Digging Deeper: The Greater Meaning of 1 Peter 3:4

Saturday, September 26, 2026

In 1 Peter 3:4, the apostle Peter points Christian wives, and by extension every Christian, away from outward display and toward the inner qualities that God himself treasures:

> *“But let it be the secret person of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of the quiet and mild spirit, which is of great value in the eyes of God.”*
>
> (New World Translation)

The day’s text applies this to courtship: “Now you have the opportunity to get to know ‘the secret person of the heart.’” To dig out the gems in this verse, we will look at Peter’s Greek wording, at how he

uses the same words elsewhere in his letter, and at the qualities the Watchtower paragraph encourages us to look for.

1 A Person Seen Clearly Only by God (*kruptos … enōpion tou theou*)

The adjective Peter uses is *kruptos* (Strong's G2927), meaning "hidden" or "secret." It is the same word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount when he spoke of "your Father who looks on in secret" (*en tō kruptō*, Matthew 6:4, 6). Peter ends the verse with the phrase "in the eyes of God" (*enōpion tou theou*). The hidden person may escape human notice, but not Jehovah's.

This matches what Jehovah told Samuel when he was choosing a king from Jesse's sons: "The way man sees is not the way God sees, because mere man sees what appears to the eyes, but Jehovah sees into the heart."

(1 Samuel 16:7) David later prayed: “You find pleasure in truth in the inner person; Teach my innermost self true wisdom.” (Psalm 51:6) The NWT footnote on “innermost self” reads: “Or ‘my secret self.’”

Of course, we cannot read hearts the way Jehovah can. So how can a couple come to know “the secret person of the heart”? Mainly through time and observation. Paul stated a principle in another setting: “The sins of some men are publicly known, . . . but those of other men become evident later. In the same way also, the fine works are publicly known and those that are otherwise cannot be kept hidden.” (1 Timothy 5:24, 25) Given enough time and a variety of circumstances, the inner person shows itself.

- Watch how the person responds under pressure, disappointment, or inconvenience, not only on planned occasions.

- Notice whether their spirituality is steady when no one is looking to praise it (Matthew 6:4).

2 Adornment That Cannot Decay (*kosmos, aphthartos*)

In verse 3, Peter uses the Greek word *kosmos* (Strong's G2889) for "adornment." He sets it against things that are "external" (*exōthen*): "the braiding of hair and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothing." In verse 4, he describes the inner person's adornment with the adjective *aphthartos* (Strong's G862), "incorruptible" or "imperishable."

Peter's own letter shows how much weight he gives that word. In chapter 1 he uses it twice: of the "incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance" reserved in the heavens, and of the "incorruptible seed" through which they were given a new birth (1 Peter 1:4, 23). Just before that, he wrote: "It was not

with corruptible things, with silver or gold, that you were set free."
(1 Peter 1:18) The Greek word for "gold" there (*chrysion*, Strong's G5553) is the same word behind "gold ornaments" in 3:3. Peter had already classed gold among corruptible things. A quiet and mild spirit, by contrast, belongs with the things God considers lasting.

The day's text directs us to Proverbs 31, which makes the same contrast: "Charm may be false, and beauty may be fleeting, But the woman who fears Jehovah will be praised." (Proverbs 31:30) Proverbs also describes the qualities that outlast appearance: "She opens her mouth in wisdom; The law of kindness is on her tongue. She watches over the activity of her household, And the bread of laziness she does not eat." (Proverbs 31:26, 27) Paul gave similar counsel: women should adorn themselves "not with styles of hair braiding and gold or pearls or very expensive clothing, but in the way

that is proper for women professing devotion to God, namely, through good works." (1 Timothy 2:9, 10)

3 A Spirit God Counts as Costly (*praus, hēsychios, polutelēs*)

Here "spirit" refers to a person's prevailing disposition. (The NWT Study Bible note on 2 Corinthians 7:1 explains "spirit" in that verse as "one's mental inclination.") Peter names two features of this disposition:

- Mild (*praus*, Strong's G4239): The NWT Study Bible note on Matthew 5:5 describes mildness as "the inward quality of those who willingly submit to God's will and guidance and who do not try to dominate others," adding that the Greek term "does not imply cowardice or weakness." Jesus described himself with this word: "I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29)

- Quiet (*hēsychios*, Strong's G2272): This means tranquil or calm. The only other place it appears in the Christian Greek Scriptures is 1 Timothy 2:2, where Christians pray that "we may go on leading a calm and quiet life."

Peter says that such a spirit is "of great value" (*polutelēs*, Strong's G4185). The word appears only three times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. It describes the "very expensive" perfumed oil poured on Jesus (Mark 14:3) and the "very expensive clothing" that Christian women need not rely on (1 Timothy 2:9). Peter uses the very word that describes luxury goods for a quality that money cannot buy.

This connects with the questions in the day's text. Will this person love as a husband should, or show "deep respect" as a wife should (Ephesians 5:33)? Will he "provide for those who are his own" (1 Timothy 5:8)? Can we live with each

other's shortcomings, since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)? A mild and quiet spirit does not try to dominate or demand. It is exactly what makes a person able to adjust to someone else's differences. That fits the paragraph's conclusion that compatibility is "largely determined, not by how similar you are, but by how adaptable you are to each other's differences."

Key Spiritual Reflections for Courtship

- **Look Where Jehovah Looks:** Am I giving more weight to appearance, charm, or status than to the heart Jehovah sees (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 31:30)?

- **Give It Time:** Am I allowing enough time and enough real-life settings for the “secret person of the heart” to show itself, remembering that what is inside “cannot be kept hidden” for long (1 Timothy 5:25)?
- **Value the Costly Qualities:** Does this person show mildness, a willingness to yield instead of dominate, and a calm spirit that settles tension rather than stirring it up (Matthew 11:29; 1 Timothy 2:2)?
- **Examine My Own Heart:** Am I cultivating the same incorruptible adornment myself, so that I can be adaptable to the differences of another imperfect person (Romans 3:23)?