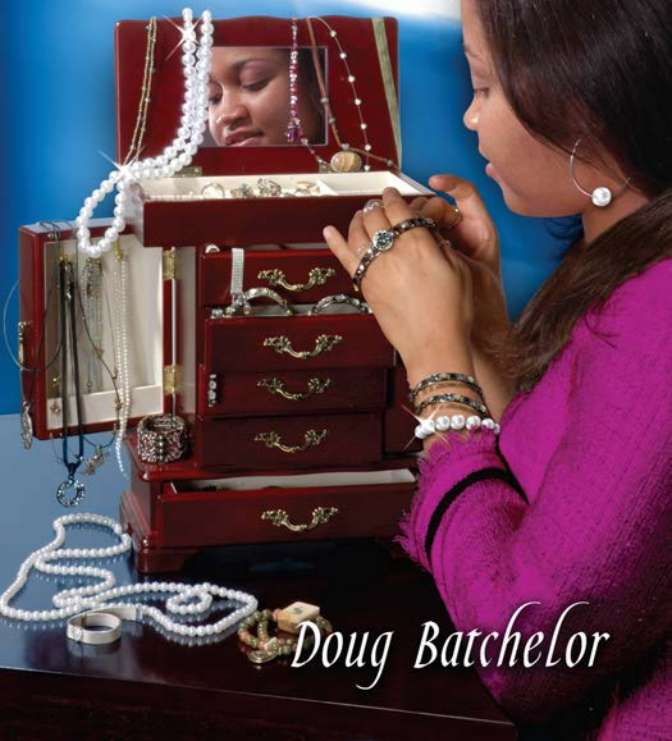


Jewelry

How much is too much?



Doug Batchelor

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by Doug Batchelor

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ONE

INTRIGUING OXYMORON

I am intrigued by clever oxymorons. An oxymoron is a statement or pairing of two words that contradict each other, such as “black light” or “pretty ugly.” A few humorous, personal favorites are “military intelligence,” “criminal justice,” “civil disorder,” and “rap music” (the rap I’ve heard does not even slightly resemble music). Some oxymorons are more serious, like “a little sin,” “innocent gossip,” and “safe premarital sex.”

A few years ago, while wandering through a Christian bookstore, I came upon a glass display case with a sign above it that read “Christian Jewelry.” I thought to myself, Now there’s another intriguing oxymoron—something like “Christian rock.” How can jewelry be Christian when the Bible strongly admonishes believers not to wear it? Clearly, “Christian jewelry” is a conflict in terms.

I realize this topic has been hotly debated within recent years, but my purpose is not to pour fuel on the fire. I hope to shed light, not heat. My desire is for people to find their

faith and practice in the Word of God. The Scriptures plainly address the subject of a Christian’s external appearance and adornment. But unfortunately, many churches are strangely silent on this subject.

Jewelry has been described by some as a small issue. No doubt someone is thinking, With all the problems in the church, why would you want to focus on something so insignificant and widely accepted? Well, friends, remember that Jesus said, “For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Often, the things that seem small on the surface have major implications. And I believe this is just such an issue.

There are unseen and subtle dangers connected with the wearing of jewelry. So, if you are a converted Christian who seeks to know how to better reflect the Lord in these last days, please keep your mind open as we reason together from the Scriptures.

TWO

THE FRUIT, NOT THE ROOT!

The power of the gospel begins on the inside, transforming the heart while unseen by

human eyes. Then it continues to flow and seep into every area of the life, producing obvious external changes. Just like a plant, the seed first comes to life below the earth. However, if the root is healthy, the plant will soon become visible and bear fruit above ground. Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

Notice that He did not say you would know them by their roots that grow underground. He said the fruit, not the root! Therefore, we are commanded to be aware of the external, visible evidence of our faith.

When a person accepts Christ as Lord, the Holy Spirit begins impressing that individual to make dramatic adjustments. There will often be changes in what appears on the table during dinner and on the television after supper. (In fact, He may lead some to get rid of the television altogether.) From the bookshelf to the closet, Jesus will penetrate the whole life. When He is in the heart, He influences every other area.

This is a basic teaching of Christianity. The apostle Paul warned Titus of those who “profess that they know God; but in works they deny him” (Titus 1:16). And James is crystal clear

that a relationship rooted in Jesus will produce external evidence. “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). You can’t be a Christian in your heart without it showing on the outside.

THREE

GOD’S AMBASSADORS

We, the Church, are the hands and feet, the eyes and mouth, and yes, even the ears of Jesus in the world today. We are the body of Christ. Our Lord said, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

We have been sent into the world to demonstrate who Jesus is and what He is like. Through the Holy Spirit, we become His representatives—to reflect His image in everything from the way we talk and work to the way we eat and dress. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, God says that “we all ... are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

A few years ago, shameful scandals surrounded several well-known television

evangelists in North America. Those opposed to Christianity rejoiced, mocking the immorality and hypocrisy exhibited in the lives of these men and their wives who professed to speak for Jesus. During this tragic time, the secular media often referred to their flamboyant dress and gaudy jewelry as proof that these professed Christians were not genuine. These inconsistent TV preachers even inspired one famous musician to write a popular song entitled “Would Jesus Wear a Rolex?” I’m sure angels wept as Christian leaders, due to their immodest appearance, became a deserving target for the lost. It is a sad day indeed when Christians win the medal for opulent external adornment!

FOUR

WEARING OUR WEALTH

Let’s take a look at the origin of jewelry. God made all of the gold, silver, and precious jewels in the world, and He intended for them to have a practical use. Since even small amounts of these minerals are so rare and valuable, long ago they began to be used as money.

Over time, people began wearing their money in order to impress others with their

wealth. When shoppers went to the market to buy an expensive item, they would simply pull off one of their rings or bracelets to pay.

After Rebecca had watered the camels for Abraham’s servant, the Bible says that he paid her in this way. “And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold” (Genesis 24:22).

When the children of Israel brought an offering to the Lord to build the tabernacle, they used the jewels they had received from the Egyptians. It was their money. “And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the Lord” (Exodus 35:22).

There is obviously nothing wrong with having money. But the question is, does God want Christians to wear their wealth for all to see? Of course not. “The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith” (1 Timothy 6:10). Since it is a sin to covet, why

would you want to entice a brother or sister to covet your money by wearing it for all to see? What could possibly be the motive for a Christian to do this?

The reason gold and jewels are so valuable is that they are rare and expensive to mine from the earth. Angels must marvel when they see us put on jewelry to signify value and wealth. In heaven, gold is used for pavement, and diamonds are the stones that form the walls of its mansions! Just think of it. From heaven's perspective, gold is asphalt and diamonds are blocks! How silly it must appear to heavenly beings when we dangle asphalt and bricks on our ears and wrap them around our fingers. Wouldn't you look twice if someone walked into your church next week wearing a black asphalt pendant and a matching tar ring?

In evangelism, I've met many sincere people who had attended the popular churches in their towns only to turn away disappointed because they discerned a spirit of pride and display among the members. These genuine seekers of God entered the sanctuary hoping to find a church home, but instead they found extravagance with which they could not compete.

How happy I've been to offer them a church where the wealthy and the poor choose not to parade their status by wearing fancy clothing and jewelry. These individuals have been thrilled to worship where they don't feel that they're looked down on if they don't wear the latest fashions. I hope that my church will always stay with the Bible truth on this subject. We have too much to lose otherwise.

FIVE

JUSTIFIED JEWELRY?

Those who seek to justify the wearing of jewelry usually point to Bible stories in which God's children wore gold, silver, or jewels. For example, the Scriptures report with no comment that Joseph wore a ring and "a gold chain about his neck" (Genesis 41:42), that Saul wore a bracelet (2 Samuel 1:10), that Mordecai was given a ring by Ahasuerus (Esther 8:2), and that King Belshazzar gave Daniel a scarlet robe and "put a chain of gold about his neck" (Daniel 5:29).

Nevertheless, remember, just because we see something done in Bible times does not mean that God condoned it. The Scriptures simply

record a faithful history of God's people—including all their failures. Noah drank wine and became drunk (Genesis 9:20, 21). Lot had sex with his daughters and got them pregnant (Genesis 19:30–38). Judah hired a prostitute for a night, impregnated her, and later discovered she was his daughter-in-law (Genesis 38:12–26). We cannot assume that God condones such unsavory practices just because these incidents were mentioned in the Bible. Other passages of Scripture clearly tell us that God condemns alcohol, incest, prostitution, and jewelry as anti-productive to accomplishing His purposes for humanity.

One story that is often cited to justify jewelry is that of the prodigal son. Since the father “put a ring on his hand,” some say that we can assume God wants us to wear jewelry. Obviously, as we've just seen, this parable is not an inspired comment on whether Christians should wear rings. Furthermore, the ring the father gave his son was most likely a signet ring. Signet rings contained the family seal. People used them to press this unique seal onto official documents. It was the family's signature. Rather than an ornament for display, signet rings

were a tool for officiating documents and were usually worn on the index finger.

Before the prodigal son left home, he asked his father for his share of the inheritance. Once he received his money and goods, he left home to spend it all on “riotous living” (Luke 15:13). Out of money and destitute, the foolish prodigal later found himself flat broke, hungry, and poorly clad. In desperation, he returned home, trusting in the goodness of his father to at least take him in as a servant. The prodigal felt that he no longer deserved to be a son, since he had squandered half of his father's hard-earned savings.

Instead of rejection, his father showed him unlimited acceptance. He replaced the prodigal's rags with a comfortable and clean robe and put shoes on his bare feet. He filled his son's empty stomach with a feast. And to the son who just wasted his riches, this father gave the signet ring—the family checkbook—with free access to his remaining fortune.

SIX

WHY BE A STUMBLING BLOCK?

One reason I do not drink any alcohol is because one person in seven who imbibes

will eventually become an alcoholic. Even though I might be able to drink moderately, I do not want my bad example to cause another person's downfall—especially for something so unnecessary as intoxicating beverages.

The same principle holds true for jewelry. We have all seen people who cover themselves with gold and precious jewels—gem-aholics, if you will. Most people who wear lots of jewelry do not sense their personal worth. They hope to feel more valuable by covering themselves with expensive articles. Others believe they are unattractive and hope to increase their perceived beauty by adorning themselves with beautiful gems. They can't control themselves. They think that if one is good, then 10 would be better. (Just for the record, I have never heard a man say: "Isn't she beautiful? Just look at her jewelry!") I'm sure everyone would agree that there is a point when enough is enough!

Well, here is the big question. What is that point? If it's okay for women to wear earrings, then who is to say it's wrong for men? If one ring or earring is acceptable, then why not three or four? If the laymen can wear jewelry, why not

the clergy? If a ring in the ear is all right, then what's wrong with a bone in the nose?

Perhaps you have noticed the modern craze of body piercing. Four earrings in one ear and rings in the nose with a chain between them. People are now piercing their flesh and wearing rings in their eyebrows, navels, tongues, and other places we can't mention in a Christian publication. Why would a Christian want to be a stumbling block for someone else and encourage this trend by wearing any jewelry? It's all unnecessary. Especially for people who are preparing to meet Jesus.

Speaking of people living in the time of the end, the prophet Ezekiel warns, "They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity" (Ezekiel 7:19).

If I were to wear any jewelry, I would instantly open the floodgates of inconsistency by my example and cause many to stumble. If I really love my brother, why would I insist on

taking that risk for something so frivolous and unnecessary as jewelry?

Whenever you are unsure about which course to take on a spiritual issue, take the safe position. I know that on the judgment day, God will not condemn anyone for not wearing enough jewelry. Therefore, the safe thing is to not wear any.

SEVEN

MODESTY AND HUMILITY

The original purpose for clothing was to cover the nakedness of our first parents. Adam and Eve never would have dreamed of hanging gold or silver on their bodies to accent their fig leaves! Clothing was for modesty and to protect them from the changing climate. Someday God will place a golden crown of victory on the brow of the overcomers. Yet even then the saved will remove their golden crowns in God's presence (Revelation 4:10, 11).

Notice what God told the prophet Isaiah about jewelry and fancy clothing. "Moreover the Lord says: 'Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton [seductive] eyes, Walking and mincing

[swaying] as they go, ...' In that day the Lord will take away the finery: The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; The perfume boxes, the charms, and the rings; The nose jewels, the festal apparel, and the mantles; The outer garments, the purses, and the mirrors; The fine linen, the turbans, and the robes" (Isaiah 3:16–23 NKJV). A woman in Bible prophecy symbolizes a church. In this prophecy, the women (churches) were to be severely judged because of their pride, which is directly connected with external adornment.

Because we wrestle with sin and temptation, now is not the right time to glorify our exteriors. The supreme goal of the Christian is to attract attention to Christ, not to self. Decorating our mortal bodies with glittering gems and minerals usually springs from pride and is diametrically opposed to the spirit and principles of Jesus. "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

Pride of appearance was a large factor in Lucifer's fall and rebellion. When God

originally created Lucifer as a perfect angel, He gave every precious stone as his garments—“the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold” (Ezekiel 28:13).

Unfortunately, Lucifer chose to misappropriate God’s gifts. Filled with pride, he decided he was beautiful enough to have God’s place on the throne of the universe. “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezekiel 28:17). Pride led to rebellion. Rebellion led to war in heaven. And war in heaven led to sin on earth.

Ever since Adam and Eve’s fall into sin, we humans have had to struggle with the same sinful nature that has pride at its root. God, therefore, has commanded us to not wear jewelry. In our sinful condition, we are no better able to resist the tendency to sinful pride than was Lucifer. When our physical bodies are changed at the second coming of Jesus, we will no longer be tempted to sin. Only then will Jesus consider it safe to place a crown of gold on our heads.

So until then, we would do well to follow the counsel given by the apostle Paul on the subject of adornment: “In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (1 Timothy 2:9, 10 NKJV).

EIGHT

POOR “INVESTMENTS”

Christians are to be faithful stewards of the means God entrusts to their care. Some display gems on their bodies that, if sold, could build an entire church in the mission field. Our money should be spent to spread the gospel in a practical, effective way. The Lord asks, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread” (Isaiah 55:2)? (See also Matthew 6:19–21.)

No doubt you will find glaring examples among church members (and in churches) where money has been squandered on some needless extravagance. I confess that I too have been guilty of this. But one inconsistency never justifies another. God’s money should not be

spent for parading diamonds and gold or even cheap costume jewelry. All the jewelry will melt when Jesus comes, and I would prefer not to be wearing any when that happens!

The Bible declares the folly of such “investments” in James 5:3: “Your gold and silver is cankered [corroded]; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.” The only valuables going to heaven will be transformed people.

NINE

LITTLE IDOLS

When I present the Bible truth regarding jewelry, I rarely hear complaints from those who are newly converted. But the folks who have been in the church for years will often pout and argue, “Doug, it is such a little thing!” My response is, “If it is such a little thing, then why is it so hard for you to take it off?” A little gold or silver can become a big idol.

Perhaps the most striking demonstration of this fact was the experience of the Israelites with the golden calf. The Bible records: “And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden

earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:2–4).

When the children of Israel passed the offering plate, they had enough jewelry to make a small calf. I fear that if we were to pass the plate today in the churches of those who profess to follow God’s Word, we would have enough jewelry to make a whole golden buffalo!

After the golden calf experience, God commanded the people to remove their jewelry lest they be consumed. “For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb” (Exodus 33:5, 6).

Notice the similar warning God gives to His people living in the last days: “In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the rugged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Isaiah 2:20, 21).

TEN

DRESSING FOR THE OCCASION

There was a time when God winked at the wearing of jewelry and other evils such as slavery and polygamy. It was not because He approved of these practices, but because His people had bigger problems to deal with at that point in time.

Acts 17:30, 31 tells us: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Why? “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.”

We are living in the days just before the coming of Jesus—a time in which the church is being judged. “For the time is come that

judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17).

As an illustration of the judgment process, God gave to His people the Day of Atonement. It fell on the tenth day of the seventh month in the Jewish year and was a solemn day on which the Lord would sanctify and judge the children of Israel. In preparation, the people conducted a thorough personal examination. They were filled with an attitude of confession, repentance, and humility. “For it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people” (Leviticus 23:28, 29 NKJV).

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest—who normally wore a jeweled vest and fine garments that were symbolic of the glories of heaven—changed into a simple, white linen robe. We should emulate his plain dress, because we live during the prophetic Day of Atonement. Just as the entire camp of Israel was required to clean and change their clothes on Judgment Day, so are we who live in the judgment hour just before Jesus returns to earth called to purify

our hearts and to separate ourselves from all pagan influences.

Other Bible stories further illustrate how people changed their dress when they prepared to meet God. Here is one from Genesis 35:1–4: “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange [foreign] gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”

We can learn two very important lessons from this story. First, notice that the foreign gods and jewelry were classified and buried together. Pagan worship and jewelry have always enjoyed a close association. And in order for Jacob and

his household to commune with God, they had to abandon all such influences. Thus God ordered Jacob to make not a temporary removal of these articles, but a permanent burial.

Secondly, the word Bethel means “House of God.” We are now living in the time of judgment and are preparing to meet with the Almighty in His heavenly house. Now is not the time to adorn our mortal exteriors. Before we go there, God wants us to separate from the things of this world that will compromise our relationship with Him. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

ELEVEN

WE ARE GOD’S TEMPLE

The most beautiful building of antiquity was the temple of God built by King Solomon. Its exterior was covered with precious, pure white marble stones. Interestingly enough, the gold was on the inside of the temple. The Bible says that this is a good pattern for living temples, as well. “Your beauty should reside, not in outward adornment—the braiding of

the hair, or jewelry, or dress—but in the inmost centre of your being, with its imperishable ornament, a gentle, quiet spirit, which is of high value in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3, 4 NEB). Like Solomon’s temple of old, our gold should be on the inside!

Friend, God made your body in His image. To try to improve human appearance by poking holes in the ears or nose from which to dangle lifeless minerals would be like trying to improve on the perfect beauty of Solomon’s temple by releasing a street gang in the marble courtyard and telling them to express themselves with spray paint. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

I believe angels turn away their faces and weep when professed Christians pierce, scar, chain, mutilate, and tattoo their bodies as a sacrifice to the gods of fad and fashion. God plainly says of His people: “They shall not make ... any cuttings in their flesh. They shall be holy unto their God” (Leviticus 21:5, 6). And if God says we should not cut our bodies, what makes us think that piercing the ears is somehow permissible?

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). In essence, you should not poke holes in priceless marble. Our bodies are to be holy, not full of holes.

The Bible principles against the wearing of jewelry have been a blessing to God’s cause. They are liberating to the members. God’s people have more money to spend on sharing the gospel and relieving the needs of suffering people. They are freed from feelings of insecurity. No longer do men need to worry about whether the ring they give their wife or girlfriend is large enough or makes a big enough social statement. And women don’t have to invest an ounce of emotional energy in comparing their jewelry with others. God’s standard has been a tremendous blessing, and we need to keep it!

TWELVE

FIRST APPEARANCES DO COUNT!

Two symbolic women appear in Revelation chapters 12 and 17. They represent the

two great religious powers that are in conflict throughout church history. Although neither of them ever speaks, we know that one is true and one is false. How? The primary way the Bible identifies who they are is by what they are wearing.

Revelation 12:1 says, “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” The first woman, who represents God’s church, is wearing natural light. His church is clothed with the pure, unadulterated light that He made.

By contrast, the second woman, who represents an apostate church, is bedecked with jewelry and fine apparel. Her beauty is external and artificial. Revelation 17:4 says, “The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.”

Obviously, these things are associated with an appearance of evil, and we are commanded to “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Jesus Himself commanded: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). God’s Word tells us to let our inner light (not our external jewels) shine so that others might see our works (not our wealth) and glorify God (not ourselves).

THIRTEEN

WEDDING RINGS?

At this point someone might be wondering, “What about a wedding ring?”

Very simply, support for the wedding ring cannot be found anywhere in Scripture. The Bible doesn’t say that some rings can be worn and that others shouldn’t. It simply includes rings in a long list of jewelry and ornamental clothing.

The wearing of wedding rings is strictly a tradition that springs from paganism and has since been embraced and “baptized” by many churches. Cardinal John Henry Newman points out that the wedding ring, along with many other pagan customs, infiltrated Christianity through the compromising influence of his church. “The use of temples, and these dedicated to

particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holy days and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, *the ring in marriage*, turning to the east, images at a later date ... *are all of pagan origin*, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.”¹

Of course, today we have found the wedding ring to be a deeply ingrained tradition. But if sincere seekers of God’s will study this topic and are convicted to remove all jewelry, God will give them the grace to follow Him above tradition. “And he [Jesus] said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

FOURTEEN

CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE

I’ve also been asked many times if wearing a cross would be okay. Well, Jesus never asked us to wear the cross. He asks us to bear the cross. Taking up our cross and following Jesus is much more challenging than wearing a

bumper sticker, tee shirt, or little golden cross as frivolous advertising. Jesus said that bearing the cross means a Christian will “deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Whenever in doubt, ask this question: “What would Jesus do?” If we follow Jesus, we are always safe. Personally, I cannot picture my Jesus drilling holes in His ears, nose, or anywhere else in order to hang glittering minerals from His extremities. The example of Jesus in the Scriptures is consistently one of practical simplicity and modesty. When He was crucified, the Roman soldiers divided his garments among themselves. Notice that they did not cast lots for His jewelry. He didn’t have any. Instead, they had to settle for His most valuable piece of clothing—a modest, seamless tunic (John 19:23, 24).

Here is a message that bears repeating: When we love Jesus, we will want to follow His example. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6 NKJV).

FIFTEEN

CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP

In the small town where I used to live, there was a house that was well known for its dilapidated appearance. Broken-down trucks, garbage, and miscellaneous junk cluttered the yard. The peeling paint, broken windows, and hungry yard dogs were an embarrassment to the entire community. Then one day, after taking an extended trip, I drove back through town and was stunned by the dramatic change that had come over this infamous structure. The old, peeling paint had been stripped off, and a beautiful natural stain now covered the wood. Clean, new windows had replaced the broken ones, and all the junk and old vehicles were gone! The yard was clean and covered with new grass. I didn't even have to ask what had caused the change. Instantly I knew that the house had a new owner.

All of us have at one time or another resembled that old, broken-down house. Sin reigned in our hearts, leaving us broken, filthy, and cluttered. But whenever a person allows Jesus to take over the heart, a cleansing

process begins immediately. Jesus will remove those things that distract from the Christian's inner beauty, and people will notice the outer improvement as well!

Jesus laid aside His heavenly throne and crown when He came to our world to save us. Then He surrendered His earthly garments when He died on the cross for our sins. Is it too much for Him to ask us to lay aside our lifeless baubles and beads that we might better reflect His simple purity in this lost world?

As we have seen in this study, there are many good reasons for Christians to abstain from wearing jewelry. But if I had to pick two of the best, it would be these—love for God, and love for our neighbors.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

¹ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1906), pp. 372, 373.



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