



BEAUTY

by the

BOOK

Study Guide



NANCY STAFFORD

BEAUTY *by* THE BOOK

SEEING YOURSELF *as* GOD SEES YOU

by Nancy Stafford

BEAUTY *by* THE BOOK STUDY GUIDE

For Personal and Small-Group Study

Welcome to a deeper reflection of *Beauty by the Book*. I have been touched and overwhelmed by your gracious response to this book. And because so many of you have requested additional material based on *Beauty by the Book*, I've developed this easy-to-download study guide, which can be used individually or with a small group, such as your prayer or Bible study group or college or high school girls group. Use this study to dig deeper and spend some time in honest reflection with God.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to read *Beauty by the Book: Seeing Yourself as God Sees You*. It can be ordered from my website, www.nancystafford.com/orderform.html, or through <http://multnomah.net/beautybythebook>.

Each essay-length piece in the book is based on a promise from Scripture of who you are in Christ. These are life-changing promises, so take the time to read the Scripture passage prayerfully, as if for the first time. Write it down; take it with you through the day; commit it to memory; absorb its truth.

I welcome you to journal as you go through this study. After you download and print the study guide, you might wish to insert it into a binder and add some blank sheets between the pages. This is for you to journal and write down your thoughts and reflections. Write what you sense God saying to you as you spend time with Him. Journaling and writing our thoughts and prayers and impressions allows us to think more deeply and gives God the opportunity to speak to our hearts and minds more clearly. My own experience is that journaling fosters intimacy with God as I bare my heart and learn to hear His.

Take time to really answer the questions in this study guide. If you're in a group, share your answers, even some of your journal entries, with each other when you come together.

My prayer for you as you go through this study is that you will get to know yourself—and each other—more deeply as you journey toward true beauty and wholeness. I pray that God will meet you in deep and intimate ways as He reveals to you how loved, cherished, and accepted you are in Him. May you always remember who you are (Psalm 45:11)!

Your friend,



1
BEAUTY MATTERS

Prepare: Read “The Power of Appearances.”

Scripture: John 7:24

Respond:

1. Think of a time when you made a quick judgment about someone based solely on appearance. How did your opinion of the person later change?

2. Think of a time when someone made a quick judgment about *you* based solely on appearance. How did his or her reaction make you feel?

3. Do you still struggle with judging others—either positively or negatively—based on appearance (ex: tattoos or piercings, gang clothing, expensive jewelry, hip clothing, racial differences, overweight, very attractive, etc.)?

4. In one of the quotes in this section, Iris Murdoch calls ours a “world of illusion.” How is your personal world one of illusion? How can you seek to discover reality—which believers would identify as the Kingdom of God—in your own environment?

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**Prepare:** Read “Our Longing for Beauty.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 27:4

**Respond:**

1. Read Psalm 27:4 again. What does the “beauty of the Lord” mean to you? How can we see the beauty of the One who is invisible? How would you describe this beauty to someone else?
  
2. What kind of beauty in life are you drawn to? Are you most apt to see beauty in nature? Art or music? The spirits of other people? Pay attention when you find yourself responding to beauty. How does it make you feel—physically, emotionally, spiritually? Pause and take it in. Let it nourish your soul. Then thank God for the beautiful thing He has shown you.
  
3. Our earthly longing for beauty translates into a longing for the beauty of heaven. What does the “beauty of heaven” look like to you? Under what circumstances are you most likely to find yourself longing for heaven?

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Prepare: Read “The Importance of Beauty.”

Scripture: Psalm 103:2–4

Respond:

1. How does your appearance affect your self-confidence? How does your self-confidence affect your comfort level when it comes to meeting new people at church or striking up a conversation with a stranger in a store?

2. The cancer patients Vera ministered to learned that “their beauty is more than just the sum of their parts.” Apply this concept to yourself. How would your opinion of your appearance change if you truly believed that your beauty was more than just the sum of your parts?

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**Prepare:** Read “Mere Appearances.”

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 16:7–8

**Respond:**

1. Reread 1 Samuel 16:7–8. What do you think the Lord sees when He looks at your heart? (Don’t be so hard on yourself—there *is* good in your heart!)
  
2. Can you recall the first time you saw your family—or yourself—through the eyes of other people? How did that make you feel? How can you overcome any leftover negative feelings from that experience?
  
3. Read the Lord Grenville quote. Think of an example of someone with true beauty. Think also of an example of false beauty.

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### **Chapter Reflection:**

In John 7:24, Jesus said, “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” He knew how common it was for people to form opinions based on superficial observation. Set yourself apart as an uncommon person by refusing to pass judgment whenever you catch yourself using “mere appearances” in determining what a person is like. That means stop judging *yourself* by mere appearances too.

In your private prayer time, pray the prayer at the end of the chapter. Pray it slowly and reflectively, just a line or two at a time, pausing to allow the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants you to see.

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## THE ULTIMATE MAKEOVER

**Prepare:** Read “The Beauty of Brokenness.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:18

**Respond:**

1. Have you ever been “crushed in spirit”? Do any of the descriptions on pages 32–33 describe you? During those times in your life, how does God reveal His tender presence to you?
  
2. Everyone has experienced some form of rejection. Recall a time in your childhood or youth when you felt rejected. How did it affect you? How did you handle it? How do you handle rejection as an adult? How have rejections contributed to your sense of worth in adulthood?

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Prepare: Read “Beauty for Ashes.”

Scripture: 2 Kings 20:5

Respond:

1. What have you used in the past to fill the void created by your fears and insecurities? What sorts of things or activities do you still use today? (Remember, this is our opportunity to be honest! This is a safe place.)

2. Often what we think are “mistakes” turn out to be God-ordained opportunities—such as the scheduling error that led Nancy to a life-changing encounter with God. What improbable events in your life have deepened your faith or brought you into a closer relationship with God?

3. Have you experienced the ultimate makeover offered by Jesus? Reflect on that experience. In your group, take five minutes each to share your story of how you came to know Christ. If you’re not really sure about your relationship with Jesus, read Titus 3:3–7 and John 3:16. Jesus loves you so much that He paid the price for your wrongdoing with His own life. He did for us what we can’t do for ourselves. And He invites you to receive God’s forgiveness and the eternal life He freely gives—and bought for you—when He died on the cross. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, if you want to accept His forgiveness for the sin in your life and receive the freedom and love He offers, then ask Him to take your sin and to give you His life. Say yes to Jesus. Invite Him into your heart. Invite Him to be Lord in your life.

If you have just made this decision, tell your group. This is the most exciting day of your life! Let them have the joy of praying with you. It’s a very special celebration!

4. Accepting Christ is a one-time decision. But our ultimate makeover is not just a one-time event. It’s a divine process of gentle transformation, as every day God changes us more and more into the image of Jesus.

In what ways does God continue to heal, restore, and transform you?



Chapter Reflection:

Read my journal entry—“Reflections of His Love”

Have you had times like this?

Sometimes we think we need to be strong, to have it all together. But when we are weak and fail, when we come to the end of ourselves and are broken, He comes close.

“Now there’s room for Me in you,” He says. “It was too crowded before.” When you feel empty and drained, think of how much room there now is inside you into which God can flood His mercy and grace.

Spend some time in honesty and vulnerability with the Lord. Let Him show you the gift and beauty of brokenness. Let Him come into those hidden places. Allow Him to exchange His beauty for your ashes, His wholeness for your brokenness. Offer it to Him....

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3 A HEALING BALM

Prepare: Read “A Clear Picture.”

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4–5; Hebrews 2:17–18

Respond:

1. It may seem easier to believe that Jesus bore your sins than to think of Him bearing your humiliation and embarrassment and shame. Think of a recent embarrassing or painful moment. How does your memory of that moment change once you insert Christ’s presence into the picture?
2. What experiences in your life have left an “emotional residue”—even a seemingly insignificant residue? Accept my invitation on page 49. Sit quietly and unhurriedly before the Lord and invite Him to show you times in your life that need His healing touch. Take the presence of Christ with you as you recall those experiences, and allow Him to bear the humiliation and pain you felt.
3. Hebrews 2:17 says Jesus became like us “in very respect” (NRSV). Part of what that means is that He was subject to the ridicule of others just as we are or have been. How can knowing that help you bear the ridicule of others?

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**Prepare:** Read “The Power to Forgive.”

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:18–19; Romans 12:18; Matthew 18:21–22; Psalm 10:2, 4–5, 15; Psalm 13:1–2

**Respond:**

1. Recall a time when you consciously forgave someone for the emotional pain he or she caused you. How did the act of forgiveness change you? What do you suspect it did for the other person (even if he or she never knew it)?
  
2. Now think about a situation in which you have failed to forgive someone. How has your lack of forgiveness affected you? How has it affected your relationship with God? With the offender?
  
3. George Herbert believes that unforgiveness “breaks the bridge” over which a person must eventually pass. What does it take to rebuild such a broken bridge?

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Chapter Reflection:

Unforgiveness holds others hostage *and* keeps you in bondage to those who have hurt you. Forgiveness, though, releases you from that bondage, freeing you to genuinely love others—friends and enemies alike. As you experience the freedom that comes with forgiveness, you also open yourself up to a deeper love relationship with God—and with yourself.

Settle yourself down before the Lord as I did on pages 51–52. Read Colossians 3:13, and ask God to open the eyes of your heart and show you your unforgiveness. We don't fully know our own hearts, so ask the Holy Spirit to show you, one by one, those you need to forgive and release. Remember it's not our ability; it is the power of Christ in us that enables us to forgive. And it is a process. Ask God to help you be willing to forgive each one and to give you the grace to do so in His timing.

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4

A DIVINE MASTERPIECE

Prepare: Read “God’s Workmanship.”

Scripture: Isaiah 64:8; Romans 8:1

Respond:

1. If “all God has to do is take away the parts that don’t belong to reveal the masterpiece that is you,” how can you cooperate with God in that process? In what ways do you find yourself resisting God as He “chisels” away at all that is not your true nature?
2. What are some of the things in your life He might want to remove? What are some of the things that cover or encase you, or that keep you from being all you were created to be?
3. Allowing God to chip away at the stony exterior that encases you will, of necessity, involved some pain, no matter how gently He works on you. How can your willingness to endure pain help reveal your true nature?
4. Just as Michelangelo did with David, “Jesus is calling you out.” Who is the “real you”? Take a few minutes and ask God to show you who He created you to be—the real YOU. Write down ten qualities you possess: your positive attributes, the things you’re good at, the things others see and admire in you (ex: you’re unny, generous, patient, organized, creative, optimistic, etc.). Don’t skip this exercise...you’re tempted, I can tell! It’s easier to think of our negative qualities, isn’t it? But God’s heart is for you to recognize the beautiful and gifted person He has designed you to be. So give yourself permission to see those qualities in yourself. Now, start writing!

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**Prepare:** Read “God’s Work.”

**Scripture:** John 8:36; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10

**Respond:**

1. Satan wants to destroy you. How has Satan tried to destroy you in the past—or in the present by bringing up the pain of the past?
  
2. Jesus wants to restore you. How can you apply His restorative work to a painful situation in your past? How can you make your past work for you rather than against you?
  
3. Satan is the father of lies. Jesus is the Truth. And the truth is that you are a new creation, with a new identity. How would you define and describe your new identity? Take some time and use the appendix in the back of the book—“In the Mirror of God’s Word I See...”—for just some of the many Scriptures describing your true identity in Christ. Ask the Lord to help you change your thinking, and believe the truth of who you are.

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Prepare: Read “Tearing Down the Wall.”

Scripture: John 14:6; John 10:10; Ephesians 2:13–15, 17; Isaiah 53:4–5

Respond:

1. Have you built walls around yourself? Can you recall when your walls first began to be built and why? What words appear on the bricks you have used to build a wall around yourself? Take some time this week to think about this. What lies do you believe about yourself? (ex: I can’t, I’ll never, I’m disgusting, I’m ugly, God couldn’t love me—He knows that unforgivable thing from my past, etc.)? What behaviors have you adopted that aren’t really you (ex: controlling, sarcastic, defensive, manipulative, bitter, fearful, abusive, insecure, compliant, compulsive, busyness, food, alcohol, drugs, etc.)?
2. Read Psalm 91:14; Isaiah 61:1–2; Luke 4:2. Now imagine that wall being shattered by the Lord. What image of yourself do you see now that the wall is down?
3. The purpose of healing is “not just to make us feel better. It’s to restore us to our original self.” The wall you’ve built may represent the fear of finding out who you really are. What do you think it will take to bring you to a place of complete trust in God during the process of self-discovery? Read “Reflections of His Love” again. Thinking of your own bricks and shattered walls, read the lyrics of Lauren Johnson’s song, and offer it as a prayer to God.

Chapter Reflection:

A lifetime of painful experiences, hurtful words, and damaging relationships have resulted in the false view you have of yourself. Even if you have found freedom in Christ, you may still be holding on to the remnants of a self-image that does not accurately reflect who you are in Christ.

But knowing your identity in Christ will change you completely. It will shatter your old warped self-perception, insecurities, and self-consciousness. Whenever Satan tries to conjure up that false image, remember the Truth—Jesus and what He has done for you and who He says you are.

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1. What are some areas in your life where God is bringing freedom to you?
2. What in your life threatens to enslave you all over again? What attitudes, sins, habits, or thoughts (read 1 Corinthians 7:23)?
3. What are some practical things you can do every day to resist the temptation to return to “Egypt”—the old, familiar patterns of thinking and behaving and sin?

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**Chapter Reflection:**

In Galatians 5:1 Paul says that it was for freedom that Christ set you free. He set you free from the hurt and the sin of your past for a purpose. Meditate on the freedom-drenched purpose the Lord has for you. Offer all of yourself—including your past—to God. Ask Him to show you how He will use your past for your good, others’ healing, and His glory.

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**6**  
**UNMASKED**

**Prepare:** Read “Taking Off the Mask.”

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 3:16

**Respond:**

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to gently reveal to you what masks you may be wearing. How do you try to mask your insecurities in public? How successful do you think those disguises really are?
  
2. Some believers use their many church activities as an excuse to avoid opening themselves up to God. What is it in your life that blocks your openness and vulnerability to God?
  
3. How does seeing your own mask make you more aware of the masks that others wear to cover themselves? How does that awareness affect your response to them and their behavior?



**Prepare:** Read “An Identity Crisis.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 27:10

**Respond:**

1. Take a close look at the roles you play in both your nuclear and extended families. In what ways can you relate to Jamie's story? Might your roles help perpetuate some negative family dynamics—no matter how well-intentioned those roles appear to be?
  
2. Recall a time when you stopped playing a role that others expected you to continue playing. How difficult was that? What was the initial reaction? What positive changes resulted from your refusal to continue the game?
  
3. What are some of the things you can do today to change any unhealthy patterns of relating and communicating in your relationships?

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Prepare: Read "I Wanna Be Me...I Think."

Scripture: Isaiah 62:2

Respond:

1. Many of us define ourselves by how others react to us. What are some things you continue to do to in order to gain the acceptance of others?

2. Brent Curtis and John Eldredge write that “You will not live beyond how you see yourself.” What does that mean in your life? In what ways would your life be different or fuller if you saw yourself differently?

3. If you really believed that God gave you a new identity when He made you a new creation, how would that impact the way you live?

Chapter Reflection:

Accepting yourself involves knowing yourself—the *you* God intended you to be. Spend some time alone with God with the sole intention of allowing Him to reveal your true self. And this week, take a practical step toward taking off your mask. Take a risk. Be authentic and vulnerable with those around you. Instead of acting like everything is okay, tell someone—or your study group—if you’re hurting or afraid or in need. In your relationships, be the first to take off your mask. Authenticity is wonderfully contagious.

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Prepare: Read “I Don’t Believe I’ve Met You.”

Scripture: John 15:19

Respond:

1. Believers—especially women—often go out of their way to conform to a mythical “Christian” image, just as I did at my church. Have your attempts to “fit in” made you feel less self-conscious or more self-conscious?

2. Answer Henri Nouwen’s question for yourself: “Am I a prisoner of people’s expectations, or liberated by Divine promises?” What can you do to enjoy that liberation more in your daily life?

3. See if you can go through one day without trying to live up to the expectations of others. (To clarify: I’m NOT talking about neglecting your responsibilities or refusing to be kind and loving to others. I’m talking about your need to feel that you have to *be* someone others expect you to be in order to feel approved or accepted.) Make note of how frequently you are tempted to please the people in your life in ways that are contrary to your true nature.

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**Prepare:** Read “The Girl With the Curl.”

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 12:22

**Respond:**

1. Make your own “good girl” list, as I did. What are the things you feel you must do to qualify as a good girl?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. To help you get to know the “real you,” do Dr. Brandon’s exercise on page 97 for yourself. Think about what you like and don’t like, who you are and who you aren’t. Write down everything you can think of and be brutally honest.

“I like myself least when \_\_\_\_\_.”

“I like myself most when \_\_\_\_\_.”

3. Remember the lies we talked about in our study of chapter 4: “Tearing Down the Walls”? Remember the words written on our bricks? Go back to the list you wrote down. What are the lies about yourself that you have believed? What are those things that keep you from fully living the life God intended for you? Refer to page 98 and go through each lie one by one—Expose it, Confess it as a lie, Repent of it, and Renounce it.



**Chapter Reflection:**

It’s freeing to know you don’t have to be who everyone else expects you to be. You just have to be who God expects you to be: your true self, the unique person He created you to be.



The real way to overcome the lies we believe about ourselves, our false self-perception, is with the truth of God. Determine from this day forward that when those lies and old tapes play in your head, you will take captive every thought—take prisoner everything that tries to take you prisoner. Read 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 and Romans 12:2. Continually renew your mind with Scriptures that tell you who you are in Christ. Look at the appendix at the back of *Beauty by the Book*—“In the Mirror of God’s Word I See....” Keep memorizing those promises.

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**8**  
**PURSUED BY LOVE**

**Prepare:** Read “Drawn to Love.”

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19

**Respond:**

1. How did God pursue you? Was it in the quiet, persistent Josh way, or the “sudden storm” way that Brennan Manning experienced? Come up with your own unique way of describing God’s loving, relentless pursuit of you.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In what ways does God continue to pursue a love relationship with you?



**Prepare:** Read “Rooted in Love.”

**Scripture:** Song of Songs 7:10; Ephesians 3:17–19; Song of Songs 2:10–12

**Respond:**

1. What does the phrase “rooted in God’s love” mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read Romans 8:39, mentally replacing the words “anything else in all creation” with a blank line. Now fill in that blank with whatever it is in your life that seems to separate you from a full awareness of the love God has for you.

3. Brennan Manning says that when we fully grasp God’s love for us, a life of “affections, awe, spontaneous praise and profound wonder results.” What would that look like in your life? How would that affect you and change you?



**Prepare:** Read “Magnificent Obsession.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 45:11; Zechariah 13:2

**Respond:**

1. The temptation to obsess about our weight and our body is a powerful one. Do you struggle with that? In what ways?
  
2. My friend discovered a healthy balance and a sense of contentment in her life that easily replaced her desire for a size-6 figure. Spend some time thinking about the beautiful and meaningful things in your own life. What could you focus on that would help take the focus off your figure?
  
3. Do you have a “golden calf” in your life—a false god that has usurped the Father’s rightful place in your heart and your thoughts? What can you do today to begin destroying that false god?

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**Chapter Reflection:**

God’s love for you is more powerful than all of those other things that vie for your attention. When you truly begin to see yourself as His beloved, you realize what a waste it is to focus on those “other things”—and what a treasure it is to make God the object of your affection. What can you do to make Him your “magnificent obsession”?

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3. What are the things you like about your body and your appearance.... And don't skip this question! It's not egotistical; it's recognizing the beauty of God's form and function in you (ex: your eye color, flexibility, strength, energy and stamina, wavy hair, clear complexion, good health, nice smile, etc.). List at least five things. Share them in your group, and then let the group share some of the positive things they see about you too.

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Prepare: Read "Leaving a Legacy."

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 28:8; Proverbs 13:22

Respond:

1. What "learned behavior" are you passing on to your children or other people in your life?
2. Listen to how you talk about yourself and what you say to others. Catch yourself when you begin to talk negatively or put yourself down or comment on others' appearance.
3. Take an honest look at your attitude about food and dieting. Is there anything you need to do to bring more balance in that area of your life?

4. Pay attention to the appearance-oriented media messages you receive in a single day. What can you do in a practical way to counteract the effect those messages may have on you? If you have children, how can you help them resist these messages, too?



Chapter Reflection:

You have received a precious inheritance from God—His spiritual DNA permeates your very being. When you embrace that truth—when you really grasp what it means—you change both the present and the future. You can live the abundant life God promised in the here and now, and you can leave a spiritual legacy for others to follow in the years to come.

Spend some time and pray the prayer at the end of the chapter—slowly and thoughtfully—with sincere gratitude to God.

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**Chapter Reflection:**

Joseph's story reads like a self-contained novel in Genesis chapters 37–48. Read those passages, and as you consider his life story, think of corresponding incidents in your life: times of betrayal, abandonment, promotion, demotion, blessing. Remember that what others have meant for evil, God means for good. Sit quietly before the Lord and allow Him to reveal to you how the trials and difficult circumstances you've faced can be used for your good—and His glory.

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2. In addition to scheduling regular quiet time with God, this week begin planning a special time to get away and “retreat” with God. Describe the setting you would most likely be drawn to. How would you spend your time with Him? What would you want to hear and receive from God?

3. Richard Foster writes, “Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment.” How have you been able to find fulfillment in your times of solitude?

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Prepare: Read “Desolate Beauty.”

Scripture: Hosea 2:3; Job 23:8–10

Respond:

1. What period in your life comes to mind when you hear the phrase “dark night of the soul”?

2. Looking back on that time, at what point did you finally realize you were being tested—and refined as gold?

3. Did you feel you were able to be honest with God about your doubts during that time? Why or why not?

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**Prepare:** Read “Springs in the Desert.”

**Scripture:** Isaiah 41:18; Hosea 2:14–15, 19–20

**Respond:**

1. How has God made your wilderness “like Eden”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Recall the times when you experienced the greatest intimacy with God. In what ways were those times like the stark nakedness of the desert?

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Chapter Reflection:

The desert can be a place of wretched desolation or a place of incomparable beauty. How you perceive it depends on just who is in the desert with you. When the One who loves

you passionately and unconditionally meets you in the desert, the once-barren landscape becomes an oasis of intimacy. If you are in the desert now, cry out and let Him meet you there.... He is close to you.

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12 UNIQUELY YOU

Prepare: Read “Busted!”

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3

Respond:

1. Think about a time in your life when you’ve tried to be something or someone other than who you are. If you really believed that God has given you everything you need for life and godliness, how should that change your efforts at trying to be someone you’re not?
2. The ability to laugh at yourself and your public foibles can help keep you grounded. Take a few minutes in your group, and share your most embarrassing moments!
3. Think of another humiliating experience in your past. How would the situation have turned out had you been able to genuinely laugh it off?
4. This week, determine to “lighten up” in all areas of your life—and see what happens!

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**Prepare:** Read “The Perfect Part.”

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 1:5

**Respond:**

1. How have you sacrificed your uniqueness in an effort to fit in?
  
2. What are some of your unique qualities and attributes?
  
3. Well-meaning people often try to make others fit into a man-made mold. How can you prepare yourself to resist their misguided efforts to make you something other than what God intended?

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Prepare: Read “No Comparison.”

Scripture: Psalm 139:14; 1 Kings 7:14

Respond:

1. In what areas of your life (such as church or work or school) have you recently felt the pressure to conform? How did you respond to that pressure?

2. How could you better express—rather than deemphasize—your uniqueness?

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**Prepare:** Read “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.”

**Scripture:** Romans 15:7

**Respond:**

1. In what ways do you face the temptation to compare yourself with others? What does this say about your contentment with God—all that He has given you and all that He has made you to be?
  
2. When we compare ourselves with others, we always lose—because whether we come away feeling inferior or superior, we started out with a faulty standard of measurement. So...what does the only valid standard—the mirror of God’s Word—tell you about yourself?

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Chapter Reflection:

Trying to conform to some artificial model of appearance or behavior is not only frustrating to you; it’s also insulting to God. He made you the way He wanted you to be. Honor Him by refusing to be “re-made” according to cultural standards. Determine today that you will revel in your uniqueness, delight in your distinctiveness, cherish your individuality.

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your fears; look up the verses and read them aloud. Read them again and again. Memorize the verse, and let the truth of God’s love for you, His care and provision and heart for you, go deep into your own heart....

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**Prepare:** Read “A Designer Label.”

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 14:9

**Respond:**

1. What labels were stuck on you throughout your life without your permission? What labels do you continue to wear?

2. Imagine replacing those old labels with a label bearing the name of the Master Designer. What does that mean to you? How does that change your perception of yourself? What does it feel like to be wearing the ultimate in custom-made clothing?

3. Now, can we talk about your clothes?! Take an honest look at the clothes you like to wear and ask yourself: *What message am I sending when I wear this outfit? What do others notice? Where will their eyes be drawn—my hips, rear end, breasts, or to my face and smile? Why do I want to wear this outfit?* Be honest with yourself.

Realize that what you wear and how you look tells everyone what you believe. So are you reflecting the world’s philosophy of beauty or God’s? Many of us are selfish, oblivious, or uncaring about how we affect others. “Why can’t I wear what I want? It’s

not my fault he can't keep his eyes off me! Why should I have to change just because he's weak?" But we *are* responsible when we do *anything* that could cause another person to stumble. Modesty isn't really a clothing issue; it's a heart issue. If your heart is right with God, you'll want to please Him in everything you do—including what you wear. Are there some changes you might need to make in your wardrobe?



**Chapter Reflection:**

Status symbols come and go; today's hot designers will soon be considered old news. Why entrust your identity to them? The Master Designer will clothe you in custom-made garments from now through eternity. What's more, you bear His name! His signature style is already all over you.

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Chapter Reflection:

Meditate on the prayer at the end of the chapter, personalizing it with images from your own life. When the words become so real to you that they could come from your own heart, pray the prayer to God.

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2. What do you have to be grateful for today? Make a list. Once you start listing the blessings you enjoy right now, just as I did you will undoubtedly become overwhelmed with gratitude to God.



Chapter Reflection:

Celia Thaxter wrote, “There shall be eternal summer in the grateful heart.” Apply the wisdom in Thaxter’s words as you reflect on each of the sections in this chapter.

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16
ETERNAL PLEASURES

Prepare: Read “What Are You Doing?”

Scripture: Psalm 21:6; Titus 3:4–7; Matthew 11:25–26; Matthew 19:14

Respond:

1. When was the last time you went out and played with God—simply being, simply enjoying His presence? What can you do to make those times happen more often?

2. Are you performance-oriented like my friend Gayle and I have been? In what ways do you try to make God love you more? What does that say about your view of God? Sit quietly and ask Him to change any false perception you have of Him. Ask Him to reveal to you the fullness of His true, loving, and joy-filled nature.

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**Prepare:** Read “The Striking Beauty of Bowling.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:11

**Respond:**

1. What activity are you involved in simply because you love doing it? Have you given yourself permission to be bad at it?

2. How have you tended to your spirit lately? What difference do you find that makes in your life?

3. And if you *don't* have much fun in your life, what can you do—today—to bring more joy and lightness and pleasure to your life? Be intentional about it! It's important!



**Chapter Reflection:**

Joy—a woman's best cosmetic! Who knew? All those dollars spent on makeup, and all along the best cosmetic was free for the taking. Ask God—and allow God—to so fill your life with joy that your inner beauty will do for you what no cosmetic ever could.

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**17**  
**FINISHING TOUCHES**

**Prepare:** Read “A Sweet Perfume.”

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 2:14; Proverbs 27:9

**Respond:**

1. How can your life be a fragrant offering to God and a sweet-smelling scent to others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Who has been that kind of sweet perfume in your life?



**Prepare:** Read “The Perfect Purse.”

**Scripture:** Luke 12:33–34; Matthew 10:7–10; Haggai 1:5–6, 9; Matthew 25:24–40

**Respond:**

1. Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). How have you lived out those words?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In what ways are you giving priority to God and His house?

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Prepare: Read “A Crowning Glory.”

Scripture: Isaiah 62:3; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 5:12

Respond:

1. You may never wear a crown in this lifetime, but Isaiah assures you that you will be a “crown of splendor...a royal diadem” in the Lord’s hand. As you mentally see that image, how does it make you feel about God’s love for you?

2. Reread Revelation 5:12. Imagine casting your crowns—what are your achievements, your pride, your position and possessions, your idols, your fears, your dreams or desires that you, today, determine to cast at God’s feet? And as you cast them down, imagine joining a multitude in heaven before His throne, crying out, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

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**Prepare:** Read “A New Mirror.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 45:11

**Chapter Reflection:**

So...what *is* God’s opinion of you?

Take time to look up the Scriptures listed in the appendix, “In the Mirror of God’s Word I See...” and meditate on each of the corresponding statements—even if it takes a month, or a season, or a full year. Allow God to remove your false self-image and reveal

your true identity to you. Time is not the issue here; truth is. Let the truth about who you are settle deep into your spirit. Allow yourself to come to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the truth of what Jesus did for you and how much God loves you. See yourself as God sees you. Meditate on Psalm 45:11.

Remember who you are!

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