

1 Peter 3:5-6

1Pe 3:1 (NKJV) **Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. ³ Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel-- ⁴ rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. ⁷ Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**

As we come to v5-6, it is certainly one that has often created high levels of consternation and concern for some. At first, it seems to read as if Peter was simply a male chauvinist. Most of that tension is derived from the three phrases of “**being submissive to their own husbands**”, “**Sarah obeyed Abraham**” and that she “**called him lord**”. In our present culture, phrases and notions like that do not seem to sit well with many. The idea of calling your husband “**lord**” seems far outside of the boundaries and definitions of the modern idea of marriage. The concept and institution of marriage, which was by the way created by God, is undergoing a huge cultural overhaul with the introduction of homosexual marriages, lesbian marriages, and abortion up to birth. God said to “**be fruitful and multiply**” and our culture has changed that to “be unrestrained, uninhibited, licentious, shameless, lustful, immoral, wicked and murder, not multiply”.

My wife and I recently heard of a young local couple with children who regularly practice a bi-sexual relationship in their marriage where they meet with other couples and singles and they sexually swap off partners with one another, engage in sexual activities with the same sex – and watch and brag about it. I am not exactly sure where judgment begins, but this certainly sounds like a great place for it to start. I remember Billy Graham saying one time that if God did not judge America that He would have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. Maybe I need to resurrect some messages on the Lake of Fire, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the names not written in the Book of Life and preach on them for a period of time. In a brazenly immoral culture that parades its sexual filth and shame, a passage like this is an open rebuke and certainly one that is not appreciated and will not be accepted by many. Unfortunately, too many people think that they are smarter than God is when it comes to a topic like this. Then to make it worse, there are many professing believers in different segments of the American church that are offended at these terms and concepts that Peter has used. They do not consider them to even be culturally relevant or pertinent. Nothing could be any further removed from the truth. In all of our personal independence and creative technological advancements, it appears that all that we have done as a culture is simply find more creative ways to reject both God and His Word. We have regressed to [Romans 1:25](#) and as it so eloquently states, we have “**exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator**”. [Romans 1:32](#) provides the end result of man’s ungodly disapproval and rejection of God when it says,

Ro 1:32 (NKJV) who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

No matter who we are or where we may stand biblically on some of these issues, it would do us all well to take heed to [Romans 1:18](#) which says,

Ro 1:18 (NKJV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

For all of those who cheered the New York legislature's approval of abortion up to birth, if they continue with that position they will one day stand at the Great White Throne Judgment of God and hear him command an angel to come and cast them into the Lake of Fire. Trust me, but no one will be cheering anything on that day. They may actually be cursing us for never having pressed them with the gospel. I am not really sure where all this distorted Emergent Church biblical rhetoric comes from, but I learned a long time ago from God's Word that being culturally relevant and biblically relevant are not always very compatible. The more culturally relevant I feel like I have to become, the more likely I am to be biblically irrelevant. I have to make a conscious choice of what God expects from my life.

Let us think about this within the home environment. If Christian parents do not believe that their children need to be hearing the Word of God on a consistent basis and find ways to excuse them from it, they may quickly find themselves watching their children being sucked up by a culture that has no mercy on godliness. If you are a parent with children, listen very carefully. Whatever you excuse in moderation, your children will excuse in excess. It may be drinking, cursing, spiritual lethargy, or a casual indifference to the things of God, His church, and His Word. It could be anything, but it will have a deeply negative impact on your children. We all need to be constantly reminded that no Christian is exempt from the laws of sowing and reaping any more than they are exempt from the laws of gravity. Whatever a man sows, Scripture is crystal clear that that is what he will also reap, and this is no more evident than in the culture in which we live. Trust me, but Scripture says that it will only be getting worse – so take heed.

So, with all of that as a backdrop to this passage, as we begin to look at v5-6 there are several important areas that we have to see in this passage in order to handle it properly. The first area is that Peter is referring to women who lived in “**former times**”. In the Greek Interlinear, it simply reads as “**formerly**” and is a word that solely means in the past. Trust me, but everything was different 4000 years ago. Life was different, language was different, culture was different, dress was different, education was different, homes were different, travel was different, ideas were different, communication was different – everything was drastically different. So, we certainly want to keep what is said within the historical context of Peter's discussion. It is important to realize that to Peter's immediate audience that he was addressing that they revered Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was called the “father of faith”, the ultimate, the supreme, and the greatest of all patriarchs. He was to them like George Washington is to America – one of the founding fathers of our nation, but even much greater. So, in the context of what Peter is addressing, everyone had a reverence and admiration for both Abraham and Sarah. His audience is not necessarily offended at how Peter addresses these issues because everything about their life had been built on the great truths surrounding Abraham and his life. They fully understood all of Abraham's and Sarah's failures that are identified in Scripture, but when they get to the bottom line, both Abraham

and Sarah are seen with a remarkable veneration and admiration for how God used them. Everywhere in Scripture we read of “**Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**” – everywhere.

However, preceding the phrase “**former times**” is the phrase “**in this manner**”. So, we have to ask the question – “*in what manner*”? What “**manner**” is Peter talking about? What is interesting, but not really noticeable in the NKJV, is that the phrase “**in this manner**” does not even appear in the Greek text. The way that the Greek text reads is “**formerly also**”, so the phrase “**in this manner**” is actually how the NKJV translators interpreted the word “**also**”. All of the translations handle it differently and rarely do any of them use the word “**also**” at all. For instance, the NASB and HCSB says “**in this way**”, the NIV says “**this is the way**”, the ESV and NLT says “**this is how**”, and the AMP says “**for it was thus**”.

So, to what is Peter specifically referring? What is the “**also**” of the passage? Well, it is specifically two things - the outward adornment and the inward beauty that he mentioned in v3-4. We must recognize from this that what Peter is identifying is something that already has a well-accepted historical element to it. The biblical role models of the Jewish faith had already “**adorned**” themselves in this way. In fact Peter actually calls them “**holy women**”. This is the normal word for “**holy**” which is “*hagios*”, and is the word that primarily refers to God Himself. It is a word that represents a woman’s character and its meaning specifically refers to her purity, to her being morally blameless, and of her being consecrated and set apart for God. It fundamentally signifies that a person is separated from known sin in their life and therefore they are set apart for God and His use Strong’s Dictionary of New Testament Words describes this attribute as something that makes the individual sacred.¹ We will find later in [1 Peter 3:15](#) that we are all personally called on by God to “**sanctify**” ourselves, and in that process to cleanse our lives of any and all defilement that would hinder our consecration and separation to God. This is certainly a major part of what it means to become a “**holy**” woman, or a “**holy**” man for that matter.

So, we simply cannot miss the meaning and impact of this word “**holy**” on how we handle this passage. It must be understood that what this word is describing is the kind of wife that God uses – in this case the wife who is pure in her life and who has consciously set herself apart to God before she ever sets herself apart to her husband. One of the obvious reasons why some wives today struggle with this passage is because they have **NOT** set themselves apart for God. It is easy to understand that if the marriage is composed of both a disobedient husband and a non-consecrated wife that there is not much hope for that marriage. In this case, it refers to the wives who have not fully dedicated their life and their demeanor and their lifestyle to God. For some, they are willingly indifferent to God’s Word, never spend any time in it, and find no problem with their personal priorities taking precedence over God’s Word. In reality, this word “**holy**” is what sets the entire tone for these two verses. Peter is not just describing a wife, but a “**holy**” wife – and that makes all the difference in the world.

So, this model of “**holy women**” that Peter has identified is something that was already culturally understood in the Hebrew faith. Contrary to what many may believe today, it was not understood as being a kind of totalitarian subservience to the husband, nor a kind of bondage to the will and authority of an ungodly husband. It was not understood as an oppressive enslavement to a bad husband. It was none of those things. To the contrary, it was holy women who were fully committed to God, morally pure, morally blameless, and women who had set their life apart so that God could use them. Being the

¹ Strong, 909.

kind of wife that God wanted them to be seemed simple to these “**holy women**” of old. They understood God’s divine order and they understood the demands and responsibilities that that order placed on their life. The point is that godliness is a non-negotiable virtue of “**holy women**”. The kind of women that Peter is addressing have eternal godly values, have a mind and heart set on God, and are unwavering in their commitment to God and to His Word.

Now, probably the most important and revealing phrase in these two verses, maybe all six verses, is the phrase “**trusted in God**”. This is the one characteristic that set these godly women apart – they entrusted their life to God. The word “**trusted**” is the Greek word “*elpizo*” and it means to hope in someone, to trust in them, to confide in them.² It is a verb that is in the present tense, active voice. So, it signifies that these godly women were personally and constantly entrusting their life into God’s care. It is one thing to say that we trust our life into God’s care when we have no other options - when the cancer is Stage 4 and the doctors give us 4 months to live. However, that is not at all the picture painted by this verb in the present tense, active voice. This is something that a godly woman is always doing. She is always committing herself to God, every day she is living for His glory, and is always fully committed to His best for her life. This is her “lifestyle”, not something that she is forced to do when there are no other meaningful options open for her. It is this commitment of her lifestyle that God uses, not some flippant spiritual rhetoric that she claims, not some spiritual verse she bought at Hobby Lobby and posted on her living room wall. This is a deliberate and provoking commitment of her life to her heavenly Father, and nothing less. At a very personal level, I found it more than intriguing that this is the only place in the entire Bible where this term “**holy women**” is actually used – the only place. Hermeneutically what that does is to place even greater emphasis on the content and message of this passage. Obviously we have a picture of a virtuous woman in [Proverbs 31](#), but this is the only place where God refers to a holy woman – so it is a place that we need to really understand and appreciate.

Now, the word “**trusted**” in this passage is not generally translated that way. The KJV, NKJV, and the NLT use “**trusted**”, but most all of the newer translations actually use the word “**hope**” rather than the word “**trusted**”. For me personally, to translate it as “**hope**” seems to lose something in the meaning. However, either way, this is a deeply intimate word because what it does is to establish that there is a unique relationship between two people – a relationship of trust where you know that the other person has your interest at heart, and they know that you can be trusted. You know that they would never do anything to harm you or to deceive you. You know that you could literally trust your very life into their care, into their protection. The model for this, not just for wives, but for husbands as well, is [1 Peter 2:23](#) where Jesus continually “**committed Himself**” to His Father. He knew that He could trust every part of His life and His future into His Father’s care – and He did just that.

Just think of your children. Your children trust you, they believe in you, they know that you care for them. So it is with these godly women because they knew that they could trust their life, their deportment, their husband, and their families to God. They had walked with God, learned from God, and they knew that, they understood the amazing reality that they could trust everything about their life to Him. These “**holy women**” had great discernment and they were able to see life from God’s perspective and that gave them the desire and the power to appropriate His truths into their life. Nothing

² Zodhiates, 570.

could be any more important for a family than what I am describing – nothing. We have already discussed in a previous study the amazing and incredible impact that the wife's spirit has on both her husband and her children. It is what stabilizes the entire family and it is what God uses to protect and strengthen her family. There is no substitute for a godly wife and mother – none.

Peter says that these holy women “**adorned themselves**”. The word “**adorned**” is the Greek word “*kosmeo*” and means to set in order, with the specific idea of honoring and dignifying who they are and who they represent.³ It specifically carries the idea that this actually makes them even more attractive – this idea of dignifying their life with purity, with grace, and with commitment to God. You cannot be considered a godly husband or a godly wife if your life is not committed to God. You may be a good husband or a good wife, but not a godly one. The verb “**adorned**” is in the imperfect tense which means that the author is portraying an action that is in process and in progress. It signifies the ongoing nature of this idea of the wife adorning her life with godliness. It is also in the active voice signifying that the wife is the one who is focused on and integrating these attributes into her life. She understands that none of this is automatic, but it is something that she is constantly working on in her life.

So, for the woman who has committed her life to developing holiness in her spirit and in her life, she is the wife who is able to actually be “**submissive**” to her husband (v5), and who in v6 is able to actually call her husband “**lord**”. Please understand that this word for “**lord**” is the word “*kurios*”. It is the same word describing Christ as “**Lord**” with a capital “**L**”, but when used with the little “**I**” it has a distinctively different connotation. It would be the idea today of calling someone “**Sir**”. It is simply a term that shows giving respect and giving deference to someone. The wife has to appreciate that it is not because the husband is such a great guy, does everything right, and never fails - not at all. Rather, it is because the very foundation of her life, her identity in life is not her husband. It is her God, and she trusts fully in Him and in His ways and in His care of her life. Is this easy? Probably never. However, it is just a part of yielding our life to our heavenly Father. That is why the phrase that the godly women “**trusted in God**” is so important because that is where the strength to live in accordance with God's divine order actually originates. It is in our willingness to trust God with our life, and as we do we find that He is able to protect us and use our life for His glory.

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³ Zodhiates, 880.