

NewSpring Church Groups Study Guide

Beautiful — Week 1 — Me, Beautiful?

Few people are comfortable in the skin God gave them. The voices of Hollywood in the latest fashions meet us daily in the grocery line bombarding us with messages of success and power telling us what we should be. Will we listen to those voices, or will we listen to our Father, who loves us, created us in His image, and gifted us with purpose. In him and him alone do we find approval and learn what it means to truly be beautiful.

- If money wasn't a factor, would you consider cosmetic surgery to fix something about your appearance? Why or why not?
- Read Genesis 1:26. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? How should knowing that you're created in his image change your perception of self?
- From entrée envy to extra marital affairs, many struggle to be satisfied with what we've been given. How do we find true contentment?
- Galatians 1:10. What kinds of things are telltale signs that someone is seeking approval from someone other than God? From whom do you seek approval?
- Ladies, who do you put your make up on for? Why?
- Guys, do you think men, as a rule, struggle less with image? How is a man's struggle with image different than a woman's?

Psalm 45:11 says, "The king is enthralled by your beauty: honor him, for he is your lord." If God is enthralled by us, how much more should we be captivated by his beauty. This week, honor him by living a full, transparent life so that those around you will know that you are a son or daughter of the King.

MONDAY

A friend recently visited a restaurant called The Blinds. In this restaurant, patrons are led to a table and served throughout the meal in pitch darkness. Amazingly, the darkness didn't cause awkwardness, but rather, lowered defenses and soon many of the guests were talking and laughing. Without a visual preconception, people were free to talk without cultural barriers. How would you respond in that environment? What are some ways you prejudge people based on their appearance? As you go through the day, try to see each person as God sees them. How is your attitude toward people different when you acknowledge that each person is his creation?

TUESDAY

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Realize that you are not only beautiful; you are becoming more beautiful every day. As you allow God to work in you, you are being transformed into his likeness. Only when we see Jesus face to face will we realize how beautiful we really are. Today, focus on reflecting him in every situation. What are the small things you can do to reflect the love of Christ? When people see you, do they see Jesus?

WEDNESDAY

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:13-16

Can you say with all your heart, "your works are wonderful, I know that full well"? It's pretty easy to look at the world and acknowledge beauty. It's far more difficult to look in the mirror and do the same. We forget that we are wonderfully made by God. Take time today to thank God for his beautiful creation. That includes you!

THURSDAY

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." From *The Weight of Glory* by C.S. Lewis.

A cashier, a waitress, co-worker, a neighbor, a parent, a spouse —they are all beautiful. We pass them by everyday, failing to consider their eternity. Commit right now to invest in someone's destiny today. By a simple conversation or an invitation to church, you may help change an eternal destination.

FRIDAY

What event from your past most affects your self-image? Do you think that event or abuse or neglect or embarrassment or sin alters how God sees you? Do you think he was surprised by all that? We tend to be defined by our past instead of allowing our identity to flow from Christ. Without moving forward from the event or abuse or neglect, or embarrassment, we stall and become ingrown. We turn in on ourselves and the result is jealousy, bitterness, anger, and insecurity. Instead, serve your way out of your circumstance. Begin to give others the affirmation and approval that you desire. Help someone who is hurting. You will find that HE will become greater and your pain will become less.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

Who are you serving?

SATURDAY

John 4:4 Now he had to go through Samaria.

Honestly, there were other ways to get home. He could have easily walked around the situation, and by evening, been speaking to thousands of people from his own neighborhood. In that culture it was acceptable to hate Samaritans, and to ignore women. Ignoring this adulterous woman would have been celebrated by the religious elite. Besides, no one knew that she was there at that moment, at that place...except Jesus. Setting reputation aside, Jesus broke through cultural norms to reach one person. Why would he do that? She was valuable. She was more valuable to him than ministry momentum or popularity and more valuable than adoring crowds. She was more valuable to him than the meal that he missed. She was more valuable than his reputation or schedule and definitely more valuable than society's opinion. Like the woman at the well, we find ourselves seeking to quench our thirst for meaning. We want to belong somewhere - to have purpose - to be recognized as valuable. But because of wrong choices, we find ourselves broken and feeling unworthy of love. To God, we are worth more than gold and diamonds. In fact, we are so valuable to him, that he sent his Son, his one and only son to die for our sins so that we too, in a moment, in a place, can have an encounter with the living God and drink from the deep well that is Jesus. Have you met Jesus? He's gone out of his way to meet with you. If you have met Jesus, are you going out of your way to meet others where they are?

SUNDAY

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...Colossians 1:22

We spend a lot of time and money hiding blemishes. Foundation, concealer, blush, wrinkle cream, Botox injections... the list goes on and on. And it's not just the ladies covering up. According to the Washington Post, men and women in the United States spend more than 3.5 billion dollars a year in an attempt to treat their hair loss.

Many of us spend a lot of energy hiding what's on the inside as well. In an effort to impress those around us, we pretend that everything is peachy, while we secretly struggle with a laundry list of sin and insecurity. What if we took off the spiritual make up? What if we realized that all those people we are trying to impress are struggling just like we are? What if we confessed our sins to each other and lived transparently? Christ took everything about you that was ugly and made you beautiful. You can now live a transformed, transparent life. It begins with honesty. What are you covering up?