

- Chapter 1 -



A New Perspective

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

1 Peter 3:1-6

There is so much covered in this passage that it would be easy to miss the best part. Tucked right in the middle of this passage is "of great worth in God's sight."

Great Worth

Can you imagine something being valuable to God? He is the creator. Doesn't he have everything? We read in the Bible that he doesn't need anything (Acts 17:25); however, 1 Peter 3:4 says that there is something that he highly values.

The Greek word translated “great worth” is *poluteles*.

Definition: *Poluteles* (pol-oo-tel-ace) the very end or limit with reference to price; of the highest cost, very expensive, very precious.¹

Poluteles means the very end or limit. In other words, this is at the top of God’s list of what he considers most precious to him. Is a gentle and quiet spirit something that you would have listed as one of the things that is most highly valued by God?

Consider what you value the most. What tops your list? I have a few things that are valuable to me, but my family tops my list. I would give up my life for them. They are of great worth to me.

Sometimes it’s not clear what we mean by the word great. If you are single and I set you up on a blind date and told you that this guy is great, you might ask me some questions. “What’s great about him?” Or, “How great is ‘great’?”

We often use the word great in a casual way. We might say that it’s a “great” day, but we are only casually comparing the last few days. However, God is not saying “great” casually. *Poluteles* means the very end or limit with reference to value. This Greek word is also used in Mark 14:3-5.

... a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive [*poluteles*] perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head...It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages.

Mark 14:3-5

This passage gives us more insight into the word *poluteles*. This perfume was worth more than a year’s salary. Personally, I’ve never spent even a day’s wages for perfume. This perfume poured on Jesus was extremely valuable.

If you had a bottle of perfume that cost more than what you make in a year (or could make), how would you take care of it compared to your other perfumes? And how would you describe it compared to your other

perfumes? I probably would repeat the word “very” several times just so that it is clear how valuable it is – “very, very, very expensive perfume.” When you compare this perfume that was poured on Jesus with any other perfume, it is by far the most valuable.

When God says *poluteles* in 1 Peter 3:4, he means GREAT worth or VERY precious. This tops his list. A gentle and quiet spirit is of incredible worth to him.

Worksheet 2 – Great Worth

1. Do you feel highly valued as a woman?
2. What does the world typically value in a woman?

Gentle

The Greek word translated “gentle” or “meek” is *praus*. There are three scriptures in the New Testament with the word *praus* in the original text.

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle [*praus*] and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

1 Peter 3:4

Say to the Daughter of Zion, “See, your king comes to you, gentle [*praus*] and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Matthew 21:5

Blessed are the meek [*praus*], for they will inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:5

Definition: *Praus* (prah-ooce’) The exercises of it are first toward God. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept his dealings with us as good without disputing or resisting and is closely linked with the word humility. It is only the humble heart which is also *praus*, and which, as such, does not fight against God. *Praus* is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest.

The meaning of *praus* is not readily expressed in English, for the terms gentleness and meekness, commonly used, suggest weakness, whereas *praus* does nothing of the kind. The common assumption is that when a man is meek or gentle, it is because he cannot help himself, but the Lord was *praus* because he had the infinite resources of God at his command.²

Praus means power under control, or power that is submitted or surrendered. It takes great inner strength to be *praus*. The English word gentleness refers more to actions, whereas *praus* refers more to a condition of mind and heart.³ Our modern usage for “gentle” and “meek” is being mild or weak, lacking in spirit and courage. Having

no inner strength and being easily imposed upon is how some people perceive a gentle and quiet spirit. Maybe that's the way Pilate viewed Jesus in Matthew 27:13-14, but Jesus was not replying *because* he had inner strength. Consider Jesus in the following verse. Imagine this taking place.

Say to the Daughter of Zion, "See, your king comes to you,
gentle [*praus*] and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of
a donkey."

Matthew 21:5

Do you picture Jesus looking docile as he rode a donkey into Jerusalem? Read the definition of *praus* again and think about Jesus entering Jerusalem. When it says Jesus was *praus*, it's describing his attitude toward God. Jesus knew he was facing crucifixion, yet he was willing to go into Jerusalem. He was *praus*.

When Jesus was arrested, he said in Matthew 26:53, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" A legion is an army of up to 5,000 men.⁴ So Jesus is saying that he could have immediately called more than 60,000 angels. One would have been enough! He had this infinite power that we cannot fathom. Jesus was gentle (*praus*) because he had incredible power at his disposal and he chose not to use it. Instead, he submitted himself to God and made himself available for God's plan for his life. He was gentle to God.

Was this how you described a "gentle" woman in the first worksheet? When I studied the Greek word *praus* and found that it described a strong woman instead of a weak one, it drastically changed how I read this verse. I found it more appealing.

Quiet

The Greek word translated “quiet” is *hesuchios*.

Definition: *Hesuchios* (hay-soo'-khee-os) tranquility arising from within,⁵ undisturbed and undisturbing, peaceable, and quiet.⁶

As a young child, I lived near a spring of water where my father would fill our water cans. Someone had put a concrete liner in the ground around the spring so that it was easy to draw the water out. I loved to go there. It was a peaceful place where water constantly bubbled up from within the earth and overflowed. It was puzzling to me how year after year the water kept coming. There was an invisible underground source that I could not understand as a child. I think of that spring every time I read this definition of “tranquility arising from within.” The quiet spirit also has an unseen source. It comes from a deep trust in God’s love, protection and promises.

There are a lot of things we face every day that reveal whether or not we have this kind of spirit. Does “tranquility arising from within” describe you or would the words “stressed-out” be a better fit? Stress, not tranquility, describes many women today. Think back on what the last week has been like for you and your household. Were you undisturbed by the events you faced and undisturbing to others around you? Did you raise your voice or somehow lose control? Were you peaceful in the middle of all your busyness? Now, I assume you have been busy. We aren’t talking about whether or not you have a life of leisure; we are talking about an inner quality.

Again, Jesus is the perfect example of *hesuchios*. Large crowds of people who were needy, hungry and sick often surrounded him (sounds like a family at times). Luke 8:42 says, “As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.” It goes on to say that a woman touched him and that Jesus took the time to inquire about it. Unlike his disciples, who urged Jesus to send needy people away (Mark 6:36), Jesus was unruffled by the crowds. We also read about him sleeping in a boat during a storm. You can see his incredible peace and his trust in God as he deals with

his disciples' fear (Matthew 8:23-26).

Jesus completely trusted God. Consider the following passage:

For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

John 12:49-50

He knew that God's commands would lead him to eternal life, in other words, get him back to heaven. He trusted God completely, including what to say and how to say it. What a remarkable level of trust.

There are many scriptures that give us direction on what to say and not say and how to say it and not say it. It's my goal to trust God completely, but occasionally my lack of tranquility shows me that I am not. When I'm in a stressful situation is when I'm most apt to say and do things that I later regret. At these times, I can usually find that I'm not trusting God about something. Consider the following scriptures:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Psalms 62:8

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

John 14:1

The quiet spirit is not a "fluff" quality. It comes from a deep trust in God's love, protection and promises.

Adornment

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment [*kosmos*], such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

1 Peter 3:3-4

The Greek word translated “adornment” is *kosmos*.

Definition: *Kosmos* (kos'-mos) 1) that which serves to beautify through decoration, *adornment*; 2) condition of orderliness, *orderly arrangement, order*; 3) the sum total of everything here and now, *the world, the universe*.⁷

In the original Greek Bible, *kosmos* is found 187 times. It is translated “world” 186 times and “adornment” one time. *Kosmos* is the root of our English word “cosmos.” It is also the root of the word “cosmetics.”

I show you this Greek word because this scripture isn't just about adornment. It is about how we order our world of beauty. Let's be honest – outer beauty is important to us. We can sacrifice a great deal of time and money to achieve just a little more beauty. How do you order your world of beauty (your *kosmos*)? Do you focus more on your outer or inner beauty?

This scripture about beauty and adornment is as relevant today as when it was first written, and we still need this message. This scripture gives us some vital information about true beauty. There is a kind of beauty that is unfading. Unfading? Wow! This should make headlines. “Unfading Beauty—Now Available!” If this were a beauty product, women would be lining up to purchase it. Me too! Why is this not making headlines, and why is it not widely embraced by women -- especially Christian women?

One reason is that outer beauty is so highly valued. It is powerful, and it opens doors for women. Another reason is that Satan has muddied the truth about the value and the power of inner beauty. For many, the

words “gentle” and “quiet” evoke a picture of weakness or passiveness, rather than strength and peace.

Let’s look again at 1 Peter 3:3-4 using the New American Standard Bible.

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 quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

1 Peter 3:3-4 (NASB)

I especially like this version, because it gives a little different look at what is at stake. It says that a gentle and quiet spirit is imperishable. In other words, it’s eternal. It also speaks of the hidden person of the heart. That’s your eternal self. The stakes are high when it comes to our inner beauty. Unlike our outer beauty that is fading away, our inner beauty can grow. And this beauty is available for each one of us.

Two questions we need to ask: “Do I believe these qualities are truly powerful?” and “Do I want them?” These are questions I put to myself at the beginning of my study twenty-six years ago. My initial motivation was being of great worth to God, but I soon found out that a gentle and quiet spirit was something I needed and wanted. A woman with these qualities has great inner strength. She trusts God to direct her, and she is overflowing with peace. She is both *praus* and *hesuchios*.

Worksheet 3 – Gentle & Quiet

1. Has your idea of a gentle and quiet spirit changed any from what you wrote in Worksheet 1? If so, how? Write the definitions of gentle and quiet.

2. Why do you think God highly values a gentle and quiet spirit?

3. How would it make you feel to be highly valued by God?

4. Have you actively pursued the qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit?

5. Why do you think God wants us to pursue inner beauty?

6. Ask God to help you become this strong and peaceful woman.

...those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. - Psalm 34:10

ENDNOTES

- 1 W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Nashville, TN: Crusade Bible Publishers, Inc.).
- 7 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) p. 561. Hereafter cited as BDAG.