

more to be redefining BEAUTY

Beauty. We want it. We pursue it. We need it. But it also makes us squirm. Our need to feel beautiful is honestly uncomfortable. Is it because it makes us vulnerable? Subject to other's opinions? Is it because it is somehow tied into our worth? How do we uncover our true beauty? Is it just within us? Or should we be able to see it in the mirror, too?

BEAUTY AS WE KNOW IT...

Beauty, as we know it, is defined by cultural norms, modeled by our families, influenced by our peers, and shaped by our own combination of looks, personality, and opinions. Our perspective and pursuit of beauty takes on its own unique shape and direction, but the pressure to feel beautiful, and the longing to be beautiful, touches nearly every female on the planet.

According to Dove® research "there is a universal increase in beauty pressure and a decrease in girls' confidence as they grow older." (Dove Research: *The Real Truth About Beauty: Revisited*):

- Only 4% of women around the world consider themselves beautiful
- Only 11% of girls globally are comfortable using the word beautiful to describe themselves
- 72% of girls feel tremendous pressure to be beautiful
- 80% of women agree that every woman has something about her that is beautiful but do not see their own beauty
- More than half (54%) of women globally agree that when it comes to how they look, they are their own worst beauty critic

Does Dove realize this heart-cry is not simply about beauty? It is also about significance. Worth. And worthiness. It reflects a God-size hole in the heart of a woman -- no matter her age -- crying out for significance, love, and approval. It is meant to be filled by God with his beautiful truth, "you are fearfully

and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), but more often than not the question is laid on the table for everyone and everything answer. Nothing man-made nor man-offered -- no materialistic treasures, promotional promises, or skewed relationships -- will ever be able to fill this void in her heart and prove her worth or validate her beauty.

Without question, media is a driving source defining beauty in the culture. The modern-day concept of beauty is entirely determined by what produces a profit. Natural, practical, and thrifty will not make advertisers and corporations rich. Constantly changing fashion trends are income producers, demanding consumers to buy, buy, buy in order to stay in, thin, and beautiful. Skinny jeans. Boot cut. Short shorts. Bermudas. Smokey eyes. Shimmery sparkles. Baked tan. Spray tan. Perms. Feathers. Pierced everything. Tattoos everywhere. Fashion trends are not designed to cultivate unique beauty; fashion is driven by a whatever will generate dollars through reaching the mass market.

Marketing attempts to define beauty but does a better job at creating identity masks. For some, it is about standing out.

For others, it is about blending in, using fashion to cover insecurities. The pervasive, unspoken, capitalized on belief is "as is" isn't good enough. Are we surprised? Tall, beautiful models are not skinny enough. Graphic designers are compelled to stretch and tuck before the photos hit the front page of *Glamour*. Teen magazines airbrush acne straight off the faces of famous cover girls. Reality TV makeovers always include highlights and low-lights, as natural hair color simply has no dimension. Really?

Media, money, and man-made values define beauty in our culture. But is this what God intended?



BEAUTY AS IT WAS INTENDED...

Have you ever noticed a little girl twirling in a princess costume? Or even a little toddler spinning in frilly tutu before her parents, although it may be upon her head instead of around her waist? In this dance, a young girl isn't concerned with her beauty; she already thinks she is simply stunning. But she is searching out her worth and significance in this world. She's really wondering, "Am I valuable? Am I loveable? Do I add beauty to this world?" When this question goes unanswered, the search begins. The need for acceptance and affirmation is clouded by the pursuit of beauty.

According to Stasi Elderidge, author of "Captivating," the question of beauty is meant to be answered by God. He is the

redefining
BEAUTY
IT IS NOT ABOUT HOW A WOMAN LOOKS
*it is about how a woman
lives in the knowledge
of whose she is*

one that declares, "Yes, you are beautiful." We are made by Him, and His creation is always good. But sometimes, this question of beauty is left unanswered by mom and dad, long before a daughter has a relationship with her Maker-God. Uncertain and insecure in her identity, she ventures into life seeking affirmation of her worth and beauty in all the wrong places. But this isn't the only reason a girl may search. Often, it is simply the work of the Enemy, plain and simple. Ongoing. Destructive. The Father of Lies seeps into a woman's thoughts and perspective about herself. He ruins her concept of God and her unique place in this world. He steals and kills and destroys God's workmanship with doubt and condemnation (John 10:10, Ephesians 2:10). She looks in the mirror and sees only ugly. She passes by a reflective window and sees only flaws. In a flashing second, the Enemy rips apart God's purposes for her life, by stripping away her worth and rendering her life without value. Simply because he can.

Even though we are fearfully and wonderfully made, spun on the potter's wheel, created as a vessel to display His glory, we struggle to see this truth. Sin has cracked our pot, gashing imperfect marks on our exterior appearance. Some bear this pain with visible deformities. Others bear it in their hearts, wounded by words defaming their unique attributes: hair type, skin color, body shape, and overall appearance.

Our perception of beauty is under constant attack by a imperfect world consumed with visual perfection. Yet this is not a new issue. Man has always looked at the outer appearance, forgetting that true beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

*The One that beholds our beauty is God.
He is the One who created us beautiful.*

God sees our inner beauty.

Beauty begins in the heart and oozes outward. It is a beauty defined by unique gifts, talents, personality, purpose,

passions, and cultivated by a heart for God. A woman becomes beautiful when her eyes are directed at Him, her mind is steadfast on His Word, and her life is positioned before the cross. As God's truth transforms her mind and His Spirit dwells richly within her soul, she grows secure in whose she and who she is. It is a stunning transformation. It is beautiful. Suddenly, she's not simply a woman looking in the mirror. She is God's child, created for a good purpose, with inherent value, able to display His glory. Her countenance is inviting and engaging. Her mannerisms are becoming. Her words are uplifting. Her behavior is attractive. Whether she is in sweats or her Sunday best, her beauty is breath-taking, because she is settled in her own skin. She is simply His. Simply beautiful.

God also sees outer beauty.

God also sees our outer appearance as beautiful, too. He made both our inner spirit and external body. Both are created by God and declared good. Both the inner soul, steadfast on God, and the outer body, living as a sacrifice of praise, are beautiful.

Unlike man, God's creativity is not limited by shape, size, or color. Look at the trees on an autumn day. Each one is perfectly unique, making a beautiful canvas displaying God's glory. Should God create humankind any differently? Each one of us is uniquely made by God. Made beautiful. Made beautiful in her place in this world. Made beautiful tall and short. Thin and big boned. Brunette and blonde. Caucasian and Asian. Curly hair and straight. Big smiles and little noses. Browns eyes and blue. Athletic and graceful. Creative and intellectual.

BEAUTY AS WE LIVE IT OUT...

So how do we live out beauty redefined? How do we put into perspective the culture's definition of beauty in light of God's truth? How do we know where to draw the line, without being legalistic?

requires a relationship

Redefining beauty is an ongoing process that requires an open dialogue with God. We enter into this precious relationship with our Father in Heaven through faith in Jesus as our Savior. In Christ, we receive the gift of God's transforming love and grace. We also receive the Holy Spirit, which reveals to us our new identity as a child of God, adopted into His family. When we are intimately connected with God through faith in Jesus, we can bring our nagging question of "Am I beautiful?" to Him again and again. Even a simple prayer can start our day:

"God, show me the ways you've made me beautiful and help me to see value in how you created me. Open my eyes to see my unique beauty, on the inside and out, and in the world around me. Protect me from being influenced to pursue empty beauty. Instead, give me a heart to pursue You alone. Enter my life and fill me with your Spirit, as you make me brighter, more beautiful, and more like Your Son. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

requires reflection

Redefining beauty requires intentionally through checking your emotional, physical, and spiritual reflection in the mirror each day. As you proceed through your daily routine of getting dressed, check on the following:

WHAT IS THE REFLECTION OF MY...

heart and mind?

- How am I defining beauty today?
- Is this consistent with Scripture?
- Am I hiding my real feelings about myself, my worth, my beauty from God?
- Am I trying to fit in? Stand out?
- Seek approval? Gain affirmation?
- Am I being too easily influenced by the opinions of others?
- Am I compromising who God made me to be?

physical appearance?

- Is my appearance consistent in what I say I believe and how I want to live?
- Is my clothing reflecting my personality?
- Is my clothing sending a mixed message?
- Am I dressed sloppy because I feel sloppy?
- Is my clothing drawing attention to my body because I need some love?
- Am I communicating a God-honoring message in my t-shirt slogan and jewelry?

designer 3:12 clothing?

The most important "clothing" to put on is found in Colossians 3:12.

- Chosen - your true identity in Christ
- Holy - being set apart by God
- Loved - by God as demonstrated by His Son...on the Cross
- Compassion - find a practical way to demonstrate this with others
- Kindness - reach out to the lonely friend in your life today
- Humility - be quick to admit a mistake
- Gentleness - consider your words and actions carefully
- Patience - take a deep breath in that frustrating moment
- Forgiveness - release an offense to God and release the person, too
- Love - in action and words with others
- Unity - get "self" out of the way for the sake of others

requires redefining

As long as media is driven by money, there will constantly be new opportunities to spend hard-earned dollars on beauty. New products will hit the market at the turn of every fiscal quarter. The only way to guard your bank account and heart from the influence is to know whose you and who you are. The truth will keep you from buying the lies. While beauty purchases, in and of themselves, are not wrong, being slave to them is living out God's less than best. So prepare yourself to redefine beauty on a daily basis by memorizing these Truths.

A woman is beautiful because she has been created by God, as female, in his image...
Genesis 1:27 ...so God created man in His image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

A woman is beautiful because she is fearfully and wonderfully made...
Psalms 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

A woman is beautiful because she is created on purpose...
Isaiah 29:16 You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?

A woman is beautiful because she is God's work created for good works...
Ephesians 2:10 NIV For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

A woman is beautiful, because in Christ she is a new creation...
2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

A woman's beauty is always seen by God, even when it isn't approved by human eyes...
1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The

redefining beauty

BEAUTY IS ABOUT

- authenticity not applause
- character not cosmetics
- thoughtfulness not thinness
- modesty not modeling
- purity not perfection
- kindness not keeping up
- reality not running away
- wisdom not wildness
- servanthood not sexiness
- influence not imitation
- unmasking not masking
- being you not being theirs

LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

A woman is more beautiful when her heart treasures the things of God...

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A woman is more beautiful when her hardened heart is softened by God's transforming work...

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

A woman is more beautiful when her inner spirit is steady on God...

1 Peter 3:3-5 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.

A woman is more beautiful when she honors God...

Psalms 45:11 NIV The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.

A woman is more beautiful when she puts on the Designer's clothing...

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

A woman is more beautiful when she shares the Good News...

Romans 10:15 How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

A woman is more beautiful when her life is a living sacrifice...

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

A woman is more beautiful when she is more like Him...

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 MSG ...when God is personally present...nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face...we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Become a woman who lives according to beauty redefined.

redefine...

1. what you put on

Determine each day that what you put on is not about making yourself more beautiful but simply about being a beautiful you -- a unique part of God's creation.

2. your significance

Spend time each day using your unique combination of gifts, talents, and personality to serve others for the glory of God, leaving a significant impact on this world because of how you live, not how you look.

3. the beauty you see

Make the time daily to speak beauty into the lives of others women, from little toddlers through grown adult. Point out God-given beauty in the way you see others serve, speak, respond, create, love, inspire, and look.

4. your impact

Tell others about the movement to redefined beauty. Share on Facebook. Twitter. Email. Use your influence to convey a message, especially to the media, that you want to see images of real women, made beautiful by their Creator, as they live real lives of real significance.

*But remember, for all your adult life you'll be a woman. And how you live your life as a woman, all by yourself before God, is what makes the real you. Nothing on the exterior can touch or change that precious inner sanctuary your heart. His dwelling place unless you let it. And God, who loves you very much, has tailor made all your outer life your circumstances, your relationships to pressure you into becoming that beautiful woman He's planned for you to be.
...Ann Ortlund...*

RESOURCES

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- <http://www.faithinbetween.com/1/post/2011/10/where-we-went-wrong-with-beauty.html>
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