

IDENTITY THEFT SERIES

“You’re Ugly”

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Who of us doesn’t want to be beautiful? Who of us doesn’t want to be loved? Who of us doesn’t want to be able to walk into the perks and the power and the acclaim and the attention that comes along with being beautiful; with having compliments coming our way in the midst of life in every day living? And you know it’s normal to want to be beautiful, to want to be liked, to want to be admired, but pretty much everybody, with very few exceptions, has things that they like about themselves and then certain things that they just don’t like about their own appearance. You know, *My forehead’s too high; my cheekbones are too low; my chin’s too rounded.*

Want to know what I don’t like about myself? It’s like vulnerability moment right here. I don’t like my teeth. Seriously. Like my whole life, since I was very young I never liked my teeth. They’re small and they’re gray and I’ve got this massive gap in between my two front teeth. As a matter of fact, let’s just kind come in . . . you got that, you got the gap? This is not just like a little crack. This is like a major facial pothole. See that right there? And there’s not just one, there’s two of them right there. I’ve been competing with Mike Tyson for largest tooth gap. One time Evel Knievel, when I was in Junior High, threatened that after the Snake River canyon jump the next thing is the Mark Ashton tooth jump that would be going over my teeth. I had lunch with an orthodontist a couple of years back and my orthodontist friend said to me, “*You know, Condoleezza Rice could never make it for President, and it’s not because she’s black and it’s not because she’s a woman. It’s because she’s got a gap in her teeth. I could fix that, you know? And I could fix yours too.*” I said, “*Thanks buddy. Thanks.*”

You know, growing up I had really bad zits all over my face. And it wasn’t just like my High School years, it was all the way until I was 28 years old I had pretty serious zits. As a matter of fact, I’ve got this kind of boyish face. You guys know that. I look a little bit younger than I am. With the zits on top of it, I would walk into college campuses where I would be like the featured speaker for the InterVarsity event I was a part of and some of the people would welcome me in as the new freshman. 28 years old and I’m the new freshman.

It’s been made worse since I’ve gotten here because now my image is projected up to like a 20 foot size. So any zit looks like a manhole cover on the side screens. If that’s not enough there’s weight. Anybody else have weight issues that go on in your life? Anybody on the January diet? How many people on the January diet? Yeah, I can admit it, I am.

We got a Wii Fit for Christmas this year from Grandma. Did anybody else the Wii Fit? Yeah, some of you guys got the Wii Fit. Now, here’s the problem with the Wii Fit. The Wii Fit . . . and you know, my beautiful daughter Caysie made sure that I got my body assessment on the Wii Fit. What they do is you know you stand on the Wii Fit and it tests your balance. You put in your height and then it weighs you and tells you your “body mass index”. My body mass index came on and the little indicator went “*Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep*” and my little character that represents me on the Wii Fit went “*BO, BO, BO, BO, BO*” and the word that came

up, no kidding, January 4th it rated me as “obese”. Somebody else has been there, thank you very much. I’m glad for the identification in that one!

Words like that can mark you, you know? Whether it comes from like a dad, or a husband, or a sister. Words like “obese” they can scar your life, even if it is from a stupid machine! Darn thing doesn’t know that muscle weighs twice as much as fat!

We over exaggerate our own negative characteristics. We can become obsessive about these things. Here’s just another true confession. I’m a little bit embarrassed about this, but I’m going to tell the story anyway. When I came here, I thought, “*Ok, now I’m going to be up on the big screen, right? So I’ve got to get my stuff that’s wrong with me fixed.*” So I go to my friends Greg and Jody who are like friends that totally are honest with us no matter what we say. We’ve known them for 18-20 years and they really speak truth into our lives. So I said, “*Ok, now that I’m going to be up on the big screen do you think I need to get my teeth fixed? I mean, you think I need to get this gap Like God won’t work through me as a pastor if I don’t have the teeth fixed.*” And I said, “*I’ve got this big gap and I’ve always been self-conscience about it.*” And they said, “*Really? What gap?*” And they began to look and, “*Oh yeah, you do have one.*” 18 years – they had never noticed, something that I’m terribly self-conscience about.

Whatever it is – big nose, big ears, wrong colored hair, wrong colored skin, nose that’s too wide – all of us have these insecurities and we want to get to the place that’s beautiful. Well, it’s not surprising that we do because it’s really true in our lives, in our culture, that people that are more beautiful get better treatment than those who are not quite as physically attractive.

Michele Graham has written a fantastic book called *Wanting to Be Her*. Michele is a woman that I got to meet at the University of Illinois. We were in InterVarsity together and she wrote this fantastic book that has been very helpful for putting together the message today. If this message rings true with you, I cannot give a higher book recommendation, if these issues are something that you want to deal with more deeply, then *Wanting to Be Her* by Michele Graham. She said some very powerful things in here. But she says some honest things as well about life and beauty and what the Bible has to say about it. She says:

“Let’s be honest. We all know that in our society beauty is power. The beautiful ones get noticed, get favored, and get better treatment. A recent psychology study asked seventy-five college men to look through photographs of women whose physical attractiveness varied. They were asked to choose those women for whom they would be most likely to do the following: help move furniture, loan money, donate blood, donate a kidney, swim one mile to rescue her, save her from a burning building, or jump on a terrorist hand-grenade. Not surprisingly, men overwhelmingly chose the most beautiful women in every case, being reluctant only to loan her money.”

The money thing – that’s another sermon. But the truth is, the truth is that beauty is something that brings about with it privilege. So for many beauty is a perpetual quest – the quest for an ideal standard, one that used to be Greek statues like David or Aphrodite, but now is the cover of magazines like *Muscle and Fitness*, *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, and *GQ*. Beauty aid companies do nothing but accelerate this idea. Last year they spent \$1.5 billion advertising the perfect woman

and we responded. We spent \$20 billion on cosmetics as Americans. \$74 billion on diet foods. 7.4 million people this year will undergo cosmetic surgery – going under the knife in order to be able to improve their appearance. I'm not saying this is an only women's issue, but 5 out of 6 of the people going into cosmetic surgery are women. It tends to be an issue that dogs women more than men in our culture. We are fanatically pursuing the impossible ideal of attaining the ideal beauty. And so often the beauty that we're looking for is not even real, it's not even a real person. The people that we see posing for the catalogs and the front of the magazines are made up, put together, primed, poked, photo-shopped, and what you get at the end is an image of an unreal person. Check out this video that shows you a little bit about how that might happen in real life.

[Link to video shown is below, entitled "Evolution"]

www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/flat4.asp?id=6909

So guys, you want a date with that girl on the billboard? She doesn't exist. Women, you want to look like the woman on the billboard? Well, she sat in a chair for hours while she had the makeup put on, the looks made right, took a hundred different pictures, picked the best one of all those pictures; touched up/photo-shopped; eyes bigger; neck longer – that is not a real person. And the problem is that often times we begin to aspire, we try to aspire to these standards of beauty that simply aren't even human. They are not real.

Michele Graham also writes about the images that we could get from Barbie, from the Barbie doll, the perfect image of beauty that you see from the time that you're very young. What she did is she extrapolated the size of the Barbie doll, made her bigger and bigger until she was like a reasonable sized person and by the time you get the Barbie with a 36 inch bust line, she gets that big, you know how tall she would be by then? Seven foot tall – it's like Shaq's sister Barbie. In addition to that she would have to, in order to fit those proportions, be missing two ribs and many internal organs and have legs that are way too long. Little girls do not grow up to look like that! Yet that's the image of beauty that they see from the time they are young. Now, I am not on a Barbie burning crusade, but I do need to acknowledge, and I think we need to acknowledge that we highlight our imperfections in light of being bomb-barded by impossible images at extraordinary rates that come to us from all different angles – from the Internet, and from television, and from the front of magazines. And the corporate effect of all these images being slam dunked on our heads all day long is a message that comes straight through to you – **You don't look like that, so you are ugly!** U-G-L-Y, you ain't got no alibi, you're ugly!! It's a message we all hear loud and clear because we don't reach the standards that society puts up. We're biased, we don't necessarily . . . we don't check out the people around us who are our peers, we look at those models, and so we feel ugly.

Now, this message, which is, I must say, my favorite title of a message I've ever given in my whole life – *You're Ugly* – is the second in our "Identity Theft" series. And as we think about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus one of those things, one of the ideas in our RISKS paradigm is that we are R – we are people who rely on God. As those who rely on God there's the initial point of coming to faith in Jesus, but the rest of your life you grow in your identity in

Christ. When you have an identity that's firm in Christ you begin to change the things that happen inside of you.

Last week we talked about our identity in terms of the lie that "you're on your own" and you may remember that whenever you hear that lie "you're on your own", you're able to say back these words – let's put them up on the side screens – I am a beloved child of the most high God. So you would respond to me if I yell out "You're on your own", you say – I am a beloved child of the most high God!

This week we're going to talk about the lie "you're ugly". Now, there is a more articulate version of this lie. It goes like this, *If I'm attractive enough to others I will be accepted and admired. I'll be respected, worthwhile, and loved. Once that happens I'll have no more problems. Life will be good. People will employ me, friends will want to be with me, heck friends will want to be me. If only I'm attractive enough.* That lie goes all the way back to the garden in Genesis. You remember when Adam and Eve were first created they were like, you know, two naked teenagers walking around. And the Bible says, in Genesis chapter 2 verse 25, "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame." But when Adam and Eve rebelled from God all of a sudden they began to hide in the garden. They went to a different place. First of all, they hid from God. And second of all, they experienced shame for the first time in their lives. So God made them some clothes and they began to hide their nakedness because of the shame of the things that they have ever done. Shame and awareness of the naked came into being and it's dogged us ever since. We've come up with fashion to decorate ourselves, cosmetics to cover ourselves. You know some women, probably some women who are right here today, won't even leave their house unmasked (without cosmetics on), without covering up their imperfections. They wouldn't make an appearance in public without doing that. So I'm issuing out a challenge next week for church. [Laughter] No makeup. And guys, just so that we've got a similar thing, maybe not as bad, no nice clothes; sweats for all the guys and no shaving for church next week. It's one of those things that alerts us to how dependant we've become on those.

Now, I'm going to retract that challenge just so you guys know. I'm not serious about it, but what I want you to do is right now take a temperature check on yourself and say to yourself, *What did that do to me in my internal world? When I thought about the possibility of coming to church not looking my best, and having people see the real me for what I look like.* See, there's become an obsession with this that we really need to get away from in order to be people that are healthy in our identity in Christ.

So, I've got three secrets that I want to give you today – three victorious secrets that are going to help us to be able to overcome the challenge of the lie that says "you're ugly".

Secret #1. Focus on what God says. Psalm chapter 139 verses 13-16 says this:

13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

16 your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

Here's what God says – *You have been knit together by a loving God with an amazing amount of care.* He made you the way that you are and he likes what he made. I mean you think of the master crafting every aspect of who you are as a human being; putting together your eyes; forming your spleen; shaping your fingers, your hair, your mouth, your brain. God hooked you up better than any machine that's ever been invented. Better than any plant, better than any animal; you are the pinnacle of God's creation. You are fearfully and wonderfully made and God loves that. As a matter of fact, God loves diversity in his creation. He makes us different from one another for a reason. And it's not because there is one ideal of perfection that we all have to aspire to. It's because God delights in differences that there are between people. Think about the flowers that God made. I mean God has made just a variety of different flowers. If the Hydrangea said to the Peony, *Man, because I don't look like a Peony, I'm not very beautiful,* you would say, *Hydrangea you're nuts! You're made to be a Hydrangea, so just enjoy the beauty that there is in you.* And God made some flowers skinny and some flowers poufy and all different kinds of colors and he delights in that. With people, he made some people skinny and some people poufy, and all different kinds of colors. Some have wide noses, some have high cheek bones, some are short, some are tall, and God delights in the variety of it all.

So, when you hear the message from the media and from our culture that says, *You're ugly,* you have a sentence to respond back with and your sentence is – I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Oh, I didn't even say repeat it. Let's try that again. Repeat it together. I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE! Again – YOU'RE UGLY! I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE!

I love the illustration that Tony Campolo gives about people from the beginning being winners because you see there was a day, about nine months before you were born, when all of the sperm, 3 million sperm lined up at the starting gate and the starting gun went off and there was a massive race. The prize was to be the first one to permeate the egg and guess who won? You did! From the time you were just an itty bitty little sperm you were a winner. God wanted you to be on this planet just as you are. If anyone ever says to you – you're ugly – you can say back? I am fearfully and wonderfully made. That's right! I am a winner. I am a winner.

Alright, let's look at another passage. Here's what else God says. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 21 and 22:

21Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, **22**set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

When you take a look at that verse it talks about who you are in Christ. You as a person, as a being, body, soul, mind, spirit – you have a new owner. It says that when you stand in Christ he has set his seal of ownership on us. There has been a transfer and no longer are you in charge of your life, but God is in charge of your life. In addition to this, underneath his ownership he has anointed you. He has set his seal of blessing upon you and he has left you better off than you were by putting his spirit in your hearts. And in this mystical arena, what God does is he takes his Holy Spirit and your human spirit and he fuses them together and he creates a moment of unity with Christ; that enables you to transcend any pressures or baggage or deep problems that there are in this world because you essentially, this is an important assumption, you essentially are not a body that contains a spirit. In your essence, you are a spirit that is temporarily housed in a body.

C.S. Lewis says that just like when you go to the barber shop and you leave your hair on the floor, but you still walk away, there's a part of you that's gone, but you still walk away. So one day we are going to leave our bodies behind in this world and the you that is you will still walk away and when you walk away you walk away with a spirit that is owned by God and has been united with Christ – him living in your heart. If you sit around and think about this for a while, it will create a major moment of WOW in your life. You need to focus on what God says – who's you are and why you're valuable.

Secret #2. Focus on what God sees. When I was growing up I loved to watch the show *Sanford and Son*. You guys remember *Sanford and Son*? You know there was Fred Sanford played by Red Foxx, an African American guy with a great gravelly voice. His son, Lamont, they were in a junkyard. That's where they lived, that's where they worked. Then there was this character named Aunt Esther. Aunt Esther was this spiteful, mean, old bitty, and Red Foxx, Sanford, loved to give her a hard time because "she's ugly", and he would say that again and again. I remember one time he came back with a long string full of fish, Fred did, and Lamont said, *Hey Dad, where did you get that big string full of fish?* And he said, *I was just sitting on the dock, Aunt Esther walked into the pond and all of the fish jumped out onto the dock and I just put 'em on the string.* There was a quote that he gave that I'll never forget. He said, *Beauty is only skin deep.* And he points to Aunt Ester and he says, *but ugly goes all the way to the bone.* And my younger brother used to say that to me my whole life growing up, so I would never forget that comment. But you know, in a lot of ways, Sanford is right. Beauty is only skin deep, but there is an ugly that goes all the way down to the bone.

If you consider another Esther, the Esther from the Bible, not Aunt Esther, but the Esther from the Bible, in the book of Esther there is one comment about her beauty, in one verse. It says, "she was lovely in form and feature". She won a beauty contest in order to get to be the wife of the king. But with one verse dedicated to her beauty, there are ten chapters that are dedicated to her character, her courage, her leadership, the way that she would live her life for such a time as this. What truly made Esther beautiful was not what was in that one comment. It was what was in the rest of the ten chapters.

Contrast that to a character like Absalom. Absalom was one of David's sons and Absalom was someone who was noted for how handsome he was. Look at what it says in 2 Samuel 14:25:

25 In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him.

And then there's a long passage that talks about just how good his wavy hair was. But in spite of the fact he was handsome he was also mean, underhanded, and foolish. He was a violent man who died a violent death. He was ugly – all the way to the bone. You know, when it comes to what God sees in our lives, what God sees is not just what is skin deep. He sees what goes all the way down to the bone.

One of my great privileges in life is I get to see my wife almost every day. Those of you who know my wife, Kelle, you know that she's a natural beauty. She's gorgeous. I've got a *hot* wife. Like the Cheryl Tiegs' kind of beauty. I remember a time early in our marriage where we were talking about some of our physical characteristics that weren't of the most desirability to us and Kelle told me some of her stuff and I said, *Ohhh, I don't want to change that! I mean that's like really good. I LIKE that physical quality in you.* It was real meaningful to her to know that there was something about her that she may have thought was a liability that I thought was a great asset. Different guys out there think different things are different assets, but God loves the diversity that there is in all of you. But you know when I find my wife the most beautiful? Earlier this week I walked in on her after she had taken off all of her makeup, sitting in bed in her flannel pajamas with her Bible sitting wide open. That's where I see the real beauty. That's when she is looking the most beautiful – plain and natural and connecting with God. Focus on what God sees.

Here's what else it says God sees in 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 3 through 5:

3Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. **4**Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. **5**For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.

Focus on what God sees. Now, interestingly this doesn't say you can't have outward adornment or braided hair or jewelry. That's not immoral, but the important thing is that you don't find your beauty from those places. It's ok to adorn the temple. You know, if your body is a temple of God, it's ok to decorate it a little bit, to clean it up, make it look good, but we don't find our worth in our fashion. And we don't look to say *I'm beautiful because of . . . the right kind of clothes, the right kind of hair, the right kind of makeup.* We can't need to have makeup or fine clothing in order to look pretty. That's an unhealthy thing. But instead, this passage encourages us to find our beauty from our inner world, from a gentle and quiet spirit in this case. From character that reflects that of Jesus – kindness, serving, love, compassion.

I challenge you, particularly if you are a young person and you're thinking about hunting down a spouse, ask some people that have been married ten years or more what matters most to them. Is the looks of their spouse matter more, or the character of their spouse? Real beauty comes from an internal world that's dedicated to God and willing to be transformed and nearly everyone you'd talk to would far rather have a person of excellent character than someone that conforms to external standards of beauty.

So often times at this moment people ask, *Ok, well, how much is too much? How do I know I'm over pursuing different kinds of things because I've got to draw the line somewhere. Pastor, can you help me to draw the line?* The answer is no; I'm not going to help you draw the line. But here's what I'd like to help you do. The key question that you need to ask when you're getting yourself dressed and putting yourself together and asking, *Am I beautiful enough?*, is ask the question, *Who's your audience? Who are you trying to please?* If, in fact, you are owned by God, then he should be your primary audience. When you think about how you look and how you dress you ask the question, *Am I pleasing to God? Am I dressing for him? Do I consider my body to be the thing that is the host of the Holy Spirit who lives in my life? Am I trying to please him?* When you consider what your wardrobe is, does your wardrobe and your dress code reflect the fact that you are trying to honor God? Or, are you trying to impress other people, people of the same sex or people of the opposite sex? Your wardrobe can have a powerful effect on people.

I want to read another quote from Michele Graham because she says something that like only a woman could say. So I want you to hear this in a woman's voice, not in my pastoral voice for just a moment here. She says this to the women:

“Some of us have a wardrobe that could be considered to be stocked with lethal weapons. Our clothes cling to every curve, waistline exposed, cleavage accentuated, rear-end practically waving hello to anyone who may glance it's way. Some of us may not be quite so obvious, but our intentions in investing heavily in our appearance are the same. We long for attention, for affirmation, for the power of being considered beautiful, and just like the prostitute we use our body to gain a profit.”

That's pretty intense stuff, but if you find your connection and your love and your desirability in a God who loves you unconditionally and who made you wonderfully, you don't have to be desperate for power or love or attention. You can be secure in God's presence and in his power and in his love for you.

Now, one little quick caveat to that – dressing in revealing and even sensual ways for your spouse is ok and even very good. Work hard ladies and gentlemen to keep your spouse interested in you. Work harder than anybody that is in their life to keep his or her interest. It's a great gift to your spouse to keep that sex hot. Sook focus on what God says, focus on what God sees, and finally

Secret #3. Focus on who God loves. The greatest commandment that Jesus gave is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. When you love people to the point of serving them, it's real easy to let

beauty issues fade into the background. When you're serving lunch at the Omaha Street School you're not worried about the gap in your teeth. When you're clipping the toenails of an arthritic 90 year old, you're not thinking about your tan lines or your buns of steel. When you're building a hospital in Mali, you don't care if the shirt you're wearing has a designer label. When you're turning a wrench for a single mom you're not thinking about you split ends. Our inner beauty shines most in contexts where outer beauty doesn't matter. God loves other people, so our need for beauty fades when we live in the reality of being consumed by love for God and love for other people.

One more note on loving people and that is, do you know somebody that God loves a really, really huge amount? God loves you, deeply. You're a beloved child of the most high God. One symptom that you don't believe this is how you treat your body. Often times people who don't grasp this actually become obsessed with themselves and their body . . . through overeating, through purging, through starving themselves, they abuse themselves and they abuse the great gift of the body that God has given them. Now, there's a lot of reasons that people do this. Sometimes it's a feeling of being unloved, pressure, pain, confusion, but mostly it happens when people feel out of control of their lives, and the one thing that you can control is that you can control the food that you're eating and so you do, often times in unhealthy ways. Now, there is a healthy way to diet and for some people that's a real important piece of life – to make nutrition a priority so that you can have a healthier body, that's a very good thing. But your eating habits can become unhealthy. Here are some signs that they may have:

1. Do you skip meals on purpose?
2. Do you avoid eating with other people?
3. Do you weigh yourself often and find yourself obsessed with the number that's on the scale?
4. Do you feel ashamed, disgusted, or guilt after eating?
5. Do you exercise to the point of fatigue or injury?
6. Do you force yourself to throw-up?

If you see these things happening in your life, then they're indicators that there is a problem. There are way too many women, even extraordinarily beautiful women, even women that attend here at Christ Community Church, that are totally beautiful, but obsessed by being thinner. That obsession breaks God's heart and it can seriously damage your body.

So if this is the case for you, get some help! Find a friend, find a counselor, find a pastor, find somebody at your school or a hospital. We've got counselors right here at the church that would be eager to talk with you and help you work through those issues that are often times much deeper than we're even aware of on the surface. Find a support group. Often times high schools and hospitals have great support groups. Parents, if you've got a kid that's going through this, we've got a support group right here at Christ Community for parents that have a kid that's struggling with an eating disorder. Go to the web, there's lots of stuff that happens there. Get into groups where talk about weight is healthy.

There are some groups that are particularly dangerous – cheerleading groups, ballet groups, other groups like that often times have a very unhealthy view of what body image should be. Make

sure you're at least in groups that have some semblance of healthy talk about your weight and your size. But most importantly, find your identity in God because he wants to love you and he wants you to bring out of whatever it is that's impacting you in this way. He wants to heal you and make you whole. If this is something you're struggling with, write down or memorize this verse, Psalm 107 verses 19 and 20. It says this:

19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

20 He sent forth his word and healed them;
he rescued them from the grave.

We serve a God who saves and heals and rescues and he is there and ready to transform you if you find your identity in him. He's looking for you and he wants to change you, not just on the outside, he wants to change you on this inside and then from your inner world being transformed and found in him you're able to be able to be transformed on the outside.

You know, when I was in high school, I was a pretty buff dude. I really was. I had broad shoulders, thin waist, six-pack abs. I still had that gap in my teeth, but everything else was looking pretty good. On the inside though, I was full of demeaning language, cutting people down, humor that would wreck other people's lives. I was a jerk to my parents. I was a jerk to my brothers. I took advantage of girls. I didn't treat my friends that well. I was really a self-serving, ugly to the bone kind of a person. Then in college God started doing something in my life and I drew close to God and I learned that he loved me. Today I don't look as buff as I did when I was in high school. Who needs a six-pack when you can carry around a whole keg? I still have that gap in my teeth, but I've begun to replace the lies of this world with the truth of God. I found beauty deep in other people and deep in myself. I've begun to serve in gifted areas and when I'm in those moments I just forget about the external standards of beauty. I've found that God has brought healing and prospective in my life and he's not done yet. That's the best news. When I look at my internal world, not the outside, but when I look internally, I can say about myself when I look in the mirror, *I can't wait until tomorrow, because I get better looking every day.* And you can say that too. Let's pray together.

God, thanks for the truth that there is in your word about being beautiful in your eyes; about being found in you; about knowing and loving you and all of the goodness that there is in you. God, we pray that by your power and by your spirit that you would give us grace to find beauty in the places that you find it; that we would be confident that we are in fact beautifully, fearfully, wonderfully made and that you want for us to become more and more like Jesus and transform us in our inner world. And we pray for this all in the great name of Jesus. Amen.