



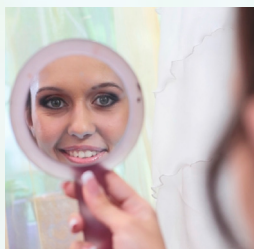
Beauty

By Carol Reid

Beauty. Every woman's magazine, every cosmetic counter, and almost every television commercial touts it.

Our world system defines beauty—and it all depends on having the right coloring, right age, right bones, right weight, right hair, right clothes, right shoes, and right bra size. That definition has more to do with sex appeal than character. In our culture, beauty reflects Hollywood more than holiness. And we hold up the “beautiful people” as our heroes and role models, regardless of the broken relationships, drug problems, and sinful lifestyles that accompany them.

But what does God's Word say about beauty? How does God's definition of beauty differ from that of our culture? Ecclesiastes includes just a sentence about beauty, but it gives us a glimpse of the eternal perspective. Perhaps that godly understanding will help us to protect ourselves and our children from the skewed worldview of American culture where we will never be rich or thin or perky or influential or fit or gorgeous enough to feel content.



Key Verse: Ecclesiastes 3:11a (KJV)

*He hath made every thing beautiful
in his time . . .*

HE HAS MADE US

An engineer plans a bridge built of steel and concrete. It is a huge and unwieldy structure, cold and inanimate, dependent on mathematical formulas and scien-

we are not merely a random collection of biological matter, our outlook changes. We reflect the Master Designer and shine as His special creation, uniquely knit together with purpose and function

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tific principles. But when he sees the finished product, he glows with pride and accomplishment and sees it as beautiful. Why? Because he is the designer. The bridge is not beautiful because of any combination of long legs and long eyelashes. No, its beauty is from its order and design.

The bridge did not build itself; it did not decide its function or purpose. Its success, stability, integrity—all depend on the skill of the creator. The same is true for you, God's special creation. You are beautiful because you were designed by a thoughtful, infallible Creator who has a very special purpose for your life.

What a difference it makes to see yourself as created in His image! When we understand that

and, yes, with beauty and wonder—not because of who we are, but because of who He is. Beauty, after all, is an attribute of God.

What does it mean to be created in the image of God? Because He is a person—with emotions, thoughts, will, abilities, relationships, and value—we are as well. We are connected with others of His creation who also reflect His person. We are meant for relationship with Him. We are treasured by Him. The God of the Universe is our intimate Friend when we belong to Him. There are no exceptions. To doubt His design in your life is to disbelieve God—maybe even to deny God and His deity. As our Creator, He seeks to know us and show us His love—every one of us.

EVERYTHING

"Everything is beautiful," Ray Stevens sang to us in the 1970s. But, you think, Ray hasn't seen me when I first get up in the morning! God has.

He knows everything about you and about your situation, and He still thinks you are beautiful.

He created everything, and He calls it all beautiful.

"Everything" is about as inclusive as you can get. Nothing is excluded from the scope of everything. Since the Scripture is completely true, some people (like us) may need to revise their thinking about beautiful. Is the little old lady in the nursing home beautiful? Is the drug addict at the bus station beautiful? Is that grumpy toddler (or teenager) beautiful? Is that struggling single or frustrated wife or grieving widow beautiful? YES! Even though the day-to-day experience is painful or difficult or heavy, in God's eyes, there is still beauty.

Remember, this is not about our opinion. This is God's verdict, a pronouncement of the Master of the Universe. The One who sees and knows all things has proclaimed it true. Who are we to argue?

Thus comes the faith element. God has declared that there is beauty in everything He created, including you. Our job is to trust His Word. Our responsibility is to

see what otherwise may be hidden to us. We must look for the beauty in everything that may not be so obvious without the eyes of faith. Believe Him and share His perspective on His creation; find the beauty in everyone you meet. Pray today that you will learn to see things through God's eyes. Practice diligently and teach your children to look deeper in others to find beauty.

BEAUTIFUL

We are still working on our new definition of beautiful. The Scripture does not measure beauty by external standards. Remember the "woe" passage in Matthew 23? Jesus says that the hypocritical church "professionals," the scribes and Pharisees, are like whitewashed tombs that are beautiful on the outside but are filled with dead men's bones. Beauty is not about appearance, according to God's Word.

Beauty is not about temporary things, either, according to the Bible. Remember Proverbs 31:30? "Beauty is vain," God says. The wrinkles and sags will win. The decay will eventually return even Miss America to dust one day. The outward appearance will not last, but there is more to God's creation than the parts we can see with our eyes.

Beauty is an inward attitude. In Mark 14, a woman comes to Jesus

to show her worship in dramatic fashion. Her alabaster box of perfume anointed him for his burial. She put aside social customs and wiped his feet with her hair. And the Savior accepted her worship and called her deed “beautiful” (Mark 14:6, sometimes also translated, “good”).

God put us in a world of order that counts time.

Proverbs 31:30 points us again to this truth. The external and temporal “beauty” is vain, but true beauty is evident in the woman who fears the Lord; this is genuine beauty.

When the prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah in chapter 53, he told us that “He has no form or comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” The picture he presents of the suffering Savior points to the despised and rejected Son of God—wounded, bruised, beaten, oppressed, cut off, stricken, burdened, grieving, poured out unto death. Yet the Savior’s work on our behalf reveals “the King in His beauty” (Isaiah 33:17) and hope for us all.

So our definition of beauty is not about what is external or what is temporal. Instead, it points us to a marvelous exchange: beauty for ashes (Isaiah 61:3). When we are wasted and

used up, when our efforts are worthless and valueless, the Lord proclaims the great substitution. For our ashes, He gives true beauty. We exchange mourning for joy, heaviness for praise, desolation and ruin for planting and building. It is not because we deserve it or earn it. No, it is the promise of the

day of the Lord when He comes as Ruler and Victor to redeem us from the curse of sin and death. And what is eternal and true and good and redeemed is understood as truly beautiful.

IN ITS TIME

Winter’s grip is finally broken. Daffodils break through, forsythia brightens up, weeping willows send out green tendrils, and the grass begins to grow. Spring has come at last.

The cycle of the seasons, of the moon, of the week, of the clock—all remind us of time. God put us in a world of order that counts time.

In fact, the whole passage in Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 is all about timing. The contrasts all depend on appropriate seasons for various activities. So verse 11, in some ways, is the passage’s conclusion. In the right time, everything is beautiful. When the

season is right, God's redemptive hand will be evident and all will be well.

This is not a new concept. We know that our times are in His hands (Psalm 31:15). We know that God appoints time and measures time. "In the fullness of time" He sent His Son (Galatians 4:4), and "in due time," Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).

We believe this. We rejoice in God's control of history and the future. We know that His work endures. What we find hard is to trust God's timing in our lives. We see the times of trouble and calamity and need and don't understand the way that God's clock works. Again, we must exercise our faith. Knowing that God is in control, certain that He is powerful and wise, we choose to trust in His goodness and in His plan. When we cannot see, we walk by faith, confident in God's promises and assured of His provision for His children. God has made everything beautiful in His time.

Reflections

In Genesis 1, how many times is the phrase, "it was good," used? _____

If God, the infallible and wise Creator, notes every aspect of His creation as "good," why would you think that He suddenly failed on the day you were born?

Read Psalm 139:13-18. Make a list of the phrases that remind you of the way that your Creator designed you and counts you very special.

Colossians 1:16 lets us know that we were not only created “by him” but also, “_____him.” What impact does this truth make in your life?

Ephesians 2:10 also underlines the importance of acknowledging God’s creative work in our lives. Because of God’s work/workmanship, what is expected from believers?

First Peter 3:3-6 admonishes women to find a true definition of beauty. From these verses, make two lists:

Beauty IS NOT:

Beauty IS:

Who are the beautiful women in these verses?

Genesis 12:11 and 14

Genesis 29:17

1 Samuel 25:3

2 Samuel 11:2

2 Samuel 13:1

1 Kings 1:3-4

Esther 1:11

Esther 2:7

Song of Solomon 6:4

Look at some of the passages where the word *every* appears in Ecclesiastes. Fill in the chart below.

Ecclesiastes	Adjective	Noun	Is/Unto What?	What does this say about God?
3:17	Every			
3:11	Every	Thing	Beautiful	He is the designer and creator
5:19	Every			
8:6	Every			
12:14	Every			

Psalm 27:4 and Psalm 90:17 talk about the beauty of the Lord. Meditate on this for a minute. Really. For sixty seconds, concentrate on a definition of beauty (not the world’s definition!) that would fit the concept that God is beautiful. Write your new definition of “beautiful” here.

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