

What is a Woman? The Marks of Biblical Womanhood, Part 2

1 Peter 3:1–6 and Selected Scriptures

Introduction

A little over a year ago, the popular conservative commentator, Matt Walsh, of The Daily Wire, released a documentary entitled *What is a Woman?* And in that documentary, this man travels the country—and travels the world—and interviews people, asking them that very question: What *is* a woman? Just a few years ago—maybe five, but certainly no more than ten years ago—that would have been a very short film! But the twisted moment we find ourselves in as a culture has made it so that people regard that question to be of profound philosophical import.

It seems undeniable that, just in the past few years, the Lord God has poured out another vial of judgment upon the Western world, particularly in the form of giving society over to a reprobate mind—to a depraved or debased mind that can no longer properly function, a mind that is given over to believe absurdities. And the transgender delusion has been the pinnacle absurdity that our society has believed. And sadly, I don't believe that's where it will stop.

And so, when a social commentator travels the country and asks Americans what a woman is, no one can give a straight answer. The documentary really is quite something to behold. “Are *you* a woman?” “Yes, I *identify* as a woman.” “Ok. What *is* that?” Blank stare. And he asks them, “When you say you identify as a woman, what is that thing? What is it, specifically, that you're identifying *as*?” And people all over the country will just say, “I don't know,” and walk away. “Do you identify as a woman?” “Yes I do.” “What is a woman?” “I don't know.”

Now, we find that ridiculous. And we ought to. But can you, as the people of God, answer Matt Walsh's question any better? Surely, yes, in the one sense, we can answer rightly: a woman is an adult human female. But then, if we asked, “What does it mean to behave like a woman?”, could we give the Bible's answer? What is femininity, according to God's own Word? What has our God—our Creator and Designer—designed a woman to be? If we reject transgenderism for the delusion that it is and recognize that women ought to look and speak and behave like women, and not men, are we that much better off than the LGBT crowd if we can't explain from Scripture what it means to be a woman and not a man?

Confusion abounds—not only in the world, where they reject gender all together— but also in the church, where unbiblical, worldly notions of masculinity and femininity have infiltrated the ranks even of those who profess to be the people of God. Not only do we have to get manhood and womanhood right in order to confront the lies of the unbelieving culture we live in. But we also need to get manhood and womanhood right, so that we can glorify God in the way He's

designed us. The fact that God has created His image-bearers to be male and female means that He intends to receive glory and honor and worship from those image-bearers as He has designed them. Men can only glorify God as men—by pressing into their masculinity and becoming more manly. Women can only glorify God as women—by pressing into their femininity and becoming more womanly.

And those realities have pressed us here in GraceLife into a series of sermons on biblical manhood and womanhood. Back in May and June, we devoted three sermons to exploring **nine marks of biblical manhood**. We found that the Scriptures teach that a man is a leader, a lover, a provider, and a protector. He is strong, sensible, dignified, sound in doctrine, and sound in speech. Last week, we began a series on **nine marks of biblical womanhood**.

Review I. A Helper

And the **first** of those **marks of biblical womanhood** was that the biblical woman is a **helper**. She is a **helper**. We saw this chiefly from Genesis 2:18, where God tell us that His design in creating the woman was so that she would be a **helper**, suitable for the man—corresponding to him as his equal and counterpart in a way no other creature was sufficient to do. And we concluded that the foundation of what it means to be woman is to be one who can suitably help a man to walk in obedience to the calling that God has placed on his life.

And another way that Scripture speaks of that helpfulness—that putting oneself at the disposal of another, yielding one’s gifts and strengths unto another’s benefit—is **submission**. The husband leads, and the wife helps; the husband initiates, and the wife responds in submission to the husband’s leadership. Two image-bearers, equal in status and dignity before God, but with distinct roles. A biblical woman submissively responds to the pattern of initiatives established by mature masculinity (Piper, *What’s the Difference?*, 49), in a way that honors and affirms—rather than usurps or challenges—his leadership.

And we found that Scripture identifies this helpfulness or submissiveness as so foundational to a woman’s identity that we spent the whole of last week’s sermon examining **nine features of biblical submission**. If you weren’t here, I encourage you to visit the website and download the message. For the sake of time, I’ll resist the urge to comment on each of those points again, but I will state them for reference: We spoke of (1) the divine design of submission; (2) the cursed difficulty of submission; and (3) the Gospel-shaped motive of submission. We also observed (4) its pervasive extent *and* (5) biblical limits, before considering (6) the practical outworking of submission, (7) the respectful posture of submission, (8) the beautiful attitude of submission, and finally, (9) the beautifying purpose of submission. And so, as I said, if you weren’t able to be with us last week, please do find a way to download that message and keep pace.

II. Beautifully Modest

But that brings us, this morning, to a **second mark of biblical womanhood**. Not only is the biblical woman a helper. She is also, number two, **beautifully modest**. And for this, we turn our attention to two main texts in particular. The first is 1 Peter 3.

As we mentioned last week, in this section of his letter, Peter has been discoursing on the Christian's duty of submission, after the pattern of Christ. As he opens chapter 3, he gives wives the same instruction: "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands." And, again, that was our subject in last week's sermon. But then in verses 3 and 4, he tells these women that their **beauty**—what makes them attractive—has less to do with external adornments, and more to do with her inward character. First Peter 3, verses 3 and 4: "Your **adornment** must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the *imperishable* [**beauty**] of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."

And then another passage comments even more directly, and that is 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 9 and 10. Turn there with me. You remember that Paul writes the letter of 1 Timothy, he says in chapter 3 verse 15, "so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." So Paul is giving instruction on what life in the local church is to look like. And after his introduction in chapter 1, he opens chapter 2 with an exhortation for the men to pray. Chapter 2 verse 8: "Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension." Then, in verses 9 to 15, he addresses the women in the congregation, and the first thing he calls them to is **beautiful modesty**. He writes, "Likewise, I want women to **adorn** themselves with proper clothing, **modestly** and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness."

In both of these passages, both Peter and Paul speak of the propriety of a woman's adornment. Peter says, "Your adornment *must* be," and then speaks of "imperishable beauty." Paul says, "I *want* the women to adorn themselves." And so the apostles are not against a woman's adornment. We spoke last week about how this term, *kosméō*, refers to beautifying something. In Titus 2:10 it referred to how godly submission would adorn—would beautify—the doctrine of God our Savior. Not that it would make Christian truth more attractive than it is (that's impossible); but that it would contribute to displaying Christian truth to be as attractive as it is. The same is true in the case of a woman's adornment. She is permitted to adorn herself in a beautiful, respectable, modest way. We see that especially in 1 Timothy 2:9, where Paul says, "I want women to adorn themselves with *proper* clothing." Literally, you could translate that, "I want women to *order* themselves with *orderly* clothing." That takes effort! That takes

preparation! It's right for a woman to prepare herself so that she is dressed in an appropriate, orderly, put-together, **beautiful** way.

And so, in calling for modesty, neither Peter nor Paul is calling upon Christian women to give no attention to their appearance, so that they present themselves in a slovenly, sloppy, or homely manner. This is no call for the proverbial "burlap sack" as an alternative to immodestly clothing. Commenting on the passage in 1 Peter, Pastor John writes, "This text does not prohibit wives from styling their hair, wearing jewelry or lovely clothing, which is why the translators added 'merely.' ... The point is that this was not to be the preoccupation or main concern..." (179). Some people read these passages and conclude that the Apostles are prohibiting all jewelry and all hairstyling. But that can't be, because the final phrase of 1 Peter 3:3 is best translated not as "putting on *dresses*," (as if to single out a particular kind of clothing), but as "putting on *garments*"—clothing in general. If this verse prohibited all jewelry and all hairstyles, it would seem that it would have to prohibit all clothing as well! But that is certainly not the point. The point is: don't be so focused on externals that you neglect true beauty, which is internal above all else.

And so, when it's accompanied by modesty and discretion, there is an appropriate **beauty**—even an appropriate external beauty—that a woman displays. The woman is, in that sense, the **beautiful** gender—or sometimes you hear the phrase, "the fairer sex." That's a biblical notion!

All the way back in Genesis 6:2, we read that "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were *beautiful*." The first time the term *woman* is used outside of Genesis 1 to 3, it's in Genesis 12:11, where we're told that Sarah, Abraham's wife, was "a *beautiful* woman." Rebekah is called beautiful in Genesis 26:7. Genesis 29:17 says that "Rachel was beautiful of form and face." Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:3, Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:2, Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1, and Esther in Esther 1:11 and 2:7 are all called beautiful. There is something appropriately **beautiful** about women! And sure, there are a handful of men in Scripture of whom the same word is used to describe them as handsome—but not as many. And when the term is used of men, the contexts of those passages always seem to indicate that their handsomeness was exceptional.

At the *very* least, we see in the Song of Solomon that a husband ought to find his wife to be beautiful, and tell her so as an expression of affection. Song of Solomon chapter 1 verse 8, the man calls his bride "most beautiful among women." In chapter 2, verses 10 and 13, he calls her, "My beautiful one." In several instances, he exclaims, "How beautiful you are, my darling!" (1:15; 4:1) or "How beautiful and how delightful you are, my love, with all your charms!" (7:6). And in chapter 4 verse 7, he says to her, "You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you." It is as if the bridegroom has decided that his wife would be the standard of feminine beauty in his mind. What she is is beautiful to him. And guys, I think that's a good

practice. Cultivate a sense of what is beautiful by looking at the wife God has given you and making *her* the standard.

But all this is to say: there is an appropriate sense in which **beauty** is proper or inherent to womanhood in a way that is not quite analogous to manhood. And I think that means there is an appropriate sense in which a woman desires to be *lovely*—sort of in the same way there is an appropriate sense in which a man desires to be *strong*. Surely, in both cases, those desires can be perverted into vanity, and pride, and self-preoccupation. Take some time this afternoon and read through Isaiah 3 and Ezekiel 16 for examples of perverting beauty into vainglory, and how severely the Lord God abominates such a thing.

But it's just so interesting that, throughout Scripture, you have exhortations to men to “act like a man” and “be strong”—and then that strength is defined in this biblical sense of being morally steadfast (1 Cor 16:13–14), and faithful to Scripture (1 Kings 2:2–4). And then at the same time, throughout Scripture, you have exhortations to women to adorn themselves modestly and discretely, and then as well that they ought to press after true and proper beauty, which is defined in this biblical sense of a gentle and quiet and submissive spirit. Men: “Desire to be *biblically* strong. Women: Desire to be *biblically* beautiful. There's something inherent to women that makes the pursuit of true **beauty** distinctly feminine.

And so, women are **beautiful**. But: they are beautifully *modest*. And you see that emphasis in both 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2 as well. Both Peter and Paul speak of a woman's displaying her beauty modestly. Peter is more indirect, by saying that a woman's “adornment must not be *merely external*”—that it shouldn't consist merely in hairdos and jewelry and dresses. Paul is more direct. He speaks of being adorned “modestly and discreetly.” You see, there were women in the church at Ephesus who were prostituting the gathering of the church for worship on the Lord's Day into an opportunity to draw attention to themselves. Whether as a means of flaunting their wealth by a display of expensive clothing, or as a means of flaunting their beauty by dressing in a sexually tantalizing way, they were making the gathering of the saints about *them*—about satisfying their lust for the attention and admiration of others, rather than about directing all attention and admiration to the Lord Jesus alone.

And I don't know if there is an exhortation that contemporary young Christian women need to hear more than these resounding calls to modesty and discretion. The pornified culture that we live in in America—and especially the entertainment-driven subculture that we live in here in Los Angeles—exerts far too much influence on those who name the name of Christ. Too many young Christian women are taking their fashion cues from Instagram influencers rather than from the Scriptures and from spiritually mature, godly women in the body of Christ. It seems grievously evident that, if the besetting sin of the young Christian man is lust, the besetting sin of the young Christian woman is lusting after being lusted after.

And it is grievous, ladies. It is grievous. It's grievous because when beauty is perverted like that—even when it's still tantalizing to some—it becomes ugly. Beauty, displayed immodestly, is ugly. Proverbs 11:22 is the inspired commentary on that phenomenon: “As a ring of gold in a swine's snout so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.” And that's true of women of all ages, but if I may speak especially to the younger women, who think that, to attract a husband you have to compete with the trollops of this age and so you have to dress immodestly to be attractive, ladies: the husband you want won't be enticed by the indiscrete flaunting of your beauty. Now, sure, young men will value physical attraction. But the godly man—the husband you want—will be attracted to the hidden person of the heart, and will actually become more physically attracted to a woman who displays that inner beauty. If there's a guy who *is* attracted by your immodesty, he's not the guy you want!

Young men who love Christ—young men who will lead you well—will have trained themselves to flee temptation as the Scripture commands them. And so if your indiscretion becomes an occasion for temptation—an opportunity for him to forfeit communion with Christ by yielding to his lusts—a godly young man will be repulsed by immodesty, the way you might recoil from getting too close to a pig's snout, no matter how pretty the ring in it is.

This is not the setting for me to get into specifics about what clothes are acceptable and unacceptable. But I will say, if you're married, and you're wondering whether this or that outfit is a display of immodesty: ask your husband. If you're still a young lady living at home, ask your parents—mom *and* dad—especially if they're believers. But if you're unmarried and out of the home, and you're unsure about whether you've become more influenced by the world around you than by the Spirit of God in you, ask an older, more spiritually mature lady in the church whose judgment you trust. And elder-sisters: be willing to be honest with your younger sisters when they ask.

With hopes of being helpful, I'll just mention three principles to consider. First, ladies, I'll put it this way: there are certain things about you that only your husband should know. Certain women seem to be very fond of sharing that knowledge with others. Don't be one of those women. Don't dress in a way—whatever the context—that lets others know things about you that really only your husband should know.

Second principle: clothing ought to be a frame for the face, not the body (Strachan & Peacock, 83). Why do I say that? Because the human face is our relational center. When you communicate with someone, where do you look? You look in a person's eyes. When you speak to them, the thoughts of your soul are expressed through your mouth, and perhaps your facial expression (Griffo, 80).

Imagine you were looking at a picture, and you noticed that I'm in the picture but I'm sort of cut out of it—you can only see, say, my foot. You don't point to my shoe and say, "That's Mike!" You might say, "Oh, you can tell Mike was close by because you can see his shoe in the corner, there." But it's not *me*. But if you saw a picture of my face, what do you say? You don't say, "That's Mike's face." You say, "Oh, that's Mike." There's a sense in which *I am* my face in a way that I am not any other part of me. That's why all of those passages of the Old Testament refer to seeking God's face (e.g., Ps 27:8) and God making His face to shine upon us (e.g., Num 6:24–26): because there's a real sense in which the face stands for the person.

The face is the relational center of the body. And that means that clothing ought to be a frame for the face. It ought to direct attention to that part of us which mediates wholesome, meaningful relational interaction. Which means clothing that draws attention away from the face and focuses attention on the body—especially those parts of the body by which wholesome, meaningful relational interaction cannot take place except by those who are married—communicates that you are interested in what a godly woman ought not to be interested in from anyone but her husband. Now, that might not be your intent, but that *is* what such clothing communicates. And you are called to not be so naïve as to communicate what you don't intend.

The beauty of the body is to be expressed privately, between husband and wife in the covenant of marriage. The beauty of the face expresses the thoughts and intentions of the heart which are at the center of meaningful fellowship between brothers and sisters in Christ. Let your clothes be a frame for your face.

Third principle: consider that immodesty isn't exclusively about being sexually lascivious or physically enticing. It can be immodest, as both 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 3 indicate, to ostentatiously display your wealth. Whether an inappropriate display of beauty or wealth or anything else—at the heart of immodesty is the seeking of distinction. It's looking to stand out. It's drawing attention to yourself rather than employing yourself as an instrument to draw attention to God and His glory. Jonathan Edwards said, "It is the nature of spiritual pride to cause [people] to seek distinction and singularity." If your presentation of yourself communicates, "I'm different! Look at me!"—if it causes *you* to be the center of attention—then you're falling afoul of the biblical command to be modest.

I think Pastor John captures this delicate balance well when he says in his sermon on 1 Timothy 2: "So a Christian woman should attract attention to her character, not her clothing. A Christian woman should show by her dress and her demeanor ... that she has no intent to flaunt her wealth, but that she is in appearance and attitude marked out by a humble heart that is obviously committed to worshiping the living God" ([source](#)). He speaks of women being "properly dressed, in a way that is becoming both to the grace and beauty of a woman and to the purpose and intent of worshiping God" (*ibid.*). And then, commenting on 1 Peter 3, Pastor John writes, "The Lord is

most pleased when a believing woman's **modest** yet thoughtful and **lovely** adornment reflects the inner beauty [that] Christ has fashioned in her" (180). In other words, a biblical woman is **beautifully modest**.

III. Quiet

Well, not only is a biblical woman a helper, as well as beautifully modest, we also find, number three, that a **third mark of biblical womanhood** is that she is **quiet**. And I know, right away, that that's sort of an arresting, jarring thing to say! It's so far out of accord with the cultural consensus that society would tell you that's a *misogynistic* thing to say. "Who does this *man*—a straight white man at that—think he is to tell a room full of women to be quiet?!" That's certainly how our culture speaks, isn't it? Riddled with the poison of identity politics and judging according to the flesh.

But the New Testament epistles place a surprising amount of emphasis on the propriety of the Christian woman's **quietness**, as a corollary of that prevailing disposition of submissiveness that we learned about last week. You see that emphasis in the following verses of 1 Timothy 2. You can turn back there with me. In 1 Timothy 2:11–12, we read, "A woman must **quietly** receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain **quiet**." Here is that famous instruction where the Apostle Paul restricts the role of teaching and exercising authority in the church to the men alone. While women are encouraged to teach one another as well as to teach children, they are not to occupy the office of pastor or elder in the church, because they are prohibited from teaching and exercising authority over men.

And that could involve us in an entire sermon series, but what we're interested in at the moment is that, in the midst of this weighty prohibition, Paul brackets his instruction—both on the front end and the back end—with a direction for the woman's **quietness**. Verse 11: She must "*quietly* receive instruction," and, verse 12: she must "remain *quiet*."

We see something similar in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Paul has been giving instruction to the church in Corinth regarding the practice of spiritual gifts—especially dealing with the miraculous gifts of prophesy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues, which gifts had not yet ceased. Two or three prophets, or interpreters of tongues, can speak in a service, and all must be done decently and in order. But then, as he brings that section to a close, he again addresses the role of women in the church. Verses 34 and 35: "The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church." Other translations have "shameful," or "disgraceful."

That’s a striking comment, is it not? Especially in our day, when quote-unquote “female pastors” dominate the evangelical landscape. Paul says women are not even permitted to speak in the corporate assembly, let alone preach every week. Now, these instructions are not intended to convey that a woman can’t open her mouth while she’s in the church building. This is not talking about greeting one another, or encouraging one another, or enjoying fellowship with one another. It’s talking about having a speaking role in the worship service. There’s so much that could be said about 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, but what’s important for our point is that both of these texts contribute to this overall picture of **quietness** being a mark of a mature Christian woman.

But the main text from which I draw this point is the same passage in 1 Peter chapter 3 that we were studying for the previous point. So turn back there with me. After instructing Christian wives to be good helpers—that is, verses 1 and 2, to “be submissive to [their] own husbands,” and then calling them to a beautiful modesty, in verse 3, here in verse 4 he tells these women that their truest beauty consists in their **quietness**. Look again with me at 1 Peter 3, verses 3 and 4: “Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable [beauty] of a gentle and **quiet** spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”

And so you see what Peter’s saying. Those external manifestations of beauty—hair jewelry, fine clothing—no matter how trendy or how fashionable—are temporary. They are fading. They are perishable. But the internal beauty of the hidden person of the heart, that beauty is *imperishable*. That’s a striking word. It’s the same word that Peter used in chapter 1 verse 4 of this letter to describe the imperishable and unfading *inheritance* that is reserved in heaven for every believer. The kind of beauty that Peter calls women to is of the same quality as the heavenly inheritance that is the ultimate hope of everyone born again by the Spirit of God. This is heavenly beauty! This is eternal beauty!

And what does it consist in? “A gentle and quiet spirit.” “Gentle” is the term *praiūs*. It’s the same word used in Matthew 5:5, where Jesus pronounces a blessing on the meek, because they’ll inherit the earth. It’s the same word that Jesus uses to describe Himself in Matthew 11:29, when He invites us to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him, “for,” He says, “I am *gentle* and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Pastor John describes the word as it’s used here in 1 Peter 3 as denoting “a humble and meek attitude, expressed in patient submissiveness” (*1 Peter*, 180). Wayne Grudem says, “It means ‘not insistent on one’s own rights,’ or ‘not pushy, not selfishly assertive,’ ‘not demanding one’s own way’” (TNTC, 148). And then another commentator writes that to be gentle in spirit speaks of {slow} “an amiable friendliness that [is] contrasted with roughness, bad temper, or brusqueness” (Davids, NICNT, 119). I think those are all helpful descriptions and definitions. Biblical women have a gentle

spirit. They're humble, and meek, and patient. They're not pushy, or assertive, or demanding. They're amiable, and not rough, or brusque, or abrasive.

And then, our term, quiet. *Hēsúchios*. Again, the commentators say it means to be calm, peaceful, and tranquil. It's the opposite of being restless, rebellious, disturbed, or insubordinate (Davids, 119). A woman possessed of a **quiet** spirit carries herself so as to be a steadying influence on those around her, rather than someone who engenders conflict. She calms a room, rather than upsets it. She's someone who is not emotionally turbulent, or tumultuous, or boisterous.

In fact, the Proverbs use that term, *boisterous*, to describe the woman of folly—the adulteress who tempts men to be immoral with her. Proverbs 9:13 says, “The woman of folly is *boisterous*, she is naïve and knows nothing.” And she sits at the doorway of her house, calling to the men who pass by, saying “Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant” (9:17). Proverbs 7 verse 11 says the adulteress is “boisterous and rebellious.” She tells men that her husband is gone on a long journey, and she's prepared her bed for him, and “Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning” (7:18).

But how in the world is adulterous the opposite of quiet? Well, it's that same *disquiet* of emotional turbulence, that inability to bridle one's temper, that inclination that just *has* to give vent to what's inside, that lack of self-control, and that *disquiet* that draws attention to oneself. The Hebrew term that gets translated “boisterous” is the word *hamah*, and the lexicons define it as “to be restless, or turbulent,” or “to roar” (*HALOT*). It's used that way in 1 Kings 1:41, where Joab asks, “Why is the city making such an *uproar*?” The woman who is possessed of a quiet spirit isn't uproarious. A quiet spirit is the opposite of the disposition described by that silly song lyric from the 70s: “I am woman, hear me roar!” It's the opposite of the disposition represented by a new book I came across this week, written by a professing Christian woman, entitled, “I Will Not Shut Up.” That's the way the boisterous woman speaks. That's the way the woman of folly speaks. That's the way the adulteress speaks. “Hear me roar!” “I am strong! I am invincible!” But the biblical woman doesn't roar. She isn't imposing, or harsh, or abrasive, or assertive, or loud. She has the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

And then “quiet” is not only the opposite of “boisterous”; it's also the opposite of being contentious. In other words, it's possible to keep your volume low but still miss the mark of a quiet spirit. Someone who is emotionally turbulent is going to be involved in quite a lot of conflict. Someone who has a quiet spirit is someone who is peaceful. And not just *peaceful* but *peaceable*. Someone who makes peace, rather than one who stirs strife and thrives on contention (cf. Calvin, 97n1). She is easily entreatable, and not difficult, or self-willed. She's reconcilable, and eager to forgive, rather than nursing bitterness and holding grudges.

The Proverbs also have much to say about the “contentious woman.” And there’s enough of an emphasis there that I think it’s worth turning to some of these passages. The first is Proverbs 21 and verse 9. “It is better to live in a corner of a roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” And Solomon thought so much of that notion that he repeated himself in Proverbs 25:24. The identical sentence appears there. In Proverbs 21:19, he says, “It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and vexing woman.” The New English Translation renders that “a quarrelsome and easily-provoked” woman. Better to live in a desert, deprived of the bare necessities of life, than to live with a woman who is poised for conflict! Back in chapter 19, and verse 13, we read, “A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.” Similarly, Proverbs 27:15 says, “A constant dripping on a day of steady rain and a contentious woman are alike.” It’s like rain drops falling from an overfilled gutter, dripping onto some metal surface over and over and over and over again. All day. A woman who is constantly spoiling for a fight, who’s constantly finding fault, who’s constantly nagging and picking specks out of your eye—constantly needling—is like that. And then the next verse, Proverbs 27:16, says, “He who would restrain her,” that is, restrain a contentious woman, “restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand.” If you’re someone who can’t be restrained, you’re out of control. You don’t have a gentle and quiet spirit.

Why does this Book of Wisdom—this inspired manual for skilled living—make so much of the contentious woman? Because it’s a problem, ladies. It’s an area of natural temptation, given your constitution in a fallen world. Just as men are more naturally given to be *pugnacious*—to express their anger in physical altercation—so also women are more naturally given to be *contentious*, and to express their anger in social and emotional altercations.

There are some people in life—men *and* women—who really seem like they just can’t be happy unless they’re miserable. It’s almost as if, with some of them at least, they stir up dissension and strife just so they can keep the attention off of their own sin. My dear sisters, the exhortation of these verses is: don’t be one of those people. *Don’t* be the kind of woman of whom it is said, “If *mama* ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.” Or “Happy wife, happy life!” Don’t be someone who has to be pacified for there to be peace in the home. Be amiable, entreatable, reconcilable, peaceable. Be more difficult to *offend* than you are difficult to *please*. Let it go. Be quick to overlook a transgression, Proverbs 19:11. Be easy.

In Titus chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, Paul instructs the older women to train the younger women “to be sensible, pure, workers at home, *kind*, being subject to their own husbands.” You just want to be a kind person, because, if nothing else, you have been shown such lavish undeserved kindness by God in the Gospel of Christ, and someone who has been the recipient of such mercy just cannot fail to be merciful themselves. “Blessed are the merciful,” the Lord Jesus says, “for they shall receive mercy.” Pastor John comments on Titus 2:5 and says, “They are to be gentle,

considerate, amiable, congenial, and sympathetic, even with those who are undeserving and unkind to them” (87).

Biblical women aren't abrasive and loud. They're gentle and quiet. Their character, attitude, demeanor, and speech are marked by the inward, imperishable beauty of gentleness and quietness. And it *is* beautiful to know people who are ruled by such a spirit. The entire point that Peter's making in 1 Peter 3:1–6 is: if you want to win over your unbelieving or disobedient husband to the truth, the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit is so much more attractive than the fading beauty of braided hair and gold jewelry and fine clothing.

Can I put it this way, ladies? Godly men aren't attracted to loud, obnoxious, contentious women. Godly men are attracted to the inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. And even better: *God Himself* is attracted to it! First Peter 3:5 says that the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit “is precious in the sight of God.” If you want nothing else in life, if there's a shred of grace at work in your soul, you want God to see you as precious. You want Him to be able to look into your heart and find evidence of His grace. As if He could look upon you and say, “Yes, My Holy Spirit has been here!” If that's your desire, dear sisters, then press hard after the true beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Conclusion

And so, we have found that a biblical woman is a **helper**, she is **beautifully modest**, and she is **quiet-spirited**. There is more still to come. But I want to speak a word of application to those of you who hear this standard and are tempted to despair. Some of you ladies hear the standard God's Word lays before you as to living out the calling of your womanhood, and you notice how far your practice falls short of your calling. “How could I ever live up to the standard God lays out for me as a woman?” The answer is: only by grace. Only by grace.

This is a lifestyle that is impossible to achieve in the strength of your own willpower. You can't fabricate this kind of Spirit-filled, grace-produced life of humble helpfulness. It can only be wrought in you by the alien power of the Spirit of God, who dwells in you, and who applies all the richness of spiritual blessings that Christ Himself purchased for you in His atoning death on the cross. Dear Christian, if hearing of this standard causes you to be convicted over the ways you miss the mark of biblical womanhood, raise your eyes to the cross of Calvary, where your humble, servant-hearted, beautiful, gentle- and quiet-spirited Savior, bore every last one of your failures away.

That goes for every last one of us—ladies *and* gentlemen. In every way that you have failed to live up to the standard that your Father calls you to, your elder Brother has obeyed perfectly, and has satisfied perfectly. And because you are united to Him by faith alone, the spotless robe of

His righteousness is draped across your shoulders, and His purifying blood covers the doorposts of your heart, so that despite your sins and failures, you are forgiven and accepted by the Father.

And because Christ is no half-Savior, He is not only yours for justifying righteousness, but for sanctifying righteousness as well. The power to obey His commands is supplied by Him as well, as He works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. And so, wage the war against your sin in the strength of knowing that everything He has called you to, He has purchased for you and provided the power for you to walk in.

And to those outside of Christ, you are welcome to this same Savior, who lived, and died, and rose again in the place of sinners, who accomplished righteousness and quenched the wrath of God for all who repent and trust in Him alone for salvation! Confess your sins and failures to measure up, turn from sin and self, and find true life in Christ alone, by believing in Him for all your righteousness.