

Chapter 7 Notes— Beautiful: Clothed in Splendor

Our efforts at beauty—whether in art, music, homemaking, or anything else—can serve similar purposes in nourishing our souls, in encouraging and blessing others, and in honoring the beautiful and beauty-making Creator. – Joe Rigney

IDENTITY THEFT

- That something in our heart that drives us to be dissatisfied with the way the Lord has created us
 - o So often our focus on physical appearance can be all-consuming and crushing. Magazine covers give a picture of the ideal woman that can only truly be achieved via Photoshop.
- This discontentment isn't truly outward, but inward.
- 3 Common Lies about beauty that can steal away our JOY and IDENTITY (these can lead to sin and misery):
 - o "Outward appearance is all important"- sin of idolatry
 - o "I must measure up!"- sin: envy, greed, and pride
 - o "I have to be beautiful to be acceptable or desirable"! - sin: fearing other people

Lie #1- Appearance is Queen

- Could it be as we scrutinize and are discouraged by our outward appearance that we've misplaced the significance of beauty and made it a god?
 - o Idolatry makes good things into God things and therefore into bad things.
 - o Beauty and the desire to be beautiful aren't sinful until we make them an idol.
 - o We are good at making idols, and even hiding them, we can excuse them away as something like a preference.
 - o The heart of idolatry is forgetting who God is and worshipping self instead.
- Some diagnostic questions of idolatry of beauty:
 - o How do you respond when you can't fit into that old dress and how long does the failure affect you?
 - o Do you struggle with intimacy with your spouse because of how you feel about your body?
 - o Are you abusing food or your body in any way in an effort to be "skinny"?
 - o Do you agonize over your looks, constantly seeking to alter or augment something in order to feel better about yourself? Are you ever content?
 - o How about your financial investment, would it reveal where your heart is (Matt 6:21)?
- Idolatry takes something potentially good and makes it too important.

Lie #2- If Only I Looked Like Her

- Pitfalls of Comparison
 - o Easily becomes harmful to ourselves, to others, and to our relationship with God. It easily becomes sinful.

- Sinful comparison snuffs out trust and gratitude.
- Steals JOY and makes it difficult to love our neighbors.
- Creates envy, greed, and competitiveness
 - For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice—James 3:16
- Sinful comparison= PRIDE
 - Pride in the biblical sense is essentially egotism or a misplaced sense of self- worth.
 - It disturbs our relationships with God and others
 - Why Paul instructs: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Phil 2:3)
- How do we kill PRIDE and fight our tendency toward comparison?
 - We must pursue HUMILITY!!

Lie # 3- Beauty Equals Acceptance

- This lie tells us that if we’re not beautiful by worldly standards, then we won’t be accepted or desired.
- Leads us to place too much value on the opinions of others and how they might view us.

Problem: Worldly standards are NOT true standards!!!

- When we forget this, we fall into what the Bible calls the “fear of man”—fear of other people.
- This fear is known as a snare (Proverbs 29:25)
 - A trapping device that often consists of a noose.
 - Fear of other people can trap you, and choke the life out of you, or lead you to do things you wouldn’t normally do!!
- BUT—those who trust in the Lord are safe, there is safety in trusting the Lord with ALL things, including our physical appearance.

IDENTITY TRUTH

To correct and redirect our thinking about beauty, we must run to the place where God outlines our identity: HIS WORD!!

Defining Beauty: the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit.

Beauty—even physical human beauty—isn’t sinful. It’s God’s idea in the first place—his gift to his beloved children. But in a world turned upside down by sin, marred by the fall, our response to it so often becomes warped. We must rethink what is TRULY beautiful.

Truth on beauty:

- 1) Beauty starts with God!! God is the Creator of the universe, and HE defines what is beautiful
- 2) Outward beauty is referenced in the Bible, but outward beauty is not the essence of who God is or what he wants from his people.
 - a. It's not his primary standard of beauty.
- 3) True beauty of God is his holiness, his righteousness, and his purity.
 - a. Holy is the way God is. To be holy he does not conform to a standard. He is that standard . . . Because he is holy, his attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of belonging to God must be thought of as holy."

What does that tell us about the standards of beauty to which God calls us?

- Peter gives us a hint: "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious" (1 Peter 3:3-4).
- Simply saying:
 - o Don't be a show-off!!
 - o Don't put a lot of time or energy (or money) on your outward appearance.
 - o Focus on developing the kind of gentle and quiet spirit that comes from trusting and fearing the Lord.
 - o Example: Sarah—lived with a quiet courage and "did not fear anything that was frightening" (3:6)
 - o Wants us to live in a courage that comes from deep trust and confidence in the One who made us.
- God is focused on the INNER person
 - o He wants our hearts!!
 - o To give us NEW hearts and a NEW purpose (Ezekiel 3:26-28)
 - o That transformation makes us TRULY beautiful
- There's something far more beautiful than the OUTWARD.
 - o God has called us to be Holy as he is holy, and God's holiness is beautiful
- Jesus is the source of TRUE beauty!!
 - o Jesus is glorious! He is righteous and pure and that is what makes him beautiful
 - o We were made to be in AWE of that beauty!! To "gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" (Psalm 27:4)
 - o We are called to be like him, so we're called to be beautiful as he is beautiful—to grow into our beautiful identity as HIS transformed people.

IDENTITY TRANSFORMED

The Fall affected beauty, so we need to correct our view, and to remember that our outward selves are wasting away.

Like Adam in the Bible, we are dust and will return to dust. (Gen 3:19) Any outward beauty we are blessed with will eventually degrade and disappear.

However, we know in time he will make ALL things NEW!!

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

Not only will we be with Christ we will be LIKE HIM!!

“Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil 3:20-21).

He will transform our bodies:

- They will be pure, beautiful, and glorious
- Our beauty will never fade
- We will never die again
- Most importantly: We will be WITHOUT SIN!!

Our fallen imperfect bodies are yet another way we can look at Christ. Each ache and pain are a reminder to us we have a Savior who is perfect in beauty, and he is coming to get us—to raise us to a condition more glorious than we can imagine!! In the meantime, by His grace, we can take our eyes off ourselves and fix them squarely on Jesus.

Remember these truths:

- 1) Life is not about pursuing a cultural “ideal”
- 2) God created us for worship—for himself. We are HIS!! We are God’s creation (Ephesians 2:10). “Know that the Lord, He is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psalm 100:3)
- 3) Each intricately designed cell, every single strand of hair—everything—was designed by God (Matt 10:30), made for His glory (Isaiah 43:7), and therefore intrinsically beautiful. But far more beautiful in his sight is the person we are becoming as we pursue holiness and follow Jesus in this world.
- 4) Soon we will be with the Lord gazing and in awe for eternity.
- 5) For now—we rest knowing that God will finish that work in us (Philippians 1:6)
- 6) The lies our culture instills in us about beauty and the lies we tell ourselves don’t have to control us!!
- 7) A “beautiful face” or “perfect body” will never bring us the love and acceptance and self-worth we hunger for.

The only beautiful thing that will ever TRULY satisfy isn’t a “thing” at all—It’s a person—JESUS!!