



*beauty* SECRETS



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*Beauty Secrets*

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## Foreword

The Bible was way ahead of us in exposing the “beauty myth” for what it is! The next time you are looking in the mirror, picture God looking over your shoulder. Here’s what He has to say about you:

**You Are Beautiful**—You grew up and became a beautiful jewel (Ezekiel 16:7).

**You Are Treasured**—The Lord your God has chosen you to be His own special treasure (Deuteronomy 7:6).

**You Are Honored**—You are precious to God, you are honored, and He loves you (Isaiah 43:4).

**You Are One Of A Kind**—Before God formed you in your mother’s womb He knew you. Before you were born, He set you apart (Jeremiah 1:5).

**You Are Loved**—He loves us with an unfailing love (Psalm 117:2).

I’m praying you will use this book you’re holding as the road map it is to *real* beauty in God!

*Rebecca St. James,*

Christian recording artist and best-selling author

## *Introduction*

I'm Dr. Deborah Newman, and for 18 years as a Christian counselor I helped young girls and women struggling with body image issues. A few years ago I wrote a book about body image for women, but I recognized that body image issues start early in life. That's why I asked my daughter, Rachel, to help me write a book for teens.

I remember talking to Rachel several years ago about some of the ways I helped her develop a healthy body image. Her response was, "Well, it's not that I like everything about my body; it's just that I don't care." I was so happy to hear that. She knows she isn't perfect by the world's standards, but she is free from hating her body so much that it disrupts her life.

That's the feeling I want you to have too. I want you to feel comfortable being just who you are. I'm eager to share some timeless beauty secrets that will help you be at peace with your body.

How can you really like yourself in a culture that has such unrealistic standards for the appearance of girls? When the beautiful people aren't beautiful enough without surgery and expensive beauty treatments, what hope is there for the rest of us? What is the secret to feeling beautiful in this kind of reality?

Neither one of us would say that it is easy, but we both know the secret and we want to share it with you. We meet girls every day who don't know the secret to true beauty. We've witnessed the tragedy of girls who get caught up in a beauty that promises to deliver, but in the end never does. We want to expose the myths and

reveal the secret that you may have known all along in your head, but need to really believe in your heart.

I (Rachel) have watched my friends destroy themselves trying to be something they feel they need to be. I want each girl to find out who she is and replace wrong thoughts with the truth of God. I also want girls to encourage one another to grow into the beautiful women God created them to be.

I now recognize that my mom has been teaching me how to accept my body since I was a young girl. I think it really worked. I don't believe, as some of my friends do, that I have to have a perfect body, and I definitely don't want to hurt my body in the process of trying to be beautiful.

Now we want to show you some beauty secrets from the Bible that have helped us. We pray these secrets will show you the truth about how beautiful you really are.

—DEBORAH AND RACHEL NEWMAN

*Pursuing  
Airbrushed  
Dreams*



Paige has a photo shoot on Wednesday afternoon. It's a catalog shoot for the new season's bathing suits. She knows what is expected of her. At the ripe age of 15, she's learned the tricks of the trade. She can hold her abdomen in, creating the hollow look they want, while she appears to be completely relaxed on a beach somewhere. In an effort to make sure the client will be happy with her, she will not eat for three days and she'll stop drinking anything the night before—even water.

Paige did that for the last photo shoot, and whether it made her thinner or not, now she is afraid not to keep up her ritual. She knows that sometimes even one ounce of fat can mean the end of her modeling career. She has witnessed her friends being cut from jobs because they looked too heavy (in the opinion of the directors or photographers). Catalog modeling isn't very prestigious, but it

does pay well and hopefully will lead to that big break Paige is dreaming of.

Even with all the work Paige puts into being thin, she won't be surprised if they airbrush her pictures. No one likes the mole on her upper shoulder; she's trying to save enough money to have it removed.

Before she became a model, Paige used to think she was beautiful. Everyone told her she was. Now she feels ugly and has become acutely aware of every body flaw. She plans to make enough money to fix everything she thinks is wrong with her body, which will involve breast implants (when she can talk her mom into letting her get them), working out at the gym with a personal trainer, and a little plastic surgery to make her nose perfectly symmetrical.

Paige is slowly giving in to eating-disorder behaviors that will soon take over her life and health. She's a truly beautiful creation of God whose pursuit of worldly beauty has destroyed her sense of dignity and worth. What Paige doesn't realize yet is that she is pursuing an airbrushed dream. The body she thinks she needs to attain to make it in the modeling world doesn't even exist in reality. (We'll talk more about that later.)

It seems kind of self-centered to admit, but if we are really honest, we all want to know that we are beautiful. The truth is that we are. No matter how beautiful you are, though, you will always feel that you need to be more beautiful if you're measuring yourself by the world's standards. Like Paige, you too will fall into the trap of pursuing airbrushed dreams of a perfect body that can't possibly exist in the real world.

We are each fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). That's how God wants us to see ourselves. But we won't get that



message from listening to our culture. We won't get that message into our heads and hearts unless we listen to what God has to say. So where can you find His wisdom? You'll need to open the Bible in order to listen to His voice and receive His healing. That's what this study is about. In fact, we encourage you to write down or journal your feelings as part of the study. You can get a beautiful bound journal, or use a spiral notebook. It's up to you. But putting your feelings and thoughts on paper will be very revealing—especially when you go back to reread your journal at the end of the study.

We both know firsthand how frustrating pursuing the perfect body can be. I (Rachel) have grown up in a society where your outward appearance defines you. The images that constantly surround me portray girls who have been electronically altered and airbrushed so they don't even look like themselves. I have watched my friends and even myself strive to imitate these illusions in hopes of finding fulfillment. However, true purpose and satisfaction comes only in discovering God's truth. I want to share with everyone the love I have accepted from God in order to help each one of you lead lives pleasing to Him.

### TEENS AREN'T ALONE

Moms battle this problem too. Your mom may be a source of pressure for you to have a perfect body. Without realizing it, she may be sabotaging your ability to fully accept yourself. As a counselor dealing with eating disorders every day, I (Debi) have tried to be extra cautious with Rachel. Even so, she has told me about things I've said that made her feel bad.

As I've dealt with teens and women as they've worked on their body-image issues, I've discovered that the only lasting cure for negative body image is spiritual. I've talked with women and girls who've suffered from eating disorders, depression, and relationship breakdowns all because they disliked how they looked. I've seen them trapped in a way of thinking that kept them in a prison of self-hatred. In their minds, there was no way out. The good news is there is a way to break out of that kind of prison; it happens through a spiritual transformation.

Are you ready to discover that you are beautiful? Think of one thing you like about yourself. It could be your eyes, your smile, your hair, even your feet. Think of that part of you, acknowledge that God made that part of you, and receive it as His gift to you. Say aloud or in your head, "I am beautiful and wonderfully made. I really like my \_\_\_\_\_ (eyes, feet, hair, etc.)." We're hoping that before long you will think positively about *every part* of yourself.

Maybe you have been so wounded by what others have said about your looks that you honestly can't find anything you think is pretty. Hopefully, with the help of your friends and this book, you will come to see your true beauty. Don't feel like an outcast. It is okay if you need some extra encouragement and someone to talk to on a deeper level about this subject. Don't be afraid to ask for the help and affirmation you may need right now.

## A SUBTLE INFLUENCE

One way a lot of us lose touch with our true beauty is through the subtle influence of the media on our psyches (the center of what you think about yourself consciously or subconsciously). Each year the

statistics paint a grimmer picture. Your mothers may have been influenced by the media's focus on thinness, but you are growing up in a whole new world. You are living in a culture, and maybe even in a family, that brands your body as flawed, even if you are a healthy weight and are fit. Girls in your generation will literally spend hundreds of dollars to get rid of blemishes! You live in a culture where people believe it makes perfect sense for parents to give their daughters breast implants as high-school graduation presents.

You might not realize how much you and others are influenced by the media, but you are—in dramatic ways. Picture this: You are snuggled up on the couch with your entire body feeling deliriously restful. You are completely relaxed in your most comfy pajamas, and you can see the television without straining. Your favorite show is on. Your plan is to just veg out for the next hour. You just ate, so you aren't hungry. You are where you want to be, doing just what you want to be doing. Nothing can budge you. Not even your ringing cell phone causes you to stir.

Now suppose a commercial for ice cream comes on. Suddenly, you are willing to rip yourself away from your oasis of coziness to get some ice cream. Now you can no longer enjoy your show or your contented position on the couch. Before you saw the commercial you were happy; afterward, you are preoccupied with your need for ice cream. That's the subtle influence of the media.

It has been proven that the media play a big role in making you feel that your body is flawed. When was the last time you saw a commercial or read an ad that said, "You are absolutely beautiful just the way you are. There is nothing our product can do to enhance your natural beauty"?

Dr. Margo Maine calls advertising "guerrilla warfare." In her

research she has discovered that “97 percent of print ads portray women in powerless positions, as victims, sex objects, or other female stereotypes. Women are objectified and trivialized, as evident by print ads featuring a woman’s full body, although often headless, but only the upper body of a man. Females are also more likely to be displayed lying down or bending over, while males stand erect.”<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever noticed the difference Dr. Maine is talking about in the way males and females are presented? What subtle message does this difference portray to girls?

If you think models are looking thinner and thinner, you’re right. They usually have eating disorders and stand in just the right positions with just the right lighting to make them look impossibly thin. However, they are still airbrushed to look “good enough.” What you need to realize is that you may be in pursuit of a body that doesn’t exist in reality. Even Julia Roberts, an actress famous for



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### *Scary Statistics*

- 42 percent of first- through third-grade girls want to be thinner.
- 81 percent of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.
- 51 percent of 9- and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves if they are on a diet.
- Without treatment, up to 20 percent of people with serious eating disorders die. With treatment, that number falls to 2 to 3 percent.
- About 50 percent of people who have been anorexic develop bulimia or bulimic patterns.<sup>2</sup>

her beauty, has used a body double. Most body doubles have been surgically altered to get closer to the look that Hollywood and the media consider perfect.

Not only do the media send you the message that you can and should reach for this “ideal” body for yourself, they also ignore all the other wonderful qualities girls possess. By reducing girls to what they wear, how they diet, what makeup they use, or how they smell, the message comes across that nothing else about you is important enough to feature in their magazines. They are saying that nobody really cares if you are generous, smart, kind, loyal, or friendly. To be acceptable, you need to be pretty, thin, and popular.

How have the media undermined you and kept you from accepting the brilliant, wonderful, beautiful girl you are? What are you going to do about it? Knowledge is power, and we believe it’s time you think about the reality of the media and their impact on the psyches of young girls and teens.

Go over to the mirror right now and consider from head to toe how much the media, certain celebrities, current fashions, or sales clerks have influenced you to buy the clothes or products that you are wearing or have used today. Make a list of all those you can think of.

When I (Rachel) look at myself in the mirror, the first thing I notice is the way I wear my hair. My hair is long and my bangs are pushed to the side. I guess I would say that the decision to wear my hair this way is the combined influence of some stars and celebrities who wear their hair this way. The clothes I wear are cute things I put together based on what I see in magazines. Sometimes I think I “need” a tan. I guess this comes from society and friends.

## DON'T THINK YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED

Even if you are the kind of girl who doesn't care what the media or others say, if you're living in the twenty-first century, you are hearing these messages.

This week try to notice how many times you are told that something about yourself is slightly flawed but can be easily remedied with a particular product. You gain power over these messages when you become aware of them, make a decision to reject them, and replace those messages with what God says about you and your beauty.

Estimate the number of times this week you were alerted to something about your body that "needs" fixing.

## DON'T GET US WRONG

We're not claiming that advertising is ultimately evil. We are saying that advertisers aren't focused on your total well-being; they are focused on getting you to buy their products so they can make money. If they have to tell you that something is terribly wrong with you to get you to spend money, that's okay with them.

We want to commend Unilever, the company that makes Dove products, for the bold stand they are taking in their advertising



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### *Quiz*

Why is your hair styled the way it is?

Who influenced the type of clothes you are wearing today?

What kind of shampoo do you use?

What perfume do you wear?

efforts. They are taking a whole new approach to interest women in their products. Rather than tell us what is wrong with us, they focus on showing us how to make what we have even better. That's great. But we can't wait for the rest of the advertising world to catch on to the same wisdom.

It's as if Romans 12:2 was written in a media generation. God tells us to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." *The Message* says it this way:

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Look this verse up in your favorite translation and write it down in your journal. This verse is the key to knowing that you are beautiful. Negative messages get into your mind. They tell you what is wrong with the way you look. When you recognize these false messages, you gain power over the impact they have on your life and your mind is transformed.

## EXPOSING BEAUTY MYTHS

Because God created females uniquely for relationships, a lot of the focus we put on trying to be beautiful is about getting people to like us, to approve of us, and to acknowledge that we are valuable. We've

found some common lies that girls believe about beauty. Read those common beauty myths below. As you read, think about whether you or your friends have bought in to any of them. Why aren't they true?

*Beauty Myth 1: If I change something about my body, I will finally like myself.*

I (Debi) can't tell you how many girls and women ended up in my counseling office after they tried but failed to change their bodies by losing weight and getting cosmetic surgery! In fact, most anorexics and bulimics I dealt with began their eating disorders in an attempt to lose just five to 10 pounds, not hundreds of pounds! They ended up with a compulsive addiction that they felt powerless to change.

If you don't like yourself, losing weight, getting breast implants, or having a nose job isn't going to change that. Liking yourself happens in your mind, soul, and spirit.

Chesna grew up with an alcoholic mom. Her parents were divorced and couldn't get along, so she rarely saw her dad after she was three years old. Her mom was too drunk to teach her how to take care of herself. Chesna was always teased about the "rat's nest" in her hair. By the time she was 10, she was overweight, covered in freckles, and had no idea how to manage her frizzy hair.

Chesna felt ugly, but that wasn't the biggest problem in her life. Being responsible for raising herself while hiding the fact that her mom was an unfit parent was a daily struggle. After her dad remarried, his new wife encouraged him to get involved in Chesna's life again. They discovered the desperate conditions she lived in, and when she was 12, her dad and his new wife took Chesna into their home.

Judy, Chesna's stepmom, taught Chesna how to straighten her



hair and make it curl in the current style. She started eating healthy meals, and that, combined with an adolescent growth spurt, helped her slim down over the summer. Almost overnight, Chesna became the pretty girl in her new school. If there ever was a real “ugly duckling turns into a swan” story, she lived it. The problem was, no matter how much positive attention Chesna received about her looks, she couldn’t stop feeling like that fat, neglected little girl inside.

How you look on the outside has little to do with whether you feel good about yourself on the inside. Studies show that beautiful people actually have a greater dislike of their looks than average-looking people.

### **Renew Your Mind**

Healthy self-esteem comes from believing in the value God holds for you, not in the value the world (including guys) places on you. The abuse and neglect Chesna received from her alcoholic mom had damaged her view of herself. It took time and attention for Chesna to come to believe in her value and worth. She had to forgive her mom and realize that she did not cause her mom to drink. Chesna’s stepmother helped her take a long journey to healing. But bad feelings about yourself do not automatically go away after you make yourself look good.

I (Rachel) know how easy it is to believe this myth. We think, *If I can just get that perfect prom dress and my hair to turn out like the picture in the magazine, I will have the time of my life.* From my years of high-school special occasions, I’ve discovered that it’s not about what you are wearing or how your hair looks. It’s about the people you are with.

*Beauty Myth 2: My outward appearance is the most important thing about me.*

It's totally natural for teenagers to focus on their appearance. It is part of your healthy development. But when this natural stage of development meets the youth-frenzied Western focus, it creates youth who are fixated on their appearance. This is not healthy at all. Some teens are willing to spend literally hundreds of dollars to do away with blemishes. We're not talking about teens who truly have an acne problem; normal girls with normal breakouts are getting facials and treatments at a very high cost.

Obviously parents are involved in funding these decisions. What does this kind of "help" communicate to their daughters? Sometimes well-meaning parents go along with these decisions in the hopes of raising their daughters' self-esteem, but it's not a healthy development of self-esteem and ends up increasing their insecurity. Girls get the message that appearance is all that matters about them. Do you know that in American culture, looking good rates higher on priorities than giving to the poor?

It's interesting that God sends blemishes into our lives at the developmental stage when we are most concerned with our looks. Perhaps the lesson God wants to teach us is that life will go on even when we have a horrible breakout. When you begin to believe that your appearance is all that matters, though, you don't even consider all the other qualities that make you you.

I (Debi) remember being a very skinny girl, but at age 13, skinny was in. I was also taller than average, and suddenly I started getting a lot of attention for my looks. People told me that I should be a model. I started to believe they were right and convinced my parents to let me try modeling. When the modeling school told us

that I would have to pay money to be a model, I began to doubt that I was destined for stardom. I also started looking through beauty magazines and realized that there were a lot of beautiful girls in the world. I realized that I could not be the most beautiful. I decided that I would need to develop other qualities.

Too many teens today don't make the same breakthrough. They stay focused on the belief that their only value is in how they look.

### **Renew Your Mind**

The truth is, your outward appearance is what people will first judge you by, but your personality, self-confidence, talents and abilities, and your spiritual sensitivity are all vital to who you are as well. Beauty is much deeper than how you look (1 Samuel 16:7).

It really helps you accept yourself when you stop judging other people based on their looks alone. As a therapist, I (Debi) gave girls the assignment to watch people at the mall without judging them by their appearance. Rather than thinking, *Look at that fat man*, say to yourself, *Look at that father holding his daughter's hand as they walk through the mall*. Looking for the beauty in other people helps you see the beauty in yourself. Try to think a beautiful thought about every person you have in your first-period class. Find the beauty in people, and it will help you discover the beauty in yourself.

*Beauty Myth 3: Everyone can look like a movie star or fashion model if she diets enough, exercises enough, and works at it enough.* Heather's room was covered with pictures of Victoria's Secret models in their underwear. She wasn't attracted to these women; she

used these pictures to motivate herself to look like them. She believed that if she worked out hard enough and starved herself enough she could make her body look just like theirs.

If you are like Heather, we encourage you to take all your motivational pictures down. Don't brainwash yourself. Your body is your unique design. As we have already said, many of those images have been electronically altered, so the models don't even look that way in reality. In fact, if you've ever seen pictures of movie stars caught without their makeup, you know they look amazingly like average women.

People don't like to hear this, but the truth is that you are more likely to look like your blood relatives than anyone else. Don't panic if some of them are out of shape or overweight. You don't have to look exactly like them. You can get in better shape and eat more healthfully than they do. But you will have more success if you accept the body type and genetics God gave you and look the best you can with the features you have. Don't waste your time trying to copy someone else's genetics. It's not possible!

My (Rachel) mom is small boned and thin. I wanted to look like her—tall and skinny. Ironically, God gave those genes to my brother. I am bigger boned, even though my mom and I are the same height. She gave me one of her rings when I was 16, but it had to be enlarged—not because I'm fat, but because my bone structure is different.

To be as thin as my mom, I'd have to be skin and bones. I don't want to waste my life trying to be something I'm not. I've learned to be okay about the way God made me and accept that He has His reasons for making me the way I am. Perhaps one reason may be

that someone reading this can relate to me and realize you don't have to be super-thin to like yourself.

### **Renew Your Mind**

God made us in our mothers' wombs—He has reasons why we look the way we do (Psalm 139:13). I (Debi) always get a good laugh when I make this point in seminars. It's so basic and true. I have a family picture from the mid-'70s that is absolutely hideous. I asked my mom to make a copy of it because it proves this point in a dramatic way. My whole family is on the thin side and we look oh-so-funny with our knobby knees and skinny legs contrasting with our big shoes and oversized sunglasses. You'd have to see it to get the full effect.

#### *Beauty Myth 4: Attractive people don't have any problems.*

Can you think of even one of *People* magazine's most beautiful people who has a peaceful and centered life? The beautiful people of our world have problems just as normal people do. They have problems with relationships, alcohol and drugs, money, a lack of privacy, and all kinds of other things. In fact, being attractive may even create problems. One example is the Harvard librarian who claimed she was not promoted because she was too pretty.<sup>3</sup>

### **Renew Your Mind**

We all have problems, and being attractive doesn't make us immune from them. Our problems stem from our sin nature, not from how we look (Romans 3:23). The culture we live in has made the scale a judge of our morality: If we can stand on the scale and it's below a certain number, then we are good; if it's over a certain number we

are bad. But how much we weigh has nothing to do with whether we're good or bad. The truth is, what is really wrong with us is our broken relationship with God.

Take the focus off of other people and their problems. Renew your mind by diving into your relationship with God in order to listen to His truth and His will.

*Beauty Myth 5: To be okay, I need a guy who likes me.*

When Adam was created and he opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was God and the second thing he saw was the garden where he could work and make things happen. When Eve was created and she opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was God and the next thing she saw was Adam, the man she could have a relationship with. It's helpful to understand that as a girl you, like Eve, are most motivated by relationships. It's also important to become aware that you can easily be misled by relationships.

One way to be misled by relationships is by basing your identity on whether a guy likes you or not. Approval from guys is so important to young girls, teens, and young adults. It can be the focus of your thoughts day and night. You wonder why guys don't like you, or you think a guy likes you and find out later he doesn't. You pray that a guy will like you. Most girls fall into a trap of wanting male approval.

Girls idealize relationships and guys idealize bodies. The reason girls are willing to submit to painful and difficult procedures to create beauty is ultimately because they want guys to like them and pay attention to them. Really, what girl wants to live her life carrying around two hunks of silicone in her chest? After all, it's

not for her own well-being. She does it so she can get the attention of a man.

Even after all the trouble a woman may go to in an effort to make herself more attractive to men by having breast implants, at least one survey questions whether it will really pay off. In a candid survey of men ranging in age between 23 and 40, the following was found:

- 86 percent prefer natural breasts to implants
- 13 percent don't care either way
- 1 percent said it depends on the age of a woman and/or prefer implants <sup>4</sup>

I heard one woman remark that the whole reason God put Adam to sleep when He was creating Eve was that He didn't want Adam trying to supersize her! Yet, that is exactly what is happening. Women are supersizing their breasts just to get attention from guys. Supersizing is not healthy at fast food restaurants, and it is equally damaging when we do it to our bodies.

Guys are into looks. They say stupid things about how girls look. Marie's boyfriend broke up with her because she didn't pass the "air test." According to this boy, when a girl stands with her legs together there should be air (space) between her thighs. Otherwise she is fat. That is insane! But it wasn't insane to Marie. She believed she was too fat, even though her weight and body mass index (BMI) proved that she was at a healthy weight for her body type. Most healthy girls will not have space between their thighs when they stand with their legs together!

I (Debi) know this about Marie because she came to my office suffering with anorexia. It took her two long years and thousands of dollars to recover. She fell into the trap of believing she needed her

boyfriend's approval. If you have a boyfriend like that—break up with him! Take his rejection as a sign from God that he is not right for you. Look for someone who likes and accepts you the way you are.

### **Renew Your Mind**

Teenage boys cannot give the love you are after; you have to love and respect yourself to determine what true love from a guy is all about (1 John 4:7-8). It's hard to believe now, but those great feelings you have about a certain guy are most likely not true love. When I (Debi) was your age, I thought I had found true love a time or two. But I hadn't. Real love is a commitment to an imperfect person for a lifetime. It involves good times and bad times. The only way to learn this lesson is to experience it for yourself by being open to the adventure of learning what love is. Keep in mind that girls idealize relationships to the same degree that guys idealize bodies.

*Beauty Myth 6: I must compete with other girls, or at least look as good as they do.*

Patty is a beautiful girl who gets lots of attention for her looks. Her best friend, Marissa, is not as cute as Patty, but when Patty found out that Marissa weighed 10 pounds less than her, she started dieting immediately. She would watch Marissa at lunch and if Marissa ate only half of a sandwich, Patty would eat a quarter of a sandwich. She kept this behavior a secret from Marissa; she didn't want her to know how insecure she felt.

There's a fine line between girl talk and competition that can get ugly. Girls bond over admiring each other's outfits. Stop and think: Who do you dress for—your girlfriends or guys? Don't you really



dress to impress your girlfriends more than guys? We like our girlfriends to approve of what we wear and how we look.

Caring what your friends think and being competitive with them are two different things, though. Feeling like you have to be the cutest all the time keeps you from real intimacy. Think about the friends you hang out with. Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.” Do you hang out with friends who are in bondage to the culture? If you do, they will constantly be reinforcing the beliefs you are trying to change. Bad body image is contagious. My (Rachel) friend and I were talking about this and agree that when you are criticizing something about your body, you are indirectly criticizing your friend’s same body part.

### **Renew Your Mind**

You will always be a loser if you compare your looks and appearance with other girls’, even if you think you’re more attractive (2 Corinthians 10:12). God has no favorites. That is a foreign concept to us. We think we have to be better than someone else in order to feel good about ourselves. In our life with God, there is enough love and acceptance for everyone. You don’t have to be a loser for me to be a winner. In God’s eyes we are both winners. Healthy body image is equally contagious. When you feel good about yourself, you will automatically bring this out in others.

### ***Beauty Myth 7: My body is who I am.***

Your total beauty is packaged within your body, mind, and soul. Right after *Superman* actor Christopher Reeve was injured in a

horseback riding accident and became a quadriplegic, he made this discovery: “I am not my body.”<sup>5</sup> He couldn’t believe that so many people found so much love, beauty, and value in him.

If you are going to discover your true beauty, you have to be willing to consider all the beauty you possess. True beauty is not just skin deep. You have relationships, friendships, and boyfriends because of who you are. People don’t stick around because of the way you look. People are friends with you because they see something they like about you. Don’t sell yourself short. Get to like yourself for who you are.

### **Renew Your Mind**

Your body is part of you, but not completely who you are. Who you are is God’s beloved daughter (1 John 3:1). Claiming that truth at the core of your being will change your life. When you can believe that God loves you beyond the boundaries of the universe, you will be on your way in your spiritual journey.

In this book we hope to help you see that it’s not the image in the mirror that is the problem; it’s the image in your mind. We hope to help you rediscover the joy you felt about your body around age five. A five-year-old raised in a healthy home environment (without parents who are obsessively concentrating on their looks, weight, or exercise) will feel just fine running naked through a crowd of people. Why? A child doesn’t think about whether her body is better than anyone else’s. She’s not worried about being evaluated by her peers because of the way she looks. All the child is focused on is living and exploring the world in the body she has.

We aren’t suggesting that you run around naked—far from it.

But we do hope to help you retain some of the five-year-old in you and enjoy exploring the world in the body God gave you.

*Rachel:* The world flashes images at us telling us what we are supposed to look like. It makes us think that there is a certain model that we need to imitate. But that's not true. God loves us. We need to learn to be happy with ourselves. It's like we're in a struggle between what the world tells us we are and what God says we are. It's not easy to change your mindset from listening to the world to listening to God. However, the freedom of life in God breaks the chains of vanity and the desire for earthly approval. Give it a try.

*Debi:* It's perfectly okay to desire to be beautiful. But it's wrong when your personal beauty is your whole focus in life or you are judging your beauty by the world's standards. You are not the most beautiful by the world's standards (nobody is). Discover what is most beautiful about you and start enhancing that part of yourself and accepting the rest.

Listen to God's voice by reading His Word. The Bible says that there is no condemnation toward you (Romans 8:1). Think about the fact that it was God who made you. Consider these thoughts by George MacDonald: "I would rather be what God chose to make me than the most glorious creature that I could think of; for to have been thought about, born in God's thought, and then made by God, is the dearest, grandest and most precious thing in all thinking."<sup>6</sup>

### WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Every morning after you get dressed, focus on the part of you that you like best, whether that's your eyes, your hair, or whatever. Then

say, “I thank You, God, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made and I thank You for \_\_\_\_\_ (that part you like).” Let the last message you say to yourself in front of the mirror be something positive and notice how it affects your week. In what ways are you more confident? In what ways do you care a little less that you don’t have the body of a cover girl? In what ways do you like yourself just a little bit more? Are you really daring to claim your true beauty?

### JUST BETWEEN GIRLS

1. How are your clothes, your haircut, your perfume, and so on influenced by the media?
2. How are you influenced to like yourself more by the media?
3. How are you influenced to dislike yourself by the media?



#### *Airbrushed Dreams Quiz*

- T/F If store mannequins were real, they would be too thin to have babies.
- T/F If Barbie was a real woman, she would have to walk on all fours to support her body.
- T/F Ninety-eight percent of women are larger than the average model.
- T/F There are eight supermodels and three billion regular women.
- T/F A size six today is equal to a size 12 ten years ago.

\*These are all true!

4. Read Romans 12:1-2. Discuss the beauty myths and talk about any of them you've been believing.
5. Go around the room and name the physical quality (appearance) that you admire most about the girl to your right.
6. Go around the room and name the character quality that you admire most about the girl to your right.
7. Make a decision to focus on your best physical qualities each day. Listen for media messages that tell you that you aren't good enough or are defective in some way and answer them with Psalm 139:14: "God says I am fearfully and wonderfully made." End the group time by saying out loud one at a time, "I praise You, God, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and I like the way You made my \_\_\_\_\_ (physical quality you like about yourself)".

Note: You can use this body part for your Weekly Challenge exercise.

## *Help for Those with Deeper Issues*

This study may have made you realize just how much a poor body image has affected your life. As you have probably noticed, it's rare to find anyone who doesn't think that something is unattractive about her body. This is a common problem.

Of course, not everyone has developed addictions and destructive behaviors due to a poor body image, but don't feel discouraged if you have. Some problems associated with poor body image need more help and attention than this book and a study group can provide. Get help for yourself and those you love. Talk to your leader and your parents about the concerns you recognize in your life. Though these are deeper problems, they are not unsolvable.

### EATING DISORDERS

#### *Compulsive Overeating*

Women who find themselves addicted to food feel that they are moral failures. They believe that if they had more self-discipline, this problem would instantly go away. They are ashamed to get help and many times don't feel that they deserve help. Help is available.

Maybe you feel that you've tried everything and there is just something different about you. That is not true. Jeremiah 29:11-14 promises that God has a plan for you and that you will find it when

## *How to Help a Friend or Loved One*

### HELPING SOMEONE WITH AN EATING DISORDER

When you suspect someone you love has an eating disorder, you want to do something. God can use you to help that person get help. Often your natural instincts are to persuade the individual to eat more food. A common reaction is to even try to force the person to eat. This does little good. Here is a list of dos and don'ts.

#### **Don't**

- get into power struggles over food
- offer pat answers
- impose guilt
- take responsibility for the person

#### **Do**

- lovingly be honest about the symptoms you see and your concerns
- encourage the person to get help
- encourage her to take responsibility for herself
- talk openly and honestly about your feelings
- give honest feedback about appearance
- recognize that the problem isn't just food
- listen
- show love and affection

## *How to Lead a Beauty Secrets Group*

If you've led other groups, you'll find that this one is similar, but there will be some special issues to be aware of. First, remember that body image is a painful issue for some teen girls. Many have been deeply wounded by the comments of friends, family members, and even strangers. It is, therefore, extremely important that the teens in your group feel a sense of safety and acceptance. No one should feel put down. As the leader, you will need to address any inappropriate comments so that spirits aren't wounded further. Make it a ground rule in the first meeting that no one will criticize another's appearance.

The questions within each chapter would be most beneficial if the girls answered them in their own journals. Since there isn't space in the book to write their answers, we suggest that they buy a notebook or journal in which they can keep their personal answers. They do not have to share anything from their journals in group time, but they may want to bring them to the meetings to make notes or to refer to if they do want to share from them.

### GROUND RULES

Following are ground rules for a successful group discussion. Your group may have additional suggestions.



# Notes

## Chapter 1

1. Margo Maine, *Body Wars: An Activist's Guide* (Carlsbad, CA: Gurze Books, 2000), 78.
2. "Eating Disorder Awareness Week—Some Scary Stats," [www.kidzworld.com/site/p3155.htm](http://www.kidzworld.com/site/p3155.htm)
3. Denise Lavoie, "Librarian Sues Harvard Over 'Pretty' Bias," The Associated Press, <http://Abcnews.go.com/Technology/print?id=603158>
4. Marielena Palma, "Perk Up Your Chest!" <http://www.ediets.com/news/pringArticle.cfm?ccid=7&cmi=2115493>
5. ABC News, *20/20* Transcript #1539;5.
6. Located at <http://www.christianity.co.nz/esteem4.htm>.

## Chapter 2

1. Bethany Dillon, *Bethany Dillon*, "Beautiful," Sparrow Records, 2004. Used by permission.

## Chapter 3

1. Katherine McPhee, "My Secret Struggle," *People* magazine, Vol. 66, no. 1, July 3, 2006.

## Chapter 4

1. *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Harpo Productions, April 24, 2006; 12.