

Where True Beauty is Found

You are likely familiar with the phrase, “beauty is only skin deep”. I never knew where this phrase originated, but Google tells me that it was first used in writings by Sir Thomas Overbury in 1613, which I found amazing. I thought the obsession with external beauty was a phenomenon of our time. I didn’t realize this has been a problem for quite a while! I feel compelled to reflect on where true beauty is found.

When I was in nursing school I remember learning about the normal developmental changes occurring in the body as it ages. I learned about age spots, loss of skin elasticity, and the presence of wrinkles. I learned about decreasing metabolism, which often results in weight gain and difficulty losing weight and of course the hair turning gray, or falling out. I learned that people can struggle with these changes.

I was prepared, at age 30, to help both men and women adjust to their “normal” changes and was ready to support them as they grieved the loss of their youthful appearance while assuring them they were still beautiful. Well, that was all well and good when I was 30! Now in the midst of these changes myself it is harder to believe. It’s not easy to maintain society’s standards for beauty. But we can age gracefully (I like that) as we discover the truth of where true beauty is found.

It will be difficult for some of you to relate to this reflection. When you are in the midst of youth it is hard to believe that beauty comes from deep inside. Your focus tends to be on body sculpting, building muscle, ensuring smooth silky skin and hair, having super white teeth and the list goes on. Many people go to great lengths to ensure they keep their outer beauty and ward off the aging process (which will come for all of us). Don’t misunderstand me I believe in keeping our bodies healthy and strong, but society’s obsession with outer beauty has both men and women distracted from the most important aspect of beauty, their inner spirit.

I was there once. I remember a time when I declined an invitation to a gathering with friends because I didn’t like the way I looked in the mirror. I believed the lies found in fashion magazines and on television that I could only be accepted if I was beautiful on the outside, if I looked a certain way. If only I had known then what I know now.

I have learned the most important lessons about beauty from some amazingly spiritual men and women over the years. These individuals have a deep regard for true beauty and have helped me understand it is never found on the surface. True beauty is found on the inside and it is deepened by spending time with your Higher Power, with God, reading, praying, practicing mindfulness. It can be seen in the person who stops what they are doing to help someone else. It shines through the smile and outstretched hand of a caregiver. It is heard in the soothing song of a grandmother holding a sick child. It is felt in the gentle touch of a calloused hand.

It is also found in quiet solitude and movement of the heart toward forgiveness. What could be more beautiful than reconciliation. Grace poured out for another. Grace, the total acceptance of others, having a deep compassion for their personal journey without needing an explanation. That’s beautiful!

In time you will discover that all the hype about external beauty is nonsense. The outside has nothing to do with true beauty. In fact, focusing on the outer shell often interferes with the conditioning of the spirit, the deepening of our connections with others. I believe individuals who extend grace towards others, and age ever so gracefully, hold the key to where true beauty is found.

Questions to ponder:

- How do I see beauty in myself?
- How would others define my beauty?
- What does God see in me?
- What practices can I adopt to deepen my spiritual beauty?
- How can I help others see their inner beauty?

May God’s Peace Be Yours,

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*Beautiful people are not always good
but good people are always beautiful.*

*Beauty is only skin deep. In other words...
a pleasing appearance can be misleading!*