

*The* LOST ART *of*  
TRUE BEAUTY

LESLIE LUDY



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## THE LOST ART OF TRUE BEAUTY

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*How beautiful* are the arms which have embraced Christ, the hands which have touched Christ, the eyes which have gazed upon Christ, the lips which have spoken with Christ, the feet which have followed Christ. How beautiful are the hands which have worked the works of Christ, the feet which treading in His footsteps have gone about doing good, the lips which have spread abroad His Name, the lives which have been counted loss for Him.

—CHRISTINA ROSETTI



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Over the past decade I've had the privilege of interacting with thousands of Christian young women. Every so often I meet a young woman who is truly a cut above the rest; a girl who has forsaken the empty beauty promoted by the culture and embraced a heavenly radiance that impacts everyone she meets. Each time I encounter such a young woman, I'm reminded of Song of Solomon 2:2: "Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens" (NASB). And I am inspired afresh to pursue the stunning beauty of Christ rather than the fleeting beauty of this world.

It is my hope and prayer that this book will inspire you toward the same end. We live in a world where hollow feminine allure is applauded and where true feminine radiance is mocked. I hope that as you read these pages you will catch a vision for feminine beauty as God intended it to be. No matter what your version of feminine beauty has been up to this point, it's never too late to let Christ transform you from the inside out with *His* version of loveliness; the kind of beauty that reflects His glory and impacts others for eternity. He is eager and willing to shape us into lilies among the thorns.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you read. This book is filled with practical advice on applying Christlike feminine beauty

and grace to our daily lives, addressing issues such as social etiquette, dressing with dignity, and communicating with Christlike grace. But, as the first few chapters of this book will explain, it is imperative that these practical principles flow out of the right foundation, a life that has been overtaken by Jesus Christ and a heart that is fully and completely His. If we try to exude feminine dignity and grace in our own strength, we will only achieve a humanly manufactured beauty that will not reflect the glory of God. So I encourage you to put the practical advice offered here in its proper context—a heart full of love and gratitude to our King and an inner life transformed by *His* grace.

Some of the principles in this book may seem a bit old fashioned. Honor, decorum, ladylike dignity—these are not ideas promoted by modern society. To many of us, they are foreign concepts. That’s why this book is called *The Lost Art of True Beauty*. If you choose to let Christ overtake your femininity, you will exude a beauty that is altogether strange to the world around you. And yet it is this kind of rare beauty that has the potential to make an eternal difference in this world.

In this book I share several examples of the specific ways God is teaching me true Christlike feminine beauty. However, these examples are not meant to imply that I’m a finished product in this arena. I am continually being stretched and challenged in these areas, and I know God will be continually refining me into His likeness for the rest of my existence on this earth. I also use examples of many young women I’ve observed up close. Some reflect heavenly beauty, and some reflect the counterfeit beauty of the culture. In all of these cases the names and some details have been altered in order to protect privacy.

I attempt to write all of my books in a casual, down-to-earth style—as if you and I were sitting across from each other in a coffee shop and having a heart-to-heart chat. I hope you will feel that way as you read this book. This is a topic that is very close to my heart. I know God has a tremendous plan for your life and your femininity, and I pray that this message will encourage you to become fully and completely His.

## THE VISION

*Exploring God's Pattern for Feminine Loveliness*



*How beautiful and how delightful you  
are, my love, with all your charms!*

SONG OF SOLOMON 7:6 NASB

About a year ago, my husband, Eric, and I visited Disneyland with our kids. Hudson, our three-year-old, found great delight in the It's a Small World boat excursion, which we dutifully rode 12 times. Harper, our one-year-old, clapped and giggled with wild enthusiasm during the parades and developed a special bond with a life-sized Eeyore, who remains her very favorite animated character. We had an unforgettable time. I had never been to Disneyland before and was impressed by how fairytale-ish everything was.

While in the Magic Kingdom, it seemed that every few minutes another little girl would walk by in a princess costume. Each time the

girl would have a happy smile on her face and walk with her head held high. Sometimes she would do a little spin just to watch her frilly dress swish around. She was living out the ultimate little-girl fantasy—to be a real princess in an enchanted fairy tale, even if just for one day. I almost wished I were eight again.

When I was a little girl, I loved wearing frilly, lacey, puffed-sleeved princess dresses—the more poof, the better. But back then the Disney Princess outfits hadn't come onto the scene, so I had to settle for wearing fancy nightgowns or bridesmaid dresses my mom picked up at second-hand stores for my “dress up” collection. They were always about five sizes too large, but I loved wearing them anyway. I would twirl around the backyard and pretend I was the most beautiful princess in all the land.

Nearly every woman I've ever met has at one point in her life imagined that she was a beautiful princess, twirling gracefully in yards of satin and silk, with gallant noblemen fighting duels in order to win her hand in marriage. And judging by the hundreds of little princesses walking around at Disneyland, this is a dream that continues to thrive within the hearts of little girls everywhere.

Princess merchandise is wildly popular among little girls today. Outfits that make you look like a princess; movies that showcase beautiful princesses; and even princess nightgowns so you and your friends can have a princess pajama party. For some reason, the idea of becoming a princess seems to capture the intrinsic longing in every girl's heart to be fully feminine—to glow with grace, radiance, and loveliness.

It's an innocent desire. In fact, I believe it's a God-given desire. But as we progress from childhood into young womanhood, the culture quickly warps and twists our longing for feminine beauty into something altogether different than the Disney Princess version.

I can't remember exactly when it happened to me. What had started as a fun game of imagination eventually morphed into a desperate longing to somehow become beautiful and desirable. But the older I grew, the more discouraged I became in my pursuit of beauty.

When I was 14, I joined a modeling school. It was one of those places



that promised to turn you into a goddess in just six weeks. The fact that I had braces, glasses, frizzy hair, shockingly pale skin, and bushy eyebrows supposedly did not matter; nor did the fact that I was gangly, awkward, and utterly style challenged. I was assured that the amazing instructors and makeup artists at this world-class institution could transform even the ugliest duckling into the most glamorous swan. So week after week I showed up, learning how to apply bronzer to the top of my cheekbones, how to tame my wild hair into a silky-smooth texture, and how to walk with my neck high and my hips forward (just in case I was ever recruited to strut down the runways of Paris.) I was even taught how to do a mock TV commercial for Mabeline, looking flirtatiously into the camera and coyly unveiling my amazing beauty secret to the world—a brand-new volumizing mascara.

I'm not really sure why my parents agreed to this ridiculousness—and even paid for the classes, no less. I think it had something to do with the fact that they felt sorry for me. For years I had been mercilessly teased about my appearance every day at school. I was desperately insecure. It always seemed as though other girls achieved effortless beauty, while I struggled and strived but never got there. Most of my friends had beautiful olive skin with year-round tans, salon-perfect blond hair that never went flat, and of-the-moment clothes straight out of a Guess catalog. I, on the other hand, was plagued with ghostly pale skin, frizzy brown hair, hopelessly crooked teeth (and thus three miserable years of braces), and a disturbing ineptness at making my outfits look even remotely trendy. At that point in my life, I had never been described by the opposite sex as “hot” or “pretty.” The most I could hope for was that guys would label me as “nice” and want to be friends with me, but a large majority of them used me as verbal target practice. They could sense my insecurity and found great delight in pouncing on it.

I still remember walking home from school one May afternoon, my skinny legs revealing my glowing white skin beneath a knee-length skirt. A carload of high school boys drove by, and one of them yelled mockingly, “Get a tan!” I was deeply mortified. (I will spare you the

story of my subsequent attempt at using self-tanning cream, which ended up making me look strangely akin to one of the orange Oompa-Lumpas from *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*.)

It had been easy enough to feel like a princess when I was eight, twirling around the backyard in a frilly dress, but the older I became, and the more of the real world I experienced, the more I began to feel like an ugly stepsister instead of Cinderella.

It didn't matter that my parents had repeatedly told me, "You are beautiful just the way you are!" My youth leader's lesson on "Accepting your own inner beauty and getting comfortable in your own skin" had not helped. And my school counselor's lectures on the importance of self-esteem hadn't made even the slightest difference in my life. The bottom line was that I wanted to be beautiful, not with some vague "inner beauty" that had no value in the real world, but with the kind of sexy, alluring, culture-pleasing appeal I saw on billboards and TV. Somewhere between playing with my frilly dress up clothes and doing the fake Mabeline commercial shoot, I had become convinced that this was the one road to true happiness and the only way to find real love.

I'm not sure if modeling school made any real difference in my physical allure. I certainly did not look like a model by the end of it. One thing I do know—I spent nearly every waking moment of my life for about two years trying to make myself more appealing to the culture and to the opposite sex.

Eventually, all of my efforts did achieve a measure of outward beauty, and I finally began to gain guys' attention. But the ironic thing was that I still felt hopelessly ugly. The first time a guy asked me out, I thought he was joking and started to laugh. And when another guy told me I was pretty, I was shocked. I looked at him in confusion and then blurted, "Really?"

For all the time I spent chasing after the culture's beauty standard, I never seemed to actually get there. Sure, I might have graduated out of my frizzy-haired, pale skin, gangly-and-awkward phase. But no

matter how much makeup I put on, I still didn't look like one of the models on the cover of *Seventeen* or *Vogue*. No matter how much I deprived myself of fries and milkshakes, my thighs never seemed to get as skinny as the girl on the Abercrombie poster. And no matter how many guys showed interest in me, there were always scores of other girls who received far more male approval than I did.

My search for feminine beauty, marred and tainted by modern society, had led me to an existence entirely centered upon myself. Instead of pursuing the elegance and nobility that my fictional childhood heroines exuded, I was pursuing the sensual standard of pop culture. Instead of twirling around in a flowing princess dress, I was sauntering down the halls in skintight designer jeans and push-up bras. There wasn't anything graceful or feminine about it. It was all based on sex. The sexier you were, the more beautiful you were.

It was anything but a fairy tale, and I was anything but a princess. In all of the fairy tales I'd grown up with, the heroine might have been beautiful, but she was not admired for her sex appeal. Rather, she was admired for her poise, grace, gentleness, courage, and feminine charm. (And, by the way, the idea of graceful, heroic femininity didn't originate in fairy tales—they are part of God's perfect design for a woman. We'll talk more about this later on.)

When I was young, I had spent hours imagining I was a captivatingly lovely heroine, exuding a sweetness and charm that caused even the birds to come rest upon my finger as I walked through the forest. When I saw injustice, I would quickly rush to offer help and protection. And when confronted with evil, I would sacrifice my own personal happiness to protect what was right. I used to dream about meeting a gallant prince who would be fascinated by all the amazing qualities he saw in me; a man who would slay dragons and conquer kingdoms in order to win me for his own.

But by the time I was 14, I had come to the sad realization that modern guys couldn't care less about feminine grace or nobility. They measured your worth based on the size of your chest and the shape

of your body. They measured your desirability based on how quickly they could get you into bed.

Modern culture scorned fairy-tale femininity. Nearly every magazine cover or fashion ad portrayed the same image of “beauty”—a haughty-looking young woman with an icy scowl on her face, waifish clothes draping her anemic body, and her lifeless eyes lacquered with ghoulish black liner. This, apparently, was the standard for womanly allure—the type of girl that guys were attracted to and that society applauded.

So I traded in my pursuit of true feminine beauty for the cheap counterfeit presented by the culture. The result was a season of hellish misery; throwing myself at guy after guy, only to be used and carelessly discarded; tossing all dignity and modesty to the wind and flaunting my body everywhere I went; exchanging wholesome conversation for profanity and crudeness; ignoring the needs of others and adopting an attitude of selfishness and rebellion; filling my mind and heart with the perverted images of Hollywood and the media. Of course, because I was a Christian, I put limits on how far I let these things go in my life. I always made sure I was a step or two ahead of my secular peers when it came to morality, but that didn’t keep me from being steeped in compromise.

From the world’s perspective, I was on the right track to becoming a desirable young woman; a woman who had forsaken the archaic, restrictive, old-fashioned ideas about feminine modesty and dignity and embraced the empowerment of a self-focused, sensual existence. But a couple of years into this pattern, I finally recognized how empty my life was. I had male attention—but it only led to one broken heart after another. I had a measure of sensual beauty—but it only made me feel like a sex object. I had social status and popularity—but it made me feel fake and shallow. I had parties and entertainment—but they made me feel slimed and dirty.

It was right around that time that I encountered a young woman in her twenties who was altogether different than any modern young woman I’d ever seen. Her name was Kristina. She was a missionary.

She was the most radiant girl I'd ever met. Her face literally glowed. She was beautiful—but it was not a contrived beauty, propped up by outward things like clothes and makeup. Rather, her beauty seemed to emanate from somewhere within her. Her eyes sparkled with passion. Her smile lit up an entire room. She was entirely others focused and seemed to completely lose sight of herself. Most men groomed by modern culture wouldn't have given her a second look. She didn't carry herself with the seductive, flirtatious air that guys always seemed to respond to. She didn't dress to show off her figure. In fact, she didn't pursue guys at all. She was far too busy living out a passionate romance with Jesus Christ to be pining after an earthly prince.

She did not possess worldly allure, but she had something far better: a radiant loveliness that reminded me of the princesses in my childhood fairy tales. It was obvious that her beauty was the real thing—and it far surpassed the hollow counterfeit I'd been chasing after for so many years. I was awed and inspired by what I saw.

Suddenly, all I wanted was to be a little girl again—carefree and innocent, floating in my frilly princess dress and pretending to be a fairy-tale heroine. The souped-up sensuality and shallow self-focused femininity I had pursued in recent years had brought nothing but heartache. When I pondered how far I'd strayed from true feminine beauty, I felt heavy with regret. Was it even possible now to return to those days of childhood innocence? Could my femininity ever be restored after I had spent years throwing it to the wind?

That night I knelt beside my bed with tears of remorse streaming down my cheeks. "God, forgive me!" I cried. "I have strayed so far from You. I have chased after empty, worldly things for so long. All the while I've been proclaiming to be a Christian, I've been living for myself. Forgive me for allowing my femininity to become so twisted. Restore me and shape me into the kind of girl You designed me to be. Cleanse me from the filth of the world and make me new."

Though I had distanced myself from God for two years, that night I felt His presence like never before. I knew He heard my prayer. And

I felt a gentle assurance in my heart that He had a tremendous plan for my life; something far more fulfilling than the path I'd been pursuing. But first He needed my life.

He was asking me for absolute surrender; to lay down all of the things I'd been clinging to for security. Over the next few weeks, I began to lay everything on the altar—my desire for male attention, my craving to always have a guy in my life, my addiction to social status and popularity, my need to always have the latest clothes and read the newest magazines...the list went on and on. I knew this was not supposed to be a theoretical decision. Many practical and often painful decisions had to be made in order to build my life around Jesus Christ rather than the pleasures of the world.

I began saying no to the frenzied social activities that had been the center of my life and helped me climb the popularity ladder. I started avoiding the usual hookup spots that had allowed me to be noticed by potential romantic flings. I relinquished my obsession with beauty and clothes, and I decided to spend my energies pursuing a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ rather than pouring all of my effort into trying to look a certain way. I threw away stacks of shallow magazines and tossed out clothes that had been purchased for no other purpose than to show off my body in a sensual way.

I made the difficult choice to walk completely away from the dating scene, and I determined I would not get into a romantic relationship until God had showed me he was to be my future husband. Until then, my focus was on Jesus Christ, not on pursuing the opposite sex.

These were certainly not easy commitments to make. But, thankfully, I did not have to make them alone. Jesus stood tenderly by my side, giving me strength to obey and whispering assurance and peace to my heart. I didn't know what the future held, but I knew I was right with Him. He finally had first place in my life. He was now in control, not me. And for the first time in years, I felt happy and fulfilled.

During the next season of my life, my femininity was completely transformed. My understanding of beauty was radically altered. God

didn't merely restore my childhood innocence and return me to the days of dressing up like a princess. Rather, He gave me a breathtaking vision for true feminine beauty—*His* vision. He taught me the ultimate secret to lasting, spectacular beauty. And it was far beyond the most amazing fairy tale I'd ever imagined.

Danielle is an insecure 21-year-old who struggles with anorexia. "I can't seem to accept myself the way I am," she confessed. "No matter how much weight I lose, whenever I see models on the cover of magazines, those images make me feel fat and ugly. I don't think a guy will ever be attracted to me unless I reach a certain standard. That's why I keep starving myself. I know it's wrong, but I can't help it."

Kayla is a 24-year-old who struggles with a different problem. She is entirely consumed with her outward appearance. "If I'm not wearing something that's completely of-the-moment, I feel distracted and insecure," she admitted. "If I don't have makeup on, I won't even talk to anyone. I spend hours each week improving my wardrobe and style. I know I shouldn't spend so much time focused on how I look, but it seems to be the only way I'll ever meet a guy or get any respect in this world."

Both of these young women profess to know Christ, but they would not be described as radiant, graceful, captivating women who reflect the glory of Jesus Christ. Rather, like the majority of young Christian women today, they would be described as insecure and self-focused.

From eating disorders to self-obsession to extreme dieting to plastic surgery, today's girls are desperately searching for beauty—but they are looking in all the wrong places. Just like my modeling school experience at 14, they are following a faulty pattern, attempting to somehow meet their insatiable longing to be found desirable. The result is the counterfeit feminine beauty we see all around us today, even in Christian circles. Those of us who know Jesus Christ should be the ones showcasing the pattern for true femininity, but instead we are only showcasing the empty pattern of this world. We are battling with the very same insecurities, eating disorders, and selfishness as everyone else.

## The Lost Art of True Beauty

When God first began to rebuild my understanding of feminine beauty, my entire outlook and value system had to change. For years I had allowed pop culture to define my understanding of feminine beauty. I had inundated my mind with modern magazines, movies, TV, and the fashion industry—a world that valued the Victoria Secret-model look and attitude. I had been surrounded by peers who applauded self-obsessed, arrogant, sexually aggressive young women. I had tried to venture as close to those standards as possible while still somehow maintaining my Christianity.

Gently and quietly God began to whisper to my heart. “I have a completely different pattern for your feminine beauty, Leslie,” He seemed to say. “One that reflects My glory and not the empty charm of this world.”

The revelation not only left me feeling excited, but also a bit nervous. Would allowing God to reform my beauty cause me to become drab and ugly? I pictured myself walking around in a dowdy, gray, tentlike dress and with a morose expression on my makeup-less face, my hair pinned in a tight, unattractive bun. The vision made me shudder. Did God have any interest in a young woman being outwardly pretty? Or was He so consumed with inward beauty that He deemed any physical beauty as unhealthy and unspiritual?

Growing up in church, I’d seen every extreme when it came to women and their physical appearance. There was the camp that seemed to think the more glamorous they were, the more impressive they would be as God’s messengers to this world. They wore piles of expensive jewelry, caked on layers of makeup, drenched themselves in perfume, dressed in carefully pieced together designer outfits, and kept their fingernails long, pointed, and manicured to perfection.

Then there was the group of women who seemed to think that the less attractive they could make themselves, the more God would approve of them. Either that, or they were so insecure that it seemed



they were trying to apologize for their femininity. They hid behind shapeless dresses. They only wore dreary, colorless clothes. They never touched makeup. They kept their hair pinned back or let it hang limply without any kind of style. And, most depressing of all, they never seemed to smile.

Neither example—the showy, glamorous, overdone kind of beauty or the drab, sad, frumpy-is-more-spiritual version—held any appeal to me whatsoever. I'd seen very few examples of women who possessed the genuine grace, poise, elegance, and charm I had longed for in my childhood. And I certainly hadn't seen any inspiring examples of young women my own age.

I had no idea what God's pattern was supposed to look like.

Then I began to read about the amazing, world-altering, Christ-built women of days gone by. I came to realize that though truly beautiful femininity may be scarce these days, it didn't used to be quite so uncommon. Women who exuded enchanting beauty can be found all throughout the pages of Christian history. Like Kristina, they rejected the empty feminine charm of the world and embraced an altogether different kind of beauty—the beauty of Jesus Christ. They showcased femininity as God intended it to be in all its elegance, grace, nobility, and lasting loveliness.

Here are just a handful of inspiring examples.

A pretty woman, with lovely soft features, kind eyes and dark hair, she was never angry, never impatient, never resentful, she patiently wore away prejudices and hatred by her gentle, gracious presence and her blameless life. She had all the firmness of a man, and yet a more gentle and womanly woman it would be hard to find.<sup>1</sup>

—SAID OF LOTTIE MOON,  
YOUNG SINGLE MISSIONARY TO CHINA

Her presence lends its warmth and health to all who come

before it; if woman lost us Eden, then such as she alone restore it.”<sup>2</sup>

—SAID OF LUCY WEBB HAYES,  
FIRST LADY IN 1821

She seemed endowed with a peculiar magnetism when you were in her presence so that you could not help thinking yourself in the presence of a being much higher than the ordinary run of humanity. I have heard her pray, and she could offer up the finest petition to the Throne of Grace of any person I ever heard in my life. She was always gentle and kind to the Indians, as she was to everyone else. She took an interest in every one at the mission, especially the children. Everyone loved her, because to see her was to love her.<sup>3</sup>

—SAID OF NARCISSA WHITMAN,  
YOUNG MARRIED MISSIONARY TO NATIVE AMERICAN INDIANS

They say there is a young lady in New Haven who is beloved of that Great Being who made and rules the world. They say that He fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on Him. If you present all the world to her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it. She is unmindful of any pain or affliction. She has a singular purity in her affections. You could not persuade her to compromise her true Love even if you would give her all the world. She possesses a wonderful sweetness, calmness, and kindness to those around her. She will sometimes go about from place to place, singing sweetly. She seems to be always full of joy and pleasure, and no one knows exactly why. She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have Someone invisible always conversing with her.<sup>4</sup>

—WRITTEN OF SARA EDWARDS  
BY JONATHON EDWARDS, HER FUTURE HUSBAND

Can you imagine being described in the way these young women were? Can you imagine glowing with such a divine inner sparkle that everyone who encountered you could not help but be awed, inspired, and captivated? This is what it means to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ through our femininity. It's feminine beauty as God intended it to be. And no matter how impossible it may seem at first glance, it's what each of us are called to.

Sadly, the picture of grace, strength, and beauty painted by these heroes of the faith is light years beyond where most of us are today. Recently I was in a coffee shop, observing a college-aged girl who is known for being an outspoken Christian. She was sitting with one of her guy friends. They were sipping lattes and catching up on life.

The girl is attractive and her personality is outgoing and funny, but there is something about the way she carries herself that is sadly unfeminine. On this particular day, she was speaking and laughing so loudly that everyone in the coffee shop could hear her entire conversation. She was sharing deeply personal things, such as her recent struggle with overeating and insecurities about her body image. It made me feel awkward listening to her go on and on about herself and her personal struggles with a casual male acquaintance. Nothing appeared to be sacred in her life—her deepest fears and struggles were placed on display not only for her guy friend, but for anyone who happened to be within earshot.

After a few minutes she shifted in her seat and made a crass comment about her backside hurting. She sat haphazardly in her chair, sloppily slurping her coffee, and dangling her legs off her stool in a very unladylike way. The more she talked and carried on, her joking became crude, her laughter became obnoxious, and her words became gossip and critical of others. It reminded me of the way I used to behave when I was caught up in the version of femininity applauded by the culture. It's a trap too many of us fall into. The concept of feminine mystique, elegance, and grace is foreign to many of us.

We have become so consumed with trying to make ourselves more appealing to this world; so intent on gaining friends, status, and

popularity; and so influenced by the lewdness of pop culture that often the only beauty we are capable of showcasing is a selfish, hollow charm of our own making that will quickly fade with time.

This kind of behavior might seem completely harmless and even normal by today's standards, but it is dismally beneath the version of feminine beauty we are called to exude.

Captivating femininity isn't supposed to only be found in Jane Austen novels or Cinderella stories. Words like *enthraling*, *enchanted*, *breath-taking*, *stunning*, *delightful*, and *noble* should be the description of every set-apart, Christ-built young woman. It's God's perfect design for each of His royal daughters. Our desire to be a radiant princess didn't originate with Walt Disney—it's a desire placed within us by our Maker. He created us to shine with royal beauty. Not to dazzle with a self-promoting beauty; but to be a sparkling reflection of the stunning beauty of our King. Just take a quick peek at some of the imagery used in Scripture to describe the royal beauty our Lord desires to work within us.

Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house; so the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him...The royal daughter is all glorious within... her clothing is woven with gold (Psalm 45:10-11,13).

How beautiful and how delightful you are, My love, with all your charms! (Song of Solomon 7:6 NASB).

Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens (Song of Solomon 2:4 NASB).

Her clothing is fine linen and purple...Strength and honor are her clothing (Proverbs 31:22,25).

In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves... with good works (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down

from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband (Revelation 21:2 NLT).

When Eric was first attempting to put words to the kind of feminine beauty that set-apart young women are called to, he described it as a blend between Audrey Hepburn dignity and Amy Carmichael selflessness. Audrey Hepburn has been called the epitome of elegance and grace. Though her personal beliefs, Hollywood career, or even her glamorized physical beauty are not things I necessarily want to promote, she knew how to carry herself like a true lady—an almost entirely lost concept among women today. Amy Carmichael is one of the most heroic women in Christian history. She gave up personal ambition and pursuits in order to rescue hundreds of endangered children in India with a devotion that is also a forgotten ideal among modern femininity. It's the dazzling blend of ladylike grace and selfless devotion that marks a truly set-apart young woman.

When Christ overtakes a woman's life and transforms her from the inside out, she becomes truly feminine—a picture of elegance, grace, and loveliness blended with sacrificial selfless devotion to her King. She becomes a true lady, carrying herself with poise and confidence, yet deflecting all attention away from herself and toward Jesus Christ. She is enchantingly mysterious, holding her inner life sacred and guarding her heart with quiet tenacity.

Noble, breathtaking, captivating, Christ-centered femininity is truly a sight to behold. It's a beauty that does not draw attention to the woman, but to Jesus Christ. It's a radiance that is not dependent upon age, circumstances, or physical enhancements. It's a loveliness that flows from deep within—the refreshing beauty of heaven, of a life transformed from the inside out by Jesus Christ.

## Making the Exchange

The first step to discovering true feminine beauty is exchanging all that we are for all that He is. If we rely on something that *we* possess

to make us beautiful, we cannot receive the supernatural, transforming beauty of Jesus Christ. True beauty is impossible outside of Him. If we obtain a worldly outer beauty, even if we become the most gorgeous, desirable, sought-after model in the world, we only have a propped-up, hollow, fleeting appeal that quickly fades with time and age. Proverbs 31:30 says, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing.” Have you ever seen a glamorous movie star on the cover of a tabloid once she has become old and lost her beauty? All the appeal and allure she once possessed has faded into oblivion, and the only thing left is what she has on the inside—which, sadly, is not very attractive in most cases.

If we muster all the human heroism and try to become a “good person,” we only have a self-made, faltering form of goodness that can never stand against the stunning righteousness of Jesus Christ. Isaiah 64:6 says it perfectly: “We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Any human beauty, any human value that we might find within ourselves is just a filthy rag compared to the limitless beauty and glory of Jesus Christ. Christ’s beauty is perfect. And, in spite of what we deserve, He desires to adorn us with His spectacular glory. It is not *our* unique beauty that must shine for this world to see. It is not *our* own beauty that we must discover and embrace—*it is His*.

C.H. Spurgeon said:

He is the lily, but His beloved is like He, for He applies His own chosen emblem to her—“As the *lily* among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” Notice that He is the lily and she is *as* the lily—that is to say, He has the beauty and she reflects it! She is comely in His comeliness which He puts upon her. If any soul has any such beauty as is described here, Christ has endowed that beloved soul with all its wealth of charms, for in ourselves we are deformed and defiled! . . . There is no beauty in any of us but what our Lord has worked in us.<sup>5</sup>

True feminine beauty is not a complicated formula involving hundreds of rules to remember. It's not something that requires spending two years at finishing school or being groomed as a beauty pageant queen. True feminine beauty is the natural by-product of a young woman who has emptied herself, given up her own life, and allowed God's Spirit complete access to every dimension of her inner and outer life.

If you are tired of the counterfeit pattern of the world and ready to discover womanly loveliness as God intended it to be, I invite you to join me as we unearth the lost art of true beauty. No matter how far from feminine beauty you may feel right now, no matter how ugly or worthless you may think you are—this journey is for you. It doesn't matter whether you've struggled with eating disorders, extreme insecurity, weight problems, skin problems, or an obsession with looking a certain way. God has a plan for your beauty, a plan that is beautiful and fulfilling beyond the most amazing fairy tale ever written.

Even now He is gently whispering to you, calling you out of the world's darkness and into His marvelous light. "Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house; so the King will greatly desire your beauty."

Are you ready to respond to His invitation?