

# What about Braided Hair?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

**In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he seems to forbid a woman wearing her hair braided. Can you comment on this? What would be the reason behind this prohibition?**

The full context of any passage, plus other relevant information elsewhere in the Bible on the same topic, must be employed to bring any ambiguous passage into clear focus. So it is with reference to 1 Timothy 2:9-10.

likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works (ESV).

The passage is enjoining “modest” (well-ordered, decent) clothing and is designed to insulate the Christian woman against the inordinate attention of others. A woman (or man for that matter) may be immodest either by being underdressed or extravagantly dressed.

The emphasis of this passage is upon the development of inner spiritual qualities, which could be obscured by outlandish attire.

Paul is not condemning the items mentioned per se. What he is prohibiting is an excess which would detract from the woman's spiritual charms.

It would not be sinful for a Christian woman to wear a wedding ring of gold, though gold is mentioned. It is, however, in my judgment, a sign of ostentation to see women wearing rings on virtually every finger, some on her toes, and three or four in each ear—not to mention nose and eyebrow rings and studs.

Historical sources indicate that in that era, it frequently was the case that women would braid their hair high atop their heads, having it intertwined with jewels and other decorative items. It was a showcase — so elaborate as to be a sensation.



One certainly may array himself or herself with pride and dignity, but to dress so as to flaunt the physical is not consistent with the will of Christ. Even preachers who are such flashy dressers that they distract from the gospel message are not exercising spiritual judgment.

Moreover, Paul's prohibition includes “costly raiment.” How much does “costly” cost? Compared to what many folks in third world countries wear, virtually anything we put on is costly. The way we dress within our culture is, therefore, to some degree a factor in exercising good judgment. When the Christian visits certain poor countries, he may need to “dress down” somewhat.

In a passage of similar import, Peter condemns “putting on apparel” (1 Pt. 3:3). Clearly this injunction is not intended to be **absolute**; rather, the language is **relative**. The point is this: for both women and men, one may dress well, and even fashionable within his cultural circumstances; however, he or she should avoid being show-offish. Inner traits should be paramount in our public demeanor. Christ should be magnified in us (Phil. 1:20).

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## Scripture References

1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3; Philippians 1:20

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