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Dear Friend:

Many women have asked if God forbids them to wear jewelry. They have heard the teaching that God forbids Christians to wear any jewelry or wedding rings. This belief was the common teaching of the last century, but it has been retained by only a few denominations. This doctrine stemmed from the principle that because the wearing of jewelry, rings and other adornments was abused by the world, jewelry and adornments were sinful of themselves and should never be worn.

The Bible teaches that the material things are not sin, but it is the improper use of them that is wrong. It is the act of abuse, of misuse, that is a sin or violation of God's law. There are two texts in the New Testament relating to the use of adornments for Christians, I Timothy 2:9-10 and I Peter 3:3-5. Neither text even mentions wedding rings, and neither one condemns the proper use of jewelry, as some suppose.

Peter wrote that women should not adorn themselves with plaited or braided hair, which, among the Greeks, was a custom in which costly jewelry and also wreaths were intertwined with the hair. The Bible prohibition of such a practice becomes plain when one considers that a woman's hair was given her to be a glory and an honor (I Cor. 11:15). The addition of costly or distracting and unnaturally bulky adornments took away from the natural and intended beauty God imparted to women. There is no scriptural prohibition against the use of a flower or other modest adornment worn in the hair.

The wearing of gold ornaments and pearls in connection with costly array is forbidden by the apostles. Gold and pearls are not sin; for God sanctified the use of gold in the temple. But their great expense was not becoming to Christian women who were to put their treasures into spiritual traits of character which God views as of much greater worth. These two verses contain no prohibition on wearing a moderate amount of relatively inexpensive, but not "cheap" adornment. A string of inexpensive pearls

would not be violating the principles which the apostle lays down. For women to bedeck themselves with cheap objects for vanity is just as wrong as to put one's treasure in expensive jewelry.

The "putting on of apparel" mentioned by Peter is explained by Paul to include unappropriate or lavish clothing worn for vain glory. In these verses the principle is always that women should be temperate in the expense of their adornments and modest in their apparel. The fact that only specific, costly or unnatural adornments are mentioned clearly implies that the apostles NEVER meant to forbid all jewelry. Since no word is said about wedding rings, although wearing them was a universal practice of that day, neither Paul nor Peter meant to forbid them. Christians have a perfect right to wear them. The origin of wedding rings does not stem from pagan religious practices, despite the fanciful cavemen stories of captured women and club-wielding men.

As absolute proof that Christian women may wear jewelry, Peter says that his description aptly pictures "the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves being in subjection unto their own husbands." Yet those women wore jewelry! (Gen. 24:47,53). And God blessed Israel of old with adornments (Ezek. 16:9-14).

LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT