

In the Eye of the Beholder

Seeking Godly Beauty in a Disfigured World

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*A Study for the viewers and participants of the online **Ladies Bible Study of Addyston Baptist Church***

Introduction

You may not know me personally, and I may not know you, but I know we have something in common. We are both marred, and we live in a marred universe. As inhabitants of a sin-cursed world that places value on things and people based upon their rarity or beauty, all of us probably have something that causes us to fail to rise to the world's – or our own – standards.

We are no strangers to the paradox between beauty and ugliness even on the earth. The same mountains and oceans that inspire poetry and cause us to travel great lengths to behold them are also treacherous when we are in their presence. Cliffs and waves can be hazardous. The same can be said for the animals that share our world. Some of the loveliest creatures are the deadliest. The multitude of barriers seen in the zoos are proof of that. Not every animal species makes an appearance to the children's petting area for interaction unless it is young or has been suitably restrained.

We are no stranger to human disfigurement either. Some people experience stigmatization or perceive it due to genetic features such as misaligned teeth, a prominent nose, or misshapen ears. Others experience it due to either trauma and defects at birth or as a result of accident and illness later. These can affect how an individual sees herself, how she thinks others see her, and how others actually see her. The last two – how others see her and how she thinks they see her – concern perceptions that may cause self-consciousness.

We likely have an inflated view of ourselves, but we are often our own greatest critic. We also may care what others think about us, but we cannot read their minds to know what those thoughts are. How do we cope with these confusing and sometimes contradictory viewpoints? How do we interact with others when we are afraid of what they might think about us? Where do we find answers to all these questions?

Consider that the Bible teaches us that there is yet another Beholder. It is how we think that He sees us that can distort our view of Him and ourselves, but actually it is how He sees us that should determine both how little and how much esteem we have for ourselves and for others. Join me as we search the Bible for the answers to these questions. We will search within its pages to help us properly behold God, others, and ourselves with the goal that we, as beholders, will have our perceptions refocused.

In the next several weeks we will be looking at beauty in 5 areas. We will discuss how that beauty came to be, how it has been marred, what has been done to attempt to control or cover the damage, and what it will be like in the future. This will not be an exhaustive topical study, but perhaps in these dark times it will open our eyes to beauty as described in the Bible, give us hope for now and the future, and help us cope with the disfigurement that resides on all of us.

Kym

Research for further understanding of this study:

If you have access to a Strong's Concordance in book form or online see what you can discover about the following Hebrew words and how they are translated. Note how many times the Hebrew word appears in the Old Testament and the various ways that it is translated. Then look up the given scriptures and read the verses in context. There are many words that are translated "beauty" in the KJV, but the same Hebrew words are also translated other ways in the same version of the Bible. **This is not meant to be completed in one week! This can be done as the study progresses, but it is important to have an idea of what it is we are seeking to find. Defining the word "beauty" in context is crucial to understanding what it is that we and others are beholding.**

Tools to help you in your research:

- A. If you have access to other literal (word-for-word) translations of the Bible, compare the usage between the KJV and those Bibles (NASB, ESV, NKJV, NRSV). How are they alike or how do they differ?
- B. If you have access to dynamic equivalent Bibles (thought-for-thought) translations (NIV, TNIV, NLT, CEV, GNB) compare them with the passages in the KJV and the other literal translations. How are they alike or how do they differ?
- C. If you have access to paraphrases (not translations at all, but a person's idea of what the author meant: The Living Bible, The Message, The Street Bible) which can be useful as Bible commentaries for getting someone's opinion on a text or to compare the author's idea with what a literal translation actually says.

Here are just a few of the words translated "beauty" in the KJV:

- A. H1927 (which means Hebrew word 1927)
- B. H8597
- C. H3308
- D. H5278
- E. H6287

Write your information on other paper, perhaps in a notebook or journal.

Weekly Worksheet – Beauty of _____

(Note: You will need 5 copies of this and each of the following pages, 1 for each area studied)

A. Seen in

B. Marred by

C. Damage Control

D. Future Restoration

E. Objective Beholder's Viewpoint (Belonging to _____)

F. Subjective Beholder's Viewpoint (Belonging to _____)

- G. Considering what you have learned this week, how do you view God? Is it different in any way than how you viewed Him before? If so, how should you respond to Him? Compose a prayer telling Him your view of Him and how you will respond to Him.
- H. Considering what you have learned this week, how do you view yourself? Does it differ in any way than how you viewed yourself before? If so, in what way? Does what you have learned make you more confident or more afraid to be viewed by God and/or others?
- I. Considering what you have learned this week, how do you view others? Does it differ in any way than how you viewed them before? How should you respond to others? Ask God to bring someone to mind for whom you might need to pray or contact with encouragement in response to what you have learned.
- J. Considering what you have learned this week, how do you view God's creation? Does it differ in any way than how you viewed it before? If so, what changes will you make or what will you do in response?