

## Imperishable Beauty

Okay ladies, it's time to engage our hearts in battle today. Through this article, we are going to expose a huge lie of Satan. Satan's lie is this: That you are not beautiful. He tells us that we do not deserve inner peace. He says we are not good enough. Satan makes us believe that we do not deserve happiness. He tells us that we do not deserve to be loved. One of the most common insecurities of women is our lack of confidence in our beauty. We often compare ourselves to others. How often do you say to yourself things like, "She is so skinny," or "Look at how fat I am," and what about "I wish I had hair like hers"? How about one of my favorites: "My breasts are too small"? Do you often look at yourself in the mirror and criticize your physical features? "My eyes are too close together". "My lips are too big". "I have thunder thighs"! "I'm too tall." "I'm too short." "My butt's too big."

For years growing up, I was belittled by others and, because of that, I had no self-confidence at all. I was picked on by the other kids at school because I was too perky and not pretty enough. I was told cruel things like "You look like a boy" and called cruel names that questioned my virtue... and that was all by the age of 10. As I grew into a young woman, it only got uglier. It's true that I was physically underdeveloped. I was also a "tomboy" who enjoyed running around barefoot and playing sports. I never learned how to wear dresses and paint my nails, or even how to comb my hair. Instead, I bit my nails off; wore shorts, ball caps, and t-shirts two sizes too big; and had knotted hair. My mom never applied make-up on herself, so how could she have taught me? I was built like a boy and played with the boys. And because of all of these things, I was a misfit with other girls.

Most people who know me now are shocked that my self-esteem has been terribly low for most of my life. They have never known and could never understand the depth of my wound. People have asked how I could not be pleased with a body that is so skinny, or how could I not be thrilled because I don't have to watch my diet. How can I be unsatisfied with blue eyes and brown curly hair? "Sharon, you are just so cute. I could take you home and put you on my dresser!" Well, I have to admit that I have often thought that everyone must be looking in a different mirror than I was. I saw a short girl with no boobs, a uni-brow and a little mustache, too. And let me tell you that I don't want to be "cute." My soul cries out to feel beautiful. I desire to be perfect.

Mark, my husband, has always complimented me. He said all the right things. "Honey, you're beautiful." "You are so perfect to me." And my personal favorite: "You are amazing." He truly meant every word. However, when he said these things, I would mentally roll my eyes and blow him off. He would give me a compliment and tell me his feelings, and I would reply with contradictions: "No I'm not" or "Whatever!" Sometimes I even thought that he only said nice things to get me "in the mood." Why is it that his words still left me empty inside? Isn't this what I longed to hear? Didn't I need to feel validated by a man? Essentially, because I didn't believe in myself, I was calling him a liar. I was tearing my husband down. He wants to build me up. It is actually one of his jobs as my husband to make me feel desired. I shot him down every time. I can see why he would want to stop saying nice things to me when my reaction to him was so negative.

I was very unfair and critical of myself, my husband, and ultimately to my God. After much soul searching, I came to this conclusion: My creator only makes perfection. My God does not fail! Who am I to judge His handiwork? Can I create anything out of nothing? (Job 38, 39) Can I breathe life into a being I create with my own words? We have to face the fact that God created us individually, and His creation is beautiful and perfect. Believe it! Our first obstacle is to get out of the way and let God judge our beauty. He is the judge of all.

Think of all the beautiful people who you know. Not those models and actresses, but the real life beautiful people you come into contact with. You know—the women to whom you are always comparing yourself. What is it that makes them beautiful? Is it their eyes? Their hair? Their hourglass body? Their clothes? Now imagine one of those women with a frown, no wait, let's put a scowl on her face. Let's imagine her angry. She is full of hatred and complaining about her chipped nails; she is unhappy and short-tempered with her husband; she is condescending and rude to the people around her. In your mind, how beautiful is she now? She is ugly. Actually, she seems downright detestable, disgusting, and undesirable. But it's still the same woman, right?

So what truly gives a woman beauty? How is it possible for us to look and feel beautiful within ourselves? Ladies, can you see how beauty shines only from the inside? Beauty comes from your heart. And we can wear a sign of our beauty on our face in the form of a smile. A smile on a woman's face draws others into her light. It is a symbol of happiness, contentment, and peace. Those without Jesus as their savior long for the joy that we have. They are thirsty and will cling to those who have it. True beauty is not measured in outward apparel; beauty without compare comes from the spirit inside of us. Proverbs 11:22 says, "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is like a beautiful woman without discretion." I don't know about you all, but I think gold in a pig's snout is just a waste of fine jewelry! A woman that has a pleasing appearance but has no discretion is a waste of a pretty face.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 tells us that we are called to wear respectable apparel. In this passage, Paul says that our godliness comes through our good works. Who is more beautiful than a woman who serves others without complaint, but with joy, peace, and submission? In 1 Peter 3:1-6, Peter says that the imperishable and incomparable beauty of a woman comes from the heart. Is it not true that what is in one's heart comes through in their words and actions? Peter further explains that adorning ourselves with submission is holy. We can be as beautiful as Sarah when we do good without fear, and when we trust in God. I don't know about you ladies, but I plan to strive for the beauty that will never fade! Don't let Satan deceive you any longer. Acknowledge the lies that Satan has been telling you and make a decision today to work for beauty that is everlasting and never fades! Praise God we are perfect on the outside just as God created us, and let Him make you beautiful on the inside as well! Work for beauty that is everlasting and never fades.

by Sharon Hatfield