

A Bible Study By

Barbara L. Roose

Beautiful Already



Reclaiming God's
Perspective on Beauty

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Abingdon Press / Nashville

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About the Author

Barbara L. Roose is a popular speaker and author who is passionate about connecting women to one another and to God, helping them apply the truths of God's Word to the practical realities and challenges they face as women in today's culture. Previously Barb was Executive Director of Ministry at CedarCreek Church

in Perrysburg, Ohio, where she served on staff for fourteen years and co-led the annual Fabulous Women's Conference that reached more than 10,000 women over five years. In addition to continuing as a member of the CedarCreek teaching team, Barb is a frequent speaker at women's conferences and other events. God has shaped her heart to reach out to women who either do not know or have forgotten that they are beautiful because God created them. Her desire is for every woman to realize that she has a God-given purpose and that nothing she sees in the mirror should hold her back from fulfilling that purpose. She lives in Toledo, Ohio, with her husband, Matt. They are the proud parents of three beautiful daughters, two dogs, and a grumpy rabbit named Pal.

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Introduction

One of the first things we do as women each morning is look in the mirror. The words that we use to describe what we see and how we *feel* about what we see are important. When we think to ourselves or whisper out loud, “I’m so fat” or “My nose has a hump like a camel,” those words scream a loud message: *I am not enough*. This dissatisfaction and discontent that plagues us—regardless of our shape, size, and description—is compounded by our culture’s unrealistic images and expectations that continually bombard us. We’re left feeling discouraged.

As women, the concept of beauty involves our size, shape, style, and soul. When we experience dissatisfaction with what we see in the mirror in these areas, this is what I refer to as our *ugly struggle with beauty*. My observation is that none of us is exempt from this struggle. In one way or another, we all experience it.

Our ugly struggle with beauty isn’t just about how we look; it impacts how we think and live. This struggle negatively affects not only our self-image and self-esteem but also our relationships with God and others. What is the answer? We desperately need to reclaim God’s perspective on beauty, rather than allow our culture to define beauty for us.

It’s tempting for us to put all of the blame on the media or beauty industry for overexposing us to vast displays of digitally altered photos or magazine headlines promising to help us drop ten pounds this week. While the images of digitized, flawless, two-dimensional bodies that fill our news feeds do have a significant impact, are they fully to blame for how we feel about ourselves? I believe that while they exacerbate our self-made drama, they aren’t the only cause of our discontent and our struggle with beauty.

Who gave you the idea that you aren't beautiful? Perhaps it was a boy on the playground who teased you about your skinny legs. Did an aunt or grandma comment that you were flat-chested just like your mother? Maybe your father was too busy to tell you that you were beautiful. In any case, these messages about how we look sink into our hearts and minds, impacting how we think and feel.

As Christian women, we often avoid this beauty-related dialogue altogether. Many of us may think to ourselves, *Talking about physical beauty issues isn't very spiritual*. We roll our eyes and dismiss the need to talk about the impact of beauty-related issues on our souls. For some reason, we've deemed it unspiritual to talk about beauty. Yet we harbor all kinds of secret language, meaning that we have looks and nods that convey our opinions about how we look or feel, but we don't or won't use words to express them. There's the look we give ourselves in the mirror when we've eaten too much or the grimace that we utter when we've gotten dressed and still hate how we look. When we're alone, that secret language speaks into our hearts and minds, even though we never utter a word.

Too often we point out that God looks at the heart, but we downplay or deny that God really cares about our bodies and beauty. And when we do talk about beauty, our dialogue is often guarded. So many of us carry around metaphorical suitcases of beauty-related pain—wounds inflicted by others related to our size, shape, or style. These suitcases of memories are shackled to our hearts and minds and drag us down whenever we look into the mirror.

During this six-week Bible study, we will unpack our beliefs or experiences related to beauty that are holding us hostage. Together we will explore God's truth about beauty throughout the Scriptures, digging into passages in both the Old and New Testaments and discovering how to practically apply their truths in our lives. This discipleship-focused study is a progression that will lead us away from over-focusing on unrealistic expectations and perceived flaws toward embracing God's viewpoint of our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. As we embark on this journey, we will

- be set free from the trap of comparison and self-ridicule,
- learn to live fully as the unique and beautiful creations God designed us to be,
- become comfortable in our own skin, and
- reach beyond ourselves to encourage and support other women.

The overarching goal is for us to see the goodness, blessing, and purpose for our bodies. Achieving this goal will equip us to "win" in the struggle against discontent and comparison and in our relationships with God and others. You'll know that you are well on your way to victory when you no longer criticize your size, shape, or style and become an encourager or mentor to other women, pointing them toward victory over their own ugly struggle with beauty.

Getting Started

For each week of our study you'll find a thematic overview and Scripture memory verse, followed by five days of homework. Each day of homework includes the following:

- Beauty Mark** a key idea
- Beauty Regimen** a lesson with space for recording answers and reflections (boldface pink type indicates write-in-the-book responses)
- Live It Out** questions for personal application
- Talk with God** suggestions for a personal time of prayer

In the margin you'll find some Extra Insights, Scripture verses, and key highlights. You will be able to complete each lesson in about twenty to thirty minutes.

These lessons will help to prepare you for the discussion and activities of the weekly group session, where you will gather with your group to watch a video and discuss what you are learning together. As you share with one another, you will learn and grow even more and be able to support one another through encouragement, accountability, and prayer.

My prayer is that God will surround you with a supportive community of women as you make this powerful journey over the next six weeks. I pray that you will have the courage to “mount up” and ride into your struggle, knowing not only that God will be with you every step of the way but also that you will be victorious!

By the end of this experience, I pray that you will be able to stand and confidently proclaim, *“I am beautiful already, inside and out. In God's eyes, I am enough just as I am!”*

Barb



Week 1

**ALL ABOARD THE
STRUGGLE BUS**

Memory Verse

"The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

This Week's Theme

Where there is shame, we will struggle to find beauty.

I don't know about you, but facing myself in the bathroom mirror first thing in the morning is a challenging way to start the day. After spending six to eight hours in a blissful semiconsciousness, my face and body need time and a shower to "come alive" again. The first glance in the mirror is a rough sight to take in. Seriously, sometimes I wonder if I got into a fistfight overnight! I survey my wild hair, droopy eyes, and flat expression. Though I know that thirty minutes and a shower will make a huge difference, that first glance causes me to ask questions that are really quiet fears:

- Can cellulite spread overnight?
- Is that a new wrinkle?
- What's that flapping under my arms?
- Does so-and-so look this bad in the morning?

I wish that I could say those questions wash down the drain once I take my morning shower. Not really. Those questions are the offspring of two larger questions that I've grappled with over a lifetime—questions that I believe confront all women at every age and stage of life:

- Am I beautiful already?
- Am I enough?

Even if you aren't into hair, nails, clothes, or shoes, you've probably been challenged by these questions at one time or another. The inability to say yes to these two questions reflects our ugly struggle with beauty. This struggle isn't about how we look; it's about how we think and live in response to our perception of beauty. We desperately need to regain God's perspective on beauty!

This week we embark on a journey to be free of our ugly struggle with beauty. It's time we learn to live at peace with our bodies. In order to do this, we need to start at the beginning. How did the struggle begin? Why do we struggle to believe that we are beautiful already and beautiful enough just as God made us? Are you ready to get started?



Day 1: How Our Struggle Began

Beauty Mark

We all struggle with beauty.

Beauty Regimen

If we're going to investigate the origins of our ugly struggle with beauty, then we've got to go all the way back to the beginning and talk about Eve.

Do you ever think about Eve? I do. When I think about her first moments of life and the instant awareness she had of her surroundings, I wonder if she thought, *What's going on here?* Surely Eve must have noticed the beautiful, colorful flowers and trees—perhaps even a lion or tiger or other animal. My guess is that Adam was awake and excited as Eve stood and approached him, and I imagine he winked at her!

I've wondered what Eve thought the first time she looked down at her body. Did she wonder, *What's all this?* Did she know if she was a pear or apple shape? Here's one that we all want to know: Did Eve have cellulite? (Personally, I think cellulite is a consequence of the Fall!)

Once Eve got a gander at her arms, legs, stomach, thighs, and feet, I wonder what she thought. Since we know that there was perfection in the garden of Eden, we can be sure that she was content. Eve enjoyed a life of pure innocence, unmarred by any negative thoughts that we struggle with today.

If I had been Eve, I think I might have planted myself by a crystal-blue pond and gazed at my reflection all day long, repeating my own version of the oft-repeated phrase in Genesis 1: "It's all good."

We find the details of Eve's beginnings in Genesis 2. God observed Adam's loneliness and gave Adam the task of naming all the animals. In this exercise, Adam would have noticed the male and female animal pairings. It was after this that God put Adam to sleep and created Eve.

Read Genesis 2:18-23. What did Adam exclaim when God brought Eve to him?

Have you ever wondered what Eve thought about herself? Put yourself in her place and write some words that she might have used to describe how she felt about herself:



While we don't know if Eve's body was a size 0 or plus-size, we do know that she didn't have any of the beauty-related issues that we experience today over our size, shape, or style. As I mentioned in the Introduction, I call our beauty-related challenges our ugly struggle with beauty. This struggle is captured by our sighs and moans in front of the mirror when we look at ourselves and don't feel that we are good enough as we are. At first, Eve didn't experience that kind of struggle. For her, there were no sighs, moans, or groans—only peace and contentment. Can you imagine that?

There are lots of words that describe our ugly struggle with beauty, but the Bible gives us a single word in Genesis 2:25. Interestingly enough, it's a word that is introduced before it ever becomes a part of the human experience.

Read Genesis 2:25 in the margin. Even though Adam and Eve were naked, what didn't they experience?

Don't miss the significance of the phrase "felt no shame." This is the only point in human history when people walked the earth without the feelings of insecurity, guilt, or self-hatred.

Adam and Eve lived in pure innocence, not knowing good or evil. There was not one ounce of guilt-induced shame—not in their hearts, minds, bodies, or souls.¹

Genesis 3 captures our loss of authenticity or vulnerability and the beginning of our ugly struggle with beauty. We see that Eve acted on the serpent's suggestion that the fruit would bring enlightenment. She listened to the serpent, and she was deceived into thinking that she deserved access to the same knowledge and wisdom that God has. So she ate of the fruit and gave some to Adam, and he ate too.

Read Genesis 3:7 in the margin. What happened after they ate of the fruit?

In that awful moment when they disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit, they became aware of their rebellion against God and lost the joy of living in paradise. As innocence was stripped away, they found themselves in a nightmare of shame. I've always found it interesting that when Eve became aware of good and evil, the first thing that she did was scamper to cover her naked body.

Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:25)

At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. (Genesis 3:7)



Extra Insight:

Shame statement
examples:

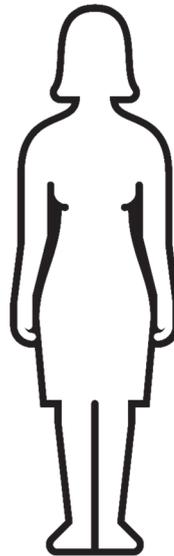
"I let myself go.
What's wrong
with me? I'm so
ashamed of myself."

"Shame on me
for eating dessert.
I'm going to gain
weight if I keep
eating like this."

Imagine how horrible that moment must have been. In an instant, her once-beloved body became the source of her shame. How painful it must have been for God to observe Adam and Eve rush to create coverings to conceal the bodies He had lovingly created.

In the absence of innocence, shame and judgment have a door to enter. Ever since the Fall, we human beings have struggled with shame as we have made judgments about our bodies and physical appearance.

Circle all of the "places" where you make judgments and feel uncomfortable about your body. Though you may be tempted to circle the entire body, try to identify specific "places" or categories.



What is a shame statement you have thought or spoken aloud recently about your body or appearance?

What impact do these struggles have on how you connect with or relate to others?

In addition to judging our own bodies, we also struggle with judging the outward appearance of others. A story in the Old Testament gives us valuable insight related to this struggle.

God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel. When we're introduced to Saul in 1 Samuel 9, we find out that he was one of the tallest and most handsome guys around. But it wasn't long before people stopped talking about Saul's good looks. Why? Because Saul had a heart problem.

God called the prophet Samuel to look for a new king of Israel. Yet before Samuel began to review potential candidates, God told him what to prioritize. God's insight provides some important information about our human behavior when it comes to judging the outward appearance of others.

Read 1 Samuel 16:7 in the margin. What did God tell Samuel about how we judge outward appearance versus how God judges us?

Following God's instructions, Samuel chose Jesse's son, David, to be the next king of Israel. Though we are given information about David's appearance, we also learn something more important about David.

Read 1 Samuel 16:12 and Acts 13:22 in the margin. What do you learn about David in these verses?

When God created humanity, He wove uniqueness into our DNA. Think about this: God could have created everyone the same. He could have given us the same height, weight, shape, eye color, skin color, personality, and temperament. But He didn't. God wove diversity into our physical DNA; and as a result, we're all different colors, sizes, and shapes. Uniqueness was God's gift to us. You are unique. There is no one else like you. Uniqueness is God's gift to *you*.

Yet we tend to use our individual uniqueness as a measuring stick. We look at one another and make judgments based on what we see. We do it both secretly and openly. Remember when blond jokes were popular? Most blonds that I know weren't laughing.

Growing up, I was a tall, African American kid. Everyone assumed that I played basketball. Okay, so I did. But it bothered me that everyone made that assumption based on what they saw. Sure, I was tall, but there was more to me than just my height.

Look at 1 Samuel 16:7 again. Ponder this phrase: "People judge by outward appearance." What are some of the ways that you've

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
(1 Samuel 16:7)

So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes. And the LORD said, "This is the one; anoint him."
(1 Samuel 16:12)

"But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.'
(Acts 13:22)

Extra Insight:

The most common eye color is brown.²

been judged by your appearance? (You can include both positive and negative responses.)

Now here's a tough question: What do you tend to evaluate regarding other women? Circle all that apply:

Hair style

Body shape

Clothing style

Weight

Nails

Shoes

Eyebrows

Purse

Skin color

Facial features

Fitness level

Dietary choices

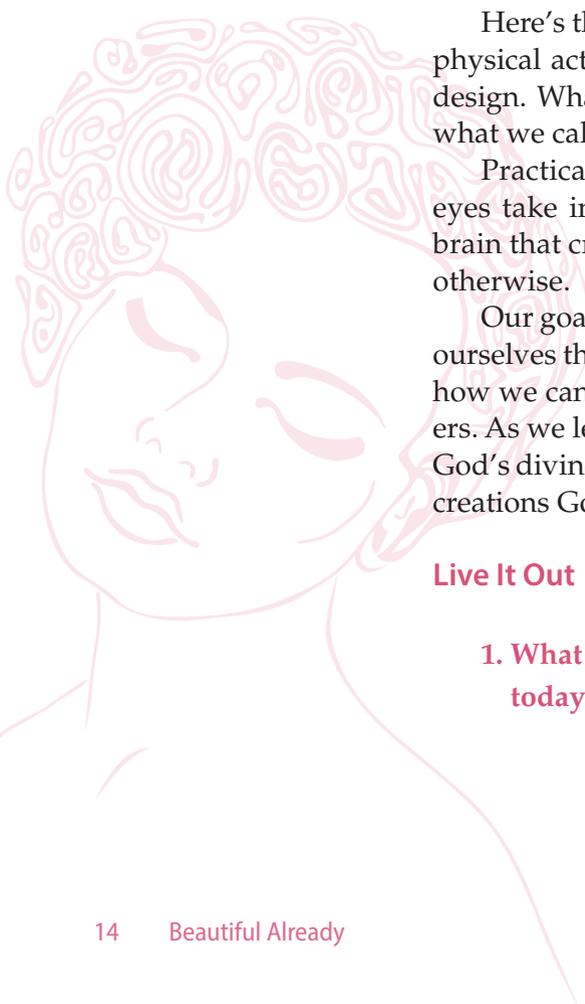
Here's the thing: we have eyes to notice ourselves and one another. The physical act of being able to see with our eyes comes as a result of God's design. What we see with our eye is interpreted by our brain, and that's what we call vision.³

Practically speaking, when you look in the mirror at yourself, your eyes take in your body's features. However, it's what happens in your brain that creates images and messages that you judge to be good, bad, or otherwise.

Our goal during this study is to develop a vision—a mental picture—of ourselves that is consistent with the way God sees us. We also will discover how we can share and apply that vision in the ways we connect with others. As we learn to let go of shame, judgment, and comparison and reclaim God's divine perspective on beauty, we will begin to live fully as the unique creations God designed us to be!

Live It Out

1. What is one thing that God impressed upon your heart during today's study?



2. Do you have a sense or leading from God about what you need to think or do differently as a result of what you've studied?

Talk with God

How are you feeling at the end of today's study? What are you thinking about? Whatever your thoughts may be, take a few moments and talk with God about what you've read as well as what you are hoping God will do in your heart, mind, and life through this study.

Day 2: Beauty Narratives— What's Your Beauty Story?

Beauty Mark

The stories that we tell ourselves about beauty have a profound impact on our lives.

Beauty Regimen

I'll never forget the day when a woman came up to me and said, No, you could never be on a magazine cover. Your face features don't work; your eyes are small, you have a small face but a big nose. I was only 14, and I had never noticed any of that stuff, you know?⁴

These are the words of supermodel Gisele Bündchen. It's hard to believe that anyone could have ever said anything negative about her face or body. However, even Gisele is not immune to the inner struggle regarding beauty that we all experience. Look at her words above and notice how her quote begins with the phrase: "I'll never forget..."

Think about the defining moments you've experienced in your family of origin, at school, or in the workplace. Do you have a defining moment? How many of those defining moments shaped your relationship with inner or outer beauty? Those experiences are all part of what I call your "beauty narrative."

A narrative is a storyline or sequences of events—related or unrelated—that form a story. When you return home from a great vacation and tell



*We dreamed
that Barbie
could do
anything.*

people about it, you are sharing a narrative. You are sharing a sequence of events that may or may not be interrelated, but those events are all part of your narrative. Narratives aren't about whether or not something is true, but they do contain your memories and your perspective of the events at the time.

Here are a few beauty narratives women shared with me in a survey I conducted a couple of years ago called *Created with Curves*, in which more than five hundred women from around the world answered questions about beauty:

"You're so ugly that..."

"Pretty girls like you can have anything that they want."

"Fatty, fatty, two-by-four, can't get through the kitchen door."

"Since you're so pretty, you don't have to worry about being smart."

Some of you have heard these narratives and others. Our beauty narratives are a mixture of positive and negative events, circumstances, and comments. Here's some insight into my childhood beauty narrative:

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Barbara Louise. Young Barbara loved to ride her pink bike (with a banana seat) up and down the sidewalk and watch cartoons. Most of all, Barbara loved to gather with her favorite girl cousins to play with their dolls. Each afternoon, the girls gathered to travel into a magical dreamland with the most perfect doll of them all—Barbie.

When I was a child, Barbie dolls were everywhere. We didn't realize that Barbie's anatomical shape was unrealistic. We just loved the fact that she had great dresses with Velcro and super cute plastic shoes. Sure, sometimes our moms threatened to throw all of those shoes away because they were tired of stepping on them, but we played on!

We dreamed that Barbie could do anything. She always had a high-paying job, a great house, and an amazing sports car. In our eyes, Barbie was beautiful and perfect, and therefore anything was possible for Barbie.

I studied Barbie on a regular basis. I shared a name with the perfect doll, and I didn't look anything like her. I was a shy, skinny, little brown-skinned girl with big, thick glasses and two very large front teeth. I didn't look or feel like a Barbie, even though we shared the same name. In my little girl brain, I hoped that I could be many things when I grew up, but I never thought that being beautiful could be one of them. So, here's another piece of my beauty narrative:

Since I do not look like the pretty Barbie dolls, then I cannot be pretty. If I am not pretty, then I should not dream of all of the things that pretty little girls dream about.

Every woman has a beauty narrative. Your beauty narrative has been shaped by events throughout your lifetime, even those that are happening now! Most of our beauty narratives, particularly the painful ones, remain hidden in our hearts and minds until we have a safe place to share those stories. Sticks and stones can break our bones, and names—especially hurtful, malicious names—can stick in our minds forever. Yet when we acknowledge our narratives and place them before God, He gives us a new storyline. No matter the early chapters of your life story, God’s narrative for your life includes beauty and purpose.

Today we’re going to uncover our beauty narratives. This may require you to come face-to-face with some powerful and painful memories that you buried long ago although they still impact your life today.

Let’s begin with our names. We know that names are powerful. Expectant parents spend quality time thinking through the name they will give to their new son or daughter. You might have been named after a family member or favorite memory. Whatever your name, your parents likely chose a moniker that in some way affirmed the kind of personality, character, or life they dreamed you might have.

Have you ever looked up the meaning of your name? My name, Barbara, is a Latin name derived from *barbarous*, meaning foreign or strange.⁵ Of course, that definition leaves a lot to be desired, so I checked UrbanDictionary.com, a crowd-sourced online dictionary that allows people to assign value to names based on their personal experience or opinion. I discovered that although my name still was defined as meaning “strange,” people had added adjectives and other descriptive statements such as these:

[Barbara is] a sensitive girl who doesn’t get mad easily.
Barbara is the best girl you will ever run into.
Barbara is beautiful, kind and funny.⁶

Isn’t it interesting how people assign meanings to names?

What is your given name? What does it mean? (If you don’t know, look it up online. For fun, look it up on UrbanDictionary.com too.)

What people call us sticks with us. While our parents may put a name on our birth certificate, that isn’t the only name we receive in life. Most of us also have one or more nicknames given to us by family, friends, or sometimes bullies and enemies. As a result of others’ perceptions, we often end



What people call us sticks with us.

up with new names, such as Dimples or Four-eyes. But it's the meanings behind those names that fill in our beauty narratives.

What are some of the nicknames you've been given through life?

What happens when our names or nicknames aren't desirable and we can't get away from them? How do those names impact our self-images, our attitudes, or our lifestyles? Are we stuck with the name someone calls us and the painful narrative that name creates?

In the Old Testament we meet a woman named Rahab who was stuck with an undesirable "name." The scriptural author introduces her as "Rahab the prostitute." Though we do not know a lot about her family of origin or ancestry, the word *prostitute* fills in a lot of blanks.

Read Joshua 2:1. As you are introduced to Rahab in this verse, what ideas and opinions about who she is and what she values come to mind?

Describe the kind of life, behaviors, or social standing that Rahab the prostitute might have experienced.

Our human nature is to put people into categories by giving them names or labels. It's a way for us to manage our beliefs and expectations when it comes to dealing with people. Imagine some of the names that the people of Jericho used to describe Rahab the prostitute: *immoral, loose, dirty, or shameful*. Those names became a part of Rahab's story or narrative about her life. That narrative would begin running in her mind first thing in the morning when she awakened and would replay all day long.

The same is true for us. Too often we allow our worst names to define how we see ourselves or how we live.

Jennifer, the chubby one
Big-boned Brenda
Elise, with the perfect body
Sarah, the ugly divorcée

Look back at the nicknames you listed. In the space below, list only the *undesirable* nicknames or labels that you've been called in life.

What are the negative names or labels that you've called yourself lately?

How have these names impacted how you care for yourself, make decisions, or connect with others? Is there an experience or event that you've opted out of as a result?

During my teen years, I didn't date much. In my mind I justified my lack of dates because I had buckteeth, I was too tall, and my thick-lensed glasses were a definite turnoff. Since I couldn't do anything about my teeth or being tall, I decided that I would concentrate on being "the smart one." That was a label that others gave me that I embraced.

Since people complimented me for being smart, I leaned into those compliments whenever prom or homecoming came around. I fought off the "I'll never get a date" narrative, choosing instead to embrace the "I'm too busy with homework to go" story. Yet deep inside I wanted just one nice boy to ask me to be his date. In fact, my family still hears about the fact that I was never asked to prom. While I can tell the story now with a smile, that narrative is part of my life and how I remember myself growing up.

While Rahab the prostitute might have been scorned and ridiculed because of what she did, there was so much more to her than just her name or label. In the following passage of Scripture, we find out so much more about Rahab and how God impacted her life.

Read Joshua 2:8-11. What do we learn about Rahab the prostitute in these verses?

So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day. (Joshua 6:25)

In verse 11, what was Rahab's declaration regarding what she believed about God?

After declaring what she believed about God, Rahab boldly asked for her life as well as the lives of her family to be spared when the Israelites invaded Jericho. I love this part of Rahab's story because it would be easy to imagine that a woman demeaned as often as Rahab was would be too shy or fearful to make such a bold request. Yet Rahab's faith in God's power seemed to fuel her resolve to save her life and the lives of those whom she loved.

In Joshua 6, we read about how the Israelite army marched silently around Jericho once a day for six days. Think about how terrifying it must have been for Rahab to wait in a city filled with fearful anticipation of the unknown.

On the seventh day, the Israelite army marched around the great wall of Jericho seven times. Then the Israelites shouted and the wall came tumbling down! The Israelite army rushed into Jericho and conquered the city, killing the inhabitants inside. Yet Rahab's story has a happy ending.

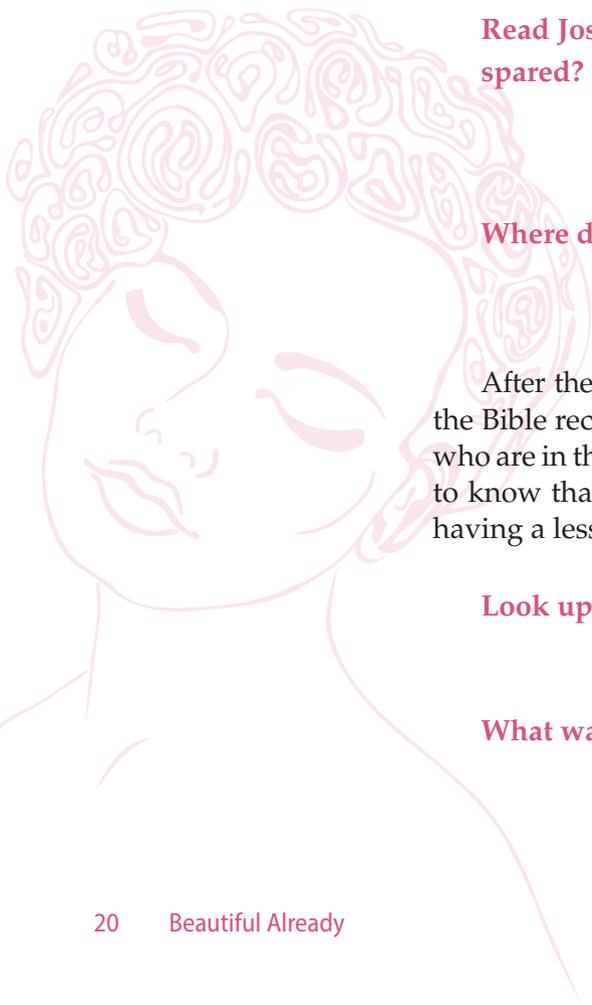
Read Joshua 6:25 in the margin. Why were Rahab and her family spared?

Where did Rahab end up living?

After the fall of Jericho, Rahab's narrative is far from over! In Matthew 1, the Bible records Jesus' genealogy, and we see Rahab's name among those who are in the lineage of Christ. Imagine how stunned she would have been to know that she would be one of Jesus' ancestors. Not bad for a woman having a less-than-desirable occupation attached to her name.

Look up Matthew 1:5-7. Whom did Rahab marry?

What was her son's name?



How was Rahab the prostitute related to King David and King Solomon?

Hebrews 11 is known as the “Hall of Faith.” This inspiring chapter contains the stories of named and unnamed individuals who displayed great faith, and Rahab the prostitute is listed in this esteemed group.

Read Hebrews 11:31. Why did Rahab end up being recorded in one of the most prestigious chapters in the Bible? How is she described?

At the end of your life, someone will write an obituary and your life story will be told in a limited amount of space. How would you like to be remembered? Complete the following legacy statement:

It was by faith that _____
(your name)

_____.

There is one more mention of Rahab the prostitute in the New Testament. For a woman who started out with such a negative narrative, she becomes a powerful example for all of us. In fact, the writer of the Book of James uses Rahab’s example to show us what faith-in-action looks like.

Read James 2:25-26 in the margin. Verse 26 is an oft-repeated Scripture, but much less attention is given to verse 25. How was Rahab’s life an example of faith in action?

Why do you think Rahab is identified here as “Rahab the prostitute”? What significance could that have for us?

²⁵ Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road.
²⁶ Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works. (James 2:25-26)



Extra Insight:

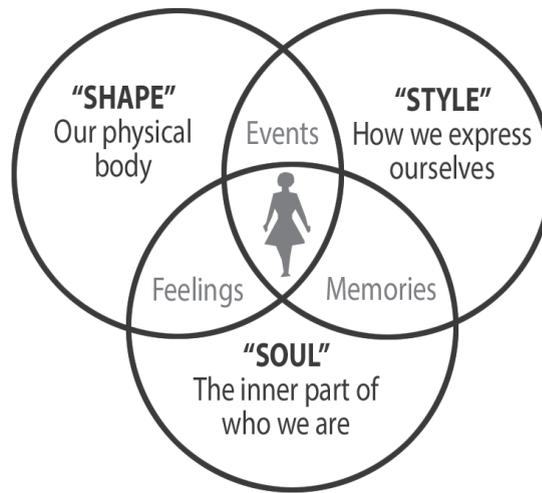
A beauty narrative is the story we create about our experiences with beauty.

Although the early chapters of Rahab’s narrative pointed in a certain direction, God stepped in and shifted her narrative in a new direction. Through her life, God shows us that it doesn’t matter where we come from or the names that we’ve been given or the narratives that have shaped our lives. What matters is the faith and trust that we have in God’s almighty power and sovereignty.

Whatever your beauty narrative may be, God has created a new narrative for you—a storyline in which you are treasured and valued for who He has created you to be.

Today I shared a portion of my beauty narrative. As we close, take a moment to write your own beauty narrative.

As the diagram below shows, your beauty narrative includes feelings, events, and memories that have influenced your shape (how you think and feel about your body), your style (the ways you express yourself), and your soul (the inner part of who you are).



My beauty narrative (if more space is needed, additional narrative pages have been provided on pages 203-205):

How do you feel about your beauty narrative? Describe how it has impacted your life:

Do you believe that God can write a new narrative for you as He did for Rahab, resulting in a lasting legacy? Why or why not?

Review the legacy statement you completed earlier (page 21). In order for what you wrote to be true, what do you need to allow God to do in your life?

Live It Out

1. What is one thing that God impressed upon your heart during today's study?
2. Do you have a sense or leading from God about what you need to think or do differently as a result of what you've studied?

Talk with God

Dear friend, God cares about your struggle to see yourself as beautiful. Your struggle isn't trite or insignificant. If you are riding the struggle bus and heading toward an ugly ending, you can hop off that bus—if you're ready. God wants to hear from you today. Just talk to Him.



Day 3: The Land of Shame

Beauty Mark

We don't have to live in shame. We can be freed by God's truth!

Beauty Regimen

In our first lesson this week, we talked about shame's entrance into the world as a result of Adam and Eve's sin and the shameful statements we think and make about ourselves when we look into the mirror. Yesterday we considered how others contribute to our shame through undesirable names and labels, creating hurtful beauty narratives that we carry with us through life. The common denominator is shame. When it comes to our ugly struggle with beauty, shame is one of the most destructive weapons Satan uses, and secrecy increases its effectiveness. Today we will explore how we can overcome and break free from the shame that causes us to feel we are less than the women God has created us to be.

In Luke 15:11-31, Jesus tells the story of the Prodigal Son. This multi-layered story features a young man, his loving father, and his elder brother. Though most of us are familiar with the story, let's remember the storyline together.

While speaking to a group of followers and religious leaders, Jesus paints a picture of a young man who leaves his home in search of something more in life. This young man begins his journey toward the land of Better-Than-Here with a pocket full of money and a head full of dreams. Soon the young man is broke and without resources to live. Jesus tells the crowd that the young man's misfortune came as a result of wild living. The young man takes a job feeding pigs in a farmer's field.

I can't help visualizing this young man in his misery. I imagine him opening his eyes each morning and thinking about how he ended up in such a bad spot. He trudges to that field day after day, reflecting on times gone by and regretting his choices—every good memory swallowed up by mistake after mistake. While he tosses out the slop to the pigs, he sits alone on the fencepost, talking to himself.

Idiot.

How could I be so stupid?

What was I thinking?

Oh, I wish that I could do it all over again...

There's no reference in the story to how long the young man works in that field. Actually, it's irrelevant to the main point, but I've always been

Once we end up living in shame, it's hard to break free.

drawn to that part of the story. It reminds me of the times in my life when I've felt alone and trapped in my regret and shame.

How often do you beat yourself up? We all make mistakes, but as women we love to heap criticism on ourselves. If someone says something negative about our size, shape, or style, we're quick to believe what they say. When we look in the mirror and focus on our flaws, we add to the negative parts of our beauty narratives.

I like to say that for every perceived failure, we're adding a stone to our Road of Regret. As that road becomes longer, we convince ourselves that there is something wrong with us. Each time we look back, all we can see are mistakes. Then we come to believe that no matter how hard we try, we'll never be enough. If we stay on the Road of Regret long enough, eventually we will arrive at the entrance to that dark, painful place I call the Land of Shame. Some of you know what I'm talking about.

The Land of Shame has a few streets called Coulda, Shoulda, and Woulda. If you've ever tried and failed at a diet, you may be living with shame. If someone in your life has repeatedly told you that you aren't good enough, you may be living with shame. If your physical appearance is much different than you would like it to be, then you may be living with shame.

Once we end up living in shame, it's hard to break free. Why? Because the sheriff in the Land of Shame is Satan. He likes to keep us in the Land of Shame because he knows that shame holds us back. It makes us too insecure to live fully for God in every area of our lives.

Unfortunately, where there is shame, we will struggle to find beauty.

Satan likes to twist our beauty narratives. Perhaps you've been working out for months, but the weight isn't coming off. One day you get discouraged and eat a pile of cookies. As you bemoan that decision, the Sheriff of Shame (or one of his deputies) won't waste a moment suggesting to you that you're a failure and you should just give up. Or if you're a single woman who would like to have a relationship but are not being asked out by any eligible men, Satan may whisper: "No one is asking you out. You must not be pretty enough." Do you know the motto of the Land of Shame? It's this: "There's no hope. You are stuck here because you can't change."

But there is hope! You can change! The Land of Shame isn't a life sentence, no matter what the Sheriff has whispered into your ear.

My favorite part of the Prodigal Son's story is found in verses 17-19.

Read Luke 15:17-19. How does verse 17 begin?

When...



What realization does the young man make?

This is the moment of great revelation! It is the moment when he realizes that he doesn't have to live that way any longer.

Though Jesus tells this story to make a point about repentance, it also speaks to us about leaving places where we don't belong. I picture the young man hopping down off that pigpen fence and hustling back to his childhood home. He may not have known what was waiting for him at home, but he didn't waste any time getting away from the place where he knew he didn't belong.

When you think about the "places" in your beauty narrative that burn or tear your heart, those are the places where you may be living in the Land of Shame. Isn't it time to break free and run back home to the Father? If you let Him, He will love you and restore all of the hurting places in your heart and mind.

Have you paved a Road of Regret? What are the parts of your beauty narrative that you associate with regret (for things you should have done but didn't)?

As the sheriff of the Land of Shame, Satan seeks to add to his town population. He already knows what his end looks like, but that doesn't deter him from trying to ruin the lives of as many people as possible. If we are created in the image of God, then Satan wants to undermine our understanding of what being made in the image of God really means and how it should impact our lives. Because the Scriptures tell us that God is love, we can expect that Satan will try to convince us by whatever means necessary that God does not love us.

Read John 8:44. What do we learn from this verse about Satan's character?

How has Satan used lies to begin, continue, or exaggerate your ugly struggle with beauty?

Read John 10:10 in the margin. Here Jesus uses shepherding as an analogy to contrast His purpose with Satan's purpose. How does Jesus describe His purpose?

How does He describe Satan's purpose?

So, knowing that Satan uses lies for the purpose of destroying us, how can we break free from the Land of Shame?

Read John 8:32 in the margin. According to this verse, what sets us free?

Truth is the key that sets us free. Throughout this study we are going to clothe our hearts, minds, and bodies with the power of God's truth. Because God created us, loves us, and sent Jesus to deliver us and bring us a rich and satisfying life, we can trust God's truth to lead us out of the Land of Shame toward everlasting freedom. We can't leave the Land of Shame by our own power; we have to deploy the resource of God's truth in order to break free from the shame caused by our enemy's lies and win our ugly struggle with beauty.

What are some truths from God's Word about who God is and His plan for your life that you need to lean into as you battle to win your ugly struggle with beauty?

Look up 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. According to verse 5, how do we destroy the strongholds that keep us captive?

"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."
(John 10:10)

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)



List below some of the lies we encounter as women when it comes to beauty. How can these lies make us captives in the Land of Shame?

Let's conclude our study today by rewriting the negative and untrue portions of our beauty narratives.

Refer to your beauty narrative on page 22 (or at the back of the book) as you complete the chart below. In the left column, list the portions of your beauty narrative that you know are not true in God's eyes. In the right column, replace that faulty narrative with truth from God's Word. Use a print or online Bible concordance to locate specific Scriptures that convey God's perspective.

Portions of my beauty narrative that are not true:	What God says about me that is the truth:

Live It Out

1. What is one thing that God impressed upon your heart during today's study?
2. Do you have a sense or leading from God about what you need to think or do differently as a result of what you've studied?

Most of us have lived in the Land of Shame at one point or another. If you are there now, you don't have to stay! Tell God that you are ready to

break free from the Land of Shame, and ask Him to use the truth that you identified today to break the hold that shame has had on your life.

If you don't feel that you are living in the Land of Shame, then take some time to pray for your sisters in Christ who need to find freedom.

Day 4: Defeating the Enemies of Comparison and Competition

Beauty Mark

You can kill comparison and competition with love!

Beauty Regimen

We spent the past two days studying shame and how it impacts our beauty narratives. I love how Rahab's story reminds us that no matter what we've been called, God has created a new narrative for us—a storyline in which we are treasured and valued for who He has created us to be.

Yet even as we deal with our beauty narratives, we also encounter real-time struggles with processing the images about beauty that we interact with on a daily basis. For me, the grocery store checkout line can be a tricky place to be.

I like to read the covers of magazines while I wait in the checkout line. Yes, I know that those photos are enhanced, but I still find myself looking at them sometimes to see how I compare. (Can you relate?) For years, magazine covers featuring celebrities with two rows of even, shining white teeth would catch my attention, and as I would gaze at the pictures, my thoughts and feelings would vacillate between longing and guilt. In one moment I would think, *If I had beautiful teeth like that, I would never stop smiling and would really feel beautiful.* In the next moment, guilt would set in and I would think, *Seriously? What's wrong with you? Stop thinking about this! There are more important issues in the world than your two front teeth. Get over it!*

Over the years, I've discovered that along with the weapon of shame, the Sheriff of Shame carries two guns: comparison and competition. With comparison, we're always looking at other women to see how we are similar or different in our size, shape, or style. When it comes to competition, we observe other women to see how close or far they are to our personal beauty standards. Now, comparison and competition are silent contests. We don't like to admit them or talk about them, but we live them.

If we're looking at images in magazines or hanging out with our girlfriends, we shouldn't be surprised when we hear whispers or suggestions such as these:

Did she lose weight? Is she skinnier than you?

Look at her new hair style! She's going to get more attention than you the next time that you go out.

Check out the bags under her eyes! You better make sure that you don't get those!

Aren't you glad that you don't have hips that wide?

Comparison and competition fuel our ugly struggle with beauty in three ways:

1. They cause us to always look for what's wrong in us, or what I like to call "flaw finding."
2. They create a barrier between us and other women so that connection is stifled or even suffocated.
3. They create collateral damage in other areas of our lives such as our finances and other relationships.

Today we're going to identify the places where we feel pressure to measure up, and then we're going to look at the story of Rachel and Leah and see the impact that comparison and competition had on their lives. Finally, we'll discover how we can disarm these two destructive "guns" and eliminate them from our ugly struggle with beauty.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I don't have anything against the beauty industry. In fact, I love finding clothes, shoes, and beauty products that make me look great at a great price. Yet I recognize that the constant feed of beauty-related messages can be overwhelming at times. I also must admit that even though I see those airbrushed images of celebrities, my brain doesn't always remember that those images aren't real. If I'm having a bad day, I might compare myself against someone's hair or hips—and it never turns out in my favor.

When you think about all of the messages about beauty as well as your personal struggles with size, shape, or style, how much pressure do you feel to fit in with our culture's definition of beauty?

Extreme pressure

A lot of pressure

Some pressure

No pressure

There was a time when I would have checked “a lot of pressure.” Thankfully, now I can check “some pressure.” After working in sales for a few years and dealing with my beauty baggage for many more, I can happily say that I feel less pressure than before. But it has been a process!

The story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah is found in Genesis 29:15-33; 30:1-24. The background of the story is that Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebekah, traveled to stay with an uncle named Laban. While Jacob later would receive an inheritance after his father died, Jacob arrived at his uncle’s home without any property or money of his own. So Laban let Jacob work for him. While working for his uncle, Jacob fell in love with Laban’s daughter Rachel.

In Genesis 29:17, physical descriptions of Rachel and Leah are given. How is each woman described?

Rachel

Leah

Notice how Leah is described with “no sparkle in [her] eyes.” Other translations refer to Leah as “tender-eyed,” meaning that she had some type of eye defect and therefore was less physically attractive than her sister.⁷

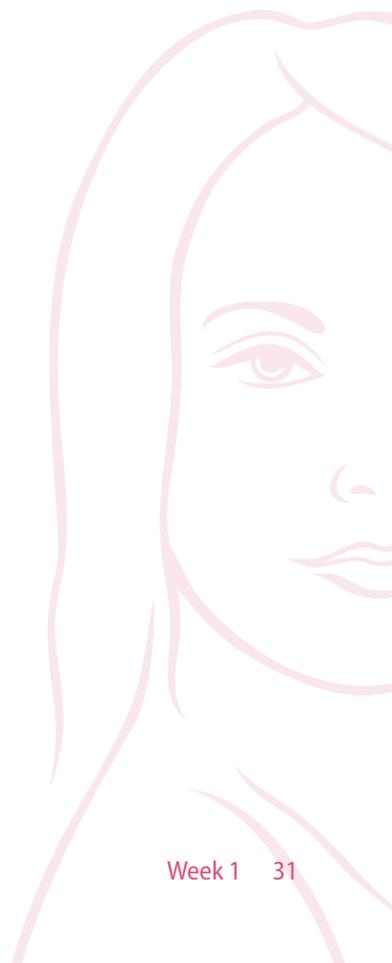
It’s not hard to imagine that more attention likely went to Leah’s younger sister, Rachel. What are some of the things that Leah might have heard people saying over and over again about her sister but not about her?

In Genesis 29:25, we see that Jacob woke up the morning after his marriage to discover he had married Leah, not Rachel. While the responsibility for such a deceptive act rested wholly with Laban, take a moment and put yourself in Leah’s sandals.

What must Leah have felt as Jacob raged about another woman he wanted to be married to instead of her?

Extra Insight:

One question you might ask yourself is, “How do I know when I’m feeling less pressure?” For me, the answer has been that I don’t desire to continually purchase new products to help me feel better about myself. I know that I’m beautiful already, so my beauty-related purchases are from a place of abundance rather than scarcity.



So filled with love for Rachel, Jacob immediately agreed to work seven more years for her, and so Laban gave Rachel to Jacob in marriage too. Not only was Leah not Jacob's first choice, she did not have Jacob's love. Adding to her pain, Leah then had to share her husband because of a situation created by her father, but it was her situation nonetheless.

Read Genesis 29:31. How did God respond to Leah?

Describe the competition that ensued between the two women.

As you read Genesis 30:1-8, note how Rachel handled the situation. What kind of heart did Rachel seem to have?

What did Rachel proclaim in verse 8?

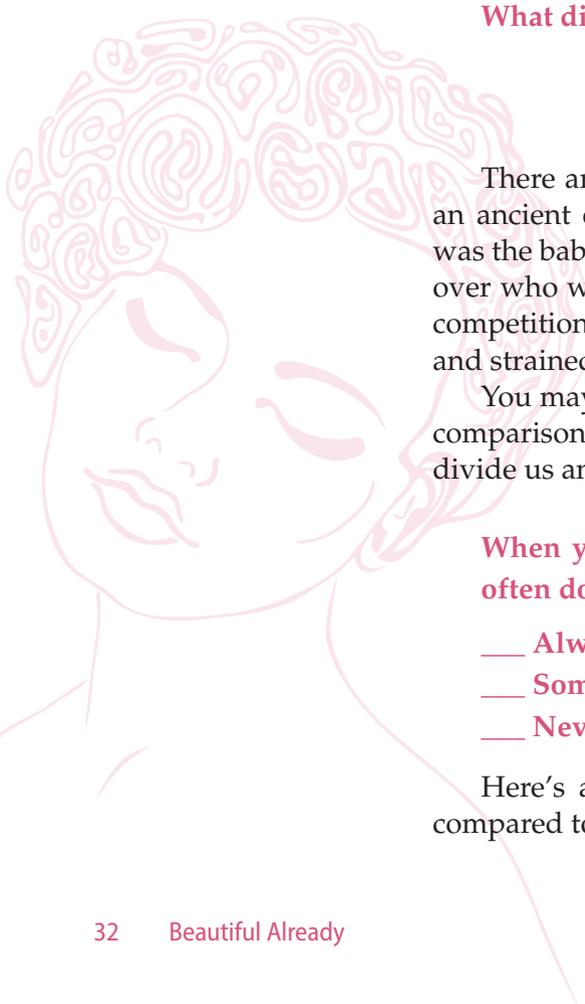
There are times when the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah seems like an ancient episode of *The Jerry Springer Show* or *The Maury Show*. Jacob was the baby daddy while Rachel and Leah were the baby mamas fighting over who would get his love. Yet as we read their stories, we see that the competition between the women ruined their relationship with each other and strained other relationships in their families.

You may know what it's like to be compared to someone, whether the comparison was or is by height, weight, eye color, or shape. Comparisons divide us and can lead to a competition where there are no winners.

When you see magazine photos of celebrities or actresses, how often do you compare yourself to what you see in the photos?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Here's a story from a friend of mine about what it was like being compared to other girls at an early age:



As early as nine years old and into my early teens, I have vivid memories of standing next to my cousins and being judged by adult female family members. Their commentary was blazed into my memory:

“Her breasts are bigger than so-and-sos.”

“She has a prettier smile.”

“Her attitude is much better.”

“She’s maturing faster. Did she start her period?”

Oddly enough, this scenario seemed normal. In my world, it was normal to worry about what other people thought of me. It was OK to want people to like me. In order to be found acceptable, I wondered about how to make my boobs bigger (even though I was well endowed for my petite frame) or how often I needed to suck in my gut so that I could appear thinner.

Those comparisons created a lot of problems between my cousins and me. We were friends, but once we were pitted against each other everything became a competition.⁸

Were you ever compared physically to another woman, either as a child or an adult? If so, how did you feel about the comparisons?

What feelings and memories still linger today?

If we define competition as a desire to match or one-up another woman in an area of size, shape, or style, are there any places in your life where you are engaged in a silent competition?

What are some ways that you have seen Christian women comparing or competing against one another in church?

How have the relationships between the women been impacted as a result?



Christian women aren't immune to comparison or competition. I grew up in a church where women wore magnificent hats on Sunday. During Easter and Christmas seasons, the hat competition was fierce!

Let's be honest for a moment about how we check out each other when we come to church each week. It's like a silent version of *America's Next Top Model*. When we see women come into church, we're often mentally putting them on display whether we realize it or not. Yes, it's not something we like to admit, but come on ladies, let's keep it real! It may go something like this. First we quickly scan what she's wearing to find out if it's acceptable and then to ascertain whether or not she's dressed better than us. Then we'll do a quick scan of her shoes before leaping back up to check out her hair and jewelry. Have you ever found yourself doing that? Most of us have.

There's a difference between noticing and comparing. As far as I am concerned, the difference comes down to whether or not I'm looking for something to *compliment* or something to *criticize*.

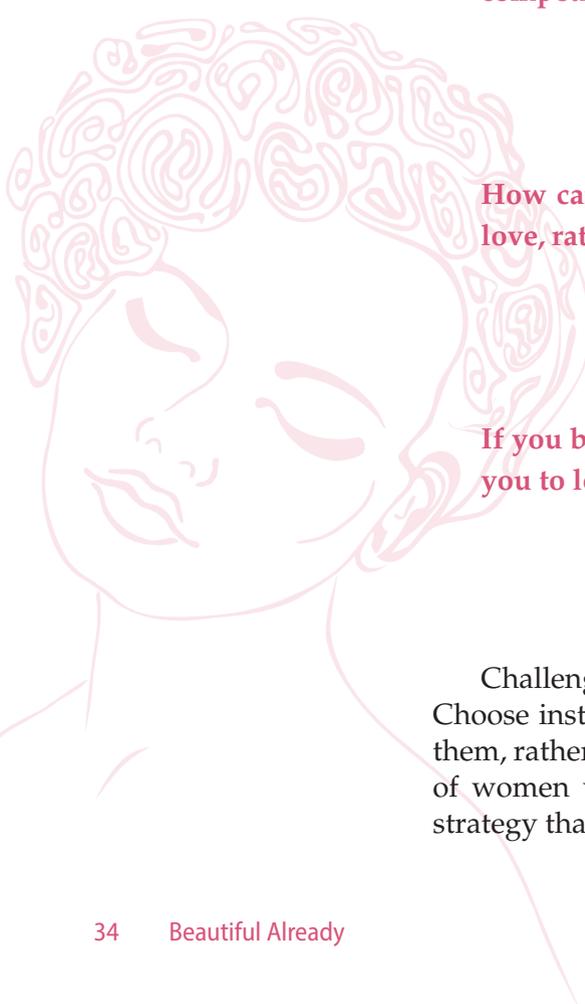
If we want to elevate the conversation one more level, the weapon that overpowers competition and comparison is *love*.

Look up 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and write it in the space below. These verses show us how love is the antidote to comparison and competition.

How can these verses remind you to look at other women with love, rather than with an attitude of comparison and competition?

If you begin to look at all women with love, how could that help you to look at yourself less critically?

Challenge yourself to stop mentally competing with other women. Choose instead to compliment others, letting them know that you are for them, rather than competing against them. You'll be amazed at the number of women who will be uplifted and encouraged by your words. It's a strategy that will enable you to win too!



Live It Out

1. What is one thing that God impressed upon your heart during today's study?
2. Do you have a sense or leading from God about what you need to think or do differently as a result of what you've studied?

Talk with God

Don't be ashamed to admit that you've struggled with comparing yourself or competing with other women. Confess that struggle before God. Ask for forgiveness and, most of all, for God to fill your heart with love for all women so that you see them as your beautiful sisters in Christ, not your competition.

Day 5: Protecting the Truth

Beauty Mark

You are beautiful because God made you!

Beauty Regimen

Imagine showing up to your house after a week-long vacation and your home's front door is wide open. Pushing past those instant feelings of fear and disbelief, you creep up to the open doorway and peek inside. Another surprise awaits! All of the windows are open too.

If you are anything like me, your first thought would be to hustle back to your car and dial 911. Why? Houses with wide open doors and windows don't feel safe. When we're in our homes, our private space, it's our doors and windows that help us feel protected. Without that protection, unwelcome guests may come into our space with their own agendas.

When it comes to our ugly struggle with beauty, our hearts, minds, and bodies also need protection. We all have vulnerable places that are at risk for damage. Depending on your beauty narrative, you may have already experienced some damage, so care must be taken to prevent additional or future destruction.



A few years ago, I stayed with friends who installed an alarm system in their home. Since there would be times when I'd arrive at the house before the family, they wanted to teach me how to turn the system on and off. As we walked through the house, the husband showed me the different sensors placed above the doorways and on the home's windows. The sensors were placed in those areas because they were the most vulnerable places in a home and the likely point of entry by a burglar.

Of course, the next day I arrived at the house and promptly set off the alarm. My mistake was that I activated a sensor but couldn't unlock the door in time. I jumped as the alarm sounded, creating quite a noise in their cul de sac. Quite embarrassing! Yet if I had been an intruder, that loud alarm would have been quite a convincing deterrent.

When I think about our ugly struggle with beauty and the impact it has on our hearts, it is clear to me that we must have sensors for the sensitive, vulnerable places. Where or when are you most vulnerable or sensitive when it comes to the topic of beauty? Maybe you feel vulnerable when you are out with your girlfriends and everyone has a boyfriend or husband except for you. Or maybe it's when you're with your mom or sister and one of them reminds you that you were much skinnier in high school. In situations like those, you need to establish sensors; and when the sensors go off, you've got to be ready for battle and to fight back!

Today we're going to talk about what it means to establish beauty-sensors and how to fight back when those sensors go off. You'll know that you're fighting back when those vulnerable events happen yet you later find yourself standing strong in God's truth rather than lying wounded in a pool of insecurity while eating a carton of ice cream.

Earlier this week we learned how Satan uses lies to convince us to believe that we could never be beautiful. His goal is to discourage us from living fully and trusting God in every area of our lives.

Protecting our hearts is serious business! Think about protecting your heart like the Secret Service protects the president of the United States. As the most powerful person in the world, the president is our country's leader and an asset to be protected. While we might think that the safest place for the president to be would be a mile underground in a concrete bunker, the role of the Secret Service is to help the president to be as available to others as possible while providing protection. Since there can be a threat to the president's life at any time, Secret Service agents must be ready for anything. As one agent described their approach, "Protection is an art form," meaning that protection has to adjust and adapt depending on the circumstances.⁹ They must continually adjust, determining what to keep out as well as what to allow in. The same is true when it comes to guarding our hearts.

Strong's Concordance defines our heart as our inner self, so what we are to guard is actually a combination of our heart and mind, representing our emotions and our thoughts, respectively.¹⁰

Read Proverbs 4:23 in the margin. Why is it imperative that we guard our hearts?

Focus on the word *guard*. Give some examples of other things in life that we guard:

Guard your heart
above all else,
for it determines
the course of
your life.
(Proverbs 4:23)

To help you know what situations you need to guard against related to beauty, think about and write a brief answer to the following questions:

When do I tend to feel the most insecure as it pertains to my body size, shape, or style?

What are some of the websites or magazines that can make me feel bad about myself after I read them?

Who are the friends/family members/acquaintances who tend to make critical comments about my appearance?

When I experience beauty-related pain, how does it change the way I view myself?



If you didn't connect with the Secret Service analogy, here's another. Think about your heart like a garden. Picture your garden. Visually populate it with flowers or vegetables—your preference. Now, picture a long afternoon of rain followed by a few days of hot sun. While your garden is growing, there are some intruders who will try to pop up as well: weeds.

What's the problem with weeds? Well, weeds siphon the nourishment from the plants that will actually produce something of value. Weeds don't produce anything of value; they only produce more weeds. Furthermore, weeds grow quickly, so any prolonged period of inattention can spell disaster. If you've been gardening for any length of time, you know that when you see a weed, you pluck it out as soon as possible.

In our world, the Internet gives everyone a platform and a voice to share his or her opinion. It also provides endless opportunities for businesses to infiltrate their sales messages into almost every aspect of our lives. This means that there are a lot of "weeds" in the form of beauty-related messages that will never encourage or uplift your heart but, instead, will overrun your heart with feelings of inadequacy and struggle, leading to discouragement.

Think about "weeds" such as the constantly recurring thoughts that you might have about your physical flaws. What are some of those recurring thoughts?

Look up Colossians 2:8 and write it the margin. Circle the word *captive* (some translations may use *capture, enslave, or cheat*).

In this verse, the word *captive* is defined as to "make victim by fraud."¹¹ What are some of the ways that you see women, including yourself, being taken captive by the world's concept of beauty?

The Apostle Paul refers to two influences that we can be taken captive through, becoming victims by fraud. What are these influences?

Why are God's weapons more effective than our efforts?

We never have to feel helpless in our ugly struggle with beauty! Ephesians 6:10-17 outlines the weapons that God gives us to fight. Ladies, we may be talking about beauty, but our battle—our ugly struggle with beauty—is against the enemy of our souls!

Look up Ephesians 6:10-17 and list the weapons God gives us that we can use to win our ugly struggle with beauty:

Which weapons do you need to deploy *right now* in your ugly struggle with beauty?

As we conclude our study today, let's create a framework for how we can set up our security system and attack plan. Follow the prompts below to customize your own plan. There are verses in parentheses that you can read through as part of this exercise.

Follow the prompts below to complete your plan.

1. Identify the risk (area of vulnerability). (Psalm 139)

When it comes to my ugly struggle with beauty, I am most vulnerable when _____
_____.

2. Notice when the alarm sounds. (Proverbs 14:16)

My struggle begins when _____
_____.

3. Call on God and trust friends for help. (James 4:7-8; Hebrews 4:16; Ecclesiastes 4:9-11)

Extra Insight:

Did you ever notice that the armor of God does not include pants? I didn't until someone pointed it out to me. Forgive me, but I had a good laugh over that one!



Extra Insight:

Need some ideas for verses to help you overpower the threat? Check these out:

Psalm 139:13-14

Psalm 139:17

Jeremiah 31:3

When my struggle begins, I need to take a deep breath and focus on God and His truth. These are the things I need to remember:

4. Overpower the threat. (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 10:5)

Here are some Bible verses I need to write down and/or memorize in order to fight back and overcome my beauty-related insecurities:

5. Declare victory! (John 16:33)

I know that I am victorious when the following happens:

- My heart doesn't sink into pain and despair after hurtful comments or experiences.
- My mind doesn't drift off into harmful, destructive shame statements.
- My heart and mind are focused on God's truth.
- I don't attack the person or people involved in the situation.
- Other:

Live It Out

1. What is one thing that God impressed upon your heart during today's study?

2. Do you have a sense or leading from God about what you need to think or do differently as a result of what you've studied?

Talk with God

Now that you've got a framework for how to guard your heart, ask God to help you activate it. If you haven't been able to come up with Scripture verses you need to memorize as part of your plan, ask God to lead you to those verses that *you* need in order to win your ugly struggle with beauty.



VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE: WEEK 1

ALL ABOARD THE STRUGGLE BUS

Beauty is a description of three things:

1. Our _____.
2. Our _____.
3. Our _____.

We have an _____ with beauty that we don't want to fight.

Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no _____.
(Genesis 2:25)

At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. (Genesis 3:7-8)

Shame is this feeling deep inside that there is something _____ with us.

Shame tells a story that we are _____.

A lie that is believed as the truth will affect us as if it was _____.

The stories that we tell ourselves about our beauty—I call those stories our

_____.

When we don't believe that we are _____ we are going to look to other people and other things to convince us that we are _____.

*Guard your heart above all else,
for it determines the course of your life.
(Proverbs 4:23)*

We need _____ to believe that we are enough in a world that is constantly showing us our faults and our failures.

