

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

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BEAUTIFUL YOU!

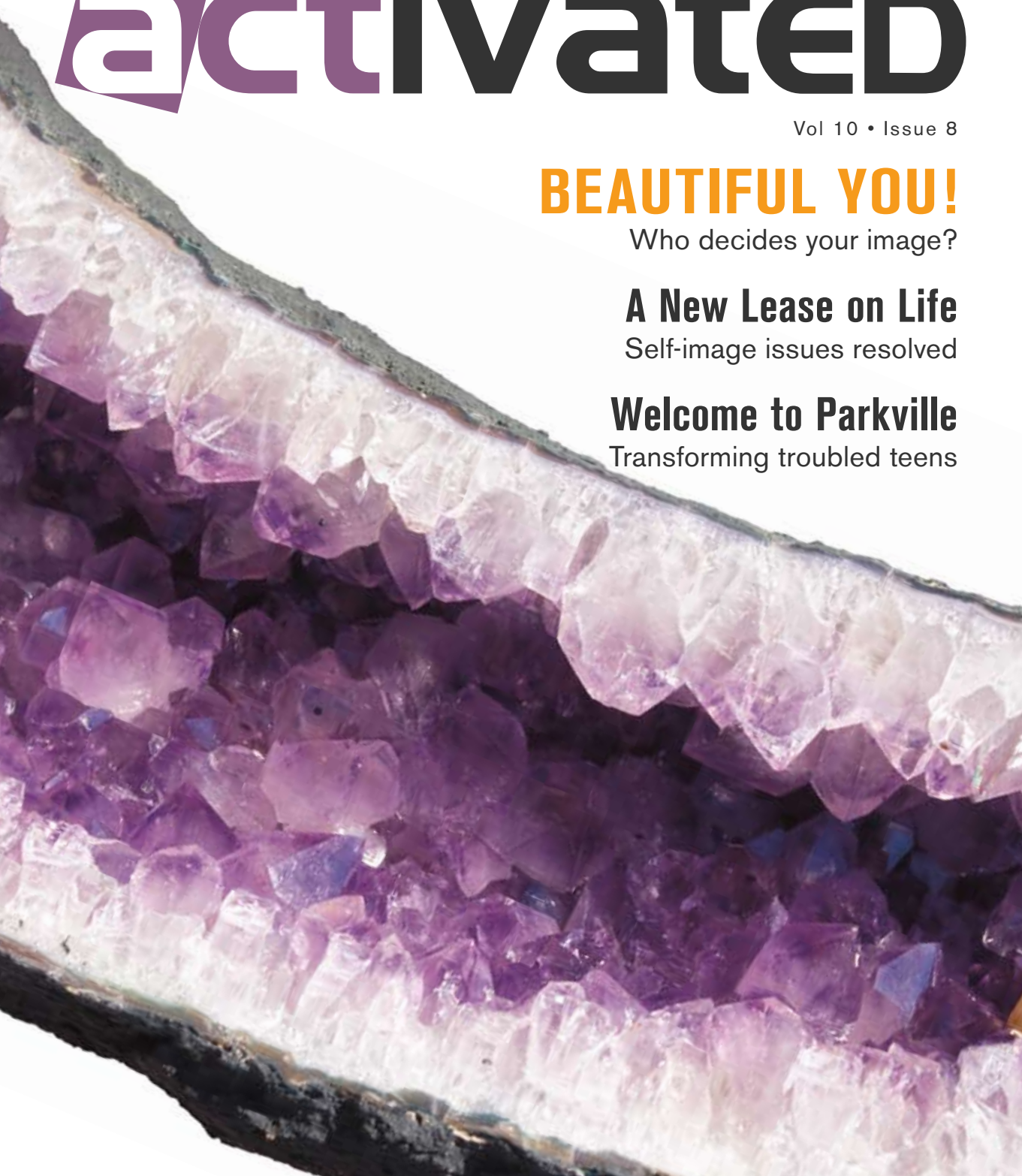
Who decides your image?

A New Lease on Life

Self-image issues resolved

Welcome to Parkville

Transforming troubled teens





PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Dressing my three preschool sons alike seemed sensible at the time. It made clothes shopping easier, for one, and because they were brothers with similar builds and complexions, they looked good in the same clothes. At home it gave a sense of order, however superficial, to a household with three little boys in perpetual motion, and in public it showcased what I was sure was the most adorable set of kids ever. On a deeper level, it appealed to my sense of equity. I didn't love one above the others, and had determined to never say or do anything that might cause them to think otherwise; I would treat them impartially in all things, big and small.

But as soon as they got old enough to make more of their own choices, coordinated clothes were out. As their individual needs changed and became more diverse, I found I continually needed to adapt and change how I gave each one my love and support. I still didn't love one more or less than the others, but I couldn't always treat them the same.

Now that those boys are grown men, in many respects they could hardly be more different from one another. My early attempts to establish uniformity now seem pure folly, and I thank God for giving each of them the sense to pursue his own interests, develop his own skills, and become his own person. Each probably has some things that he would like to change about himself—there's always room for improvement—but I love them dearly just as they are.

That's how God loves us. We compare ourselves unfavorably with others, or we fuss over something about ourselves that we don't like, but all the while He's trying to tell us, "I love you the way you are. If something needs to change, I'll let you know and will help you fix that, but otherwise just be your special self." If we could all believe that, how happy we would be!

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

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The pottery exhibition

BY ABI F. MAY

THE DISPLAY CASES at a pottery exhibition I visited recently were filled with items, large and small, some functional and some decorative, but all crafted with care. Practical coffee sets and elegant vases, ordinary fruit bowls and intricate ornaments, plaques and plates and figurines, mugs and jugs, jam jars and soup tureens, teapots, coffeepots, and sugar bowls—each item spoke of its creator’s passion and attention to detail. The art of fashioning clay into bricks, tiles, or porcelain objects is one of the oldest known to the human race.

Each item started off as a lump of clay, more or less. What made the difference? A pair of skillful hands, to be sure, but more than that: a purpose and a design. Will this item be a slender vase to display bouquets of flowers, or a set of dishes? Will the craftsman fashion a tiny pitcher to pour cream for coffee, or a large jar for pickling vegetables?

God is a potter. We are the clay vessels of His design. He fashioned each of us to be a unique vessel for a unique purpose. He knew exactly where to place each part, each handle, and each

spout. He knew which areas needed to be solid and strong.

No matter how inadequate I feel, and how many talents and qualities I lack, God knew what I would need for the purpose He created me to fulfill, my destiny. To grumble about or belittle what He has given me is as ridiculous as the fruit bowl lamenting, “I’m missing a spout,” or the vase complaining, “I’m too tall,” or the teapot moaning, “I’m just too fat.” And what about the plate? Would he gripe, “Why am I so flat and plain?” No, each of these items is designed to fulfill its function.

I saw some beautiful examples of pottery at the exhibition, but when I got home, I didn’t regret not owning any of them. I was happy to pick up my old favorite coffee mug, which faithfully fulfills its purpose each day.

I have a feeling that’s how God sees us. He made us and equipped us for what He wants us to be and do in this life, and nothing pleases Him more than seeing us live up to that potential.

Time for a refill.



Who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?”¹

ABI F. MAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ☞

¹Romans 9:20



Beautiful you!

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG



IF ALL THE FLOWERS in the world were one color, or if there was only one type of tree, it would get boring after a while. Beauty is found in variety—the varying types and textures, hues and shades. I don't understand why people try so hard to all look alike. What's the beauty in that? I look at these models walking down the runway, and while many of them have symmetrical chiseled features, great skin, and what the media and fashion industry promote as “perfect” bodies, most of them look similar. They're perfect examples of cookie-cutter beauty.

I'm all for people taking good care of themselves and their appearance. I think it glorifies our Maker to dress neatly, be clean, stay fit, and make an effort to look nice. I don't believe in just “letting yourself go.”

What's disturbing, though, is when people try to change the way God made them in order to meet

Always be a first-rate version of yourself instead of a second-rate version of someone else.—*Judy Garland*

someone else's definition of beauty. When they do that, they're giving someone else control over them, over how they think, over their happiness. Who decides that one thing is better than another—hair that's dark or light, curly or straight; bodies that are lean, muscular, or rounded; noses that are large or small; lips that are thin or full? Would *you* give someone else control over you like that?

When you try so hard to fit a certain mold of beauty, whether it suits you or not or is realistic or not, you're giving up your uniqueness. What's the attraction of looking like everybody else? The first thing you notice about some people is their hairstyle,

or their clothing, or their new nips and tucks or enhancements. You notice the “look” and whether it fits the latest trend. In some cases, the look isn’t attractive or flattering; it doesn’t match the person’s anatomy or personality.

One of the many problems associated with comparing yourself with others or trying to fit into the fashionable standard of beauty is that you’re never going to be truly happy. You might feel a sense of satisfaction that you changed something you didn’t like or kept up with the latest trend, but even if you do manage to achieve the level of beauty that you’re hoping for, even if you finally become the most popular person in your circle of acquaintances, how long do you think it’s going to last? You’ll eventually run into somebody who’s higher up on the physical-beauty ladder. What will you do then?

If it’s happiness you’re looking for, you’re not going to find it like that. The constant need to meet the world’s standard of beauty leads to obsession—first the physical makeover, then the molding of your personality to fit the new you, then the struggle to keep the look or to keep up with the changing looks as each trend gives way to a new one. What kind of life is that? Do you think you’ll ever fit the world’s idea of perfect beauty? Not even worldly celebrities

DOWN ON YOURSELF?

Raise your self-esteem with these tried and proven tips.

- ✦ Be positive! Focus on the attributes you have, rather than on those you lack.
- ✦ Be willing to venture out and make changes.
- ✦ Look outward. Don’t make yourself the focus of your life.
- ✦ Learn from past mistakes, but move forward.
- ✦ Don’t live your life according to the expectations of others.
- ✦ Don’t measure yourself by other people.
- ✦ Rest in God’s love, realizing that you are His unique creation and that He loves you just the way you are!

can reach it, and they have plenty of money to change anything they want. And change they do, because the trends in what’s beautiful keep changing. Even the rich can barely keep up.

It’s human nature to want to be thought attractive, but true beauty is not only about physical appearance. It’s also about inner beauty, that spark that sets a person apart from the millions of others who are dressing the same way, getting the same haircut, and trying to achieve the same body—the interchangeable masses who desert their individuality in an attempt to keep up with the latest trend.

Save yourself a lot of time, trouble, and grief. Clear your mind of everyone else’s perception of what is beautiful. Set aside everything you’ve thought or seen or been told, and ask God to show you what specific qualities or features He gave you that make you unique. Enhance those, and you’ll bring out the best, most beautiful you. ✦



BY JESSIE RICHARDS

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

“THAT’S NOT FAIR” must have been my three most-used words when growing up. It seemed that someone—or everyone—always had it better than me.

By my early teens I had a well-developed measure-and-analyze mindset, and I was particularly obsessed with comparing my looks, personality, and abilities with those of other girls my age.

When I came into young adulthood and joined an office team, it was all about measuring up at work. I was convinced that the only way I would ever be accepted or appreciated was if I made up for my relative lack of skill and experience by working harder than everyone else. I was always trying to gain points (whatever those were and whoever was giving them out), and I was always frustrated with my self-assessed score.

I didn’t like myself in general, and even the things that I liked somewhat I wouldn’t give myself a passing grade for until I improved them a bit. I could always find something wrong.

Then another big source of discontentment kicked in—feeling cheated and like a loser because nearly all of my friends, who were also in their early and mid-twenties, were married and had children, while I still didn’t have so much as a serious boyfriend. I wasn’t sure whether that was God’s fault or my own, so I was upset at both of us.

I could hardly stand to be around other people, because almost everyone made me feel inadequate in some way, but paradoxically I also found a lot to disapprove of in everybody else. You would think that I would have focused on their strong points, since I was always wishing I were more like them, but that wasn’t the case. Not surprisingly, my negative attitude toward others caused them to keep their distance, which made me feel more unlikable and hopeless. It was a vicious cycle.

At a particularly low point, I read some articles by Maria Fontaine about recognizing and overcoming negative thought patterns. These made a definite impression on me, as I started to realize why I was so discontent and began to want to do something about it. Understanding the concept that I could change was the seed of freedom.

The way she applied biblical principles started me reflecting on my life from a very different angle—one of thankfulness to God for all He had given me, rather than complaint over what He hadn’t given me; one of gratitude, rather than resentment.

I also asked Jesus to tell me what He thought of me, and then I tried to look at things from His perspective. Through this I learned to communicate with Jesus more deeply than I had before, and gradually I started to change—first my mind, and then my life. Through hearing from Him, I came to understand that I had been made the way I was

I could appreciate others' good qualities, thank God for the wonderful way He made them, and enjoy our differences

because that was what He wanted, that He really did love me, and that He wasn't out to punish me for anything I'd done wrong.

I also joined a small prayer group, where we would explain our struggles and then pray for one another. Those times of prayer channeled the life-changing power of God into my life. They also put me in a position to receive a lot of encouragement and support from caring friends, which in itself went a long way toward my development of a healthier self-image.

Something else that helped me gain both confidence and compassion was getting to better know some of the people whom I once envied, because I found that their lives weren't as perfect as I had imagined. Things really do even out.

I found that I could love more completely once my relationships with others weren't hampered by envy. I could appreciate others' good qualities, thank God for the wonderful way He made them, and enjoy our differences, realizing that they're just that—differences. One wasn't necessarily better than the other.

It took some time to break old habits—nearly two years from the time I took my first steps toward

change until there was a notable difference in my attitude toward life—but it happened. My perspective changed to the point that I can now say I'm truly content and don't envy anyone. I consider that a miracle.

Now, nearly 10 years later, I'm happy to say that my inner makeover was a lasting one. I know that some things are truly not my strong points, and I accept that. As a result, I'm not constantly getting derailed when I notice something about myself that isn't ideal.

Life continues to get better, and I continue to get happier. I've learned that more good things come to a person who looks for the good in life and the beauty in people. I also know that I have the power, through Jesus, to keep making progress in areas that actually matter. It's amazing how we can learn and grow when we aren't hampered by paralyzing I-can't-it-is, which is born of negativity and fear of failure.

JESSIE RICHARDS IS DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION FOR *ACTIVATED* AND SEVERAL OTHER FAMILY INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS. ✂





STUNTED GROWTH

BY PETER STORY

Just imagine a world full of people who truly believe that anything is possible

WHEN I WAS A KID, I saw plenty of goldfish in the houses of my friends, and I remember wondering why so many people would want to keep such small, unexciting creatures as pets.

Then one day, when I was about ten years old, I went on a school field trip to a botanical garden that had a pond stocked with fish. One especially large, brilliantly colored fish stood out to me.

“What kind of fish is that one?” I asked our guide.

“That’s a goldfish,” she replied.

I was confused. “Aren’t goldfish supposed to be small?” I asked with a note of 9-year-old sarcasm.

“Not at all,” she replied.

“Goldfish will grow even larger than these. It really just depends on the size of their environment.”

I took in the information and determined to never again show myself so ignorant about goldfish, but it was years before I understood the broader lesson.

How often have I been like a goldfish in a fishbowl? How

often have I limited myself by my perception of my world? Worse still, how many times have I put others in a small bowl in my mind? How many times have I written off someone as insignificant or unexciting? How many times have I failed to see others’ potential to grow?

How much more could I achieve if I forgot my perceived limitations and dared to swim

beyond the boundaries I’ve set for myself? And what would happen if I moved others from their small bowls into the ocean of limitless possibilities that Jesus offers?

Just imagine a world full of people with that perspective, who truly believe that anything is possible and reach out to claim it. Together we could do astounding things. Together we could work miracles. ✂

CIRCUMSTANCES

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

When you’re stuck in a situation that’s not to your liking, you’ll be amazed sometimes at what a little positiveness can do. It’s only natural to see all the things that are wrong with the situation, or to remember all the times you had it better, or to look at those who currently seem to have it better, but you’re not going to be happy that way. You *will* be happy, though, if you decide that you’re going to be thankful for what you have, rather than dwelling on what you don’t have.

When you look for the good in a situation and focus on that, the things that you don’t like about it fade into the background. The circumstances may not have changed a bit, but if you change your attitude, it will be as if the circumstances have changed too, because your perception of them will be different. ✂

They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so with this thought in mind I interviewed a few people—male and female, younger and older, and from different backgrounds—to find out what they felt made a person attractive. Here are some of their answers:

The beauty survey

BY ANDREW MATEYAK



What I find most attractive in a woman is when she isn't overly concerned about what others think of her, when she just acts naturally.—Raymund (29)

One way that I judge whether or not a woman is beautiful is if she's smiling and her eyes are happy. If so, then she's beautiful to me, even if she isn't what most people would call glamorous or especially good looking.—Tim (20)

If somebody has a kind and concerned spirit, they're beautiful no matter what their physical features may be.—Melody (21)

My personal definition of a beautiful woman has changed over the years. It has gone from a ravishing young blonde, to a

mature, personable woman who is a good conversationalist and has a good sense of humor, to one who is happy to sit with me and watch TV.—Steve (70)

Good looks are part of it, but if a girl is charming, funny, and easy to relate to, then she's beautiful. Or if she's humorous, ready to do things unexpectedly, adventurous, passionate, and caring, then she's attractive to me.—James (17)

They say that the eyes are the window to the soul, and that's true. The first time I met my husband, it was his eyes that attracted me. He had beautiful eyes that reached deep into my soul.—Joyce (46)

A woman's voice is often the first indication of whether or not I will find her attractive.—Jimmy (38)

Kindness, gentleness, positiveness, conviction, and a sense of humor are some of the qualities that make a person beautiful.—Armina (27)

What makes a woman beautiful to me is her spirit—the way she reacts to people and situations around her.—Nathan (24)

My survey was simple as surveys go, but the consensus was clear: Those polled said that real beauty runs deeper than physical attributes, clothing, or cosmetics; it comes from the inside out. I agree, and it seems that's how God looks at it too. "Man looks at the outward appearance," the Bible tells us, "but the Lord looks at the heart."¹

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¹ Samuel 16:7

WELCOME TO PARKVILLE

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER



AT A WORKSHOP I ATTENDED, art and drama therapist Emily Nash shared an experience she had while working with traumatized children and adolescents at a residential treatment center in the U.S. The boys who attended her class were often combative, prone to negative and self-destructive behavior, and unable to trust adults or even one another. Almost all had histories of severe abuse and emotional neglect.

They routinely brought their negative attitudes into the classroom, as reflected in their foul speech and rough mannerisms.

Sitting in a circle in typical group counseling fashion, some of them expressed their anger through statements like “I hate being here” or “I hate doing this!”

“Fine,” Emily would say, “but why?” She put the question to them one by one.

“There’s no respect!”

“These jerks laugh at me!”

“Nobody listens to me!”

“Too many fights!”

After listening to their reasons, Emily replied, “What I am hearing is not that you hate this class exactly, but that you hate living in a

community where people don’t respect or trust one another, make fun of people they don’t like, and fight.”

They nodded in agreement as if to say, “At last someone is listening!”

“What if,” Emily asked, “we were to create a community where you *did* feel respected, a community in which your needs were met, a community in which you felt safe? What would that community be like? Let’s create it together!”

The boys’ imaginations shifted into gear.

“Let’s call it Parkville!” someone called out. Everyone agreed.

Parkville developed into a six-month project. The class made a banner that read: *Welcome to Parkville—Where all your needs are met!* They drew a map of the town, including points of interest that reflected what they wanted in their community. They elected and appointed people to fill various roles in the town: mayor, superintendent of the school, director of the arts center, owner and chef of the community café, manager of the video store, and many more. They created special events. They found solutions to Parkville's problems in town hall meetings. Parkville became a community that they all said they would love to live in. Many expressive art projects were born from the creation of this imaginary idyllic town.

The first step was to draw the young people out by asking questions and listening carefully and respectfully to their answers, even though they came across quite negative at first. The next step was to challenge them to make a difference by channeling their energy into constructive projects that interested them. Emily explains Parkville's success:

The project gave these young people an opportunity to experience living in a well-functioning community, many of them for the first time, even if only while they were together at the center. Their community became one in which there was support, where they could express their needs and others would listen and respond, a community built on mutual respect and care, a community of possibility.

In role-play they found that they could be effective citizens and had something to contribute. Self-imposed limitations were stretched, and new strengths and capacities were accessed. An adolescent who was engaged in destructive behavior was transformed into a leader, a caring father, a resource to the community.

Various methods are being used today to reach youth through their own interests, such as sports programs, art and drama therapy, and community projects. Through these, young people can acquire lifelong skills and a positive self-image. When we help them identify goals and find ways to overcome the obstacles they encounter along the way, we help them realize their potential.

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EMILY NASH IS A LICENSED THERAPIST WITH THE ARTREACH FOUNDATION, AN ORGANIZATION THAT TRAINS TEACHERS FROM REGIONS AFFECTED BY WAR AND NATURAL DISASTER IN THE USE OF CREATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY. ✿

"WHO STILL WANTS IT?"

A motivational speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up.

He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you, but first, let me do this." He proceeded to crumple the bill.

He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air.

"Well," he replied, "what if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20.

"Many times in our lives, we are crumpled, dropped, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value in God's eyes. To Him, dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless."

—Author unknown





“Beauty marks removed”

BY SHERRI BIXLER

MY HEART SKIPPED A BEAT at the sight of the beautiful sign—not beautiful in an aesthetic sense, but beautiful because of one magical phrase: FRECKLES AND BEAUTY MARKS REMOVED. To my eager eyes, those words seemed written in silver and edged in gold, for they held a promise of freedom from the thing I had always hated most about myself.

Things, actually—seven of them, dark enough to pass for careless spatters of ink by a Creator too busy to notice His mistake. Since

I had never seen so many dark “beauty marks” (who invented that cruel term?) on anyone else, the *spots* had made me feel singularly unattractive. Now I could put all that in the past.

Excitedly I neared the building, trying not to breathe too fast or seem too eager. When I read the rest of the sign, however, I came to a near stop. The versatile plastic surgery catered to those unfortunate enough to have been born with any of an assortment of physical imperfections, yet fortunate enough to have the financial means to correct them.

All my physical flaws flashed

in my mind. My large eyes, strong nose, and ample mouth fight for prominence on a face that is neither oval nor square, thanks to an equally pronounced forehead. My long arms and slender torso are paired oddly with a thick-hipped lower half. I wavered. What would this crafter of human masterpieces think of imperfect me?

The thought of getting at least a little closer to the ideal forced me up the polished cobalt-blue stairs and into a space that was at once delicate and prepossessing. In a waiting room softly lit in blue, a large number of blemish-

We are beautiful because God made us

free plants rose and bloomed without restraint. *Of course*, I thought. *Here, even the plants are perfect.*

I stammered a request to see the doctor, gesturing awkwardly in the general direction of my spots. The lovely spa attendant, slim and perfect in cobalt blue, rushed away, and in less than a minute the doctor himself emerged and whisked me into his office. Ineloquently I managed to make him understand that I needed the spots gone. Could it be done?

When the good doctor put on his magnifying glass to take a closer look, his prognosis faded from the initial confident, “Of course, of course!” to a troubled gaze that lasted longer than it should have. His conclusion: The procedure was difficult, and a good outcome impossible. The spots were there to stay!

I felt my euphoria drain away like air from a punctured tire.

The doctor sat down. For the first time, I looked at his eyes. Then, I looked *into* them, and what I saw surprised me. I saw regret, but not pity; weariness, but not despair. As he pronounced his sentence—“This is what your parents’ genes have

given you”—his eyes pleaded, “Accept the way God made you.” The weariness, I realized, was the result of years of nipping, tucking, removing, lengthening, shortening, and straightening what God had created for those who thought they knew better.

Strangely, I felt hope rekindle.

As I walked down the shining cobalt stairs and into the street, I wondered how many times those eyes had pled with others, only to be rejected or go unnoticed. This time, thankfully, the believer in him had linked with the faith in me and helped me accept the unacceptable.

I’m still not perfect, but now I don’t have to be. For that I thank the tired, pleading gaze of an old artist who thought I was beautiful enough the way God had made me.

Lives that turn out to be less than perfect can cause us just as much anguish as our

imperfect bodies do. When a divorce, accident, demotion, or other unexpected crisis shatters our hope of an idyllic future, it can be disheartening. But if we can trust that we are beautiful because God made us, why not also trust that our lives can be beautiful because He loves us?

God doesn’t pick picture-perfect people to be His examples. “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.”¹ So lift up that chin and “boast in [your] infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon [you].”² He will make your imperfect life beautiful, too, if you let Him.

SHERRI BIXLER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO. ✿

One day our descendants will think it incredible that we paid so much attention to things like the amount of melanin in our skin or the shape of our eyes or our gender instead of the unique identities of each of us as complex human beings.—*Franklin Thomas*

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:27–28

² 2 Corinthians 12:9

HEAR FROM HEAVEN



A Spiritual Exercise

THE BIBLE'S BOOK of 1 Kings includes the story of the prophet Elijah. Chapter 19 recounts the tumultuous episode when he was running for his life from wicked Queen Jezebel and hiding in the wilderness. After a while God led Elijah to go to Mount Horeb. There God told Elijah to leave the cave where he had taken refuge and stand before Him. A strong wind tore into the mountain and broke nearby rocks in pieces; then there was an earthquake; then a fire; then a "still small voice."¹ God was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but that still small voice was His.

You too can get alone with God to hear His voice and thereby receive His words of love and encouragement, answers to your questions, and solutions to your problems. Here's how:

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, preferably for at least 15 minutes. Bring your Bible or some other inspirational reading, and a laptop or a pen and something to write on.

Begin by reading a short passage or two to boost your faith. Then think about a matter that you would like God to speak to you about—a problem or concern or even something that you're curious about. Sit quietly and listen to what He tells you. Perhaps He'll remind you of something you have read in His Word. Perhaps He'll remind you of something you have seen or something someone has said. Or perhaps He'll give you a

message in words or pictures. Whatever comes to your mind, write it down for future reference, and then thank Him for speaking.

When you are first learning to tune in to His voice you may mistake it for your own thoughts, but with practice you will learn to distinguish between the two—especially when He tells you things you never would have thought of yourself.

The following messages were received from Jesus in prayer, as described above. So is the *From Jesus with Love* message on the back cover of each issue of *Activated*.



I know all the things that bother you about yourself. I know about the times that you compare yourself to others and think negatively about yourself, when your weaknesses embarrass and discourage you. I know about all these things, and I love you anyway.

When the storms of life blow around you, rest your head upon My shoulder and see how I will care for you.

How do I love you?—I love you unconditionally. I love you completely. I love you eternally. I love you like a father loves his child. I love you like a husband loves his wife. I love you tenderly. I love you perfectly. ✨

¹ 1 Kings 19:3–12



FEEDING READING Beauty

Physical beauty is short lived.

Psalm 103:15–16

Jeremiah 4:30b

1 John 2:15–17

Real beauty is on the inside.

1 Samuel 16:7b

Psalm 45:13a

1 Peter 3:3–4

The closer we live to the Lord, the more beautiful we become.

Exodus 34:29

Ecclesiastes 8:1b

2 Corinthians 3:18

Heavenly happiness here and now and for all eternity is just a short prayer away. If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can right now by sincerely praying the following:

Dear Jesus, I want to know You. Thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrongs I have done. I open the door of my heart and I ask You to come in. Give me Your gift of eternal life, and fill me with Your love. Amen.

POINTS TO PONDER

That person in the mirror

Each person is a V.S.P. (Very Special Person) because we are each created in the image of God.—*Desmond Tutu*

Friendship with oneself is all important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world.—*Eleanor Roosevelt*

If God had wanted me otherwise, He would have created me otherwise.—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

We are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.¹ But as children of God,² we are also not to think more lowly of ourselves than we ought.—*Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner, What Every Family Needs*

Search God's Word and find out how *He* feels about you. That's the true basis of all self-worth. If a perfect God can love and accept you with full knowledge of all your imperfections, then the message to you is "Lighten up on yourself!"—*Bob Gass*

¹Romans 12:3

²Genesis 1:27

Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly.—*Saint Francis DeSales*

Building self-esteem often has a lot to do with your relationship with the Lord. If you're close to the Lord, you're handsome or beautiful because His love and light shine through.—*David Brandt Berg*

When people compliment you, pay attention! Repeat the compliment to yourself. Don't downplay or dismiss it. Why should your own negative voice be louder than the positive voice of a friend?—*Carole M. Wallace*

Christianity tells us we ought to love ourselves because God loves us. We are not centers of wholeness and goodness all by ourselves. We are of infinite worth because we are the apple of God's eye.—*William Kirk Kilpatrick*

Each of us is unique in God's eyes. Each of us is an individual, and He wants us to express our individuality. He's not trying to press us all into one mold, so that we all look the same and act the same, and do things exactly the same way.—*Maria Fontaine*



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

you're
special!

You are part of a magnificent, vast, overall plan. You can't see that plan, but I can. You can't see how beautifully you fit in with the overall panorama of life and the balance of the universe, but I can. Someday you will see it too, and you will marvel together with Me at how wonderfully it all came together and how perfect it all is.

You are unique. There has never been a person like you, nor will there ever be another just like you. That's one of the things I like most about you. Resist the temptation to look negatively at yourself

and focus on what you think are your shortcomings—weaknesses and inabilities, a less-than-perfect body or personality or whatever. What you perceive as imperfections, I perceive as uniqueness. What is perfection, after all? It is fulfilling the purpose for which you were created, which is to love and be loved. I love you just the way you are, and I love you as though you were the only person in the world.

Come and let Me show you how much I love you and how special you are to Me.