

THE WIFE'S BEAUTY

1 Peter 3:1-6

By Andy Manning

The title of this sermon is "The Wife's Beauty."

This is part 2 of our sermon series, "Making marriage work."

I'm a student of happiness.

Happiness is something everyone searches for, but so few seem to find it.

According to a Pew Research Study in 2010, only 34% of adults say they are very happy.

What makes people happy? You might be surprised.

Here's one: **Get in shape.** 48% of people in excellent health are very happy, compared to only 32% of people in good health, 22% in fair health, and 15% in poor health. That's huge! If you want to be happy, get healthy.

Here's another one: **Get educated.** 42% of college grads are very happy compared to 30% of those who have only a high school diploma or less. Get an education.

Here's one that might surprise you: **Vote Republican.** 45% of Republicans are very happy compared to 30% of Democrats; 40% of conservatives are very happy compared to 27% of liberals.

Here's one you would expect to hear at church: **go to church.** 43% of those who attend weekly are very happy, compared to 31% who attend monthly or less; and 26% of those who never attend.

But here's the one that might be the most surprising of all: **Get married.** 43% of married people are very happy compared to 24% of singles.

Marriage can increase happiness – dramatically.

That's very surprising because there's a powerful and popular urban myth in our society that says marriage will make you miserable.

But that's simply not true. Marriage can dramatically increase your happiness.

This should not be surprising. God created marriage to bless us; to make us happy.

That's why the Bible says **Proverbs 18:22 (CSB)**, "A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."

In other words, marriage is good, and marriage is a gift.

But before you run and get married, or before you ask yourself if you're married why you aren't happy, this is something you need to know: **A healthy marriage can dramatically increase your happiness.** That's the key. To get the benefits from marriage it has to be healthy.

So right now we're in a sermon series in which we're thinking about how to build a happy, healthy marriage.

Let's begin with this thought. **The best place to go for marriage advice is to the marriage maker.**

Just a few weeks ago some friends of ours dropped by the house; they called it Christmas in October. One of the gifts they gave us was a pressure cooker. We've heard great things about pressure cookers, but we don't

know how to make them work. So guess what Lydia was doing over the next few days. She was studying the instruction book provided by the manufacturer.

That's just common sense. If you want to know how to use something, how to make it work, find the maker. Find the manufacturer.

God is the inventor of marriage. He made it. So the best place to go for marriage advice is to God's word – the Bible.

The Bible is our marriage manual.

There are some great books out there on marriage, but the best marriage manual is the Bible, because it was written by the manufacturer of marriage.

Here's another thought for you to jot down. **Anytime God tells you to do something, it's good for you.**

When I was a kid my parents told me to do all kinds of things. They told me to stay away from credit cards. They told me to work really hard in school. They told me to go to church, and put God first in my life.

Why did they tell me these things? Because they loved me, and they wanted what's best for me. They didn't tell me to do those things to hurt me, or ruin my life; they told me to do those things because they were good for me.

It's the same with your heavenly Father. God loves you more than you can imagine. And when he tells you to do something, it's for your good. When God tells you to relate to your spouse in a certain way, it's for your good. When God tells you to follow a principle in your marriage it's for your good.

On the surface some of the things that God says to do might seem counterintuitive; they might seem like a bad idea; you might not

understand how they would help your marriage; but just remember, God loves you. When he tells you do something in your marriage, it's good for you. You have to believe that or you will resist God's marriage instructions because they are counter cultural.

Right now we're looking at one particular passage of Scripture on marriage – 1 Peter 3:1-7.

In this passage we can find 4 commands, or four principles about building a healthy marriage – four principles about making your marriage work. The first two are for wives, and the second two are for husbands. Last week we looked at the first one – the wife's submission. This week we'll look at the second – the wife's beauty.

Let's begin by reading 1 Peter 3:1-6 (CSB).

1 In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live 2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives. 3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry, 4 but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

Let's zoom in at verses 3-4. “3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry, 4 but rather what is inside the heart.”

At first glance, this sounds like Peter is saying that wives should not worry about their physical appearance, or that a wife's physical appearance is not important.

Let's talk about that for a moment.

That's not what Peter is saying.

Here's what Peter is saying to wives. **Outer beauty should not be your only focus, or your primary focus.**

Let me explain with the words of Jesus. In **Matthew 6:19-20 (CSB)** Jesus said, "Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

Now at first glance it seems like Jesus is saying that we shouldn't have any money in savings, or that we shouldn't keep anything of value; we should just give it all away.

But is that really what God wants? Don't save up for emergencies? Don't plan for retirement? Don't have any assets to your name? No.

Because we know that elsewhere in the Bible it talks about the importance of savings, and of financial responsibility, and of planning for the future.

So what does Jesus mean?

He means earthly treasure should not be your only focus, or your primary focus.

He is saying that there is something much more important than storing up earthly treasure, and that is storing up heavenly treasure.

Don't get so focused on storing up earthly treasure – saving up, planning for retirement, enjoying your money – that you forget about what's most important – storing up heavenly treasures by investing in the kingdom of God.

Peter is saying something similar to wives.

He isn't saying that physical appearance is unimportant, or that wives should completely neglect their physical appearance.

He is saying that outer beauty should not be your only focus, or your primary focus.

Let me say this about your physical appearance.

Is it important? Yes.

Men are visually stimulated. Men are attracted by sight.

For the majority of men, their wife's physical appearance is very important; and for some men, it's more important than others.

It's just a fact; it's reality.

You would be foolish to try to defy or ignore this principle.

Dr. Willard Harley, the Christian marriage counselor and author of *His Needs Her Needs*, lists the five most important emotional needs of a husband. One of those five is his wife's physical beauty. Your physical appearance is important to your husband.

Now some Christian women might say, "That's horrible. My husband shouldn't care about my physical appearance – how much I weigh, or how I dress, or how I paint my face. He should just love me unconditionally."

Let me explain it like this.

As a general rule, bad smells are a turnoff. Bad hygiene is a turnoff.

Women care about that stuff.

Would you love your husband if he neglected his odor and his hygiene? Yes you would love him.

But would you want to snuggle with him on the couch?

Would you want him in your bed?

Would you want to stand next to him in public?

No! Or at least it would be hard. You might have to hold your nose.

It's similar with your physical appearance.

If you neglect your physical appearance your husband will still love you. Should!

But you will put a strain on your relationship. You will be more like friends than lovers; more like roommates than soul mates.

So Peter isn't saying that physical beauty isn't important, or that wives should neglect it. **Physical beauty should not be your only focus, or your primary focus.**

Why? There's something more important to the health of your marriage. There's something more important to the happiness of your husband.

What is it? Go back to **verses 3-4**. "3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry, 4 but rather what is inside the heart."

The thing that's more important, that should demand the majority of your attention as a wife is what's inside the heart; your inner beauty. In other words – your character.

Your **character** is the combination of your conduct and convictions; your behavior and your beliefs.

It's the inner you.

It's your morality; your attitude; your spirituality.

That's infinitely more important than your outer beauty.

So here's what Peter is saying in this passage. This is really the big idea in verses 1-6 for wives. **To build a great marriage, develop your inner beauty.**

Do you want to improve your marriage? Work on your inner beauty. Work on your character – your conduct and convictions; your behavior and beliefs. Work on the inner you – your spirituality, your attitude, your morality.

Wives tend to make **three mistakes** when it comes to their outer beauty.

First, some wives focus solely on their outer beauty and almost completely neglect their inner beauty.

These are the women who spend a ton of time of time and money on clothing and jewelry; and they might spend a ton of money on diet products; or they might spend a ton of time at the gym.

But they invest very little time, energy, and money on their inner beauty.

But that's what Peter is saying wives shouldn't do.

Outer beauty should not be your only or even your primary focus.

There's something much more important. There's something much more affective.

Second, some women deny the importance of outer beauty.

They think their husband is a jerk if he cares about physical beauty and he should just love her like she is.

But that's a mistake.

Again, that's like a man saying, "I'm going to stop worrying about my odor and hygiene, and she better love me anyway." That's just foolish.

Third, some women try to build a great marriage by focusing all their attention on developing their husband's inner beauty.

That's not going to get you very far.

And that's not what the Bible says to do.

The Bible says for you to work on your inner beauty.

To build a great marriage, build *your* inner beauty.

WHY INNER OVER OUTER BEAUTY?

Now let me ask you a question before we move on.

Why does God command you to focus first and foremost on your inner beauty?

I want to take you back to a statement that we talked about near the beginning of this sermon. **Anytime God tells you to do something, it's good for you.**

Now let's stop just for a moment.

The primary reason God tells you to do something is to glorify Him – to show how good He is through the way you live.

But what you may not realize is that God created you in such a way that you will be happiest when you are living for His glory.

So let's get back to the question. Why does God command you to focus first and foremost on your inner beauty?

Because it's good for you. It's good for your marriage.

Focusing on your inner beauty will add more value to your marriage than focusing on your outer beauty.

God is saying that your inner beauty will attract your husband in a deeper, more powerful way than outer beauty.

God's not telling you this for His good; it's for your good. But you have to trust Him.

THE LIMITS OF OUTER BEAUTY

Let's explore that idea for a moment.

Outer beauty is not irrelevant, it's not unimportant, but it is very limited in what it can do for you.

- Outer beauty can attract your husband, but it can't help you build intimacy.
- Outer beauty can turn your husband on to you, but it can't turn your husband on to Christ (it can't inspire your husband spiritually).
- Outer beauty can motivate your husband to chase you, but it can't motivate your husband to not chase other women. (Many women think

that they key to preventing their husbands from being unfaithful is to focus heavily on outer beauty. But that's not true. Your husband will appreciate your efforts to be physically attractive, but remember, even men who are married to supermodels are sometimes unfaithful.)

- Tiger Woods' ex-wife was a Swedish model, and he cheated on her multiple times.
- Outer beauty can't help you when you are having conflict;
- it can't help you when go through adversity;
- it can't help you when you are having money problems;
- it can't help you raise your kids for Christ.
- Outer beauty might help you start a marriage, but it won't help your marriage last.
 - Many beautiful women see their marriages end in divorce.

You need more than outer beauty to build a healthy marriage.

You need more than a pretty face if you want to finish the race.

You need inner beauty.

HOW TO DEVELOP INNER BEAUTY?

So how do you develop your inner beauty?

Peter gives you five virtues to work on right away.

A virtue is a morally excellent behavior.

Here they are: Submission. Purity. Reverence. Gentleness. And quietness.

Peter says, “If you want to build a great marriage, then develop these five things in your heart.”

These are five ways to attract your husband at the deepest level.

5 Virtues to Increase Your Inner Beauty

1. Submission.

This was the subject of the entire sermon last week, so I don't want to go into too much detail.

1 Peter 3:1 says, “In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live.”

Submission means to voluntarily allow your husband to be your leader, giving him the final say.

Remember, submission does not mean that the wife is inferior.

Men and women are equal in value, but have different roles in the social structure of the family.

The man is to love and lead, and the wife is to submit and support.

Submission does not mean that the couple can't make decisions together, or that the wife can't offer input.

In fact, I recommend you make every decision together and that you never move forward unless you are both in enthusiastic agreement.

But in the end, submission means that the wife lets the husband have the final say.

Many of you know that my daughter, Josie, has braces. Well, just a few months ago we took Andrew to the orthodontist, and surprise, he needs braces, too. After insurance it's going to cost us about \$1,300. The orthodontist gives us payment options. We can around \$100 a month, no interest, until it is paid off in about a year. Or we can pay the full amount in cash up front and they will give a \$70 discount. So Lydia and I talked about it. I am leaning toward the monthly payment plan; and she is leaning toward the cash plan. So what should we do? Well, Lydia said, "Andy, here's what I would prefer, and this is why, but it's up to you." She is giving me the final say.

Now, do you know what that does to me? That makes me want to prefer her and pay the full amount in cash.

Her submission is very attractive.

It's like reverse psychology or something.

She tricks me into doing what she wants every time. "Here's what I want, but it's up to you. I trust you." It works every time.

2. Purity.

1 Peter 3:1-2 (CSB) says, "1 In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live 2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives."

The next virtue is purity. It means chaste, or sexually pure.

One of the things that a wife longs for in her husband is complete and total sexual purity. A wife wants her husband to be faithful physically, visually, mentally, and emotionally. What's the best way to inspire and influence your husband to live this way? To set the example. Exemplify the purity that you want to see in your husband.

Guard your hearts, ladies.

Recognize how affairs begin. They begin as friendships – with a coworker, a neighbor, a church member, one of your husband's friends.

Be careful.

One time I counseled a couple who were having serious problems.

The husband was upset because the wife spent lots of time talking on the phone, and going to lunch, and texting, and emailing, and Facebooking her ex-husband.

And she just couldn't understand why her husband didn't like that.

She said she would never do anything wrong; they were just friends.

Can we say "clueless"?

If she doesn't end that relationship with her ex, it's only a matter of time before she cheats on her husband with her ex-husband.

3. Reverence.

The third virtue to cultivate in order to attract your husband and build a great marriage is reverence.

Reverence is sometimes translated fear.

This simply means be a God-fearing woman. In other words, be a fully-devoted Christ-follower.

Let your husband see a living, breathing example of what it looks like to be fully-devoted.

Have you heard of a **Triangular Relationship**? (DIAGRAM) God created marriage to look like this. As you seek Christ with all your heart, and as your husband seeks Christ with all his heart, God draws you closer and closer together; your marriage gets stronger and healthier.

Now right now, we're not talking about your husband. We'll talk to your husband the next two weeks. Right now we're talking about you. So here's what you need to know. As you live a fully-devoted life, your example becomes a powerful magnet that attracts your husband to Jesus.

Look back at the text, verses 1-2. "1 In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live 2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives."

So your example inspires him to seek Jesus. And then when you are both seeking Jesus, the power of the Triangular Relationship comes into play.

4. Gentleness.

The next two virtues are found in verses 3-4. "3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry, 4 but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

Gentleness.

If you want to build a great marriage, cultivate the inner virtue of gentleness.

If you want to attract your husband, cultivate gentleness.

What is gentleness? Stay calm and kind, even when you're angry.

Gentleness is the way you respond to your husband when he makes you angry, or hurts you, or frustrates you.

Rather than losing your temper and yelling and threatening and hitting things and shooting insults, you stay calm and kind.

Look at **Proverbs 25:15 (AMP)**. “By patience and a calm spirit a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft and gentle tongue breaks the bone [of resistance].”

In your home your husband is the ruler; he is the leader. How do you attract him? How do you influence him to be a better man? A better father? A better Christian? Is it through harsh words, insults, yelling and screaming, throwing and hitting things? No. The Bible says the key is a gentle spirit. A gentle spirit will persuade your husband, and will break his resistance.

5. Quietness.

The last virtue that Peter mentions is quietness, or a quiet spirit.

Now this doesn't mean that you need to be quiet and not speak.

The word quietness means “undisturbing.” The idea is to keep the peace in your marriage.

There are two ways to keep the peace in your marriage. Avoid complaining. And avoid arguing.

Look at **Philippians 2:14 (NLT)**. “Do everything without complaining and arguing.”

Nobody likes a person who is always complaining and arguing. Nobody is attracted to that. Nobody wants to live with that.

No man ever said, “You know what I really want in a wife? A woman who complains and argues. That just sounds like bliss.”

I remember reading a book called *Every Man's Marriage*, by Stephen Arterburn, in which he said that a husband's deepest desire, his greatest desire in marriage is

not sexual intimacy; it's not an attractive wife. Do you know what it is? It's his wife's happiness. Isn't that interesting? God created men so that what they most want is for their wives to be happy.

When a man's wife is happy, it communicates to a man that he is taking good care of her; he's a good man; he's a good husband. That's very attractive to a man.

So what do you think it does to a man when his wife is complaining and arguing? It's not attractive. It makes him miserable.

Conclusion

So what's the message today?

If you want to build a great marriage, develop your inner beauty.

Outer beauty is not irrelevant. Don't neglect it.

But there's something far more powerful than outer beauty. There's something far more attractive than outer beauty. It's your inner beauty. Your character.

Now let me close with this.

When your husband doesn't do what he should do, it motivates you to not do what you should do.

But here's what you need to understand.

Just as negative behavior fosters negative behavior, so positive behavior fosters positive behavior.

As you strive to be who God called you to be, and to develop your inner beauty, then it motivates and inspires and influences your husband to be who God wants him to be.

It may take longer than you want, but trust the process.

The best way to get what you want from your husband is not deprive your husband, but to be the wife that God calls you to be.

And that means regardless of your husband's treatment of you, you focus on your inner beauty.