

The Kind of Woman God Treasures

1 Peter 3:4, God Desires Every Christian Woman to Aim for This Quality
A Sermon by Chris Mueller

After interviewing some fifteen thousand tiny guests on his *House Party* show in the 1950's, Art Linkletter compiled his funniest interviews in a book titled *Kids Say the Darndest Things!* Here's a sample of the answers that came from the mouths of those fidgeting and unflinchingly honest children.

"What does your mom do?"

"She's a Sunday School teacher."

"What does she do for fun?"

"She plays poker and drinks beer."

And what about the innocent who spouted:

"My Dad's a cop who arrests burglars, robbers and thieves."

When I said, "Doesn't your mother worry about such a risky job?" he answered, "Naw, she thinks it's a great job. He brings home rings, bracelets and jewelry almost every week."

Oops. It was forthright exchanges like these that taught Mr. Linkletter this interesting insight: children under ten and women over seventy give the best interviews . . . for the identical reason. They speak the plain unvarnished truth. They dish it out in no uncertain terms, with heartfelt emotion coloring each phrase. No concealing, flattering, hypocritical editorializing among the very young and the very old. If you don't want the truth, better not ask them.

But there's someone else we'd better not ask, if we don't want the truth--someone whose book we'd better not read if we want to be pampered, or protected from reality. If you don't want the plain, unvarnished truth, better not study God's Word. Now you can make the Bible say feel-good truths, you can manipulate it to tickle ears, you can pick through the Word of God and share practical principles that will help everyone, but you will not hear God's intended message. Only as your main diet is to go through the letters of the Scripture, verse-by-verse in context, seeking to understand the author's intended meaning alone, working hard to determine what each verse meant to the people it was written to, in the language it was written, embracing the culture and history of the time, can you possibly discover the one correct interpretation of each verse of Scripture, hearing God's intended message for them and only then, its application for us.

Sadly, the author's intended message of the Scripture, called the authorial intent, is seldom heard in pulpits today. But there is some hope--when you go to a church, ask them if they teach the Word of God verse-by-verse. Then ask them if they ever instruct from God's Word on God's sovereignty in salvation, God's purpose in discipline and spanking, God's view of homosexuality, and God's design in the unique roles of husbands and wives--from that you can determine whether they want to hear what God's Word has to say, or you'll discover if they treat the Word of God like a Smorgasbord, picking only what tickles people's ears, and skipping the rest.

Many pulpits today will not teach on the roles of men and women because of three main reasons. Do you know what they are?

First Contemporary cultural pressure

Go out to Winchester, grab a poster board and write on it, "I BELIEVE WOMEN ARE SUPPOSED TO SUBMIT TO THEIR HUSBANDS--HONK IF YOU AGREE" and see what happens. Just see how many people honk, compared to those who yell at you, or worse, try to run you over. There is a lot of cultural pressure to avoid the Biblical truth of the roles.

Second Modern Christian compromise

Today, most Christian colleges, seminaries and seemingly good churches teach an equalitarian position. That position states the roles of men and women are the same, there is no difference in their roles, and a wife should never submit to her husband. Some will wrongly add--sure Paul and Peter told women to submit back then, but that doesn't apply to today--today we're more advanced, we know better now. So with clever words and tricky hermeneutics, they reinterpret the Bible.

Now, personally, I think you all are pretty smart. Any thinking person in this room, reading 1 Peter 3, Ephesians 5, Colossians 3 and Titus 2, will say the Bible teaches that a wife is to submit to her husband--that's face value, it's clear, obvious, literal and normal. When anyone changes that plain meaning, they have to use contemporary, postmodern hermeneutics to change the clear instruction of God.

Again, because of the pressure from seminaries, Christian colleges and churches, you have an equalitarian position--reworking the text so that the plain teaching of the Scripture is manipulated to somehow teach that the roles of men and women are the same. Please learn that word--it's the errant equalitarian position.

Now the Bible clearly teaches a complimentary position--that word is used to describe the roles of men and women as different, but they complement one another, as in the trinity, the roles of authority and submission are different, but they are also one. So there's pressure from society, pressure from bad teaching, and pressure from . . .

Third The simple but difficult, genuine Christian application

There is pressure on Christian women and men who want to embrace what God says in 1 Peter 3:1-7, but are struggling to do so. So today, let's understand our struggle by opening your Bibles and taking your outline. Some of you nice ladies are seeking to apply the Word of God by the power of the Spirit, following the example of Christ and humbly showing up every week to hear what God has to say to you about becoming a truly Godly woman.

Some of you men lately have actually been anxious to get to church, hurrying the family out the door, making sure your wife gets to hear all this good truth that applies directly and only to her--fix her Lord! I've been wondering if some of the single and married men are saying, "I'm not even taking notes right now, this is great. I am gonna' kick back and let Mueller let these

ladies have it with the machine gun of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Let me remind you men, verse 7 is coming. It is just around the corner.

God wants you not only to know His Word, but to live it. We can only live it if we hear it taught, seeking God's intended meaning. So look now at verse 4, to embrace God's Word in order to help your marriage, prepare you for marriage, and generally to esteem God's design in male/female relationships. Hear God's heart today as you ladies discover the kind of woman God treasures from verse 4 of 1 Peter 3. What has God said thus far in our study?

Look at verse 1, *"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands."*

#1 Submit to your own husbands, like Christ submitted, so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word

#2 Submit, even if your husband is in rebellion to God they may be won

#3 Continue hoping for your husband's salvation without a word by the behavior of their wives

#4 Using your actions over your words

Verse 2, *"as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior"*

#5 Master those two behaviors in particular

Verse 3, *"your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses"*

#6 Do not allow your appearance to be your priority

But where should our priority be?

Verse 4, *"But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."*

Let your passion be the internal character of your heart. This is what God treasures in the life of a woman. This is what God wants women to aim at. This is what God wants wives to hunger after--not thinner thighs, pouty lips, a flatter stomach or longer lashes, but the bull's-eye in God's dart board for women is a gentle and quiet spirit found in verse 4. Your outline breaks verse 4 down phrase-by-phrase, seeking to embrace every word that Peter uses. Let's start in verse 3.

"Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." What does God want a Christian woman to aim for?

#1 Not external qualities, but let it be the hidden person of the heart

God makes this clear--do not pursue that, but do pursue this. Here is the strong contrast, do not focus on externals, verse 3, but do focus on internals, verse 4. Do not invest your heart in clothing, verse 3, but do invest your heart in character, verse 4. Look again: *"your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."* God says big hairstyles, jewelry and expensive outfits are meant for display, but inner character is hidden from our sight at first glance. But inner integrity is what God wants you to focus on.

What makes this difficult is that it's an act of faith. You get immediate feedback from external appearance, but not from internal qualities. But character is what pleases God and lasts forever. One is immediate, and the other is eternal--one is feeling, and the other is faith. God is making a strong contrast we can't ignore. The first word of verse 4 is but, *alla*--and that word is the strongest single word of contrast in the New Testament: not this, BUT this.

When I go to the restroom in a foreign restaurant, I start to sweat. Why, because I am working so hard to make certain I go into the correct one, because one of them is a passionate "no" (the women's), and the other is a strong "yes" (the men's). Verse 3 is a passionate "no", and verse 4 is a strong "yes".

Wearing nice clothes, jewelry and braided hair is not evil, but it's not to be your passionate heart, your focus, nor your priority. Peter even carefully contrasts the external with the internal in verses 3 and 4. In verse 3, the word adornment, *kosmos*, where we get our word cosmetics (describing surface issues) is in contrast to verse 4, that which is hidden, of the heart and an internal deep quality.

God through Peter also uses the strongest verb in verses 1-7 right here. It is a continual command--can you see it? "Let it be," not the Beatles' song, but "let it be" is actually in verse 3 in the Greek text, and becomes the assumed verb in verse 4. God commands for us to continually not allow our garb, verse 3, to overshadow our heart for God, verse 4. As a way of life, don't pursue external appearance over internal uprightness.

Your lifestyle is to have an internal character priority. This will make you different, since our entire society is swayed by appearance--handsome dudes in sharp suits, attractive ladies decked out in gowns, slick brochures, even gifted speakers with no integrity tend to influence us when they shouldn't. Take a tired old car, wash it, rub in some wax, lather it with Armor All and people will buy it just for the shine.

How influenced are you by external shine, flash, and glitz over internal faithfulness, conviction and character? Are you more concerned with what people say about you, or what God thinks about you? Godly women and men do not pursue external qualities most--they don't--what do they pursue? What does God want a Christian woman to aim for? Verse 4, *"but let it be the hidden person of the heart."*

#2 A deep quality, but let it be the hidden person of the heart

God is not talking about a woman's skin-deep cosmetic changes, but deep inward changes--a wife's true personality, her true self. It isn't visible at first, because Peter is describing her internal nature. The Greek word for hidden means it isn't immediately seen, heard or touched. And the word person is actually the word for man, *anthropos*--but in this context it refers to the internal you, the buried inner man or your secret inner person no one sees. Like those

cartoons where the character is in conflict with himself, so a little angel or devil pops up on the shoulder. This verse pictures the nonmaterial you as the real you being your true beauty and true motivation, even though it is hidden.

The Greek word for heart is your core, the new man central representing your whole person, the seat of your affections where you commune with God, make decisions, and set direction. As a Christian, heart is describing the new creation, new you. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* And Galatians 6:15, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (The externals don't matter, the new creation does.)

The hidden person is the new you in Christ--the true you. You've played that game with older babies, "I see you!" You hide behind your hands as if you are hidden, then peek out. We do the same--we hide behind smiles, appearance, and the right words, but forget that God knows our hearts. He always sees the genuine us, the real us--the deep true person. And what really matters is who we are in our hearts. Are you impressed with externals, or are you impressed with the heart?

Samuel the prophet was impressed with David's studly, older muscle-bound brothers. What's even sadder is David's own father Jesse didn't even consider David worthy to show off to Samuel as a future king, and left him out to watch the sheep--his own son. But God isn't impressed with handsome, muscles, the ability to fight, or charm--God told Samuel He is impressed with the heart. First Samuel 16:7, *"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"*

Yes, ladies and gentlemen of FBC--take care of yourself, eat well, work out, sleep properly and watch your weight (verse 3), but make certain you care for your heart before God (verse 4). Feed your soul, study the Word, cultivate a relationship with God through prayer, review sermons, talk about spiritual truth, and check your heart, more than you check your weight.

Men in ministry must never neglect their hearts. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:16, *"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."* (Pay attention to your heart.)

And Christian, don't ever let this be true of you today or ever. Matthew 15:8 says, *"This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me."* And Christian wives with saved or unsaved husbands, God treasures a woman who focuses on the hidden person of the heart. Strive for internal qualities, Peter adds with the imperishable quality. What does God want a Christian woman to aim for?

#3 A lasting quality, but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality

Our father in heaven does not want our lives to be characterized by the pursuit of short-lived earthly fashions that are here today and gone tomorrow. Have you looked at what you wore in the late 60's, 70's, 80's and been embarrassed? I have groaned over shirts, pants, shorts, shoes, hairstyles, hair length, mustaches and more--horrific. Just think, if the Lord doesn't return, all of you will groan over what you are wearing right now . . . your hair style right now--how 2010, embarrassing. It's all temporary and fading.

God doesn't want our lives focused on passing earthly fashions, but on heavenly, eternal, lasting qualities. God doesn't want you passionate about expensive clothes (verse 3), but

treasured character (verse 4). God doesn't want you concerned with fashion that'll wear out, but with qualities that'll never die.

When Peter uses the Greek word imperishable, he is describing something that is incorruptible--it will last forever. Peter uses imperishable here, but also back in chapter 1 verse 4, where it describes a believer's eternal inheritance in heaven. First Peter 1:4, *"to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."*

Imperishable is eternal--it can't be destroyed. It is the born again new nature God gives you, so when you live dependent upon the Spirit of God, what is done lasts forever. God wants you living for heaven and not for now, longing for reward in heaven and not the praise of men now. The Greek word imperishable is an adjective which the New Testament uses consistently to speak of heavenly realities, things which won't fade away with the passing of this present world. Since Peter uses this adjective without a noun following it, a noun must be supplied by the reader from the context (in verse 3). The NASB supplies the word "quality"--imperishable quality, that's good. But this time I think the ESV got it--it says "imperishable beauty."

Christian women, do not make earthly beauty your passion (verse 3). But make lasting, eternal, unfading beauty your passion (verse 4). It is as if Peter is saying, your beauty should depend upon what you yourself genuinely are inside of you. What you are in your heart is what causes you to be beautiful. God says, this is how I designed a woman's beauty--her character is true, lasting, unfading beauty--and it truly is.

No amount of exercise, good eating, sleep, pills or surgery will stop wrinkles, spots, skin, fat, arthritis, and age from doing their worst. But nothing can stop true internal, lasting beauty from shining through an older vessel, and we have many examples proving that truth here at FBC. I pray more of you will join their ranks.

One news website had a brief article titled, "Stars who have lost their looks." I scanned their examples, surprised by how many of them I had no clue as to who they were. And admittedly, there were a few who were displaying on their faces the consequences of their sinful choices. But as I looked, many of them were just showing their age, which illustrates our society's worship of youth, and the pressure this world puts on women to stay youthful-looking.

There is a way to grow old and still be gorgeous. Develop inner character--you may look older in the mirror, but those with imperishable qualities will always be eternal beauties. This attractiveness is ageless, it never fades, it is lasting. Expensive jewelry can be stolen, hair will turn gray, expensive dresses will be torn, worn, moth-eaten or no longer fit, but imperishable character in the heart of a Godly woman will always generate true beauty. It will always produce a "wow" reaction. Peter says, don't live for temporary beauty--live for eternal beauty.

But what does that look like Peter? *"But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit."* What does God want a Christian woman to aim for? Here's your bull's-eye . . .

#4 An unwavering quality, "with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit"

This is what all women are to strive for. This is the goal of every Godly woman in this room, and what proves your maturity--a gentle and quiet spirit. This is the tool God will use to impact the unsaved husband, to impact the saved husband, and to make you irresistible at any age. This is true beauty. Are you curious as to how a gentle and quiet spirit leaks out? It's not a woman who doesn't talk, is shy, wimpy, or says, "Yes, dear." It isn't a woman who smiles a lot, talks in a soft voice, says she prays, and tells you how much she trusts Christ with all her problems. How does a gentle and quiet spirit leak out? Get this down . . .

First A woman who is obedient to the Word of God *context*

Peter makes sure you don't miss this obvious truth, so do not be fooled by a phony any more. No one can have the gentle and quiet spirit of verse 4 without living out the context of 1 Peter 3, verses 1-7. Verse 1, "in the same way," meaning she submits to unfair life situations like Christ did. She submits, even when her husband is a demanding and unfair non-Christian. She lets her obedient lifestyle be her primary witness (verse 2). And even when her husband lies about her (verse 6), she obeys him--she's obedient, following God's Word in all things.

A woman with a gentle and quiet spirit is first unwaveringly obedient to the Bible. The moment she doesn't submit to authority, the moment she chooses to disobey the Word of God as a way of life, she is no longer a Godly woman, not gentle and quiet—period.

Second A woman who shows strength under control *gentle*

The adjective "gentle" occurs a total of four times in the New Testament. Two of the references are self-descriptive of Christ, the third is a beatitude given by Christ, and the fourth is our verse today, verse 4. Peter exhorts female readers to display the same gentle spirit Jesus lived out during his earthly ministry. In Matthew 11:28-29 He said, "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" And in Matthew 21:5, "*Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'*" And finally Matthew 5:5, "*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*"

Gentleness is a quality required of every Christian. It is an attribute of Christ, describing strength under control. This is the tame female bear that doesn't harm people until someone threatens her cubs--strength under control.

A Greek ruler who was considered gentle was the one who was very kind to all the citizens, but also would stand on the front lines with his sword to defend his city. He would be one who would be gracious to the harmless one-time thief, but command the execution of the intentional murderer--strength under control.

The word "gentle" comes from the word referring to a humble and meek attitude, expressed in patient submissiveness and kindness, but a spirit of unwavering devotion to God's Word. So quiet and gentle means:

First A woman who is obedient to the Word of God, from the context

Second A woman who shows strength under control, from gentle

Third A woman who is calm in a crisis--rooted in heaven **quiet**

Quiet describes an attitude of calmness, serenity, and tranquility--it does not mean not talking. The meaning is calm, not disturbed, not internally upset, but still or tranquil. A Godly woman is still in the storm, doesn't panic under pressure, and is trusting during the trial. Whereas gentleness has to do with her dealings with others, quietness has to do with her own heart in her circumstances. She is kind to others (gentle), but also at peace in her heart (quiet).

Women with unsaved husbands live with a high level of uncertainty. Most saved women with lots of kids experience high levels of chaos. But the Godly woman is undisturbed within--her heart is calm . . . why? Because she's intimate with the God who's running every single detail of her life. She trusts His love, relies on His strength, depends on His promises, believes His wisdom, feeds on His Word, practices prayer, enjoys the means of grace--her heart is calm.

Yosemite Valley used to have a lake called Mirror Lake--I've swum in it during summer, and seen it iced over in the winter, and most of you have seen pictures of it and didn't even know it. The picture you saw was of Half Dome reflected in the lake like a mirror. I have seen Mirror Lake so smooth it was like glass, and you couldn't tell where the sky stopped and the reflection began. That's a quiet spirit--it is a heart that is at peace with God, no matter what storm is raging around you. Most of you have experienced those moments when your heart is calm, reflecting the truths of God's faithfulness and great love. And you all have experienced a heart when it is like a stormy sea--churning, tossed, agitated, and making you dangerous to be around.

There is no secret to this--it is simple, but difficult to apply. Keep your heart focused on heaven, and live as if you lived there now. Keep your mind saturated with the Gospel, and live believing you are always getting better than you deserve. Keep your will submissive to Christ, trusting only in His Word. Keep your actions filled with the Spirit, dependent only on divine power. Keep your life as a living sacrifice, giving every moment to Christ.

What God wants is for each woman He saves to grow into a quiet and gentle spirit. God values a woman when her spirit is a calm pool, even when her circumstances are like a hurricane--she is unwavering. The Greek word spirit here does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but your entire disposition--your frame of mind. Spirit is the immaterial part of you which has been made new, and will live forever. And a gentle and quiet spirit is what makes a woman beautiful.

Can you now see how nagging, shouting, and creating turmoil are not only ungodly, but they actually accomplish the opposite of what women desire? They actually work against true intimacy. And a gentle and quiet spirit is not describing someone who is not funny, not fun, not athletic, or someone who doesn't shout encouragement at a sporting event. To be quiet and gentle doesn't make you tedious and dreary. A Godly woman is not dull but delightful. She is not a bore but a beauty, and her beauty is ageless--it's a beauty time can't spoil. This kind of spirit is beautiful to everyone--to husbands, children, friends, to unbelieving husbands and to God--yes to God.

Read verse 4 one more time. *"But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."* What does God want you Christian women to aim at?

#5 A valued quality *a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God*

This quality not only makes a woman valuable and attractive to her husband, but Peter shocks his readers by declaring that God Himself delights in it; God literally treasures this in women. A gentle and quiet spirit is precious in His sight. Jesus Christ was God, yet when He became a man, fully God and fully man, He veiled his glory. You didn't see by looking at Him that He was God immediately. But once you heard and watched Him, people began to figure it out.

Just like Christ was veiled, so Godly women are veiled--at first they will look merely like women. But once you hear them and watch them, you will begin to figure out that they're a gentle and quiet spirit--that they are deep and eternal and truly Godly. She's not all about cosmetics and clothing, but Christ and the cross.

The word precious means costly, valued or treasured. It is literally very expensive, like your most valued possession, which is secured or set in a place of honor or enjoyed regularly. Being precious to God means He values, honors and enjoys you. God cherishes this character in women--He esteems and respects it. Christ loves this Spirit in women--God prizes this make-up in women. In the world's sight, garb and goop on the face are important. In Christ's sight, Christ and character are important.

The phrase "in God's sight" reminds us God is watching. He knows what is going on, and His thoughts toward you are more than the sand of the seashore. If He knows when a sparrow hops, He knows about your marriage, your home and your heart. And notice Peter says, "which is precious in the sight of God." By the use of the Greek verb "is", God is stating a fact that's true of Him continually--all the time, every moment of every single day. God always, anytime, all the time considers a gentle and quiet spirit the highest character, and is most valued by Him. And if what encourages Christ is important to you, then having a gentle and quiet spirit will be a priority for you.

For millennia, there've been beauty contests, and today those contests use certain criteria to evaluate women. What you look like in a bathing suit, your poise, your elegance, your talent, and your ability to answer tough social questions, which are always answered with world peace. In the future, all of you ladies will be in a beauty contest, but there'll be only one criterion--did you develop a gentle and quiet spirit? How will you do? To get you ready, allow me to give three final challenges.

1 Find a balance between internal and external

Peter is forbidding vanity and excess in appearance in verse 3, but he is not forbidding women to look attractive. Don't go to extremes here--it is totally possible for a woman's appearance to be so unkempt and unadorned as to embarrass and discourage her husband, to whom such indifference in the name of Christ would make the Gospel offensive and be just as spiritually detrimental as too much attention given to externals. The Lord is most pleased when a believing woman's modest, thoughtful and lovely adornment reflects the inner beauty Christ has fashioned in her. Be balanced.

2 Honestly check your heart

External beauty is temporary, but internal beauty is timeless. One is attractive to the world, and the other is attractive to God. Peter just told you wives in verse 3 not to make your priority

your outward appearance, but now verse 4, to make your priority your inward character, so be honest. What do you spend the most time and money on? That will tell you where your heart is--Matthew 6:21, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" Reset your commitments to make certain your internal pursuits through the Word, prayer, ministry, discipleship, and worship are pleasing to the Lord. Some need to repent, others to adjust.

3 Don't be fooled about eternity

Everyone here, young and old, is going to grow old and die. And everyone here will face Jesus Christ and give an answer for your life. Don't be fooled--He was not just a man, but God who made the only way for you to be right with God. Turn to Him today.