

Who Is That Girl I See

February



Mirrors are intriguing objects. They have a knack for reflecting both the good and the bad, pointing out the right and the wrong, and expressing the clean and the messy.

But there is one thing mirrors never do: lie.

There is no need because we do it already. When we—especially as women—stare down our reflection in a mirror, all the criticisms, blemishes, and lies our minds create swallow up any thoughts or ideas of beauty.

Mindset matters.

When our thoughts scream revulsion at the very sight of ourselves, it is not long before our mouths follow suit. A pessimistic mindset soon turns into negative self-talk, which then evolves into a degrading way of living in which we no longer like the person we see in the mirror, not necessarily because of any bad choice we've made, but because we don't look like... Fill in the blank.

Society tells us we should be, look, and act a certain way. Our finite, human minds and hearts often agree.

But who does God say we are?

It is important for us to have a healthy understanding of who God is because we can then truly understand who we are with and without Him.

So, who is God?

Three in One, Creator, Sustainer, Ancient of Days, Savior, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Great Shepherd, Redeemer, the Word, Light, Mighty Warrior, the Bright and Morning Star, the True Vine, Prince of Peace, Deliverer—the list goes on.

He claims in Revelation, “I am the Alpha and the Omega...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). His promises are true, His holiness unfathomable, and His grace everlasting.

He is the All in All.

Who we are without Him is what we see when we look in the mirror from a worldly, fleshly perspective. We see the lies: the mistakes make us uglier than oth-

ers, the reasons a guy never looks our way, and the answers to our deepest fears and concerns.

We see our shortcomings, regrets, and failures. We see our sin.

In many ways, without God, we are defined by our sin. We are missing true purpose, fulfillment, or eternal hope. Without God, we are like Solomon when he says in Ecclesiastes: “Vanities of vanities...all is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Life is meaningless without Jesus.

Sometimes, I get sad at night. This may seem like an odd confession, or perhaps you experience something similar at times. My loved ones joke with me about it. Truthfully, I do as well; it is a bit comical. Me—a grown woman in her late twenties with a wonderful home, job, family, and friends who seek daily to be closer to Christ—sometimes finds herself lying in the comfort of her bed at night overwhelmed with a deep, unexplainable feeling of sadness.

I can only come up with one explanation for it.

In those moments, I am entirely inwardly focused on myself concerning entirely outward experiences. Instead of relying completely on the Lord, I am self-absorbed, attempting to process my world all by myself.

If I, as a follower of Christ, occasionally experience hopeless, meaningless thoughts and emotions, how much more do the world's unbelievers find themselves in a similar predicament? All the more, I am reminded of our daily need for Jesus to take control of our relationships, experiences, and lives.

Solomon, who had all the worldly possessions and experiences anyone could desire, heavily exclaimed that without God, who can find enjoyment? Who can truly understand what it means to love life and experience it abundantly (Ecclesiastes 2)?

Galatians 6:3 reads, “For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” Jesus tells us in John 15 that He is the Vine, and we are the branches; apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:4-5).

Without God, we are all the negative things mentioned above: nothing, without purpose, and without hope.

Application:

Who does God say we are with, through, and in Him?

With Christ as our Savior, we have:

Purpose: “(God) Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (2 Timothy 1:9). God gives us purpose through Christ.

*Reflection: Where have you experienced God’s **purpose** for your life recently?*

Fulfillment: Psalm 16:11 reads, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” In Christ, we find complete fulfillment.

*Reflection: How has Christ **fulfilled** you this week?*

Satisfaction: Psalm 107:8-9 reads, “Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” Jesus speaks to the woman at the well, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again” (John 4:13-14). In Jesus, there is complete satisfaction.

*Reflection: What can you hand over to the Lord to experience complete **satisfaction** in Him?*

Mercy: Lamentations 3:22-23 reads, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” In Christ, we find mercy far greater than any sin we have committed.

*Reflection: What **mercies** did the Lord give you even this morning?*

Peace: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks-

giving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

*Reflection: What circumstance can you hand over to the Lord, making room for His unexplainable, all-encompassing **peace**?*

Forgiveness: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).

*Reflection: In the mighty name of Jesus, we can have forgiveness. Where have you seen the Lord’s **forgiveness** in your life recently?*

Grace: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The Bible speaks of God’s grace as: amazing grace, abundant grace, abounding grace, saving grace, sanctifying grace, satisfying grace, strengthening grace, restraining grace, redeeming grace, restoring grace, grace greater than all our sins, and grace upon grace. He is full of grace. And He offers that grace to us.

*Reflection: How have you experienced God’s **grace** this week?*

Life: “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12). “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

*Reflection: Jesus offers eternal life and joy with Him forever to any who will receive Him. How can you praise Him this week for the glorious **life** He has offered you?*

This is merely a short list of our incredible hope and promise through Jesus Christ. All of this is found in Scripture.

I once heard a preacher discuss mirrors in a sermon; he asked us to consider how often we look at ourselves in a mirror during the day. Some studies claim the average mirror time for a human could be anywhere between one and four hours; other research claims women, specifically, look at a mirror 30+ times a day.

How often do we spend time in Scripture? Forget daily; what about weekly? Monthly? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us Scripture is God-breathed; it is meant to teach, correct, and train us in the ways of righteousness so we may be fully prepared to do the Lord's work. How are we supposed to reflect what the Bible teaches us if we are not spending time looking at it?

God's Word tells us exactly who we are as His creation and who we are to be as His followers. Too often, we allow the lies of this world to persuade us otherwise.

Imagine you are having the following conversation with God:

"I'm nobody."

I have created you in My Image. I know the number of hairs on your head (Genesis 1:27, Matthew 10:30).

"I'm ugly."

You are My masterpiece. You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Ephesians 2:10, Psalm 139:14).

"I can't be saved; I've done too much wrong."

Whoever calls upon My Name shall be saved (Joel 2:32, Romans 10:13).

"God doesn't care."

I care for even the birds and the lilies of the field...how much more I care for you! (Matthew 6:26) Come to me, give me your burdens. (Matthew 11:28).

"I keep messing up."

You're being made more like Me every day through the truth of my Word. It won't be an immediate transformation; you must wake up each morning and choose Me. You must combat each temptation with Me. You must seek to live every moment for Me. I know your weakness, I am strong. My grace is sufficient; My mercies are new every morning. (2 Timothy 2:21, John 17:17, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Lamentations 3:22-23).

This is a fictional conversation, but the Scripture references are true. The emotions within it are real. Often, the person we are in the reflection is the opposite of who we ever intended to be, altered by the falsities of the world. It is certainly the opposite of who God intends us to be. Proverbs 27:19 reads, "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man."

Reflection: Who or what is your life reflecting? If our lives look differently than we want, how can we, as Christians, change it? Take a moment to reflect on these thoughts.

The simple answer to that question is this: We can't. Our human flesh cannot make a positive change within us; that change can only come from the Lord. But when we peel back the layers of that response, we start to see the simple answers of "We can't" and "Only God can" have far more depth than we initially thought.

To change the reflection from someone we don't want to be to someone we were created to be requires a great deal of cleaning.

In late August, middle Tennessee experienced a massive heat wave. The flowers began to die, the grass started to wither, and the green thumb inside me (the one that makes an occasional appearance to appreciate the beauty of flowers and well-manicured lawns briefly) ached for nature as if I was the parched, shriveled one. So, I took myself outside and

helped my friend water every inch of nature in sight while the water inside me profusely leaked from each pore. As caretakers go, I am no professional; you won't see any Nobel prizes in my future.

The next afternoon, we grabbed the hose and did the same thing. The grass and flowers needed care every day that week. One evening, after watering, I noticed the daylilies had more brown strands than green. As this was still during the time frame of my occasional green thumb, I was naturally saddened by this. I bent down, lightly touching the plant's leaves, and...wait! Upon further inspection, there was radiant green life amongst the cracking brown.

The daylily was not dying. It was getting rid of the old, so the new had room to grow. I carefully brushed aside some green leaves to see more brown at the roots. These dead strands had to go. For the next 15 minutes, I shuffled between the four daylily plants, weeding out the bad, so the good could flourish.

Like all of nature, the daylily plant was created for God's glory; its wonderful purpose and life reflect the beauty of a wonderful Creator. Sometimes, it needs a little extra water or weeding.

Likewise, as humans, we were created to glorify our Father in Heaven. Our purpose and lives should reflect our Creator's glorious, unfathomable beauty. Even still, sometimes we need extra care, some water here and some weeding there. This may mean getting rid of the old ways, how we used to live before Christ. Thus, making room for our new life in Christ to flourish.

Whether you are a veteran Christian or a new convert, we all need daily care and cleaning. This comes from the Great Caretaker. He loves us so deeply; He desires to mold us into humans who reflect Him and His power and grace.

Therefore, how should we view ourselves?

Imperfect, unique individuals created with the sole purpose of glorifying the Creator; unworthy of saving, but viewed by God with such love and devotion

that His very Being would not allow us to remain in our hopeless state of depravity without providing a means of redemption; and meaningful, undeserving of His love, grace, and mercy—is how we view ourselves, but when we put on Christ Jesus, God deems us worthy. We are worthy of His calling, name, grace, and kingdom, and worthy of Him.

This life is filled with so many reflections. Sometimes, they are good reflections showing your success, fulfillment, and happiness. Others are negative; they can become so prominent in our lives so obnoxious and overwhelming you lose sight of the person God intended you to be.

Who God says we are as His children and what He calls us to reflect in His Word is the voice that truly matters. Through Him, we are worthy of His calling as believers. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, His Holy Spirit lives within you, and He desires to use you for His glory. As a Christian woman, He can do mighty things through you.

Beyond that, He wants to do mighty things through you. The all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present Lord of all Creation seeks to bring heaven down through you.

If we do not like the reflection we see in the mirror, we must allow God to make those necessary changes to us, no matter the cost. Then, we will see who God says we are and not who the world says we are. When we learn to study the Bible more than we study the mirror, we will not have to wonder who we are in Christ. We will know.

We are loved, chosen, forgiven, satisfied, beautiful, whole, grace-filled, and made new ambassadors of Christ with a reflection in the mirror that proves it.

And mirrors never lie. *W*

About the Writer: Claire Ryan, originally from Southern Illinois, has lived in the greater Nashville area for almost six years. She is a graduate of Welch College and holds a master of arts degree in instructional leadership. Claire has taught both middle and high school. Claire currently is an assistant coach for the Welch College Lady Flames basketball team. In her free time, Claire enjoys writing fiction.