



A Beautiful Strength

Celebrating the courage it takes to be a Mom

Day 1

READ Psalm 27:4. What images come to mind when you think about beauty? Has your taste in beauty changed from when you were a child? Do you think your taste in beauty will continue to change over time? How do we determine that something or someone is beautiful? There is no short supply of instruction or advice given on how to be beautiful or how to enhance our beauty. FLIP through television channels or pages of magazines and see what our culture has defined as beautiful and what we're to applaud as beautiful.

However, who or what is considered beautiful today will change with time. Proverbial wisdom tells us that "beauty is fleeting" not just as weathered by time, but we, as fickle beholders, admire one thing today and something completely different tomorrow.

READ Psalm 104. As you read these verses, consider the beauty of not only creation but of the one creation reveals. WRITE down a few things that stand out to you about God's beauty. THANK Him for the beauty He is and the beauty He gives.

Day 2

READ 1 Peter 3:3-5. We're all familiar with the concept of inner beauty or true beauty, but what does that mean? What's your idea of a "truly beautiful" person? How would you describe someone who, in his/her own way of **being and character**, is beautiful? When we use the word *true*, we do so to emphasize permanence (*true* love is lasting, genuine, real). True beauty then must also be lasting, unfading, and real. It's less about what you see when you look at someone and more about how you feel when you're around him/her -- Feeling safe, calm, inspired and connected in the presence of a beautiful spirit.

THINK about someone you know who you'd describe as having a beautiful spirit. What's most attractive about that person? LOOK at the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22. Are these the qualities that come to mind when you think of someone with a beautiful spirit? As we follow Jesus and choose the better path, we discover these qualities becoming a part of who we are as we become beautiful people.

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him...

Matthew 12:35a

Day 3

READ 1 Kings 3:24-27. What truth about the heart of a mother was Solomon wisely counting on when he offered his solution? True beauty reveals love. Think about the characteristics of love shown by the mother of the child as she chose to give up her child in order to protect the life of that child. When have you chosen what was best for someone else, sacrificing your own desires or best interests? Why did you make that choice? DESCRIBE a time when someone demonstrated love in that way for you. How did that make you feel?

READ John 3:16. What does that say about the love of God for us? PRAY: Father, not only is your beauty true, your beauty reveals your amazing love. Help me today to allow the love and beauty of your Spirit to flow through me.

Day 4

Love in action can actually define beauty. READ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and John 13:34-35. LOOK at each of the characteristics of love listed. This is the kind of love we've been given and are to give as we follow Jesus.

THINK about the people in your life - spouse, sibling, parent, boss, teacher, friend, colleague. As you follow your Rabbi this week, how does He call you to love them? What characteristic of love does He call you to give them this week? Is a friend in need of encouraging love? Forgiving love? Is your parent or sibling in need of patient love? Consider writing 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 on a note card or commit it to memory. Ask God to remind you of the love He's given you and specific ways to give that love to others.

Day 5

The compelling thing about a mother's love is that it's given for no reason at all. A mother doesn't wait to be drawn toward loving her child or wait for the child to love her first. Before we could ever love, we were loved.

READ 1 John 4:7-12 and Romans 5:7-8.

Only because we were first loved are we able to love. Look again how love is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Only as we seek to know and become like Jesus are we able to love like this. We can only give what's been given to us.

In your journal, WRITE out each characteristic of love individually, allowing space between each one. START each line with the words: "love is..." (*love is patient*) Now go back through each line and WRITE "God's" before the words "love is" (*God's love is patient*). Now INSERT the words "for me" [or your name] (*God's love for me is patient*). READ through what you've written. GO through each line and thank God for loving you this way. TAKE time to pray and reflect about the characteristics of God's love and all the ways He's loved you.

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