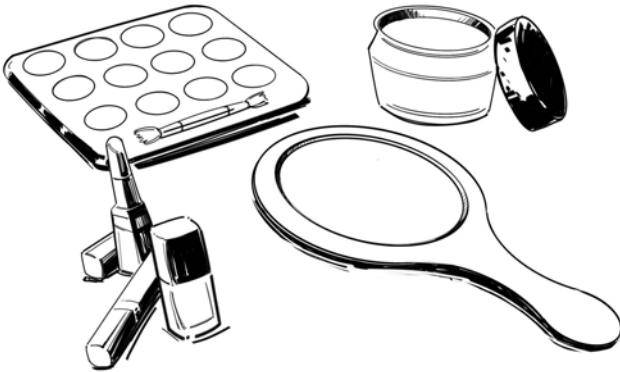


What is Beauty?



ave you ever sat down at your dressing table and said the following words:

'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?'

And has your mirror ever answered you back?
(Of course not!) What would you do if it did?

- A. Scream in fright?
- B. Throw it out the window?

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C. Start an argument with it – ‘Hey you mirror! You’ve got a cheek. You’re not so hot looking yourself with that 1980s framing! You’re so last century!’?

If you have ever had a conversation with your mirror then you probably won’t admit to it. Imagine if you were in full flow and someone walked in on you! You’d never live it down.

Anyway, the line ‘Mirror, mirror, on the wall’ is from the fairy story *Snow White* where an enchanted mirror can tell you if you are the fairest in all the land.

Now, I don’t believe in talking mirrors or flying fairies! Neither should you. But let’s have a bit of fun and imagine that a ridiculous looking woman, with purple wings on her back, comes to visit for afternoon tea. Along with a packet of biscuits, she brings you a parcel in shiny paper, with a label on the side. On the label are the words, ‘Whatever

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is inside this parcel will make you beautiful.' What would you hope to get?

- A. Bouncy blonde curls?
- B. Straight black locks?
- C. Tiny feet?
- D. A long neck?
- E. A little nose?
- F. A tan?

That's quite a list isn't it? But this list could go on and on as every country and each century has its own idea about what is 'stunning' or 'gorgeous'.

Ladies in Victorian times never went outside without a hat. If their skin went brown in the sun it was considered unattractive. This was because a tanned skin said certain things about the way you lived. It meant that you spent a lot of time outdoors – and probably had to work for your living. A pale complexion meant you were 'well off' and from a 'better class of people'.

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After some time had passed people changed their opinion: they wanted to look tanned instead of pale. It was considered 'attractive' – because it meant you were one of those rich people who could afford to travel and go to sunny climates to laze about on the beach all day.

And then there's the Bible – beauty is described in different ways there too. The Song of Solomon describes a young woman by saying, 'Behold you are fair, my love! Behold you are fair! You have dove's eyes behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats going down from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep.'

Different times and different cultures saw different things as being beautiful.

But the beauty that the Bible is really telling us about is a lot more than our skin and bones or even our hair and teeth. Physical beauty is temporary at its best. The Bible wants us to be

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spiritually beautiful, because that beauty reflects God's beauty and it is eternal.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 31:30 that beauty is 'passing'. That means it is here one day and gone the next. The physical beauty you have as a young woman disappears as you get older. This sort of beauty is just skin deep as they say – it only lasts a short time. It's not going to give you long term happiness. And even if you did look physically 'gooooorrrgeous' all of your life – it wouldn't give you true joy. Some people think it would – but they'd be wrong. Some people worry about looking 'just right' – but this sort of worrying is such a waste of time.

Don't get me wrong. It's good to brush your hair, wash your face and wear smart clothes – it's just not the be-all-and-end-all. It's certainly not something to worry about because the Bible says that we're not to worry about these things!

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Read more: Matthew 6:25-34

Do you spend a lot of time and thought on making yourself physically beautiful? Is it important that you always have the most up to date fashions? If you could, would you change your nose, your height, your eye colour, your shape?

Here's an interesting Bible fact: None of us, by being anxious, can even add an hour to our lives or even a few inches to our height! The Bible also tells us not to worry about what we are going to wear!

This summer I went for a walk in the country and saw the most gorgeous array of lilies floating in a lake. They were stunning. Pale petals, as pale as any Victorian lady could have wished for. A light pink blush was in the centre of each of them – as subtle and breathtaking as any make-up artist could ever achieve. And here's the thing –

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God did that! The Bible tells us in Matthew 6 that the lilies don't work but not even the greatest king in the world was ever dressed as beautifully as them. So if God takes care of lilies like this – he's going to take care of you! Don't spend time stressing about the way you look. Trust in God. He provides.

Think instead about a different kind of beauty ... it's a biblical beauty. It lasts for ever. It gives you real happiness because this beauty is Jesus Christ himself! Breathtaking! He is the most beautiful Person in the Bible, in the world, in all of creation – Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Saviour, the Prince of Peace, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus did not have what we would call 'film-star' looks. We are told in Isaiah 53:2 that Jesus wasn't really anything special to look at. He had a body like anyone else, he grew up physically

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like anyone else, but he 'had no form or majesty that we should look at him or beauty that we should desire him.' (ESV)

So how is it that Jesus is the most beautiful? Well, it's simply that the beauty of Christ is something far greater and far more lovely than anything you will ever see on a magazine. His beauty is holy. It's perfect. Think about these words: Love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self Control.



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You don't see these words in a mirror. But, you see them in every single way in Jesus Christ. Each of these words is Jesus. Jesus is each of these words. In absolutely every way.

And these are words that God gives his people. Those who trust in the Lord receive so many good gifts from God their Father. Along with salvation, forgiveness of sin and eternal life, God gives his children true eternal beauty. This is the beauty that we're going to find out about. So stop chatting to that mirror of yours and start reading