

Peter's Pedagogical Method in 1 Peter 3:6

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—"like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham
and called him her master" (1 Pet 3:6 NIV)

In 1 Pet 3:6, Sarah's conduct exemplifies willing, Christ-like, vicarious suffering, while Abraham exemplifies a husband disobedient to the Word. This thesis is developed by a close exegetical study of the literary context (1 Peter) in light of its ancient Greco-Roman historical contexts and by finding the appropriate OT context (Gen 12:11-20). The findings are compared with some contemporary feminist concerns.

Key Words: good conduct, analogy, mutual authorities, Sarah as Christ-type

Model is a poignant educational method. And here in 1 Pet 3:6 Sarah is mentioned as an important model for the reader. But of what is she a model? For some she is a model of wifely obedience to the husband,¹ while for others she is a model of a Christ-like, righteous spirit of submission in the face of hostile, anti-Christian forces.² A pivotal question for interpreters is whether obedience or pure conduct is the

1. E.g. Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, (ICC; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T Clark, 1902) 153; Wayne Grudem, "Wives like Sarah, and the Husbands Who Honor Them: 1 Peter 3:1-7," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991) 196ff.; David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981) 104; Dorothy Patterson, "Roles in Marriage—A Study in Submission: 1 Peter 3:1-7," *The Theological Educator* 13 (Spring 1982) 71; Larry Christenson, *The Christian Family* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1970) 41; Andre S. Bustanoby, "Love, Honor, and Obey," *Christianity Today* 13 (June 6, 1969) 4.

2. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 189-90. Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 174.

foundational principle for the pericope. And in order to unleash the text's meaning, I will look at the literary context of the letter, its ancient Greco-Roman historical contexts, the appropriate context(s) in the OT, and then the contemporary context(s). I will show that for Peter, Sarah is an example of willing, Christ-like, vicarious suffering in Genesis 12.

1 PETER (LITERARY) CONTEXT

Peter's³ overall goal in this letter is to encourage the exiles⁴ to conduct themselves in reverent fear throughout the time of their exile by remembering and growing in salvation (1 Pet 1:17). The letter highlights two means by which the exiles are to spur on that appropriate behavior: first, by remembering the good news that had been announced to them (1:3-25) and, second, by growing in salvation (2:1-5:11). The exiles should grow in salvation (2:2) because (a) they are chosen and precious in God's sight though rejected by mortals, as Christ was precious but rejected (2:1-8); (b) they are chosen to proclaim God's mighty acts (2:9-3:12); and (c) they suffer in the flesh, but live in the Spirit (3:13-5:11). The passage I am focusing on appears as part of this middle section exhorting the reader to proclaim God's mighty acts as a means of growing in salvation. Knowing one's identity is a precursor to proclamation. Women as well as men believers are an elect race, royal priests, a holy nation, a people for a possession by God (2:9). The priestly functions of the congregation are no longer divided by gender, birth, race, or any physical characteristic. Now everyone has the privilege and responsibility to represent God.

3. 1 Peter claims to be from "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), "an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (5:1). 2 Pet 3:1 refers to 1 Peter. The early church unhesitatingly recognized 1 Peter as genuine. Eusebius, the early Christian historian in the 300s, summarized the church's regard for 1 Peter with the highest category of "recognized books," as "recognized" as Paul's letters (*History* 3.3.25). Papias (AD 60-135) mentions 1 Peter and its composition in Rome (Eusebius *History* 2.15). Clement of Rome (AD 30-101), the Didache, and Polycarp (AD 69-156) quote from every chapter of 1 Peter. Irenaeus (AD 130-200) quotes from 1 Peter by name (e.g., *Against Heresies* 4.9.2; 16.5). Nevertheless, some commentators, such as Francis Beare, consider the case against Peter as author as "overwhelming." *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (2d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1961) 29. However, his points can be more than adequately answered. E.g., R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938); Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992).

4. The readers appear to be Gentile Christians (1:1, 14, 18; 2:10; 4:3-4). If indeed they are Gentiles, then "exiles of the dispersion" (1:1) is a metaphor referring to the Christian life in the world.

1 Pet 3:6 is one part of a larger pericope, 2:11-3:7: Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles by being submissive to human institutions so they may glorify God. 1 Pet 2:11-12 expresses the first, main point of this section: "Beloved, I exhort (you) as strangers and sojourners to abstain from fleshly desires, which war against one's life; having a good conduct among the Gentiles, in order that, while they speak against you as criminals, observing your good actions, they might glorify God in a day of visitation."

"Doing good" (*agathopoieō*) in 3:6 has its synonym "good behavior" (*anastrophē*) here in 2:12. The unbelieving husband (3:1) would be one example of a "Gentile" who might speak against a Christian wife claiming she does bad works (2:12). According to the Romans, upon marriage, a woman would renounce her father's religion and worship instead at her husband's hearth. For example, Plutarch wrote, "it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in" (*Advice to Bride and Groom* 19 [140]). According to the laws of Romulus, married women were obliged to conform themselves to their husbands (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Roman Antiquities* 2.25.1). The father or husband was the *paterfamilias*, who was chief priest, and held the power of life and death over the entire household.⁵ In the context of 1 Peter 3, wives whose aim was to "win over" their husbands to Christianity (3:1) might very well be fearful (3:6). However, Peter wants them instead to focus on doing good actions as a means of evangelism.

In 2:13-3:7 Peter now applies his general exhortation to specific situations. Every believer has certain worldly passions that might keep him or her from having good conduct (2:11-12). What might they be for specific groups? These potential danger points are what Peter will highlight. 1 Pet 2:13-16 has one main finite verb in Greek ("submit yourselves," *hupotassō*, 2:13). *Hupotassō* and its synonyms in 2:17 ("honor," "love," "fear") govern the entire section from 2:13-3:7. All believers are commanded (*hupotassō* is an imperative) to become subject to all "human" creations (2:13). Although *hupotassō* can certainly include hierarchical relationships, it does not have to be limited to such. Peter does not command people to make others subject to themselves. Rather, he uses the passive voice, "become subject." Even though some writers⁶ say that *hupotassō* "always implies a relationship of submission to an authority," the NT also recognizes that believers can be submitted to one another as *mutual* authorities, as in prophets who are "subject" to other prophets, allowing each other to speak and

5. Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken, 1975) 150-54; Balch, *Wives*, 82-95; Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 263-65.

6. E.g., Grudem, *Manhood*, 199.

evaluate each other's message (1 Cor 14:29-33; also Eph. 5:21). This practice might be similar to the *hupotaxis* (a noun form of *hupotassō*), the lightly armed military division that would "draw up behind" the phalanx.⁷ In the same way, Christians are to become supportive presences, in actions and words, because of a more important reason ("for the Lord's sake," 2:13). Submission is respectful cooperation with others. The idea of "respect" comes from the summarizing clauses, the pleonastic synonyms for *hupotassō* in 2:17: "honor everyone, keep on loving the believers, keep on respecting God, keep on honoring rulers." Only the first verb "honor" (*timaō*) is an aorist command; the others are present imperatives. Thus, "honor" appears to be a summary of all the commands in 2:17. Also a finite main verb, similar to *hupotassō*, *timaō* helps explain *hupotassō*. Respect and treating people as valuable⁸ are aspects of Christian submission.

Peter clearly states that he will be writing about "human creations" (2:13). These human creations include national political and local domestic institutions (government, 2:13-15; free or slave status, 2:16-25; and marriage, 3:1-7). Even though marriage is ordained by God (e.g., Gen 2:18), the structure for marriage is human. God has not created a structure where the wife *must* accept the husband's religion or where the husband is the *paterfamilias* or priest. Earlier we saw how all believers are a royal priesthood (2:9). When it comes to governmental leaders, "doing good" (*agathopoiēō*, 2:15, the same verb as 3:6) may "muzzle" the ignorance of the foolish. Peter wrote in AD 64-66 when Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome was a precedent for Roman officials in the provinces to treat Christians as criminals and enemies of the state.⁹ If the Christians were clearly doing good actions, their critics could find little basis for accusations. Similarly, Peter calls wives to "do good" and not fear (3:6), although those were certainly fearful times.

7. LSJ, 1897.

8. *Timaō* can mean "set a price on, estimate, value" as well as "honor." Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (ed. William E Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 4th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 824.

9. Nero was the first Roman Emperor to persecute Christians, during the latter four years of his reign (AD 64-68). Roman historians, such as Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44), Suetonius (*Nero* 16), Lactantius (*The Deaths of the Persecutions* 2), Severus (*Chron.* 2.29), confirmed this fact. In order to divert criticism from himself (Nero burned Rome with the intent to rebuild it as "Neronopolis"), Nero blamed the Christians. This persecution is described in 1 Peter as "the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you" (4:12), "your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering" (5:9), "always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting" (3:15), "now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials" (1:6). Peter alludes to fire which was used to kill Christians. Christianity under Nero was not yet publicly illegal. However, the example set by Nero guided the actions of other Roman officials. See also W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (New York: Putnam, 1893) 245, 251.

1 Pet 3:1 begins "in the same way" (*homoiōs*), grammatically connecting 3:1-6 to the earlier sections. The Greek does not have a finite verb, as well, but a participle ("wives, being submissive," 3:1). Neither does 2:18 have finite verb. It too reads "household slaves, being submissive." Thus, the submission of household slaves and wives is syntactically connected to the directives to all believers in 2:17 and 2:13. Peter in 3:1-6 is elaborating on one type of submission to one human creation, ancient marriage. In other words, wives, cooperate and honor husbands as long as what you do advances God's cause (2:13).

The purpose for being submissive ("so that") is clarified as "they may be won over" (*kerdainō*, 3:1). *Kerdainō* is a financial metaphor, literally signifying they may gain a profit.¹⁰ These are husbands who are not convinced of the claims of Christ. They are debits on a financial sheet. "Even if some of them do not obey the word" (3:1) clarifies their worst possible condition. These men may be nonbelievers who need to be "won over" so that they "may see your honorable deeds and glorify God" (2:12). They are the "foolish" ignorant who need to be silenced, who may be maligning their wives as evildoers (2:12, 15). They too need to be honored ("honor everyone," 2:17).

Peter uses three parallel phrases to describe the way these nonbelieving husbands can be won over: (1) "by their wives' *conduct*"; (2) "without a word"; (3) with "respectful pure conduct" (3:1-2 in Greek sequence). Peter highlights *how* to win these men over by leaving the main verb (*kerdainō*) to the end of the sentence (3:1). "Conduct" (*anastrophē*) is an important word for Peter. It refers to actions (1:15; 2:12; 3:16), clarified by the second phrase, "without a word." The final phrase reiterate and expands the first way. Exactly of what kind of actions does Peter write? Literally, "the-respectful, pure-actions" (3:2). "Respectful" (*phobos*, "reverence," NRSV) is the same word as in 1:17. Earlier Peter had commanded the whole church to "live in reverent fear (*phobos*) during the time of your exile" (1:17). Wives are not exempt from this general church command in their marriages. (See also Eph 5:33.) Christ-like behavior (also 3:16) should at best result in the husband demanding an accounting for the hope of the wife. At that point the wife should be ready to speak a word (3:15). The situation here is of an intimate relationship, where an initial description of the good news (1:25) by the wife was rejected by the husband (3:1). Thereafter, Peter recommends good behavior to win over this obstinate, unreasonable type of husband.¹¹

1 Pet 3:3-6 is one extended thought, further describing how to gain the husband to obedience to the word (3:1). In Greek the sentence

10. LSJ, 942.

11. Kenneth S. Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942) 72.

begins "*whose* adorning let it not be" (KJV). "Conduct," not words or external adornment, is important. Peter contrasts the outside adornment (*kosmos* refers to "adornment" and to the "world") to the inside human (*anthrōpos* or "self" here refers to females) (3:3-4). If a wife has been tempted to win over her nonbelieving spouse to Christianity by physical attractiveness, her means would contradict her goal. Rather, Peter commands ("let it be," KJV 3:4) imperishable ("lasting") values or attire, "a gentle (*praus*) and quiet (*hēsuchos*) spirit" (3:4). "Gentle" is a key description of Jesus (Matt 11:29; 21:5; 2 Cor 10:1). Jesus calls all followers to be "gentle" (Matt 5:5). Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:23; Eph 4:2) and the way to "restore" someone "detected in a transgression" (Gal 6:1; 2 Tim 2:25). Gentleness is a way of life required of all Christians (Col 3:12; Titus 3:2; James 1:21; 3:13; 1 Tim 6:11). "Quiet" is a state of calm, restraint at the proper time, respect and affirmation (Acts 11:18; 21:14, 40-22:2).¹² All Christians are exhorted to lead a "quiet and peaceable (*hēsuchos*) life" (1 Tim. 2:2). This quietness (*hēsuchos*) has positive connotations, as opposed to silencing (*phimoō*) an opponent (1 Pet 2:15). Thus, gentleness and quietness are qualities for all mature believers. What is real wealth? According to God (3:3), who you are inside that affects how you live creates your value, not perishable, superficial wealth. (See also Mark 7:20-23; Matt 23:25-28.) Christian women, like men, to God are already beautiful as God's holy sanctuary (2:5).

1 Pet 3:5-6 is one extended sentence in Greek, connecting back to 3:3 ("adorn," *kosmos*, 3:3; "used to adorn," *kosmeō*, 3:5). If women whose spouses are unbelievers feel without hope, Peter now explains by illustration how their "hope" is in God (3:5). Peter explains further that an inward, lasting adornment includes, literally, "being subject to own husbands." Gordon Clark suggests that Christian women may especially be tempted to become intimate with Christian men¹³ who are not their husbands, but Peter reiterates his earlier point that being respectful and honoring a husband may win him over to Christ (3:1; 2:12, 15).

OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXT

Peter illustrates his point ("it was in this way," NRSV; "like," NIV) by citing Sarah, who "obeyed Abraham and called him lord" (1 Pet 3:6). Most commentators believe Peter alludes to Gen 18:12 LXX because

12. Aída Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985) 76-81.

13. Gordon H. Clark, *I and II Peter* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980) 110-11. Compare with 1 Pet 2:11-12, the "worldly passions" that might mislead a Christian wife with a non-Christian husband.

the term "lord" (*kurios*) appears in that passage.¹⁴ However, I would like to suggest that Gen 12:11-20 fits Peter's context better. Many commentators have noticed that a superficial understanding of 1 Pet 3:6 ("Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord") does not fit Gen 18:12¹⁵ or Sarah's personality or characteristic behavior.¹⁶ Sarah did not so much *address* (vocative) Abraham as "lord," but she described him in the third person as "my lord."¹⁷ Moreover, the context in Genesis 18 was not so much deference as skepticism.¹⁸ Sarah either laughed within herself or she belted out in a gut-level guffaw (literally, "Sarah laughed in her intestines," Gen 18:12), saying: "After I am worn out, shall I, have this delight, even though my lord is old?"

Peter writes not that Sarah "called" (NRSV) Abraham "lord," but that she was "calling" (KJV) Abraham "lord." Peter's use of the present participle ("calling," 3:6) suggests not a one-time incident but a practice over time. Similarly, Peter uses a participle form of *kaleō* to describe God as the one "having called you" elsewhere in 1 Peter (1 Pet 1:15; 2:9; 5:10). Thus, the pivot by which to find the OT basis for Peter's simile should not be *kurios*, but rather, "Sarah obeyed Abraham." In looking at Gen 11:29 (Abram and Sarai's marriage) through 23:1 (Sarah's death) the reader finds few clear examples where Sarah obeyed Abraham, outside of Gen 12:13.¹⁹

The conjunction "as" (*hōs*) introduces an illustration, an analogy.²⁰ "As Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him 'lord' (3:6). (An analogy is

14. "Peter ignores the context [of Gen 18:12] and fastens instead on one word [*kurios*]." J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988) 165. "1 Pet 3:6 picks out one word, 'lord,' and concludes that Sarah is a pattern for 'obedience' (Balch, *Wives*, 104).

15. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 165; Grudem, *Manhood*, 201, 501 n. 15; Balch, *Wives* 103-4.

16. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 191; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1975) 95; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 167; Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993) 716.

17. Belezikian aptly calls it "a monologue to herself, when [he] was out of earshot" (*Beyond Sex Roles*, 191).

18. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 165.

19. In Gen 12:5 "Abraham took Sarai." In 18:6 Abraham directs Sarah to bake. Whereas in Genesis 12:13 and 20:13 Abraham encourages Sarai to do as he desires (Hebrew, an imperative "say" plus a particle of entreaty, "pray!" 12:13). In contrast, in Gen 16:2 Sarah encourages Abraham to do as she desires (Hebrew, an imperative "go in" plus a particle of entreaty "pray!") and in 21:12 God commands Abraham to do as Sarah desires (Hebrew, "obey" or "listen").

20. *Hōs* is a "conjunction denoting comparison" introducing an example. Bauer, *Lexicon*, 905-6. It is *not* a simile, because, although it is an explicit comparison using "as," the conjunction "as" does not connect two things of unlike nature. But it is an ancient *parable*, which we can call an extended synecdoche (where a whole is known from a small part). Similarly, Jesus calls a "parable": "as soon as [a fig tree's] branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near," "so also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates"

"reasoning or arguing from parallel cases."²¹) Similarly, the rabbis used to reason by *keyoze bo bemaqom 'a'her* (a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another which has points of general [though not necessarily verbal] similarity) and *dabar halamed me 'inyano* (a meaning or conclusion is established by its context).²² Thus, since "verbal" similarity does not seem to work between 1 Pet 3:6 and Gen 18:12, I should compare 1 Pet 3:6 with Genesis 12 (and secondarily Genesis 20) to understand the analogy Peter appears to develop.

The setting is similar.²³ In Genesis 12 (see table 1, #1) Abraham and Sarai left for Egypt to live as aliens because of a famine in Canaan (Gen 12:10). 1 Peter is written to the exiles, a metaphor for Christians, who must live in the secular world in the midst of persecution (1 Pet 1:1, 6). (In contrast, in Genesis 20, Abraham is journeying but not because of difficult circumstances [v. 1].) In Genesis 12 (table, #2), Sarah's external beauty is mentioned and, because of her beauty, Abraham feared they would kill him but let her live (Gen 12:11-14). Similarly, in 1 Peter the wives were interested in external adornment (3:3). Abraham's own behavior was not full of compassion and love (*hesed*) for his wife. Rather (table, #3), he was concerned for his own life (Gen 12:13). In Gen 20:6-9, the wrong deeds of Abraham come out quite clearly. Pharaoh is innocent, although he had to suffer (Gen 20:4-6, 18). Therefore, at this time in his life, Abraham was an example of a husband disobedient to the word, not showing consideration and honor to Sarah (table, #4) as also an heir of God's blessings (1 Pet 3:1, 7; Gen 17:15-19; 18:10, 14; 51:2). Abraham (table, #5) asked Sarah to say she was his sister, to do this act for him to keep him alive (Gen 12:13; 20:13).

Sarah obeyed (or "listened to")²⁴ Abraham (1 Pet 3:6). Sarah was courageous. Sarah's obedience was exemplary of Christ-like righteous, vicarious suffering. She gave her life as a potential sacrifice for Abraham. Similarly, wives are to be "meek" (*praus*), as we saw, a word used to describe Christ.²⁵ Immediately preceding 1 Peter 3 is an extended description of Christ as an example for the Christian exiles: "Christ suffered in your behalf leaving you an example"; Christ "entrusted" himself "to the one judging righteously" (2:21, 23). And

(Mark 13:28-29 NRSV). Aída Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style* (ETS Monograph 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Evangelical Theological Society, 1984) 310, 312 (repr., Lanham: University Press of America, 1998) 208, 210.

21. Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2d ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 10. An "analogy" is a *proportio*.

22. *T. Sanh.* 7.11.

23. Mark Kiley, "Like Sara: The Tale of Terror behind 1 Pet 3:6," *JBL* 106 (December 1987) 690.

24. Bauer, *Lexicon*, 31.

25. 1 Pet 3:4; Matt 11:29; 21:5.

TABLE 1. *Analogy*

Genesis 12	1 Peter 3

(#1) <i>Alien World</i>	
(1) Abraham and Sarah left Canaan to live in Egypt as aliens because of a famine (v. 10).	The exiles (Christians) must live in the secular world in the midst of persecution (1:1, 6).
(#2) <i>External Beauty</i>	
(2) Sarah was beautiful in appearance. Because of her beauty, Abraham feared they would kill him but let her live (v. 12).	The wives were interested in external adornment (v. 3).
(#3) <i>Husband Disobedient to God</i>	
(3) Abraham was concerned for his own life (v. 13; 20:6-9).	The husbands might disobey the word (v. 1).
(#4) <i>Wife, an Heir, Worthy of Honor</i>	
(4) Sarah was an heir (Gen 17:15-19; 18:10).	Wives are heirs (vv. 1, 7).
(#5) <i>Obedience Means of Vicarious Righteous Suffering</i>	
(5) Abraham asked Sarah to say she was his sister to keep him alive and therefore Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's house (vv. 13, 15; Gen 20:13).	Sarah obeyed Abraham (v. 6). The wives are to be "meek" and peaceful (v. 4). Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example (2:21). He entrusted himself to the one who judges justly (2:23). Good Christ-like conduct will put to shame maligners (3:16).
(#6) <i>Deliverance</i>	
(6) God delivered Sarah (v. 17; 20:6-8).	Holy women hoped in God (v. 5). Christ hoped in God the Father (2:23).
(#7) <i>Purity</i>	
(7) Sarah committed no sin and showed good behavior (20:4).	Wives are to do good (v. 6). Christ committed no sin (2:22-23). Christ was a good person, offered for sinners (3:18).
(#8) <i>Fear</i>	
(8) Abraham expressed fear (20:11). Sarah was courageous, although she may have been fearful.	The wives might be fearful (v. 6).
(#9) <i>Man May Be Won Over</i>	
(9) For Sarah's sake, Pharaoh dealt well with Abraham. He is innocent, although his household had been punished. Pharaoh is won over (v. 16; 20:4-6, 14-16, 18).	Because of the wives' conduct, the husbands may be won over without a word (v. 1).
(#10) <i>Prayer</i>	
(10) Abraham prays for Pharaoh (Gen. 20:7, 17).	Effective prayer is needed for husband (v. 7).

later in 3:16 "good Christ-like conduct" will put to shame maligners. Even as the larger context highlights good conduct, so here too Sarah's good conduct is highlighted. God (table, #6) delivered Sarah by afflicting Pharaoh and his house with plagues (Gen 12:17). Similarly, Peter describes the holy women who hoped in God, even as Christ hoped in God the Father (1 Pet 2:23; 3:5).²⁶ Sarah (table, #7) committed no sin. Christ too committed no sin. He was a good person offered for sinners (1 Pet 2:22-23; 3:18). Thus, in the same way as Christ was a model to slaves, Christ is a model to wives.

Every analogy or illustrative image has limitations or degrees of correspondence where the analogy no longer applies. Where do these parallels no longer find correspondence? In Genesis (table, #8), Abraham was fearful (Gen 20:11), but in 1 Peter the wives might be fearful (1 Pet 3:6). However, true courage is not so much not being fearful as acting courageously despite one's fears (as Sarah did). In addition, for Sarah's sake (table, #9), Pharaoh dealt well with Abraham (Gen 12:16; 20:14-16 Peter hopes that because of the wives' conduct, the husbands may be won over by their actions (3:1). Pharaoh was won over, but not Abraham. Abraham had kept on doing this action, was never won over, and modeled this practice before his son, Isaac (Gen 20:13; 26:6). Thus, at this point, the analogy breaks down, or else, we may conclude that Peter may be suggesting that even if the husbands are not won over, God is always a winner and worth hoping in.

Mark Kiley notes²⁷ a further potential analogy, how Abraham (table, #10) prays for Abimelech (Gen 20:7), even as Peter mentions the effective prayer of husbands (3:7). However, Genesis 20 does not indicate the previous *ineffective* prayer of Abraham. The analogies may be summarized in table 1.

The final clause (3:6, "whose daughters ye are," KJV) summarizes who is a genuine daughter of Sarah in two parts: (1) "as long as you do what is good" and (2) "never let fears alarm you." Doing good actions simply repeats earlier exhortations, which confirms that *obedience per se* is not the focus but rather pure conduct (3:1-2). The NIV "do not give way to fear" is closest to the Greek, which is literally "not fearing any terror" (3:6). The phrase is a pleonasm, two synonyms for "fear," to highlight one concept. Humans may be respected or feared (*phobos*, 3:2; 1:17), but terrors should not be. A terror (*ptoēsis*) is something that causes a person to agitate with fear, such as wars and ghosts (Luke 21:9; 24:37 *phobeō*).

26. 1 Pet 3:6 appears to allude to Prov 3:25-26, where the theme of not fearing attacks of the ungodly are also tied to hopes that the Lord will deliver.

27. Kiley, "Like Sara," 691. See also *m. B. Qam.* 8:7.

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS

Independently, Mark Kiley²⁸ has suggested that Genesis 12 and 20 are the background for 1 Pet 3:6, *not* Gen 18:12. The difference in my approach is that Kiley appears to stress Sarah's obedience rather than good behavior and Kiley appears *not* to stress the Christ-like nature of Sarah's behavior and, like Christ, the expected deliverance. Therefore, I have discovered that his article has not always been well received by women scholars. For instance, Kathleen E. Corley writes: "The address to wives hints that they too should submit to sexual abuse, and the example of Sarah recalls the giving over of Sarah by her husband to the household of Pharaoh on account of her beauty. Hence wives, like slaves facing abusive masters, are to 'let nothing terrify' them when they submit to their husbands" (3:6).²⁹ Dorothy I. Sly writes that "some details in the Genesis account of Sarah and Abraham's marriage were embarrassing to men in the Hellenistic age and that consequently the writer of 1 Peter may have been more deliberate in reinterpreting the story than Kiley would allow."³⁰ Thus Kathleen Corley resists Kiley's view because it might encourage women to accept abusive behavior, and Sly resists Kiley's view because his emphasis on obedience contrasts with Genesis, where Sarah nowhere "obeys" Abraham, but rather Abraham "obeys" Sarah (Gen 16:2,16; 21:12).

In response, numerous scholars have noted that the ancient use of "lord" as an address was not so much a sign of obedience to a husband, as a term of respect, such as "sir" might be today.³¹ Abraham and Lot called the visiting angels "lords" (Gen 18:3, 27; 19:2). The Hittites addressed Abraham as "my lord" (Gen 23:6) to express their respect for him as a "mighty prince," even though Abraham was a needy person, needing a burial plot as a "stranger and an alien" living among them (Gen 23:3). Rebekah addressed a stranger, Abraham's servant, as "my lord" (Gen 24:18); Jacob called Esau "lord" when he wanted to get back into his good graces. Even in New Testament times, *kurios* in the vocative was a common deferential address³² (as

28. Kiley, "Like Sara," 689-92.

29. K. E. Corley, "1 Peter," in *Searching the Scriptures* (A Feminist Commentary 2; ed. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994) 353.

30. Dorothy I. Sly, "1 Peter 3:6b in the Light of Philo and Josephus," *JBL* 110 (Spring 1991) 126.

31. Most commentators today are in agreement on this point. Grudem, *Recovering*, 204, 501; Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992) 94; Keener, *Bible Background*, 716. Even John Calvin agrees that this "God, indeed, does not regard such titles." *Calvin's Commentaries: Ephesians-Jude* (Wilmington: Associated, n.d.) 2470.

32. LSJ, 1013.

the Gentiles addressed Philip when they wanted to see Jesus in John 12:21).

Thus, Sarah muted her skepticism about Abraham's ability to be the father because of his age by describing him in a deferential manner ("my lord is old"). Where did Sarah "obey" Abraham in this incident? She did cook cakes as Abraham asked her (Gen 18:6). But in the immediate context of v. 12 she was directly addressed by the angel and she expressed her disbelief (and delight) at the announcement of the forthcoming child. Thus, Sarah may have described Abraham as "lord," but in so doing she was not obeying him in Gen 18:12.

Thus, if we are to understand 1 Pet 3:6 as authoritative *and* accurate, then indeed Sly's conclusions would *not* be pertinent. No wonder Wayne Grudem concludes that "Peter does not seem to be referring to any one specific incident here."³³ However, once we interpreters open up 1 Pet 3:6 to Sarah's "general pattern of behavior,"³⁴ we are left on quite subjective grounds. Dorothy Patterson can point to Sarah following Abraham "willingly and without complaint when he left their homeland,"³⁵ while Scanzoni and Hardesty can describe Sarah as a "woman of strong personality,"³⁶ and Bilezikian can summarize that "Abraham obeyed Sarah as often as Sarah obeyed Abraham."³⁷

Instead of word to word, we have moved from context to context. Indeed, Richard Longenecker has concluded from his study of *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* that NT writers interpreted the Old Testament "from a Christocentric perspective."³⁸ Sarah here has been used by Peter as a poignant Christ-like example. How do we differentiate between women, as Corley suggests, who "submit to sexual abuse," and Sarah, who is Christ-like? This question goes right back to Christ's example. Was Christ a victim abused by the Father? Or, was Christ a vicarious sufferer who chose to give his life so that others might live? Peter is quite clear in stating that Christ suffered "in behalf of *you*, leaving behind a model so that you might follow in his footsteps" (1 Pet 2:21). Vicarious suffering is at the heart of Christianity's good news, and it is a model for all—wife, husband, slave, free, rulers, citizen alike. The difference between a victim and a *vicarious sufferer* is that a victim has no choice, acts out of fear, redeems no one, and may be a sinner. 1 Pet 3:6 has nothing to do with wives allowing husbands sexually to abuse them because Sarah was

33. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 165; Grudem, *Manhood*, 201, 501 n. 15; Balch, *Wives*, 103-4.

34. Grudem, *Manhood*, 204.

35. Patterson, "Roles in Marriage," 72.

36. Scanzoni and Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, 95.

37. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 191.

38. Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 206.

not sexually abused by Abraham. She was not blindly obedient to him. She was not going to be killed by her husband. Instead Sarah chose to save *her husband's* life. She made a choice to obey or listen to Abraham in this event because she was willing vicariously to suffer for Abraham. If in Genesis 22, Isaac was a Christ-type, in Genesis 12, Sarah was a Christ-type, but Sarah was a proactive one.