

CHAPTER 2

How Do Others See Me?

How do others see me? When people look in my direction are they impressed? horrified? amused? flabbergasted? delighted? depressed? envious? indifferent? appreciative? If I could see myself through their eyes, what would I see?

Most people are concerned about how they are seen by others. Time is spent before the mirror each day. Careful thought is given as to what clothes should be worn. Efforts are made to put on a good appearance before others.

How would you like your friends and classmates to see the way you look when you first wake up in the morning? Suppose you were sick or ill and forced to stay at home where you would be seen only by your family members. Under these circumstances, would you be less concerned or more concerned about your personal appearance? Why?

THE DESIRE TO BE SEEN

I am most likely a person who wants to be seen and noticed by others. I want to be recognized and appreciated. I do not want to be ignored, overlooked or belittled. Nobody likes being a nobody! Everybody wants to be recognized as somebody who is important and respected and honored.

Thus, there is the desire for attention. How can I get others to pay attention to me? How can I get them to focus their eyes upon me? How can I get them to look in my direction?

The problem comes when men and women try to get attention in wrong ways. For example, a young woman may dress in such a way as to *draw attention* to her body (her form and figure) in an indecent way which could be a problem and a temptation to men. What she is really saying is this: "Look at me. Notice my body!" This is called **immodesty** (not being **modest**). The Bible demands and requires that Christian girls and women should dress modestly. One such command is found in 1 Timothy 2:9, a verse which contains three key words:

1) **Modest** = well adorned, orderly, well arranged, neat. A woman or girl should dress neatly and in good taste. She should seek to be attractive in a good way. The opposite of this word would be "chaotic," just like you are when you first get up in the morning, when everything is messed up and out of order.

2) **Shamefacedness** = modesty and humility. This word describes the woman or girl who would shrink away from anything that would even suggest immodesty or indecency. Her love for what is decent and right makes her ashamed to put her body on display before the eyes of lustful men. She wants the beauty of the Lord Jesus to be seen in her.

3) **Sobriety** = good judgment. This word indicates that the Christian girl or woman should give careful thought to what she should wear, how she should dress and the appearance that she should present to others. She is to dress sensibly. She should display good taste in the clothing she wears, not drawing attention to herself or to her body with extremism in either direction.

Concerning fashion and fads, she follows this sound advice: "Be not the first by whom the new is tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

In other words, don't draw attention to yourself by wearing some old clothes that your great, great grandmother once wore. Don't draw attention to yourself by following the latest trends of the world (having your body tattooed and piercing your nose, lip and chin, etc.). Instead draw attention to yourself by living your life according to God's Word in a reasonable and right way.

Young men can also be guilty of this sin of immodesty. For example, a man may take pride in body building, and he may dress in such away so as to show off his bulging muscles. This person who does this is saying, "Look at me! Pay attention to my body!" But isn't there something far more important than one's body? When people look at me, do I want them to see me only as a body?



There are other wrong methods which people use to get attention and to be noticed. Some people are full-time clowns. Everything they say must be a joke and must produce a chuckle in the hearers. A healthy and wholesome sense of humor is good, but some people don't seem satisfied unless others are constantly laughing at them or laughing with them. Others may seek to gain attention through incessant talking. They seek to be the life of the party. Suppose you were in a room with ten other people. Would not your attention be fixed on the person who does most of the talking? Talking in itself is not wrong, but there are better ways to gain attention other than depending solely on "the gift of gab." There are other people who have much to say but it is because they have many worthwhile things to say. They are knowledgeable and fascinating to listen to. They converse with others, not so much to draw attention to themselves, but to inform and to enlighten and to persuade. Others who are very shy are reluctant to say very much. They are fearful that they might say the wrong thing or they have low self-esteem, thinking that they have very little to contribute to the conversation. They need to trust the Lord to help them to open up and express themselves. When our hearts are right with the Lord and when we have a genuine concern for other people, then we will have worthwhile things to say, things that can encourage and bless others. What does Ephesians 4:29 teach us about the wrong kind of speech and the right kind of speech?

Can you think of other methods people use to gain attention and to be noticed?

THE DESIRE NOT TO BE SEEN



There are times when a young person may not want to be seen or noticed. For example, during a certain stage of life a person may have problems with his/her facial complexion and may not want others to notice pimples or blemishes. Or a young man may not want others to notice his voice (especially in singing) during the time when his voice is changing and becoming deeper. But, these are all things that are a necessary part of growth and development, and everyone must go through such things or similar things to one degree or another. At one point, we all had to face the embarrassment of dirty diapers, but we have since advanced to more mature stages of growth. Of course, a baby is not really embarrassed at all! The baby just relaxes and enjoys being a baby, and cares little about what others think!

There are times when you may not want to be seen or noticed in school. Think of those times when the teacher asked you a question and you did not know the answer. You may have wished that all the other students would suddenly disappear! You did not want them to see your ignorance! But remember, most of them probably did not know the answer either, and even if they did, there are some things the teacher could have asked that you could have answered and they could not. The person who is really smart is the one who is willing to admit his ignorance and to simply confess, "**I don't know.**" We cannot expect a teenager to know as much as a thirty-year-old! Again, learning involves a process or growth and development.

In James 1:23 the illustration is given of a man looking into a *glass* (a looking glass or mirror) and seeing his *natural face* (the face he was born with, for better or for worse!). Now obviously, as we look into the mirror, there are certain things that we can change and certain things we cannot change. For example, a man may behold himself in the mirror after he wakes up in the morning and see a dirty face, messed up hair and some ugly stubble of beard. These are all things that can be changed, corrected or cleansed. What are some things that cannot be changed? (We discussed some of these things in Chapter 1.)

One of our greatest problems is that we are too *self-conscious*! When you have been involved with a group of people, perhaps for a social function, have you ever had this feeling: "It seems that everyone is looking at me"? Or, if people start laughing and you are not sure why, do you ever think this: "They must be laughing at me! Maybe something is funny about the way I look or the way I dress or what I just said." Or as you answer a question in class: "Everyone must be thinking how stupid I am!" Probably the other students are thinking about how they didn't know the answer either and how glad they are that the teacher did not ask them the same question! Read Matthew 26:20–22. Were the disciples self-conscious? Was this good or bad? (When the

Lord speaks we need to search our hearts and make sure we are not guilty!)

Not only are we too *self-conscious*, but we are also overly *self-centered*: "I'm the center of the universe!" "I'm like the sun; everything revolves around me!" But life is more than just you! You are just one person in a world filled with millions and millions of people who were all created by the greatest and most important Person in the universe and beyond--*the Living God*. Real progress and growth in the Christian life come as we become less self-conscious and more God-conscious (Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 37:3-7), less self-centered and more Christ-centered (John 3:20). He needs to become more and more; I need to become less and less.

DON'T WEAR A MASK

A **HYPOCRITE** is a person who does not want others to see what he is really like. He wants others to see the beautiful mask he is wearing, but not the real person who is under the mask. The Lord Jesus strongly condemned the hypocrites of His day. Consider Matthew 6:2,5,16; 23:13-33. Who were these hypocrites? What was their mask? What was under the mask?

DON'T SHOW OFF THE OLD MAN

The "old man" is all that a person is IN ADAM (possessing that sinful nature which was inherited from Father Adam). How is the old man described in Ephesians 4:22?

_____ Is this what you want others to see? The works of the old man are described in Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-9. Are these things you would want others to see? How *ugly* do you consider yourself to be outside of Christ? Remember, it is the inner ugliness (the ugliness of the "old man") a person should worry about, not the outer ugliness. A person who may not be very attractive on the outside can be a very beautiful person on the inside (and the inside will greatly affect the outside!).

LET OTHERS SEE THE NEW YOU

If any man is in Christ, what is he (2 Corinthians 5:17)?

_____ If you are really saved, then others need to see *the new you*—"Christ in _____" (Colossians 1:27). God wants "Christ in you" to be noticed and seen!

God also wants you to dress in such a way that you will really gain the attention of others. He wants you to take off the ugly garments of the old man and put on the beautiful garments which He has provided for every child of God. If you wear these clothes day by day, people will really begin to notice something different about you! According to Colossians 3:8-9, what are some of the clothes that you should *take off* or *put off*?

_____ What clothes are you to *put on* and wear (Colossians 3:12-14)?

_____ What should every believer *put on* and display before a lost and dying world (Romans 13:14)?

"Let the _____ of the _____

our _____ be upon us" (Psalm 90:17)!