some cases, should the little baby survive the abortion procedure, the baby can be left to die on its own unattended on the operating table if the mother and the physician deem that the right thing to do. If that's not an attack on womanhood and motherhood, I don't know what is. The most wonderful, blessed, godly and natural thing in the world is for a woman to conceive a child and love that baby with all of her heart. It's an attack against the essence of the glory and the dignity of how God made women that women would actually along with these state legislators, throw a party celebrating the passage of such bills. This is wicked. This is vile. This is ungodliness on parade in addition to being a violent attack on God-ordained womanhood and on motherhood.

Actually this attack started a long long long time ago. Satan came into the garden, the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were there. Satan didn't go to Adam, he came to Eve. Now Adam and Eve had received the commandment from God, "You have all of paradise, this wonderful perfect environment to enjoy. You can partake of anything, rule it as you will, there's one thing you must not do, though, Adam and Eve, you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." That's it. Satan comes craftily, Satan comes deceptively, Satan comes manipulatively and he talks to Eve away from Adam, said, "Adam, has God," or, "Eve, has God really said you can't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Has God really said that if you eat of the tree of the knowledge and evil, the day you eat of it you'll surely die? Eve, look, stand on your own feet here. You don't need to go talk to Adam about this. You don't need to submit to Adam on this, you can, you can take headship right here. You can stand on your own here and make your own decision. Here's what God's doing to you, Eve, God knows that the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you're gonna be like God. Eve,

you know what God's doing to you, Eve? God is holding you back. Eve, God is being oppressive toward you. God is, is hindering you. He's discriminating against you, Eve. I mean, God must be some misogynist to be treating you this way." Now this is the Jeff Noblit Amplified Translation but that's the gist of what's going on here. "Eve, you can make this decision on your own apart from your head, your husband. You don't need to consult or submit to him. Eve, go for it! Eve, expand your horizons. God's way is limiting you, it's not fair, it's not just. Do what you need to do." Eve takes and she eats. Now we know there's a lot, lot more to the story but a little later on Eve conceives a child and that child's name is Cain. Eve conceives another child and that child's name is Abel. Then one day Cain in a jealous rage murders his brother Abel and then evil and sorrow and ruin begin their course multiplying in the world all the way down to this day.

Eve. Now let's be fair and balanced, I'm just talking about this episode in Eve's life. I believe Eve was a repenter, she was converted, she'll be in heaven, but in this scenario, Eve's heart, Eve's behavior and the consequences of her choices have a multiplying affect and influence all the way down to you and I today. But the Bible mentions another woman, a lowly woman, nobody knows about her hardly, at least not at this time. Her name's Mary. She's engaged to a man named Joseph. She becomes pregnant by force of the work of the Holy Spirit of God being yet a virgin, and an angel tells her husband Joseph in Matthew 1:21, "She will bear a Son; and you will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Powerful. Now here's a woman by all biblical accounts is humble, submissive, honors authority without being too trite.... No, I'm not gonna say that. Honors authority, submits to God, and she bears a child conceived of the Holy Spirit and he's God's Savior and he is a cause for reversing the curse and curing the ruin in the world. Eve's children indulged in sin and multiplied sin in the earth. Mary's son conceived by the Holy Spirit is born into this world and has the impact of reversing the pattern of sin and ruin, even forgiving sin and one day eventually removing sin and ruin from all of the cosmos.

Now here's what I want you to see, ladies, all the ladies under my voice, all the ladies in the world: all the ladies who have ever lived in a generalized sense line up under either Eve or Mary. In one sense, Eve has a headship. She represents all of womankind, but in one sense Mary represents those women who find their place in God; who come to know Christ as Lord and Savior and who walk in his truths. You can be like Eve in your heart, in your behavior, and have the negative consequential influence in the world, or you can be like Mary and her heart, fully yielded to God's will and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and then your influence will have that wonderful good of reversing the curse and the forces of sin in the world. That's why I say when you become a church lady the way the Bible speaks of the church lady, you're the most powerful woman in the world.

Can anybody in a million years ever challenge the impact Mary had through her Son Jesus Christ? The hand that rocks the cradle does rule the world and so my challenge as we exegete this text, to our dear ladies this morning is this: do not succumb to the temptations of this world's spirit and the evil one. Maintain the high honored dignity of God's role for you and have the impact on the world God's called you to have. Satan doesn't want you to have it, that's why he's still coming to women today and he says,

"Hey, girls, I've got another tree for you to eat of. This tree's gonna really, remember how I helped Eve? I helped her eat of a tree so she could stand on her own, she could take headship, she could be liberated, she could be her own woman, remember how I helped it and I'm gonna help you ladies in the modern era. I've got a new tree, the tree of feminism and liberalism. If you'll eat of this tree, you're gonna really be free." Get them in a quiet place, get them out from under the crashing screaming narrative of liberal progressive voices and talk to the woman, women rather, who've been duped into having abortions and see how their emotional and psychological health is going.

Now wait a minute, Satan said you'll be free. Satan says you can throw off these bonds. Satan told us this is the way we can be like men and have it all. But you can't go against the way God made you and have any freedom. You're in the bondage and the slavery of the depression and the anxiety and the burden of what you did to that child. And by the way, if some of you have walked through that nightmare here's what I want to say to you: there's wonderful grace and forgiveness for you in Jesus Christ. Wonderful grace and forgiveness for you in Jesus Christ.

Now let's go to our text and, ah, as I studied this this week and to be honest as it just got a hold of me, I realized we're not gonna get this done in one setting so this is gonna have to be two parts or you're gonna miss lunch, and I think we've got some ladies here that would say, "Forget lunch, tell me God's word." I really believe that. We've got ladies like that in this church. Our ladies aren't afraid of the word of God, they've found liberty in the word of God.

Now I know there's been little skits and comedy about the church lady through the years, I think even Madea is a church lady, isn't she? You know, all this stuff. What I want to do is I want to give you the correct understanding of the holy dignity, righteousness and strength of a real church lady because that's what Paul's doing. He's writing to church ladies. If you're not of Christ, if you're not regenerate of the Holy Spirit, if you're not truly born again, if you haven't had your heart and life changed by Christ, this isn't for you. You won't get it. You won't like it. You can't receive it. You're not capable of receiving it because these things are spiritually discerned. And even the spiritual ladies will have some old flesh rise up and work against it, and that's why Paul's writing it because evidently there's been some problems in the church in Ephesus, some of the ladies who've come under the great liberation that the Christian Gospel gave the women of this day, went too far in their liberation and got in another ditch on the other side.

But anyway, to the outline. The title "Church Ladies: The Most Powerful Women in the World." I. The heart, hairdos and hemlines. That's what Paul talks about. Ladies, Paul's got something to say about your heart, he's got something to say about your hairdo. Actually I'd like to talk two or three about your hairdo myself but, um, he wants to talk to you about your hemline.

Look at it there in verse 9, "Likewise," now he uses the word "likewise" because he's already given a practical instruction about men leading particularly in the area of prayer in the church in verse 8. Now he says, "Now I wanna skip over to some things concerning

the ladies in the church," again particularly in the church at Ephesus though it applies to all of us in all times, "I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly with braided hair and gold or not, rather, with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments." So he's exhorted the men about something specifically, he's talked to the men about their sphere of responsibility in public worship, and the consequential conduct to carry out their sphere. Now he says, "Ladies, you have a sphere or a role in public worship and this is primarily addressing public worship in the local church. Ladies, you have your sphere," Paul is saying, "and you have proper conduct you need to carry out to carry out this sphere God has given you."

Now he first of all, he says, "Ladies, I want you to adorn, I want you to adorn yourselves." He uses the word "themselves" here. The word "adorn" here literally means "to dress." The scholars tell us it has the concept of a letting down of things. It's, it's letting down to make a statement about one's person. It's almost like unfurling a banner that announces, "This is what I am." "Ladies, adorn yourselves because you're making a statement with what you wear." So he's saying, "Now church ladies, make sure you're careful and your adornment, your clothing, your dress, makes a true statement about who you are in Christ. Adorn yourselves right."

Then he uses the word "proper, adorn yourselves with proper clothing." The word "proper" comes from the word "cosmos," it has the idea of order. When God made the solar system, for example, everything has structure and order. There's a propriety, an orderliness to it. So he's saying here that, "You've got to understand something, ladies, you're in a pagan and wicked godless culture, Ephesus," ladies, just like we live in a pagan and wicked godless culture called America. And the Ephesian women and the Ephesian culture rather was godless, so the women of the culture had no concept of what was proper because they didn't know the God who's proper. They had no concept of what was orderly because they did not know the God of order. They did not have any concept of what is becoming concerning dress because they didn't know the God who defines what's becoming. So the ladies of the church must not fall into dressing in such a way that reflects the style of the women in the culture who do not know God. It doesn't mean you focus on them and try to be different from them, you focus on what's right and it'll make you often different from them.

Now there are women in the world who dress fine and you can dress like those, what he's saying is don't make it the pattern of your heart and life to look like the godless women of the culture. You're not the godless women of the culture, you're God's ekklesia, called-out ones. You're to have a higher understanding. You live and walk and dress with a higher dignity and goodness and honor than the women of the world can even comprehend. You know who God is, honor him in your dress.

So the point is since we know this one true God and because of the new birth and the changed heart, we're learning to love this one true God and we love the things about God, and that's something we've worked, ah, ah, ah, intentionally for many decades now to teach our children and all of us the great attributes of God so we'll know what he's like. We don't get to make God like we would like for him to be, we let God be who he has

proclaimed himself to be. So we know him and we're learning to love him and we understand he is a God who is proper, of orderly, orderliness, of propriety and of decency and Christian ladies, therefore, must dress in ways that reflect and honor him as he's revealed himself to be.

So this word "proper" includes, ladies, what you wear and it includes how you wear it. Have you ever started to leave the house as a young girl, young lady, teenager maybe, and your dad say, "Pull up that top. You're not going out with that skirt on." You know what he's saying? "That's unbecoming because you are a daughter to a family that knows God."

You ever had, and I can, and, and, and, and I grew up with women and I live with women now, only just one woman now, I got rid of the other three. Ah, ah, but they, they have a pattern of coming back. And I have heard this phrase before when we would see a woman somewhere and maybe my mom, I remember this, and my wife would try to be giving guidance and instruction. By the way, ladies, I sympathize with you because this is all-out warfare at times and you see a girl who's not dressed as a girl who knows God ought to be dressed, and mom might say this, "That's just too much." Have you heard that, "That's just too much." What they, what they're saying, that's what Paul's saying here, "That's not, that's unbecoming. That's not orderly or proper for a woman who knows who created her and what that Creator is like." Proper.

Now the next word gets more deeply to the heart issue, he says, "and modestly." Modestly. Ah, the idea here, the Greek word here mean literally "to be ashamed." The scholars say a good way to translate this to get the point is that women, church ladies need to have a shamefastness. A shamefastness. In other words, there's an honorable shame that should be in a godly woman's heart and it should hold her. It should result in her dress being that which is becoming, orderly and proper. In other words, ladies should possess an inner disposition of honorable shame, that is, they would be ashamed to dishonor God by dressing inappropriately.

So it's the heart, that really is the main issue. They would view certain ways to dress as shameful, as disgraceful to adorning one who knows this wonderful and true Creator, this all-wise, orderly, proper, decent Creator who loves us and who gave himself for us. Now in a practical sense at this point, ladies, I think this would be a good reminder, three things. The dress, I don't literally mean that item of clothing, I mean that generically for whatever you're wearing, the dress itself is important, the way it is worn is very important, but most important of all is the inner heart that guides the choices of how you dress.

Now he continues on in verse 9 and he comes to the word there "discreetly. I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly." The, the word "discreetly" here has the idea of self-control and the idea of a soundness of mind. Paul is saying to the ladies in the church at Ephesus and God is saying to the ladies at Grace Life Church of the Shoals, "Don't go out in this world dressed like you've lost your mind. Have you forgotten in your brain who this God is? Have you forgotten His nature?"

Have you gotten, forgotten that He's holy and pure and dignified and honorably and becoming? Honorable and becoming," I should say. "Don't go out in the world like you don't know who God is. Don't dress yourselves like you've lost your mind." Men, there's a proper way to look at your daughter as she starts to go out the door and say, "Hold on. Time out. You've lost your mind." That's proper. That's good. When we go out into the world, he's saying, ladies, you represent God. Your joy and your duty, get both of those. Now we've had a lot of legalism in Baptist and Christian evangelicalism over the last decades, it's just rule, rule, rule, rule, rule. That's not where Paul's going. That's not where God's going. Joy, because of my joy in this God I want to have some rules about what's proper, what honors my God in my dress.

So this word picks up on a sense of an inner self-government. It, it, it, it, give, it, it, it, it means that the woman has a constant rein on her desires and her emotions to make sure she stays in check with how she adorns herself. Now he goes to the other side of the coin. He says in the last part of verse 9, "That's what I want you to be like. Here's what I don't, don't, here's what God does not want you to be like, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments." Now the point that Paul is making here is that, um, the, the, the women of the Ephesian culture were given to excessiveness in their dress. Again, these are women who do not know God so they dress like they do not know God and that was characterized by an extravagance, an excessiveness. The Ephesian cultured women of the day were show-offs and that's about all they had was what they cosmetically or showed off what was on the outside because they weren't like the ladies of the church who had godliness and dignity inside, all they had was just a shell and a covering.

Is that not our world today? These pop stars and these Hollywood movie stars, they put themselves up in the most extravagant garb and cosmetics. You know why? That's all they got. They're show-offs because there's nothing inside. I think I'm gonna take my 12 gauge shotgun and the next time they interview some Hollywood star about our political situation, I'm just gonna blow the screen up. Why in the world should it matter to us what some person who spends their life acting like somebody they're not feels about things? That's all, the only qualification they got is they can act like something they're not. And that's okay, there can be an art form there, though most of it's wicked. It can be a decent art form there but that doesn't mean they're qualified to tell us anything.

Not like the Ephesian women who were show-offs. They gave themselves to excessive refinements and great expensive clothing. 1 Peter 3:3 just to show you this is throughout the New Testament, "Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses." The Bible does not say, we're not talking about legalism here, the Bible is not saying that you can't braid your hair and you can't wear jewels and you can't wear a nice dress, that's just not to be the heart of the issue for you. You want a different kind of beauty to be known about you other than just that.

As a matter of fact, in Revelation 17:4 we see a description of the great harlot church that grace, great false church that will come together and be this global church in the end times, and by the way, everybody will think it's the grandest thing in the world; they'll think, "Finally we have this solution for the whole world and this great church," but it's a

false church, it's a harlot, it's a fake. So metaphorically speaking, he speaks of this church as a woman. He says she's "clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality." So he uses the woman who has no inner beauty or real strength in character but only outward showy attractiveness as a symbol of the fake harlot church.

So these godless women in Ephesus displayed their godlessness in extravagant dress, with expensive jewels, always striving to wear the clothing of the latest top designer labels. Christian women may do some of this but that's not to mark who you are. That's not the pattern of your life. I think the heart condition is so very important and that's why I think Paul brings that aspect out here. Listen, the spirit of the heart definitely alters the effect of the outer garment. And here, what is that? The spirit of the heart definitely affects or alters, rather, the effect of the outer garment. There's a lady that can wear an item of clothing and she's got an unclean spirit about her, she's got a, a, a, an inappropriate spirit about her, a sensual spirit about her, and she gives off some air that dishonors God. The same lady can wear the same clothing. Now some clothing is just wrong period, but the same lady wear the same clothing who loves God, has a pure spirit and a godly spirit, and she does not put off that kind of allurements from her life. The heart is so important. The heart condition affects the, the, the, effect of the garment itself and I believe it's the key issue.

Ah, Pam and I were in, um, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee one Christmas and there was a large church youth conference there and I don't remember which group it was but it was one of the more rural centered, um, denominations where they're real strict about women's dress, you know, you just got about eight or nine do's and eight or nine don'ts and if you do that, then everything else okay. You couldn't, couldn't cut your hair. You couldn't wear makeup, dresses had to be a certain length, and all of those 16-21 year old women there kept every one of those rules but they were the most sensuous girls I've ever been around. I mean, buddy, they didn't cut their hair but they had it in the most extravagant, alluring, I mean, man, you wouldn't believe what they did with it. They wore the long dresses but the dresses just had such a, an appeal to them. My wife reminded me, "Yes, and they fitted in ways that were improper." And on and on, and she and I have talked through the years about isn't it amazing just in one sense they were the most modestly dressed girls but in the other sense they were the most sensuous spirited girls we'd ever seen.

So it's more than just strict rules, though we need some of those. It is the condition of the heart. That's what Paul's getting to here. He's saying, "You're different. You've been changed. You're God's daughter. Make sure your dress doesn't look like women who don't know God." Now in balance, a balancing thought here. Do you think you would hear balance out of me this morning? You hear balance out of me a lot, don't you, because the Bible isn't one verse or one section, there's balance and truths. In balance, there's no scriptural evidence that I know of that prohibits a woman from special adornment, even expensive adornment, for proper occasions. Ancient ancient Israel, God gave guidance to the children of Israel and they spent a lot of money and time on certain festive occasions. On a, on a girl's wedding day, I think that's proper. That's a, that's a



proper and, and, and orderly time to do something special. Maybe there's a special setting or a special, ah, ah, occasion with maybe a dignity. The Bible talks about going before the king in a proper way.

I have had two private dinners with the Governor of our state and when the Governor came here and had dinner with me, I, I dressed appropriately. I didn't dress like 98% of these cool preachers we've got today dress when they mount the sacred desk to preach God's word. Some of them look like they just came from a chicken fight. Because I think there's an appropriateness, there's a dignity about your wedding day, about certain settings, and I believe about the pulpit ministry. Now look, I know some of these guys are good brothers and I know they preach sound stuff, when you understand the weight of what God says to women, we understand the principle about a propriety covers a lot of things, a lot of these guys who aren't sound in doctrine and who are building their churches on gimmicks and fads and nonsense, don't be deceived, their dress-down sloppy look is very intentional and they put a lot of work into it. They're putting on a uniform, trust me. But I'm gonna tell you, the God that I serve is not casual. He's not loose. He's not trendy. He's not cool. He is holy. He is transcendent. He is of utmost dignity and righteousness. And as Paul tells women, "Dress like a daughter of the King," so we all should have some concept of propriety in the totality of our lives and responsibilities.

On the fourth of July, how would you feel if I unfurled out here on a great big flagpole the flag of the country of Canada? Now I love Canada, just went hunting up there. Brother Blake K. got me a hunting trip up there so I went hunting up there and, and, and by the way, you get out of the cities and you find folks just like us. But you'd say, "Brother Jeff, that's not appropriate to fly the flag of Canada. That's not orderly. That's not becoming. This is America's fourth of July." And I would say, "You're exactly right." That's what Paul is saying. "Ladies, dress appropriately as a daughter of the King."

Now let me conclude this morning and now I think this has become a three-parter. Let me conclude this lady, this morning with an exhortation to our younger and older ladies. Young ladies, look at me. Some of you are right here, some of you are scattered around. I want you to continue to strive that your beauty is more than what you wear. It's good that you wear pretty things and you do and I'm glad. As a matter of fact, we want our girls to be pretty. Can I get an amen there? Propriety also means girls shouldn't dress like boys and boys shouldn't dress like girls. That's biblical. "Well, we're just..." No, you're not different, you're sinful. God developed the genders, and by the way, he assigns them at conception. So young girls, strive in your hearts, yes, to beautiful attire, nothing wrong with that but make sure people say, "There's something more beautiful than just the way she dresses, it's her heart."

To our older ladies, I charge you to be a little more intentional, a little more active, a little more personal always with humility, compassion, and without legalism help our younger girls dress right. We need older church ladies, and by the way, you can do that for any of my daughters or granddaughters. I'm first signing up. If you'll do it kindly, humbly, with compassion say, "Sweetheart, you're way too pretty to be dressed like that." It'd work on that... I mean, if your skirt's up to here, you need to get it down lower. And by the way,

can I just get it all out here this morning? When did it become okay for women to wear their pantyhose like pants? Who told you that was dignifying and honorable to the King of kings who owns you and who created you and who loves you and who died for you?

And then propriety, can I say it again, don't go to Walmart with your flannel pajamas on. Now I know that is funny but I'm just, I get, I was, I actually took a picture. I was behind a, I said, "I can't believe a person made in the image of God, created by Him, and holy and high and honorable and righteous God...." Now look, there's a place for sweatpants. I understand all that. I'm not about legalism but what I'm talking about is propriety. Be careful with the trends. Be careful with the fads. Be careful with what the culture throws out there and we're not gonna be a, a, a subculture where we all dress like the cast of "Little House on the Prairie," but we can walk in a way and dress in a way that honors God. Could I get a hearty affirmation from our ladies? All in favor say, "Amen." Thank you, ladies.