

A good biblical woman knows how to shop!

By [Kendra Weddle](#)

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Feeling the need for inspiration as a good Christian woman, I logged onto *Today's Christian Woman*. And sure enough, the first image to appear was one that spoke to me, a real heart-to-heart moment. A woman with a shopping bag slung over her shoulder was looking back as if to say, "Come on! Let's run to the mall for a quick shopping spree."

No doubt about it: tempt me with racks upon racks of clothes or shoes or accessories and I'm just, well, in heaven. I cannot imagine anything better to do than spend hours feeling extraordinarily embarrassed by my lack of fashion savvy, trying on all kinds of clothes that I know I'd never be caught dead wearing, because, in reality, I'd never get up nerve enough to wear them. For that matter, since I'm pretty frugal, refusing to spend money on something I know I can't wear with just about everything else in my tiny closet, I feel guilty or frustrated the entire time. If I'm going to spend some extra cash, odds are its going to be on a new book or two.

Still, since I have been in serious training this past year to become a true woman, I figured I should at least read this shopping article, hoping to glean some insight from a woman who must know something about shopping that I don't.

Turns out, [Margot Starbuck](#) has her own reason for avoiding the mall: a shopping fast. Yep, she is in the throes of resisting the urge to hit the closest Banana Republic in favor of flexing her spiritual muscles. Even when the temptation of buying tights or other grocery store merchandise needled at her as she made her way from the produce section to the canned veggies (I had no idea this could actually happen), she remained firm in her fast.

Good for Margot!

Except—and I get really tired of saying this—her biblical reasons are simply nothing more than drivel. It really is this kind of bad exegesis that often masquerades around so-called "Christian inspiration" sites as acceptable biblical teaching.

In some ways, I applaud Margot for identifying something that she believes is getting in the way of exercising her faith more completely. So, since shopping is that thing, good for her to give it up for a season, to fast from shopping much like others fast from eating. I think many Christians are helped a great deal when they exercise this kind of rigor. I often think our Muslim and Jewish friends have much to teach us about embracing a regular practice of self-denial.

And yet, when Margot supports her anti-shopping resolve by quoting Jesus in Luke's gospel, where he claims his followers should trust God to supply their needs rather than relying upon their own abilities, I admit that she's lost me. (Eugene Peterson is partially responsible here, since Margot quotes his paraphrase, *The Message*, which completely masks the cultural context of Jesus' day.)

When Jesus spoke to those who were following him, they lived in a precarious world, one where the domination of Rome was a lived oppression they felt each day. To let them know God cared for them as much as for the lilies of the field was to make an anti-imperial claim; it spoke to them of trusting God and not empire, of knowing that despite their political and religious oppression, God saw their struggle; that God was not vengeful but was loving and caring.

To reduce Jesus' message to a trite notion of "hey, relax, it will be okay" simply isn't taking the Bible seriously. Because in our context, we are no longer in the position of being the oppressed because we have become the oppressors, the presence of a domination system today. In other words, how we live undergirds and supports an oppressive system that works to dominate others around the world in support of our lavish and wasteful lifestyles. In this context, Jesus' message to us is one of calling us to recognize our complicit participation in an unfair system.

But there is one more thing that strikes me about Margot's decision, because I think it illustrates the tendency among many Christians to see Jesus' statements as those made to individuals rather than understanding the role of community. For Margot, when she chose to give up shopping she also prayed that "the clothes inside those stores would end up on the bodies of God's children who might actually need them." I don't know how she imagined this clothing of the needy to take place, but it struck me as a lost opportunity, one that resulted from an individualistic approach to Scripture and to following Jesus.

Instead, it could be that Margot's shopping affinity was a perfect answer to someone else's need. If shopping was her gift, why not shop with gusto, and then give it away to those who desperately need to be clothed?

Now, that would be biblical.

*Originally posted at [Ain't I a Woman?](#)*