

IS IT WRONG FOR WOMEN TO WEAR JEWELRY?

By Joe Keim

Introduction

Is jewelry condemned by God?

Is it sinful for Christians to wear wedding rings, necklaces, or other jewelry?

Some churches strongly teach against jewelry, while others see no problem with it at all.

This subject has caused confusion, division, and even judgment among believers for many years.

The purpose of this article is not to argue, but to carefully look at Scripture and ask an honest question:

What does the Bible actually teach?

If gold and precious stones were sinful in themselves, then heaven itself would be filled with sin, because the Bible describes heaven as being made with streets of gold and foundations adorned with precious stones.

Let us carefully examine this subject together.

A Question About Wedding Rings

Dear Joe,

Since you were raised Amish, I thought you might understand the wedding ring tradition and perhaps help me think through this issue biblically.

My husband James and I work in a business where we deal with many people who do not know us personally. Over the years, I noticed people often assumed I was divorced or a single mother because I did not wear a wedding ring.

I was raised Apostolic, and wedding rings were not part of our church tradition. But after living in the broader culture for many years, I realized that society generally assumes married women wear wedding rings.

I have experienced many uncomfortable situations because of this misunderstanding.

One of my daughters and her husband are still members in the Apostolic church, yet they work professionally in the business world. They decided to wear wedding rings because they believed it prevented confusion and avoided the appearance of wrongdoing.

That caused me to think seriously about the matter.

The Bible often speaks positively about gold and jewelry. For example:

- Abraham's servant gave Rebekah jewelry (Genesis 24:22).
- Precious stones and gold are mentioned throughout Scripture.
- Heaven itself is described with gold and precious jewels.

Yet some churches use verses such as:

- 1 Timothy 2:9
- 1 Peter 3:3

to teach that jewelry is sinful.

Personally, I do not believe Paul was forbidding all jewelry. I believe he was teaching that inward beauty is more important than outward beauty.

What are your thoughts?

With Christian love,
A. H.

Joe Keim's Response

Dear A. H.,

Your story reminded me of something that happened in my own life.

When Esther and I were married in the Amish culture, wedding rings were not allowed. In fact, no jewelry was permitted at all.

When we left the Amish church in 1987, we never even considered wearing wedding rings. To us, they had very little significance because we had never been raised around them.

About fifteen years later, a woman from our church approached me after a service. She pointed her finger at me and said:

"Joe, how can you travel and preach in churches all over the country and not wear a wedding ring? It sets a bad example."

Needless to say, Esther and I eventually went out and bought wedding rings.

But then, several years later, I preached in a conservative Mennonite church. As soon as people noticed my wedding ring, some became very upset.

Over the next several days, I received phone calls telling me that certain church members were deeply disturbed that I wore jewelry while preaching behind their pulpit.

Some were reportedly upset enough to walk out.

So, you see, the exact same issue caused problems in two completely opposite directions.

Christians Often Divide Over External Things

During my travels, I have seen believers divide over many outward issues:

- wedding rings,
- drums in church,
- dress codes,
- Bible versions,
- jackets and ties,
- hairstyles,
- and many other things.

One church sees something as worldly, while another church sees the exact same thing as perfectly acceptable.

The apostle Paul addressed this kind of situation.

- **1 Corinthians 9:19-22:** “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

Paul was teaching believers to be sensitive to others and not unnecessarily offend people when it could hinder the gospel.

My Advice About Wedding Rings

A. H., my advice is simple:

If wearing a wedding ring helps avoid misunderstanding and confusion in your culture, then wear it.

But at the same time, be loving and sensitive toward those who may sincerely believe differently.

There may be times when wisdom and kindness call for laying aside personal liberties in order to maintain peace.

Is Gold Sinful?

If gold itself were sinful, then why would heaven be filled with it?

Revelation 21:18-21: “And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass... The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones...”

The Bible describes:

- streets of gold,

- gates of pearl,
- and foundations covered in precious stones.

If God were against gold and jewelry in themselves, why would He use them to describe the beauty and glory of heaven?

Clearly, the issue is deeper than jewelry itself.

What Did Paul Mean in 1 Timothy and 1 Peter?

- **1 Timothy 2:9-10:** “That women adorn themselves in modest apparel... not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array...”
- **1 Peter 3:3-4:** “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning... of wearing of gold... But let it be the hidden man of the heart...”

Paul and Peter were not primarily condemning jewelry itself.

They were addressing something much deeper:

- pride,
- vanity,
- worldliness,
- and drawing attention to oneself.

Their focus was on the heart.

The Real Issue: Inward Beauty

The Bible teaches that true beauty is not primarily outward.

True beauty comes from:

- humility,
- godliness,
- meekness,
- purity,
- and a heart devoted to God.

A Christian’s outward appearance should reflect modesty and good judgment, but the greatest beauty is the beauty of the heart.

- **1 Peter 3:4:** “The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit... is in the sight of God of great price.”

What About Modesty?

The Bible clearly teaches modesty.

But modesty can look somewhat different from culture to culture.

The key question is not:

- “How much jewelry is too much?”
- or “Can a Christian wear a wedding ring?”

The better question is:

- “What is motivating my heart?”
- “Am I trying to glorify God or draw attention to myself?”

A believer should never seek sensuality, pride, vanity, or worldly attention.

Instead, believers should seek humility and godliness.

A Helpful Commentary Thought

The *Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible Commentary* says: “Holy women trusted in God, not in fashionable hairstyles, clothes, and jewelry. They sought inward beauty rather than outward beauty.”

That captures the heart of the issue very well.

Final Thoughts

This subject has divided Christians for many years.

Some sincere believers choose not to wear jewelry at all.

Others believe simple jewelry, including wedding rings, is acceptable.

Wherever a believer stands on this issue, several truths remain important:

- We should not judge one another harshly.
- We should seek modesty and humility.
- We should focus more on inward beauty than outward appearance.
- We should avoid pride and worldliness.
- We should strive for peace among believers.

The kingdom of God is not built upon jewelry, dress styles, or outward traditions.

It is built upon faith in Jesus Christ and a transformed heart.

- **Romans 14:19:** “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

Mission to Amish People

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