



ADORNED

by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth

Review by Tim Challies
February 7, 2017

This book begins with a wedding. It kind of has to, doesn't it? After writing so many books as a single woman, Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth (formerly Nancy Leigh DeMoss) has now written her first major work as a married woman. Not that it's a book about marriage, of course. Not yet. Rather, it's about adornment, about living out the beauty of the gospel.

Adorned is a lengthy exposition and application of the second chapter of Titus and, in particular, the verses where Paul provides Titus with instruction in godly living intended to encourage the women of his church. He makes it clear that older women are to accept the responsibility of teaching and training the younger women in Christian living. The great goal and purpose of such godly living is “that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” Women (and men, for that [matter]) are to adorn the gospel, to display its beauty and reality in their lives, in their character and conduct.

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Wolgemuth's focus is women, of course, and the responsibility they have toward one another. “When older women and younger women support each other in living out God's transforming love, the entire body of Christ—the bride of Christ—grows more beautiful.” This book is for both the older and the younger. “It's for all of us—because each of us is an older woman to somebody and each of us is a younger woman to someone else. And each of us, in different ways, in different seasons, can be on both the giving and receiving end of this life-to-life process.”

The book is structured around three parts. The first part considers “A Woman under God.” Before a woman can address her behavior, she must address her beliefs for these two can never be separated. Thus, Titus is to “teach what accords with sound doctrine”—first the doctrine and then what accords to it or the practices that flow naturally out of it. The godly woman is to heed this doctrine and to structure her life around it. She is also to understand her position in relation to others as either an older or younger woman, one who must teach or be taught; she must accept her God-given responsibility of being involved with others; she must learn to be reverent, to be one whose demeanor is consistent with her profession.

The second part considers “A Woman under Control.” Many of Paul’s commands to women pertain to a life that is joyfully submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit. Thus a godly woman is to refrain from all gossip and slander and to speak only what is true and delightful; she is to be at liberty from alcohol or anything else that might enslave; she is to develop and display self-restraint over all evil passions and all temptations to excess; she is to be pure, to refrain from any appearance of evil and to instead value purity and propriety.

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The third part considers “A Woman Under her Roof.” Paul expects that women will accept a particular responsibility for the home. Thus, a godly woman is to cultivate a joyful and godly atmosphere in her home; she is to love and treasure her husband; she is to display godly submission to her husband’s leadership; she is to embrace the gift of motherhood; she is to display that rare but beautiful quality of kindness.

I have always appreciated DeMoss’s Wolgemuth’s books, and found this one as enjoyable as any. She pushes hard to understand doctrine before suggesting applications. She avoids the lure of legalism, of commands or strictures that might be preferential but which are not biblical. She avoids the triteness that marks too many books on this subject. And, having lived so much of her life as a single woman, she avoids teaching as if her readers are all married with perfect homes, perfect marriages, perfect families.

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“This is God’s good and beautiful plan. The biblical model of older women living out the gospel and training younger women to do the same, of younger women recognizing the value of older women in their lives—of women adorning the gospel together—is vital for all of us to thrive. Living our lives as Titus 2 women enables us to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. It helps our families and churches to flourish and the beauty of the gospel to shine forth in our world.”

Adorned is an excellent and deeply biblical work. It is fitting, then, that as a book, a physical object, it is nearly a work of art. The typography and page layout wonderfully complement the contents. It is a rich study of a rich passage full of rich truths, and I give it my highest recommendation.

Review by Tim Challies, <http://www.challies.com/book-reviews/adorned>

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