



SESSION 5 — Self-Image: Defining Beauty Biblically

- Pastor Keith -

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

- Unlike our Bible study on handling the wilderness wanderings of life, this lesson was not at all provoked by anything I'm seeing or hearing in our group. In other words, I'm not at all driven by concern that some are doing too much in the beautification department, while others are doing too little.
- I would like us all to consider this topic tonight for ourselves—for guys to consider these thoughts for themselves, and for ladies to consider these thoughts for themselves. While this topic impacts the sexes differently, I am convinced that there are perspectives and practices that we each need to adjust when it comes to the way we appreciate, evaluate, and pursue beauty.

INTRODUCTION

In his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky puts in the mouth of one of his characters this phrase: "Beauty is the battlefield where God and Satan contend with each other for the hearts of men." This battle is nothing new, for it has been waging since Satan's first rebellion and Adam and Eve's first disobedience. Beauty has been broken and corrupted by sin, but God will have the final word.

Clearly, our world today is confused (to say the least) on the issue of beauty and self-image. Clothing, accessories, body shape, cosmetics, surgery—this is the culture in which beauty is ascribed meaning and

value. The standard has been set high and is only seen on screen, in magazines, and in pop culture, but the rest of the seething masses worship at those shrines and Christians are left to feel oddly out-of-place and outdated.

Closer to home, as it affects our group, I imagine that we all wrestle with the expressions and implications of human beauty in various ways. Some of us have at some point lusted after a human image deemed to be beautiful, only to discover that it didn't fill us with lasting joy, wonder, amazement, and satisfaction as we anticipated—instead, we found ourselves quickly turning from intrigue and awe to shame, disappointment, and emptiness. Why? How can that be? If that image was truly beautiful, how could its effect be so short-lived and deceptive?

Others of us have yearned for a particular appearance, knowing that it's not real and attainable, that we'll never achieve it, and that those who apparently have testify to its absolute vanity. Some of us wonder what the role of physical beauty should play in our romantic pursuits, and others of us question how to compete with the industry standards of beauty and appeal that leave us feeling terribly inadequate. Many of us sense that our culture's beauty industry is "smoke and mirrors," and yet we don't always know how to see through that to truth and substance.

God's Word has much to say about beauty and self-image. In fact, God invented beauty and is restoring it, and it is only through a Scripture-informed understanding of true beauty that we can live contentedly, distinctly, and missionally in a world that is confused and corrupted on this topic.

BEAUTY AS INHERENT IN GOD

1. Beauty defines God (Psalm 96:1-9).

- God is characterized as having "splendor" and being "glorious." "Beauty is similar, if not synonymous, with God's glory."¹
- Psalm 96:1-9 — "Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For

great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!" (cf. Psalm 29:1-2)

- Psalm 27:4 — "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." → **Thought Provoker:** Would you rather gaze at the beauty of a person or "the beauty of the Lord"?

2. God defines beauty (Philippians 4:8).

a. Implication #1: True beauty is more than "attractiveness" in a physical sense.

- God didn't have a body until the incarnation and yet He is described as being splendid in His beauty.

b. Implication #2: True beauty is simultaneously good and true and real.

- Plato first suggested that these four "great transcendentals" are unified in "the one," and Augustine fleshed out who that "One" is. Mohler summarizes, "God alone, by virtue of the fact that He is infinite in all His perfections, is the source and the judge and the end of all that is good, beautiful, true, and real. For as Paul said, 'From Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen' [Romans 11:36]." ² Throughout and at the end of creation, God declared all the beauty He had made to be "good" (Genesis 1-2), and His fundamental quality of "truthfulness" binds the three together.

- **Thought Provoker:** Mohler explains the implications of this important unity between the beautiful and good and true and real, "It violates Scripture and indeed the character of God to call something 'beautiful' which is not good, or 'true' which is not beautiful, or 'real' which is not true."³ This is why Paul encourages us in Philippians 4:8, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

BEAUTY AS INVESTED IN CREATION

Gerard Manley Hopkins writes in his poem "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo",

*Give beauty back,
beauty, beauty, beauty,
back to God,
beauty's self and beauty's giver.*

Indeed, all beauty originates in God, but is not found only in God, for God has invested the world around us with beauty.

1. Reflected in natural creation

- Psalm 19:1 affirms, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."
- In an article entitled, "A Christian Vision of Beauty" (Part 1), Albert Mohler writes, "Christians cannot properly think as Christians without understanding the power of beauty."⁴ He then quotes the following from Augustine's *Confessions*: "I have learnt to love you late, Beauty at once so ancient and so new! I have learnt to love you late! You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself. I searched for you outside myself and, disfigured as I was, I fell upon the lovely things of your creation. The beautiful things of this world kept me from you and yet, if they had not been in you, they would have had no being at all." Mohler provides the commentary, "In that confessional statement, Augustine is saying that it was beauty that was calling him. It was his

Creator that was calling him, and yet he was distracted by the things of *apparent* beauty in the world. And yet he does not despise those things; he remembers that their beauty is merely a reflected beauty, derived from the fact that God is their Creator. Augustine continues: ‘It was you then, O Lord, who made them. You who are beautiful, for they too are beautiful. You who are good, for they too are good. You who are, for they too are. But they are not beautiful and good as you are beautiful and good. Nor do they have their being as you the Creator have your being. In comparison with you, they have neither beauty nor goodness nor being at all.’ Augustine realizes that in order to see true beauty, he has to go to his Creator, and then, knowing the Creator, he may observe the creation and see that it does indeed bear the mark of its Maker. There is undeniable beauty in creation, but in comparison with the infinite beauty of the Creator, such finite beauty no longer has the seductive allure it once had. All earthly beauty is simultaneously validated and relativized by the contemplation of the beauty of God.” → **Thought Provoker:** Do you see earthly beauty as a reflection of a far greater beauty? Or, in the words of C. S. Lewis, are you “far too easily pleased” by the lesser beauty around us?

2. Reflected in human beings

- While we are tempted to look at the universe and think it to be the greatest reflection of true beauty, Psalm 8:1-9 explains that God’s beauty is actually reflected to a much fuller degree in people, those whom He created in His very own image (Genesis 1:26-28).
- Mohler writes, “The *imago Dei* is the beauty in each of us, and the rest is but of cosmetic irrelevance.”⁵ What makes us beautiful is our unique status as being made in the image of God. This beautiful image is not primarily physical (for God is spirit), but is in our inner person (as we will see later). Furthermore, the image of God in us enables us to appreciate and evaluate beauty, which uncorrupted would have instructed us into eternal and enjoyable worship of God, the most beautiful and splendid Being (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:11).

BEAUTY AS IDOLIZED THROUGH SIN

Today, human beauty is not so much enjoyed as a reflection of God’s splendor, as it is worshipped for its own sake. Human beauty has become a massive idol, and our world has “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man” (Romans 1:23). How did this happen?

1. Satan corrupted beauty (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-17).

- Satan’s “heart was proud because of [his] beauty,” and he “corrupted [his] wisdom for the sake of his splendor” (Ezekiel 28:17).
- He lusted after the glory of God (Isaiah 14:13-14) and was subsequently cast out of heaven to earth.

2. Adam and Eve corrupted beauty (Genesis 3:6-7).

On a human level, beauty was first confused and corrupted in the Garden of Eden (of all places! filled with the reflected beauty of created and the real splendor of God). Genesis 3:6-7 reveals that Eve was deceived and disobeyed in part because of her attraction to “delight [of the fruit] to [her] eyes.” “A false understanding of beauty—the false allure of the evil rather than the good—is a part of the story of the Fall.”⁶ This corruption of beauty had several ramifications.

a. Beauty became divorced from the good, true, and real.

- In Adam and Eve’s choice, God was removed from the center of beauty. They loosed themselves from the good, and thus they sacrificed the beautiful. This is exactly what Satan intended. “The evil one tempts with prettiness, and lies about beauty, and corrupts the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real, sundering them from each other and celebrating the confusion. He celebrates whenever something ugly is called true, when something unreal is called beautiful.”⁷
- Again, we’ll let Mohler flesh out the implications of this:

- “Thus we are warned that that which is a delight to the eyes may very well be unbeautiful. Our human temptation is to substitute the truly beautiful for that which is merely a delight to our senses and a delight to our eyes, and thus we also are drawn to the forbidden fruit of a corrupt and fallen culture.”⁸
- Today, “the popular culture increasingly confuses the artificial for the real, the pretty for the beautiful, and the untrue for the true.”⁹ He illustrates it by asking, “What does it say of us that we live in a culture in which the cover girl is the ideal, and yet no one actually looks like that? *The Times* of London recently forecast that eighty percent of all women will have cosmetic surgery at some point.”¹⁰
- He then brings it home to the Christian community, admonishing, “If we are honest, we admit to ourselves that in our common cultural conversation, we routinely sever the good from the true, the true from the beautiful, the beautiful from the real, and the real from the good.”¹¹
- **Thought Provoker:** Do you see how helpful it is to understand this?

b. Beauty became almost exclusively associated with attractiveness, prettiness, and likeability.

- Since beauty is no longer governed by the good, true, and real, it has become dominated by ideas of attractiveness, prettiness, and likeability (e.g., Donald Trump’s use of “beautiful”) (cf. Esther 1:11; Psalm 45:11; Proverbs 6:25). Our society worships “images resembling mortal man” (Romans 1:23). Romans 1:22 labels this worship of physical beauty “fool”ishness, which is true for three reasons.

1) *Physical beauty is a shadow (Genesis 1:27).*

“We can very quickly look at the creation and think that it is beautiful in itself, rather than having been made beautiful by the One who alone is beautiful. We can begin to look at the human creature as beautiful in and of himself, rather than beautiful because he or she is made in the image of God. Thus we adopt and bring into the very center of our hearts a corrupted understanding of beauty that bears more signs of the Fall than of the common grace that allows us—even as fallen creatures—to see this beauty.”¹²

“Just as we, in our fallenness, are likely to see the fallen aspects of creation as beautiful, we are also likely to try to validate ourselves in an artificial humanism of worshiping the creature. When we look at our fellow human beings, or frankly, when we look in the mirror, we are likely to be led astray by prevailing concepts of prettiness and attractiveness rather than to gaze into the mirror or to gaze into our neighbor and see one made in the image of God. The *imago Dei* is the complete and transformative category here, and without it we are left with nothing but the superficial. The *imago Dei* explains why the child with Down’s syndrome is far more beautiful in herself than the cover girl in the fashion magazine.”¹³

2) *Physical beauty is passing (Proverbs 31:30; 1 Peter 1:24).*

Physical beauty does not last in its outward manifestation or in its emotional appeal. Along with “the things of the world,” it is “passing away” (1 John 2:15-17).

3) *Physical beauty is deceptive (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 31:30).*

“We delude ourselves into thinking that attractiveness means beauty. Just as nature can lie with its attractive creatures [beautiful but poisonous frogs, etc.], so also we can lie with the attractiveness we try to portray on the newsstands, on the television, in Hollywood, or in the mirror. An entire industry of billions of dollars is built upon the lie that one can buy enough or endure enough, suffer enough or apply enough, to be genuinely beautiful. The whole category of pornography is one big mutual co-conspiracy to deny the beautiful in favor of a perverted ideal of attractiveness. The real is denied, because given the insatiable desire of the sinner toward erotic attractiveness, the real no longer suffices. Thus the imagined and the fantasized becomes the hunger that is the appetite to be met.”¹⁴

- “In reality, a Christian worldview that takes full account of human sinfulness is the only way that we can understand how prevailing cultural standards tend to dehumanize our fellow human beings.”¹⁵
- **Thought Provoker:** Can you see how the concept of beauty has been hollowed out from its biblical definition to one focused solely on physical/external attractiveness?

c. **Beauty became sexualized (Ezekiel 16:14-15, 25).**

- **Thought Provoker:** Since sex is only ever appropriate in the context of marriage, is “being sexy” appropriate in any other context?

d. **Beauty became a source of tension between the sexes (Genesis 3:16).**

- The pursuit, perspective, and pride of beauty has become a tension point between the sexes, which has only grown (into actual oppression) as it has become more sexualized.

BEAUTY AS REDEEMED THROUGH CHRIST

As Dr. Horn stated in his last session, Satan strategically targets our body with his temptations, because our bodies have been uniquely reclaimed by God through Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 3; 6; Romans 8). Moral sins surround us and culture of bodily beauty is a corrupting one. Fortunately, that is not the final word, for through the lens of the gospel we discover lastly that Christ is redeeming beauty.

“[Jonathan] Edwards defined beauty as consisting mostly in ‘sweet mutual consents.’ By this, Edwards meant that things are rightly set: the thing is what God declared that it must be. In other words, beauty is achieved when the thing created most closely and most perfectly glorifies its Creator. Thus a ‘sweet mutual consent,’ or absolute harmony, exists between the created thing and the Creator. ... Thus the confusion over beauty is not merely an item of cultural consternation, nor is it merely a matter of theological debate. It is a matter of redemption. The only way out of our confusion over beauty is to know the Creator, to know Him not merely conceptually but personally, and to have our relationship with Him once again set right, something which only He can do.”¹⁶ This consenting and harmonious relationship, broken at the Fall, can be restored through Jesus Christ!

1. **The gospel gives us a restored perspective on beauty.**

a. **We are able to affirm the unattractive beauty of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6).**

- Prior to belief in the gospel, we rejected Christ, for we despised Him (Isaiah 53:2-3). Although He is the very “radiance of the glory [or beauty] of God” (Hebrews 1:3; cf. Isaiah 33:17; Matthew 3:17; Colossians 1:15), Satan had “blinded [our] minds...to keep [us] from seeing the

light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

- But, when God granted us faith to believe the gospel, our eyes were opened and we saw and rested in the beauty of Christ for our salvation (cf. Isaiah 61:3). In the words of John 1:14, we were enabled to “see his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- We would have gone to hell for our ignorance about this true and climactic expression of beauty in the person and work of Christ. But in the mercy and grace of God, He “shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6, notice the physical/bodily language).
- Indeed, our ongoing sanctification is simply being increasingly conformed to His glory, or we could say, becoming more and more beautiful in the way God intended (2 Corinthians 3:18).

b. We are able to affirm the unattractive beauty of all image bearers (Psalm 139:13-16).

- Toward the end of his article on beauty Mohler asks, “In what way is every single human being beautiful?” This is his answer:¹⁷
 - “First of all, it is by virtue of the very fact that every individual is made in the image of God. What if an individual fails to meet up to current cultural or even scientific or medical definitions of what it means to be adequately human? We are the people who must say this person is still beautiful, still true, still good—not in the sense that we would bless a disease, but in the sense that we would bless the individual who is made in the image of God. Our societal failure to see this is a symptom of something gone terribly wrong in us.”

- “I was approached some time ago by a young minister—a new pastor—who made a call upon an elderly lady who was in the hospital. Being like so many young pastors, as all of us who have been in that position can well remember, he was confronted with someone who needed more than he knew how to give. This elderly church member turned to him from her hospital bed and said, ‘Am I pretty?’ He told me, ‘I lied and said “Yes.”’ The woman was suffering in the last stages of a degenerative disease, and she wasn’t pretty. So that pastor’s answer was probably the wrong one. I understood his heart, but I told him, ‘You need to change *pretty* to *beautiful*. This isn’t pretty, but it is beautiful.’ Thus, we can speak of beauty recovered even in that moment when, in a countercultural move, we say pretty really isn’t important. In reality, pretty wasn’t important when this woman was twelve. Pretty really wasn’t important when she was twenty. Pretty is not important now. In heaven, there will be no pretty people, only beautiful saints, made beautiful by the grace of God and for God’s glory alone.”

2. The gospel gives us a restored practice of beauty (Titus 2:10).

Redeeming our focus from self-worship to the worship of God (the source), the gospel informs us how to practice beauty and adornment. Titus 2:10 instructs us that “in everything” we should be striving to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” Therefore, there is less of a focus on outer beautification, and more of a focus on inner beauty.

a. Inner beauty (Proverbs 31:10-31; 1 Timothy 2:9-11; 1 Peter 3:3-6)

- Regarding the application of this to women in particular, Doug Wilson explains how the gospel instructs the redemption of beauty for Christian women: “Women must be rebuilt in the area of glory,

learning how to be a true glory, without ostentatious or seductive display. This is why apostles in the New Testament spend a surprising amount of time instructing Christian women on the importance of being beautiful. The contrast between Christian women and unbelieving women does not consist of the former not caring about beauty and the latter caring very much. The difference is to be between caring about beauty as wise women and caring about it as foolish women. The command is not that Christian women should not adorn themselves, but rather that they should adorn themselves in a particular way. They should do it in a way that really works. They can adorn themselves without any selfishness because when they adorn themselves rightly, they are becoming the glory they were created to be.”¹⁸

- Referencing just 1 Peter 3:3-6, John Piper fleshes out five ways the gospel redeems our understanding of physical beauty (applied in the context to women, but applicable to men, as well).¹⁹
 - 1) *“Hidden”* — It is hidden from men, but open and clear to God.
 - 2) *“Person”* — We should pursue being a kind of person, not presenting a kind of persona. The real you is not your face. It is an awesome thing to be a person, made in the image of God.
 - 3) *“Of the heart”* — This is the sea of the affections and the will. This is who you are most deeply. God never had a body until the incarnation, and He was glorious. So, bodies are not the essence; they display the essence.
 - 4) *“Imperishable beauty”* — This kind of inner beauty last forever, whereas outward beauty fades away.
 - 5) *“Of a gentle and quiet spirit”* — Being flashy, visible, and attractive is the cultural mandate—these qualities, we are told, reveal a confident

woman. But the gospel-produced qualities of meekness and serenity reveal a woman who is trusting and hoping in God (v. 5) and make a woman fearless, lion-hearted (v. 6). Ironically, the woman who spends hours on her face and worries about her figure is likely frightened all the time and insecure.

- The key to restoring true beauty, then, is allowing it to flow from the heart. A butterfly doesn't “work” to make itself beautiful or adjust to meet a standard—its beauty naturally flows from its makeup. Likewise, beauty (whether it is masculine in handsomeness and strength; or feminine in prettiness and grace) should not be forced but flow from who we are in Christ. Thus, even as Scripture teaches, “modesty” is key, not so much as an end, but as a means to an end. We need “modesty”—the quality of thinking humbly and meekly about ourselves—in order to worship the truly beautiful One.

b. Outer beauty (1 Timothy 4:8)

- As we have demonstrated, our culture has imposed impossible and unrealistic standards of beauty. This can wrongly affect a man by encouraging him to lustfully and demeaningly accept this standard. This can wrongly affect a woman by magnifying her feelings of personal inadequacy and insecurity and her sense of guilt/shame in not “measuring up.” Again, we need Scripture to speak to us, then!
 - Physical beauty is never commanded, but enhancing it has its place. Scripture has many references to “beautiful” women who adorned themselves in various ways.²⁰ This adorning may indeed be corrupted, but it may also be itself an expression of God’s image and a reflection of His creative workmanship.²¹ Perhaps 1 Timothy 4:8 provides a helpful balance in suggesting that grooming your physical persona has a place, but it is an inferior investment. In marriage, it may

have a more central role in the cultivation and enjoyment of intimacy (cf. Genesis 2:22-25; 24; Proverbs 5:15-20; Song of Solomon; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Ephesians 5:33).

- Psalm 139:13-16 assure us of God's good sovereignty in creating us as we are, whether or not we are content with our level of physical appeal. In fact, God is the creator even of the disabled (Exodus 4:11-12).
- Regarding men, in particular, Scripture never exonerates a man's lust due to a woman's beauty, nor justifies a man's infidelity due to his spouse "letting herself go."

3. The gospel gives us a restored proclamation of beauty (Romans 10:15).

- As we have seen, only God through Christ can restore a commitment to the unity of the "great transcendentals"—the beautiful, the good, the true, and the real.
- Therefore, it is no accident when we are told in Romans 10:15 that the one who carries the gospel has "beautiful" feet. The restoration and renewal of true beauty will only happen through "beautiful" messengers—those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb and commissioned to be His ambassadors.

4. The gospel gives us a restored promise of beauty.

Mohler writes, "The Christian understanding of beauty is an eschatological view, one that looks forward to the unveiling of true beauty, which will come on the day of the Lord when the Alpha and the Omega will be seen as the beautiful One."²²

- a. We will see God's beauty (John 17:24; Revelation 22:4).
- b. We will be surrounded with God's beauty (Revelation 21:2).
- c. We will be sanctified into God's beauty (Ephesians 5:25-26; 1 John 3:2).

ENDNOTES

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996).

² Albert Mohler, "A Christian Vision of Beauty", Part 1 (<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/11/16/a-christian-vision-of-beauty-part-one>).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Albert Mohler, "A Christian Vision of Beauty", Part 3 (<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/11/18/a-christian-vision-of-beauty-part-three>).

⁶ Mohler, Part 1.

⁷ Mohler, Part 3.

⁸ Albert Mohler, "A Christian Vision of Beauty", Part 2 (<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/11/17/a-christian-vision-of-beauty-part-two>).

⁹ Mohler, Part 1.

¹⁰ Mohler, Part 3.

¹¹ Mohler, Part 1.

¹² Mohler, Part 2.

¹³ Mohler, Part 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mohler, Part 1.

¹⁷ Mohler, Part 3.

¹⁸ Douglas Wilson, "On Why Christian Women Are Prettier" (<https://dougwils.com/s7-engaging-the-culture/on-why-christian-women-are-prettier.html>).

¹⁹ John Piper, "Feminine Beauty in God's Eyes" (<http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/feminine-beauty-in-gods-eyes>)

²⁰ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 273.

Although the Hebrews did not exalt the human form as did the ancient Greeks, the OT does idealize physical attractiveness. A bride's beauty is described eloquently by her bridegroom in love lyrics in Song of Solomon 4:1-15; 6:4. Such praise of the bride may have been a traditional feature of Israelite weddings. Several women prominent in the OT are described as beautiful (Gn 29:17; 2 Sm 11:2; Est 2:7). But sensual beauty was secondary to industry, resourcefulness, and traditional piety in a woman (Prv 31:10-31). A number of men also were known for their physical attractiveness—for example, David (1 Sm 16:12) and Absalom (2 Sm 14:25). Cosmetics, jewelry, and other accessories were used as female beauty aids in OT times. The prophet Isaiah listed such items (Is 3:18-24), and Ezekiel mentioned cosmetic practices current in his day (Ez 16:10-13).

The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology states,

Both women and men are described as attractive. Human beings at times used cosmetics to make themselves more beautiful (Isa. 3:18–24). Sarah (Gen. 12:11), Rebekah (Gen. 24:16), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:3), Rachel, Abishag, Bathsheba, and Esther are singled out for their beauty. Yet physical beauty was secondary to piety and resourcefulness (Prov. 31:10–31; also see 1 Tim. 2:9–10; 1 Peter 3:3–5). The writer of the Song of Solomon portrays his love for his bride as beautiful. Though the Hebrews did not exalt the human form as did the ancient Greeks, some men are referred to as exceedingly handsome: David (1 Sam. 16:12), Absalom (2 Sam. 14:25), Daniel (Dan. 1:15), Joseph, Jonathan, and even Moses as a child (Exod. 1). Clothing also had esthetic appeal (see Gen. 41:42; 45:22; Exod. 26:36; 28:2; Rev. 3:4).

Carolyn Mahaney and Nicole Whitacre, “A Biblical View of Feminine Beauty” (<http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/women/a-biblical-view-of-feminine-beauty-11536450.html>).

For example, the Proverbs 31 woman - who is put forth in the Bible as a model for biblical womanhood - wore colorful, high-quality clothing (Proverbs 31:22). We read where the bride in Song of Solomon adorned her appearance with jewelry (Song of Solomon 1:10). We are told that Esther underwent 12 months of beauty treatments - 6 months with oil of myrrh and 6 with perfumes and cosmetics (Esther 2:12).

²¹ Mahaney and Whitacre write,

*Now granted, these activities can be sinfully implemented; but still, we must not overlook the fact that the essence of our desire to beautify comes from God. John Angell James in his book, *Female Piety* (first published in 1860), offers this helpful thought: “This taste [for beauty], however in many cases it may be altogether corrupted in its object, wrong in its principle, or excessive in its degree, is in its own nature an imitation of the workmanship of God, who, ‘by his Spirit has garnished the heavens,’ and covered the earth with beauty.”*

²² Mohler, Part 2.