

Super Models

1 Peter 3:5, The Example of Godly Women from the Old Testament

A Sermon by Chris Mueller

What do Claudia Schiffer, Cindy Crawford, Cheryl Tiegs, Heidi Klum and Christie Brinkley all have in common? They are all supermodels--these are women who work for top fashion designers, have million dollar contracts, gain endorsements from companies, adorn themselves with multi-thousand dollar outfits, and find worldwide fame. These women make money from their appearance.

I find it encouraging that God has His own list of supermodels--women who adorn themselves with something far more valuable than outfits--they have a totally different criteria and priority, and Peter now describes them in 1 Peter 3:5. Open your Bibles, and take out your outline.

Peter is teaching people who have been displaced and are now under suspicion because they are Christians who worship the one true God, and not the pantheon of Roman gods. Some women turned to Christ as their King, and it put them in conflict with their husbands who followed Caesar as king. So Peter writes to address marriage in general, and wives married to non-Christians specifically in chapter 3. But there is a problem--what is it? The same one I have.

I can't follow directions--give me written directions to a location and I can't follow them or find my destination. It just doesn't work for me. But give me a map and I can get anywhere. A lot of us struggle following a principle, a truth or thought, but give us a model and example, a person to imitate, and we do great. Do what I say is tough--follow me as I follow Christ is easier. So Peter now helps his female readers with some models. God has given all Christian women and Christian wives married to unsaved husbands some examples to follow--it's easier.

Read with me starting in verse 1, but focus on verse 5, *"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 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. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands."*

These are the women who have lived out the principles that Peter has been teaching us in verses 1 to 6. These women are God's supermodels, who the Lord gave us to be a pattern to follow, showing women of all time how to live with their husbands. The Church was too young for there to be models at this point, so this appeal reaches back to the Old Testament. Do you know, God said this was to be one of the purposes of the Old Testament? Speaking of the Old Testament, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11, *"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."*

The Old Testament contains examples for us to follow. There are clear instructions demonstrated in those who lived with God before. Most athletes will watch films of great players to learn their moves. At one point in my past, I was watching films and coaching an Olympic-hopeful discus thrower through those films to improve his technique. Peter is saying

to you ladies, the Old Testament is giving you great moves to imitate. Hopefully you're asking, "Chris, who are these Old Testament supermodels?"

Peter does not name them in verse 5, and names only one in verse 6. But if we have read our Bibles, the names are not far from recall:

Sarah, a model of faith in God and obedience to her husband

Rachel, who gave birth to a child in death

Jochebed, the mother of Moses, who entrusted her baby to God, and was rewarded by being able to nurse her own child

Deborah, called a mother in Israel, who led the sons of Israel to victory

Ruth, the gentle sweet spirit who sacrificed and was blessed to be the mother of Obed, who fathered Jesse, the father of king David, who was in the line of Christ

Hannah, who was married to a man who had two wives, yet she put her hope in God--and God blessed her with a child whom she dedicated to God's service, the last judge and also a prophet who anointed David, whose name was Samuel

We do not know who Peter is referring to exactly in verse 5, but we do know these are women of faith, submission and hope. So if you love seeing how a Godly woman functions, look with me at verse 5, and follow the outline, which is just a reflection of it.

#1 The supermodel example

When you make clothes, you follow a pattern

When you build a house, you follow a blueprint

When you make a coin, you use a die, a cast

When you grow into a Godly woman, you follow God's supermodels

Why? Because they give us a pattern to follow--like finishing school, God says put the book on your head and walk the same way these women walked. Which way?

First Follow their pattern "*For in this way in former times*"

Peter says in verse 5, "*For in this way in former times the holy women also,*"--Peter is making an appeal for you ladies to wear Godly adornment by referencing God's supermodels of the past. And Peter says look at God's magazine here, and see what true beauty is like. In fact, Peter uses four words connecting this entire passage with Godly women of the past--do you see them in verse 5?

1 FOR is *gar*, introducing an explanation. With "for", Peter is clarifying what I just taught in verses 1-4. Peter is saying, "let me illustrate this for you."

2 IN THIS WAY, *houstos*, means “in the manner described.” Peter is saying, “just like I have said, just like I have been talking about” in verses 1-4--here is an example for you.

3 IN FORMER TIMES, *pote*, is referring to sometime in the past. With “in former times,” Peter is making a vague reference to Old Testament history. This is what happened back then, in former times--pay attention to what they did.

4 THE HOLY WOMEN ALSO, that “also” is *kai*, reminding the readers in Asia Minor and us today in Murrieta, Temecula, Hemet, Menifee and Winchester that saved wives of the Old Testament themselves did what Peter just wrote, and what God designed in verses 1 to 4.

Each of you knows exactly what Peter is doing here--you do it too. You've been in a pressure situation or embarrassing spot, where you had to say the difficult truth--so you quote someone else. Men who wimp out say, “Go ask your mother,”--that's from The Reversed Standard Version Bible. Maybe you appeal to a scholar, like MacArthur. But to really win your case, you appeal to a legend--Spurgeon says this, or Calvin wrote this, or Luther said this.

Peter is doing the exact same thing, except he wisely appeals to the Scripture as his authority. Peter turns to the Old Testament here to prove he is not the only one who tells women how they should live with their husbands. Hey, it is not merely me, or Paul, or New Testament writers--let me remind you that truly godly women have been living this way for centuries. We have plenty of models to look at and point to. So Peter points to the pattern set by Old Testament women that stresses spiritual values and internal character.

Do you remember what God's pattern is? Have you been owning what Peter has been describing in verses 1 to 4? Look at your outline and see how you are doing.

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

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.*”

#7 Let your priority be internal, a gracious and tranquil spirit

But how do you know what this looks like, Peter? Follow the pattern of God's supermodels from the Old Testament. Like a climber who follows the holds of the climber in front, or like a hiker who follows the footprints in the snow of the leader, wives are to look to the those who have gone before and imitate their faith, their submission, their character and their heart for Christ. Notice the next phrase in verse 5, "*For in this way in former times the holy women also.*" These ladies are holy women, telling us what God wants us to imitate.

Second Follow their position and practice "*the holy women also*"

These specific unnamed exemplary women are identified as the holy women--women with a unique spiritual position which resulted in a uniquely godly lifestyle and practice. We know these were married women, because Peter says they submit to their own husbands later in this verse. And Peter calls them holy, set apart, unique, like God Himself.

The Word holy is really misunderstood. Most think holy means these women were stuffy, they rarely smiled, they always wore black bonnets or veils, were critical, never laughed, prayed only emphasizing the word G-O-D, and were judgmental of everyone. Happily, that is not holy--that is religion, which God hates. Some view holiness as perfection--but Peter is not referring to perfect women, or wives who have it all together, or ladies who always did the right thing.

These supermodels were not religious--they were real, genuine, authentic women who were miserable sinners, condemned under sin, had a nature to sin, yet had been given salvation by God. This salvation transformed them and gave them a new nature. Now they wanted to follow God and live like Him, desiring to please Him in all things. They put their hope in God for salvation, and lived hoping in God for sanctification, which included submitting to their husbands and developing a quiet and gentle spirit.

These women were holy because they were made members of God's chosen people, set apart, uniquely belonging to the God of Israel. They were positionally holy, and when God saves you, He changes you so that you become practically holy. Before you were saved, your nature was to sin--you wanted to sin, you loved sin. You're bad, really bad. Give a lion a choice between a salad and a steak, what will it choose? A steak! It's in his nature to want steak.

A non-Christian may choose not to sin only sometimes for various reasons, but the nature of all those without Christ is to want to sin. But now that you're born again, your nature wants to please God--to live like Him, to live holy, set apart for His purposes. So these women who were made holy will began to live holy--never perfect, not religiously eternal, but with lives that had been transformed so that they now want to obey God's Word, want to do anything that would please God, and gladly give their entire lives to God in worship because of who He is and what He's done.

If you've been saved, you have been made positionally holy, and when that happens, you will become more practically holy. You will want to follow Christ, just as Peter said in 1 Peter 1:15, "*Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.*" This is why the New Testament continually reminds true Christians that they will obey God's Word and change to be more like Christ.

1 John 2:4, “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Hebrews 12:14, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

No one is godly who doesn't submit to authority. No one is godly who doesn't grow. No woman is Godly who doesn't grow to become more gentle to others and tranquil before God. And the Bible warns that those who don't obey, don't submit and don't grow may not be His true children, but make-believers. God's supermodels are made holy and live holy--they are unique, they're not like everyone else. Their new internal character leaks out in all they say and do, demonstrating they belong to God. This is why Peter calls us to follow . . .

#2 The supermodel style

Read verse 5 again, “For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.” God is talking about divine dresses--character clothing, God's garb, righteous rags. So when Peter says, “adorn themselves,” he's describing their hope in God, which is very much like those who have a gentle and quiet spirit. Plus, when he says, “submit to their own husbands,” Peter is repeating the main command of the entire passage, for wives to submit.

Peter is summarizing what he's already taught us in verses 1 to 4--but like a good preacher, he's saying the same thing in a different way. He says, remember these supermodels who dressed in a way that really pleased God. Ladies, Peter wants to make certain you are pursuing righteous rags, God's garb. What should you want for Christmas? Here is your wish list. Here is what to pray for and dependently pursue--three things.

First Consistent spiritual adornment “For in this way in former times the holy women also, used to adorn themselves”

Adorn is to clothe themselves--it is the word *kosmos* where we get our word cosmetics. It is that which goes on--it is what you wear to appear in public, and Peter puts a whole new twist on it. Instead of the external, Peter says focus on the internal. Put more time into putting on your heart than worrying about your hemline. Focus more on your character than your clothes.

You all know how pregnant women glow--no, I am not talking about how hot and sweaty they sometimes feel. But they glow, often they are bright, and there is something really special about their face and expression. It is almost as if what's inside is showing on the outside. The very fact that they are filling out one of the purposes of womanhood, and they are growing a new life internally--they glow externally. This is like what Peter is saying here--you glow externally when your heart is dressed internally. But Peter uses a unique verb for “used to adorn themselves,” telling the readers then and us now three important truths.

1 It is active. God expects you ladies to act on this--don't just hear the Word of God about prioritizing your internal character, act on it--do it, step out in dependent obedience and build into your routine a focus on developing Godly character. Time in the Word, prayer, the input of older godly women, and service to Christ, all of which are a fight--if you have a husband and children, this will not come easily, but it is worth it.

2 It is indicative, telling us this is a fact. These women had husbands and children, and often very difficult circumstances, but they were able to put their hope in God, develop a quiet and gentle spirit, and submit to their own husbands. And Peter says, if they can do it, then you can do it. They did it, it is a fact.

3 It is imperfect, telling us the most convicting truth, this was continually done. These women were consistent in their efforts to depend on God, live for Him, trust in Him and rely upon Him for everything they needed. They found their joy in Him when life was rough, when their husbands were dumb, and their circumstances were unbearable. And they stayed faithful to keeping Christ as their main focus over their clothes. They literally, continually adorned themselves in the past.

We are not very consistent--all of us struggle with faithfulness, women and men. I am reminded of the true story of an unbelieving man who had a terrible temper. Traveling for a living, he found himself yelling at the airline personnel for goofing up his trip. He felt bad, so he called his wife and tells her all about what he did and said. His wife thinks up a fun idea, so she sends him flowers, but she makes him think they were from the airline, apologizing for their goofs. He has no idea the flowers are from his wife.

He is surprised by the flowers and mildly embarrassed, but he gets this great idea. He grabs a card, writes a new note for the flowers, and brings them home, and tells his wife that he was thinking about her and missed her so much that he bought her some flowers. Ouch! Sadly, we are not faithful and consistent, but Peter is calling you ladies to be dependent enough to make your internal heart character your main focus when it comes to your appearance. Be like the supermodels who continually used to adorn themselves. What will that look like? Two main articles of clothing:

Second Continual confidence in God “who hoped in God”

Godly women hope in God. Godly students hope in God. Godly wives hope in God. Godly singles hope in God. Here is the open secret of their success--instead of fear that she will be without food because of the foolish ways her unsaved husband wastes money and time and work, she trusts God to provide. Instead of arguing and fighting with her husband over the ways in which he fails to discipline and guide the children, she quietly seeks to be the best wife she can be through respect and purity, and puts her hope in God to overcome any deficiencies.

Fill in the blank, ladies, with whatever fits you:

Instead of _____, she puts her hope in God. Instead of the fretting, frustration, anger and tears that may have accompanied any sinful behavior on the part of her husband in the past, now she entrusts herself, her family and her future completely to God alone. She does not put her hope in her husband, or in getting a husband, or boyfriend, or date, or just interest, or put her hope in herself, or put her hope in her family, or put her hope in her looks, or appearance, or wealth, or anything or anyone else—she puts all her hope in God alone.

A Godly woman puts her hope in the promises of God--it is like Proverbs 31:25, “*Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.*” A Godly woman smiles, even laughs at what the future will bring or might bring, because she trusts her God. She looks away from the troubles, miseries and obstacles of life that seem to make the future bleak, and she focuses

her attention on the sovereign power and love of God who rules in heaven, and does on earth whatever He pleases.

She knows her Bible, and she knows her theology of the sovereignty of God, and she knows God's promise that He will be with her, help her, and strengthen her, no matter what. This is the deep, unshakable root of Christian womanhood. And Peter is explicit in verse 5--he is not talking about just any woman. He is talking about women with unshakable Biblical roots in the sovereign goodness of God—holy women who hope in God.

The fact that these Old Testament supermodels put their hope in God is telling, in that it informs us that these wives did not submit to their husbands because they believed their husbands were intellectually superior to them, physically stronger, or spiritually deeper. They submitted to their husbands because they were confident that God would reward all those who put their trust in Him. Remember, Peter is writing Christians who are under an oppressive government, believing slaves who have unfair masters, and godly wives who are married to non-Christian men, and reminding them of the importance of hope. He has already emphasized the importance of hope:

1 Peter 1:13, *"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

1 Peter 1:21, *"through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."*

1 Peter 3:15, *"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."*

Hope is confidence in God's certain return, constant control and comfort given in the midst of trials--which is crucial for wives of unsaved husbands not to be depending upon the uncertainties of marriage, or even looking for life to bring joy or security, but to look only to Christ. The Old Testament supermodels demonstrated great hope in God, and did not place their hope in anything else.

Hope is reaching up, hanging onto, and resting in God. Hope is putting all your greatest desires in Him. Hope is trusting in God's promises, relying on His Word, taking your stand on truth, and following His commands over all others. Hope is confidence that this life is fleeting and temporary, but eternity is forever and permanent. Hope is a quiet confidence in God which produces a gentle and quiet spirit, enabling a woman to submit to her husband's authority without any fear that her submission will ultimately be harmful to her well-being or her family.

Are you getting it? These Godly supermodels did not take matters into their own hands, but completely waited on and trusted in God for His outcome. And because hope in verse 5 is a participle, it has an ongoing nature to it--they continually, faithfully, regularly, consistently, expressing confidence in God over anyone or anything else. Are you wearing hope? Is that your adornment, your style, your character? What else did they wear? . . . one final article of clothing:

Third Willing self- denial *"being submissive to their own husbands"*

Peter repeats the main command for wives in this entire passage--be submissive to your own husband. The supermodels of the past were submissive--they continually followed and honored the leadership of their husbands. They continually placed themselves under their husbands' authority, trusting ultimately that God would accomplish His purposes through their husbands, if they didn't challenge his headship. Except for sin, these women honored and obeyed their husbands. Simply put, they willingly denied themselves. Do you?

Like Christ, who is equal with God, is God, and is one with God, yet submits to the Father's authority, will you deny your own will and submit to your husband's authority? How do you respond when you are ordered around? How do you like it when someone tells you what to do? What's your first response when you are mistaken for the help? The godly man and godly woman deny themselves—they humble themselves under authority, live with a servant's heart. This is how a Christian wife reaches her non-Christian husband. This is how godly women impact their husbands. This is how Christians point to the reality of Christ--are you?

I could go on and on--which is what the preacher says when he runs out of material. But we could look at Hannah, Ruth, and especially Sarah—but in order for us to study Sarah, you have to come back next week for verse 6.

1 Deal with pride

It isn't culture, age or your crowd that makes the role of women difficult for you, it is your pride--the fear of what others think. First Peter 5:6 says, "*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.*" Repent of your pride. The root issue behind your difficulty submitting to your husband, parents, employer, elders or authority is pride. Truly godly women are those who humble themselves before God, ignore all other voices, and put their hope in God by following His Word alone.

2 Follow godly examples

Peter just got done telling us in 1 Peter 2:21, "*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.*" And Hebrews 13:7 adds, "*Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*"

FIRST--follow the examples of our Lord Jesus Christ and the godly men and women of the Scripture

SECOND--read or listen to biographies of godly men and women from the past

THIRD--link up with godly couples, men or women living today in our church and follow their example

Don't follow one, pursue all three--Christ and Biblical examples in the Scripture, biographies and real life models today

3 Hope in Christ alone

You are not going to heaven later nor pleasing God now unless you have turned from your sin to follow Christ alone for salvation, and you are depending on Christ alone in every detail of life, putting your hope in Him for everything you face today.