

beauty

Leader's Guide

BIG IDEA

Beauty is a gift from God. But, it is often a redefined and abused gift. The Gospel confronts *both* the way we use beauty to get the acceptance that only God can give *and* the way we use our moral performance to make ourselves beautiful enough for God.

BEAUTY POP QUIZ

SAY "To begin this study we are going to take a quick Beauty Pop Quiz. Let's read through all the questions first and then flip the sheet upside-down to see the answers."

THIN-SPIRATION TO LOOK GOOD

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

When was the last time you experienced something beautiful?

THE PROBLEM

LEADER READS THE SMALL SECTION UNDER "THE PROBLEM"

SAY "Now we are going to read a few passages of Scripture that talk more about beauty. Can I have five volunteers with a Bible each read one of these passages? We are going to read through these passages quickly to get a clearer definition of beauty. The answers might come easy, but it will be very helpful to go over them."

READ Proverbs 31:30

*How is the passage urging you to think differently about beauty? Physical beauty doesn't mean much. It's passing quickly.
What is the passage urging you to do? Fear the Lord.
What is the reward for doing it? You will be praised.*

READ 1 Peter 3:3-4

*How is the passage urging you to think differently about beauty? Though it is OK to wear make-up, jewelry, and nice clothes, your beauty should not primarily come through these external things.
What is the passage urging you to do? Weigh your beauty first and foremost by looking at what's on the inside.
What is the reward for doing it? In God's eyes gives, inner beauty has much worth.*

READ 1 Timothy 4:8

*How is the passage urging you to think differently about beauty? Inner beauty has more value than outer beauty.
What is the passage urging you to do? Enter into spiritual training more so than physical training.
What is the reward for doing it? Godliness has value in both in this life and the next.*

beauty leader's guide cont.

READ 1 Samuel 16:7

How is the passage urging you to think differently about beauty? People aren't accepted or rejected by God because of their outer beauty, but because of their heart.

What is the passage urging you to do? Look at the heart more than outward appearance.

READ Proverbs 11:22

How is the passage urging you to think differently about beauty? It is silly to think that a gold ring could make something as unclean as a pig look more beautiful. In the same way, a woman's physical beauty can not excuse her lack of discretion.

What is the passage urging you to do? Pursue discretion (having good taste and judgement).

SAY "Hopefully these passages helped you to get a clearer picture of God's definition of beauty (which places an emphasis on internal qualities) as opposed to the culture's definition of beauty (which places an emphasis on outward qualities). To summarize, **outer beauty** passes by quickly and is often used by us to measure our worth and the worth of others. **Inner beauty** on the other hand has long-term benefits and consists of fearing the Lord and pursuing godliness. Now let's look at the root of our beauty problem so that we can find a helpful solution..."

THE ROOT

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

How have you experienced others around you using beauty to get approval, power, comfort, or control? How have you done this?

SOLUTION

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

What is your initial reaction to the Gospel message above? Potential follow-up questions:

- *How will deeply knowing The Gospel change the heart of someone who a) abuses the gift of beauty or b) is trying to become beautiful enough for God through their moral efforts?*
- *What else stood out to you from this section?*

REDEEMING BEAUTY

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

Which of these do you need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out more fully? Potential follow-up question: Which of these areas have you struggled with in the past?

SAY "Thanks for sharing. Let's spend the last few minutes in prayer."

PRAY

Pop Quiz

- 1) ___ of women are dissatisfied with their appearance.
 - A. 20%
 - B. 50%
 - C. 80%

- 2) The average American woman is _____.
 - A. 5'2", 120 lbs.
 - B. 5'4", 140 lbs.
 - C. 5'6", 160 lbs.

- 3) The average American model is _____.
 - A. 5'9", 103 lbs.
 - B. 5'10", 110 lbs.
 - C. 5'11", 117 lbs.

- 4) Models are thinner than ___ of American women.
 - A. 58%
 - B. 78%
 - C. 98%

ANSWERS:
 1) C (80%)
 2) B (5'4", 140 lbs.)
 3) C (5'11", 117 lbs.)
 4) C (98%)

Quiz source: Fantasy (CruPress)



THIN-SPIRATION TO LOOK GOOD

The characterization of a "beautiful" person is often based on physical factors, such as health, weight, youthfulness, facial symmetry, and complexion. TV shows with big ratings like "What Not to Wear", "The Biggest Loser", and "Ugly Betty" show people changing or dealing with the way they look. We live in a culture that is obsessed with beauty. It is estimated that the diet industry alone is worth anywhere between 40 to 100 billion dollars in the United States. There has been a growing fad in our culture to be thin and beautiful.

Even before make-up, hair gel for men, beauty treatments, and shopping malls existed, there was beauty. God says in the first chapter of the Bible, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." Having the "image" or "likeness" of God means that we resemble God and his beauty.

The Psalmist says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am

fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:13-14). Vicki Courtney, a writer for Focus on the Family says, "You were created in the image of God, and God doesn't make junk! Like a snowflake, every person is unique. No two are the same. God sees you as a masterpiece."

St. Augustine reminds us that God doesn't discriminate when it comes to giving the gift of beauty: "Beauty is indeed a good gift of God; but that the good may not think it a great good, God dispenses it even to the wicked." Whether someone is good or bad, know that God has freely given everyone beauty for the simple fact that he created everyone in his image.

God is pro-beauty. Even something as small as a lily has a beauty that can surpass a king in all his splendor (Luke 12:27). We are told at the end of the Bible that God's people will someday live in a city that is exceedingly beautiful (Rev. 21).

Beauty is a gift from God that should cause us to worship him with thankfulness in our hearts.



When was the last time you experienced something beautiful?

beauty is a

the problem

Beauty is a **gift** from God, but we've **abused** this gift by **redefining** it. We've created an outward, one-dimensional version that we use to get acceptance.

Read

- 1) Proverbs 31:30
- 2) 1 Peter 3:3-4
- 3) 1 Timothy 4:8
- 4) 1 Samuel 16:7
- 5) Proverbs 11:22

Answer the questions below after reading each passage of Scripture...

How is the passage urging you to think differently about beauty?

What is the passage urging you to do?

(For #1-3 only) What is the reward for doing it?

THE ROOT ISSUE

It is quite evident in the passages above that we as human beings tend to put more effort on our outer beauty than inner beauty. But why is that? What is the root reason for the imbalance? You can find the answer to this question right away in the first book of the Bible. The story of Adam and Eve tells us that after they *inwardly* sinned against God they *outwardly* felt ashamed. So they physically *covered* their sense of inadequacy and hid from God. Their internal beauty problem led them to feel unaccepted by God and each other.

You could say that all abuses of the gift of beauty are rooted in our sense of inadequacy. Here are a few of the ways that people try to cover their inadequacy using beauty:

Approval and appreciation.

"If I wear enough make-up, spend enough money on the most expensive beauty products, or take enough trips to the gym and tanning bed - then I will get the approval that I crave."

"If I wear expensive brand name clothing, then I will get the respect I want."

Influence and Power.

"I will only invite the most attractive or talented people into my group of friends or organization so that we will be more desirable or powerful."

"If I date someone really attractive, then it will make me look good too."

"If I ditch my old friends for these new, more respected friends, then it will feel like I'm moving up in the world."

"If I gossip or make fun of the way they look today it will make me feel better about myself."

Emotional and physical comfort.

"If I look at beautiful men or women in the magazines or watch pornography on the Internet - it will make me feel less empty."

Security and control.

"If I spend enough money on beauty enhancement procedures, then I can control

the way I look or slow down the aging process." Interesting fact: Plastic surgery has increased 754% since 1997.

"I can control the way I look in the mirror by not eating enough food or over-exercising."

At some level, all of us are guilty of using beauty to cover ourselves with approval, power, comfort, or security. Therefore, counselors have been encouraging us to cover ourselves with confidence - to look in the mirror and tell ourselves we're beautiful. But simply mustering up the power to feel confident won't remove our deep sense of inadequacy for more than a day. All addicts, including beauty addicts, need a power from the outside to come in and replace their need at the root level.

We must ask ourselves, "Is there someone or something that *can* make us feel fully accepted *without* having to sacrifice all our time and money to that person or thing to get it?" Do you think such a solution exists? We'll find out on the next page, but first...

How have you experienced others around you using beauty to get approval, power, comfort, or control? How have you done this?

solutio

The Gospel confronts the way we use beauty to get acceptance. We can spend hundreds of hours on a treadmill or in the tanning booth and spend thousands of dollars on beauty products and treatments and still have no guarantee that the world will accept us.

If you try to attract someone who cares more about your outer beauty, you'll have to spend your whole life maintaining your body to hold onto them. If you try to win God with your inner beauty, you'll have to spend your whole life morally outperforming everyone else to hold onto him - which doesn't work anyway because the Bible says that all of us are morally unclean despite our best efforts (Isa. 64:6). Having a nice body may get you into a night club or fraternity party and having a nice moral record may get you into a certain spiritual community, but neither of these are enough to get you into the gates of heaven. Pastor Tim Keller points out: *"If we struggle to live up to others' standard of beauty, how will we ever become beautiful enough for God's standard?"* In other words, in the end, is there any hope for us? The answer lies in the person and work of Jesus.

Jesus had unimaginable beauty and acceptance in heaven, but he gave it all up when he came humbly as a plain man into a world that rejected him. Isaiah 53:2-3 says, *"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men... like one from whom men hide their faces..."* Jesus became hideous on the cross as our sin was placed on him so that we might have his beauty in return. Ephesians 5:25-27 says, *"...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her... to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish..."*

The good news is that the story line of the Bible is not what people think - that the gospel is about following all the rules so that we can make ourselves look more beautiful. No, at the heart of the gospel, is Jesus coming down out of heaven to cleanse his bride (the church) so that we might stand acceptable and confident in his sight. This free gift of beauty is offered to all who trust in the One who purchased it for us at great cost on the cross.

Only when you realize you've been cleansed of all your internal beauty flaws by God through the work of Jesus, and know that even your physical beauty will one day be renewed (Phil. 3:21), will you be free from using and pursuing beauty in all the wrong ways.

Deep down we all fear being physically and emotionally exposed for who we really are. Thankfully, we have a God who was stripped, mocked, and rejected in public for our imperfections (on the cross) so that we might be covered with his perfection and never experience shame again (Matt. 27, Ps. 22).

redeeming beauty:

You can't **redeem** beauty without being redeemed yourself. So the first step is to trust in Jesus, who lived a perfect life and died to make you righteous before God (2 Cor. 5:21). Those who are made righteous by God are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), who empowers you with the motivation and ability to redeem beauty in the following ways:

spend less money

According to a Newsweek examination of the most common beauty trends, by the time a 10-year-old is 50, she'll have spent nearly \$300,000 on just her hair and face. Cutting back on certain beauty products or treatments will allow you to use your time and money in a God-honoring way. You may also think about cutting back on brand name clothes, brand new cars, the latest technology, and anything else that you use to boost your appearance.

spend more time on spiritual disciplines

Spiritual exercise is more important than physical exercise (1 Tim. 4:8). Spending more time praying, reading the Bible, going to church, and getting into a small group will have profound effects on your relationship with God, life, and family. Remember, doing these things doesn't make you acceptable to God. However, knowing you're accepted through Jesus will drive you to do these things.

take care of your body

Even though the Bible heavily emphasizes spiritual exercise, we need to remember that we are also called to honor God with our physical bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This would include regular exercise and eating healthy. Negative examples would include binge eating/drinking, bulimia, cutting, and forgetting about personal hygiene.

stop feeding yourself pop culture

The more you feed your eyes and mind with fashion magazines or pornography, the more your heart will want to chase after the unobtainable perfect standard of beauty.

Which of these do you need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out more fully?

What is your initial reaction to the Gospel message above?