

The (Truly) Beautiful

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Every look in the mirror is another opportunity to ask it.

But it becomes more than a question. How we look becomes a primary concern for all of us, men and women, that pervades many of our thoughts and interactions with others.

Our beauty-obsessed culture quickly adds its voice, with images bombarding us each day on television, movies, billboards, magazine covers, and so on.

These images are of perfectly proportioned women and unblemished skin. But these images don't tell the whole story. As that little video helped us see, they conceal thousands of hours in the gym, thousands of dollars on products and surgical enhancements, and the fine-tuning, the deceitful fine-tuning of Photoshop.

[1 : 19] But the images don't stay there, do they? They come into our hearts. They become a mirror in which we look at again and again, and then look back at ourselves desperately trying to measure up.

This morning, the book of Proverbs wants to change us by giving us another image. In so many ways, the fight for beauty in our culture is not won or lost with rational arguments.

It's not won or lost with learning biblical principles merely. The fight for beauty in our culture is won or lost on images. It's not the science behind diets that gets us in the wrong place.

It's the images of beauty that derail and detract us. The flat abs on the cover of a woman's day that compel us to try yet another diet to fix our waistline.

The trim, healthy sitcom mama juggling domestic life with joyful ease, unlike us. The young Instagram star that stays rail thin while taking pictures of all the food she's eating.

[2 : 26] The images are the problem. They tell us, they tell you, you're not good enough. You're too fat, you're too thin, you're too old, you're too young, you're too pale, you're too tan.

Be like me and you can be beautiful and successful. This morning, in this passage that we know so very well, the scriptures want to put together another image. They want to put forward another image that can change your life.

It's meant to be held up out in front of you. Not a to-do list to do, which is often the way we approach Proverbs 31, but an image that compels us into wisdom and into the fear of God.

So that's where we're going. Proverbs 31, verse 10, I'm going to begin reading there. An excellent wife, who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax and works with willing hands.

[3 : 29] She is like the ships of the merchant. She brings her food from afar. She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.

She considers a field and buys it. With the fruit of her hand, she plants a vineyard. She makes herself with, she dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She puts her hands to the staff and her hands to the spindle.

She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

She makes her bed coverings for herself and her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates while he sits among the elders of the land.

[4 : 35] She makes linen garments and sells them. She delivers sashes to the merchant. Strength and dignity are her clothing.

And she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom. And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her. Many women, this is his quote, many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.

No woman is more beautiful or worthy of praise than a woman who fears the Lord. No woman is more beautiful or more worthy of praise than a woman who fears the Lord. We're going to dive into this massive subject in three points this morning.

[5 : 45] The first one is beauty's counterfeit. Beauty's counterfeit. Proverbs 31 is an acrostic poem describing the truly excellent and beautiful wife. An acrostic is just a poem in which each letter begins with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet or any alphabet.

But this one's in a Hebrew acrostic. So it begins with each line begins with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet. So it's trying to say that this is the woman from A to Z.

This is the one from top to bottom. This is the excellent woman. This is the great woman. This is the ideal woman in so many ways.

It's trying to give that to us. That's what it's trying to say. Now, early on in the book of Proverbs, if you remember our second message, I think we were introduced to Lady Wisdom. You remember Lady Wisdom several times in the first nine chapters?

She opens her mouth. She cries out into the streets. Come on. Come find wisdom. Come to me and find wisdom in the streets. And while Proverbs 31 is not another message about Lady Wisdom, it is a picture of wisdom in real life.

[6 : 55] That's what it's supposed to be in so many ways. This is not another picture of Lady Wisdom. It is a real life woman who is wise. But before we can take in this woman, we must turn back to see another woman in the book of Proverbs.

If you'll turn with me to chapter 5. You can go and stick your finger in 31 and turn with me to chapter 5. We have to look at another woman. If you remember throughout the book of Proverbs, the father warns his son about another woman, the foolish woman.

Chapter 5, verse 1 to 6, he says, My son, be attentive to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discernment, and that your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil.

But in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death. Her steps follow the path to Sheol.

She does not ponder the path of life. Her ways wander, and she does not know it. The longest speech in the book of Proverbs is about this woman.

[8 : 05] Not the Proverbs 31 woman. It's trying to say something. The father warns his son to watch out for her in the streets and in the markets.

She is smooth, says all the right things. But she will lead you to break every promise you've ever made. This is what I'm going to call it, for our purposes this morning, this is beauty's counterfeit.

This is beauty's veneer. This is mere physical beauty. This is untrue beauty. In so many ways, beauty's counterfeit, what she says, is that physical beauty is the only beauty that truly matters.

Beauty's counterfeit just says to us, and physical beauty is the only beauty that truly matters. In the old days, she was seen in the streets and in the markets.

That's what he said. He said, his son, just stay inside. You'll avoid her. But now beauty's counterfeit spreads her message in the images that bombard us inside the house. And tell us that how we look is the most important thing.

[9 : 11] And so beauty's counterfeit in our culture, and I know this is a little bit of a sensitive subject, beauty's counterfeit encourages women to obsess about their physical appearance more than anything else. You know, what stands out to me about this foolish woman here is that she's in so deep, she doesn't know what's going on.

She stood in front of the mirror for so long. She's worn clothes that show off her body for so long. She lured men with her eyelashes for so long that she doesn't realize it. Look in verse six again.

She says, she does not ponder the way of life.

Her ways wander, and she does not know it. She's outside the path of wisdom, but she has no clue. She's gotten so into this pit that she's become blind and blind to her blindness.

The obsession with physical beauty starts small. A little bit of mascara. A little bit of blush. A pattern of healthy exercise.

An occasional rush of excitement from watching a guy's head turn, or a girlfriend comment enviously on how you look. But what begins small often begins to consume.

[10:20] Several years ago, I read about an Australian Instagram model. I don't even know that those words fit together, but they do. An Instagram model who quit social media because all her images were not the real her.

It wrecked me reading this article. Her eyes were open to see her obsession. She said, I was addicted to what others thought of me. I believed how many likes and followers I had correlated to how many people liked me.

I didn't see it happening. But social media had become my sole identity. I mean, you don't have to have a thousand followers on social media for that to become your sole identity.

I didn't see it happen is what scares me. It's so deep that she became blind. Now, before she deleted all her images, when she came off social media, she went and rewrote the blurbs underneath them.

One of them, she said, stomach tucked in, strategic pose, to emphasize my body. I just want younger girls to know that this is not real life, or cool, or inspirational.

[11:23] It's contrived perfection made to get attention. The payoff is the intoxicating feeling of being liked, whether in the lunchroom or on social media.

It's everywhere. I mean, you know, the obsession is not just for young women. You know, the average woman spends a staggering \$12,000 to \$15,000 a year on cosmetic. The typical woman will spend more than a year of her life putting on cosmetics.

No wonder we wait so long, you know. Heads off to the men. But, you know, as women age, the challenge to look good and hide the lines grows harder and harder. And the biggest temptation sometimes can be the younger women that seem to be effortlessly beautiful.

And so we turn to things, cosmetics, pills, surgeries, obsessive dieting, and exercise, eating disorder, and so on, driven by the desire to look like our old self. I have a close friend, we'll say.

Now, in her upper 50s, been enslaved to an eating disorder for ever since I've been born, 40 years.

[12:32] And still thinks she's fat. So it just warps so many things, warps so many things about us. So what do we do? Do we throw it all out? You know, do we say, well, makeup's wrong, you know.

Dieting's wrong. Exercising is wrong. Adrian Rogers said it well. Some women say it's a sin to wear makeup. I think it's a sin for some women not to wear makeup. You can laugh at that.

That's good. There's a healthy place for these things. Somebody said to me, you know, I grew up thinking movie theaters were bad, and here we are meeting in one for church, you know.

And often makeup can be like that, too. It can be in an unhealthy place. There's a healthy place for these things. It's fine to look good for your husband and nice for others. Your body is a temple.

One of the things that affects me so much on this, the Apostle Paul was probably in his mid to upper 50s when he was traveling all over the world, around the Mediterranean, planting churches.

[13:32] I want to be that ready. Your body's a temple, you know, not for your obsession, but to prepare it for mission so that you can be vigorously involved in mission way up into your old age.

That's the goal. But watch the line. Watch the line. What's healthy?

What's obsessive? What honors God? What's intent to gain honor for myself? This is, you know, that line is not just for women, either.

It's for men. I've read, you know, gym rats are men. And we can fall into that, too. Beauty's counterfeit fails to warn that physical beauty fades and is a dead end.

You have Proverbs 31, 30. Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is worthy to be praised. You know, we hear that word vain and we think, we think of that song, you know, he's so vain and everything's so vain.

[14:39] You remember that? Nobody? Okay, great. You know, we think arrogant and self-centered. That's not the meaning of vain here. Vain literally means a breath, a vapor.

Here today, gone tomorrow. It's not saying physical beauty is wrong. It's saying physical beauty fades. That's the message that this culture is not telling us. It's fixing everything in these images so

we can't see that beauty fades.

And there's something beautiful about a woman who ages in the Lord. It's temporary. David Pallison said it very well. Even women who succeed against the cultural ideal can do so for only a short window of time.

Someday, everyone who lives long enough will look like grandma or great grandma. Old, wrinkly, white-haired, frail, bent.

You're in a race against time in which everyone loses. If you buy into the value system, someday you'll be cursed no matter what. Don't fall for the obsession.

[15:47] You know, I was talking to a friend this week whose mother tried to raise her in these things. Right beside her mirror, she had this verse. Charm is a evil, a beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is worthy to praise.

On top of her dresser, where she probably picked out the clothes for the day, she had, You're fearfully and wonderfully made. That's exactly what we've got to do. Now, don't throw out every mirror in the house, you know, make sure the hair looks okay or something like that, but put something right by it.

It says don't do it. Don't fall for it. There's something more important than physical beauty. That's what Proverbs is trying to say. There's something more important than physical beauty, and it's wisdom.

Get it, and it'll save your soul. One of my favorite Proverbs, very vivid Proverbs, 11.22 says, Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion. Gold rings don't belong to pigs, or they don't belong with pigs.

Beauty's counterfeit has a message for men, too. Beauty's counterfeit encourages men to follow their eyes wherever they lead, wherever physical beauty leads.

[16:58] And so he warns. All throughout Proverbs, the father warns. He's warning the son. In so many ways, we think, well, beauty is a subject for women, but not in the Proverbs.

Beauty is a subject for men. And so he says, don't desire her beauty in your heart. Don't let her capture you with her eyelashes.

Eyelashes. Jesus warns the eye is the lamp of the body. So men are often led to corruption through their eyes, through looking lustfully at the women around them and the images of other women.

I became impure when I was eight or nine years old. This is when I saw the first illicit image I'd ever seen.

I remember the feeling. The strange feeling of curiosity, excitement, guilt, and shame that began a fight with lust.

[17:55] The book of Proverbs is not pulling punches. It's saying very clearly, don't fall for this obsession, men. Don't fall for this.

Women are on the cover of women's magazines and men's magazines because men treat women more often like things to look at than people to provide for and protect.

Don't be one of them. Get help. I mean, get accountability. Do whatever you have to do. You know, Proverbs said, can a man carry the fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?

Can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? You know, sexual romance and intimacy within the fireplace of covenant marriage is a wonderful thing. It's secure. But outside of it, it'll burn you down.

It'll burn down the house. The end is not pretty. I mean, this is not a game. This is not just an image. The end is death and destruction. Her house, 727, her house is the way to Sheol.

[18:57] Going down to the chambers of death. The point is, beauty's counterfeit comes to us in a system. It's in a world system in this world and all its values are passing away.

And so we must run from this world to Jesus Christ for life. If you don't turn, you will pass away with it. That's what he's saying. That's what Proverbs is saying.

That's what the Bible says. So many ways you can turn to Jesus Christ, no matter if you've been inundated with these things for years and you need rescue. Point two, beauty's evidence.

Beauty's evidence. After showing us beauty's counterfeit, beauty gives us another image of true beauty. And I just love this, you know, in so many ways, the longest sermons in the book of Proverbs are about this forbidden woman, about this counterfeit beauty woman in so many ways.

But then he gives us another image because like I've said, we need these images. We need to be lured and enticed by an image, by a good image, by an appropriate image. And so we need this

image to see the folly of beauty's counterfeit and the good life of fearing God and finding wisdom.
[20 : 07] That's what this is. It is the ideal woman, right? I mean, it is A to Z woman. But more than that, it's an image meant to lead you to life. It's an invitation meant to lead you to life.

So don't walk away with a ruler checklist thinking that that's the way. Walk away with this vision. And maybe there's something in there for you to learn. But you need the vision more than anything else.

Beauty's evidence is found in a satisfying life of good works. I mean, the wise woman here is trustworthy. I mean, look down in verse, actually, I look back in Proverbs 31, because I am going to keep our fingers in this for a moment.

Proverbs 31, verse 11. She said, the heart of her husband trusts in her and he'll have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. Look in verse 23. She says, her husband is known in the gates.

He's known for something. He's known for this great woman he has. When he sits among the elders of the land. You know, unlike our culture that seeks to reverse the roles between men and women, reducing the husband, then little more than the wife's helper.

[21 : 13] The husband here entrusts all he has to this woman. She's trustworthy. She's faithful. Not only has she proven to be honest, she's proven herself to be reliable.

She doesn't run up the credit card behind his back. She doesn't undo his principles of parenting behind his back. But more than that, she takes all that he's entrusted to her and she takes it to the bank.

She carries it all the way. This woman is no joke. And it's something to aspire after. Later in 1 Timothy 5, women are called to guide the home. But the word literally means to be a house despot. You know, it's a combination of those two words. Despot just means Lord or ruler or something. So house ruler. I love the way Doug Wilson said the wife is to be the ruler or despot of the home. This means that when she tells you to take your shoes off at the door, you will take your shoes off. And cheerfully. Now that's funny.

[22 : 13] But don't act like another child, man. That's what that means. Who pushes back.

Act like one that says, yes, ma'am. She's trust. If you're going to trust her with everything in your house, then act like it. It's incredible.

This wise woman is a hard worker. You know, the first thing God made women to do in Scripture was to work. As Rebecca Merkel humorously put it, God didn't look at Adam in the garden and say, it's not good for women to be alone.

He needs someone to look at. God made a woman to be man's helper and working hard to fill the earth with the glory of God.

And I just love the way Proverbs 31 is just loaded down with work. Look at verse 13. She seeks wool and flax. She works with willing hands.

[23 : 14] You know, unlike the sluggard, who you're going to hear about from Ben next week, she works with willing hands. Her hands are just dying to jump into things.

Look at verse 27. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. She does not have much time for social media because she's looking well to her household. In fact, in these verses, there's five references to hands.

You know, it's underlining not merely the work of her fingers, like what she gets herself into, but the idea is that if she's in it with her hands, she's in it with her whole heart. There's this idea that she's given herself to the labor so much that it's up close and personal with her.

It's not delegated out to a servant or something like that. And in fact, what's striking about this is she's a wealthy woman. And this woman, her food comes from afar.

I mean, it's like Whole Foods next level, you know, sail it in. You know, I want cheese from Italy, you know, whatever. I want, yeah, bring it in. So she's a wealthy woman.

[24 : 16] She has servants that she serves, that she provides food for. The idea, but she views her financial blessing, not as permission for ease, like Americans do, but as a responsibility for greater fruitfulness, which biblical Christians do.

So she's a hard worker. She rises early, verse 15, while it is yet night. Provides food for her household, portions for her maidens. That's where her servants are.

Verse 19, she puts her hand to the distaff and her hands hold the spindle. She sew, she makes clothes for her kids and for her family, makes sure her family has all that they need, even for snow.

Now, this doesn't mean her house is like squeaky clean. I was watching a show the other night, and they even had that phrase, and you know, cleanliness is next to godliness. I mean, that's baloney. I don't just trash everything, you know, but if you've got a few cars on blocks, maybe move a few out, you know, clean up a little bit.

But I love Proverbs 14, 4. It says, where there are no oxen, the manger is clean. Now, one day your house is going to be clean.

[25 : 35] It's going to be squeaky clean, but it's going to be quiet. Right now you're making oxes.

You're making strong kids, and they're like bulls in Chinese shops. They run into things. So give yourself to your home in such a way that it doesn't worry about trivial things.

Verse 20, she opens her hand to the poor. She's generous. Verse 24, she makes her linen garment and sells them. She delivers sashes.

She's got a side hustle. She's getting it done all over the place, right? It's an incredible woman.

Now, let me say a few things by way of application. Now, being a Proverbs 31 woman, you know, we throw around that phrase. I don't know if that's really the goal. Maybe being envisioned by the Proverbs 31 woman doesn't mean you have to live off the land.

[26 : 41] And so your kids clothes. Now, some of you just breathe a sigh of relief. It's a picture of a wise woman in her day. It's not a prescription for wise women in every day.

Being a Proverbs 31 woman does not mean you must only work at home. It does not mean you can only work at home. It does mean that your life should be guided by the question, what do my people need?

Several months ago, the hit musical Hamilton came out on Disney Plus. It was the smartest thing the world has done since coronavirus, I think. Because we've done a lot of stupid things.

The whole nation tuned in. July 4th weekend, perfect weekend for it. The musical brings to life the contributions of Alexander Hamilton, and often underlooked and disliked, if we're honest about it, and our American history founding father, in a very provoking way, which we could talk about it, Liv. I'm not going to talk about it now. But the last song rings out in a provocative way in our culture. The last song, the phrases are, who lives? Who dies? It's kind of talking about, you know, the final song is just kind of talking about what they tried to do, which was talk about Hamilton and bring him to life and things like that.

[28 : 05] And so nobody knows much about him. Ron Chernow brought that novel and so, or not that novel, but book. And so it says, who lives, who dies? Who tells your story? Who lives, who dies?

Who tells your story? All good, right? Our culture pushes us to think of our life as our story. Our relationships, our interests, our adventures, and our work. It's all about telling who we are.

It's about telling the world who we are. I mean, I got to let everybody know who I am. So often, fueled by feminism, work for women falls into that framework. Feminism pushes us to ask, what do I want?

What am I good at? What brings me joy? Now, those questions are not all wrong. God made you in a way. I mean, you may be wired to be like an engineer type person.

You may be wired to be like an artist type person. The way of life and following the Lord is not negating all those things. It's just that those questions are not meant to be first. The wise woman is consumed not with what she wants, but with what her people need.

[29 : 19] She's not consumed with what she wants, but with what her people need. Your life should be all about your people. Households bigger than a home, and being a blessing to the people in your household may lead you to work outside your household.

The guiding question is not, can I work outside the home? Of course! But that's elementary, my dear Watson.

I mean, that's, sorry, I'm not trying to speak down. That's just an entry-level question. The bigger question are, what do my people need from me right now? Do they need more of my time?

Do they need more of my attention? Do they need me to help make ends meet? I remember walking with a woman after the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, and her family literally was going bankrupt, had to declare bankruptcy, and she was committed to homeschooling her kids.

I said, I don't agree with that. Your family needs you to get a job. I hate to say that to you, but her husband had a job that just wasn't bringing much money in because he was in the housing market, and, you know, so you need that, okay?

[30 : 35] Very rarely do I step in and say, I didn't say, they'll say it to the Lord or anything like that, but I do want them to see. I mean, you know, it's great to homeschool, whatever, but right now that's not what I think your people need.

I submit to you. Yeah, think about this. I think I said it a little softer than that, but, you know, what does my husband need or desire for me? If you're unmarried, what do your future people need? These questions open up the key to life. Don't try to have it all. Devote yourself to your people in every season. Now, in all this, or maybe as an aside, I want to underline the value of motherhood in a way that our culture does not.

The culture does tell you, stop wasting your gifts and talents and market yourself. Your own heart tells you, what's the point of all this? I'm just wiping noses and changing diapers, just doing laundry. But one day, your boy will call home to tell you you've met the girl of his dreams, and he won't call dad. He won't.

[31 : 43] He'll call you. Because he'll know you're the one who gave your life away for him. And he won't forget it. More than that, one day you'll see the eternal value of what you're doing.

Douglas Wilson again says, when your wife and her children have been there for 10,000 years, bright shining as a sun, then that apparently eternal pile of laundry will finally come into perspective. Now, if it weren't clear already, the wise woman is not a pushover. She is strong, man. And she is getting it done. Look in verse 25.

Strength and dignity are her clothing. And she laughs at the time to come. Strength here is not bicep curls and workouts at home, you know.

It's something God gives by dwelling with her. The idea is God's given her a dignity to life, much in the way we talked about it when we addressed the deacons months ago. Her full life flows from an abiding sense that God is with her and will supply all her needs.

[32 : 57] No wonder she laughs at the days to come. And no wonder she fills her home with trust in the Lord. Thirdly, beauty's source. The source of true beauty is the fear of the Lord.

The beauty's source. The source of true beauty is the fear of the Lord. In that most memorable verse, verse 30, it says, The idea is that this passage is just descriptive.

It's meant to be kind of a mounting effect. It's meant to mount in our hearts this gnawing hunter to know what makes this woman tick. I mean, what makes her different?

What makes her stand out? What sets her apart? And he says, it's the fear of the Lord. That's the answer to it all. If you remember, we opened the book or we opened this series with studying on the fear of the Lord.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. If you remember, I pointed out in verse 1-7 and then in verse 9, the end of that chapter, chapter 9-10, it says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

[34 : 02] And so the fear of the Lord begins the book. Fear of the Lord closes the first section. And now the fear of the Lord closes the entire book. What he's trying to say is the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and it's the end of it.

The fear of the Lord is the first word and the last. The fear of the Lord is the key to the book of Proverbs. It's the key to life. And so much, the Father makes clear, it's the key to true beauty. It's the ticket. It's what makes all the difference. Now you think, wouldn't fear be a bad thing? I mean, shouldn't it be the love of the Lord that sets us free, you know, that gives us confidence and gives us peace and life?

But fear is very important here. The idea is that when you fear the Lord, you say that he is the one that's most worthy in the universe.

And you put him in the highest place in your heart and your mind and every other fear falls away. The fear of the Lord, what he's trying to say, he's saying, son, learn the fear of the Lord. It's not the cringing dread of a slave.

[35 : 06] It's not the cowering fear of a subject. The fear of the Lord is the all-filled reverence of a son that loves his father and bows before him to listen and receive all that he needs.

So how is this the key to true beauty? Here it is. The fear of the Lord means that no other person can tell you who you are. The fear of the Lord means no other person can tell you what matters, why you matter, what matters, what's valuable about you.

The fear of the Lord means that you bow before the Lord and let who he says he is and who he says you are define how you live. That's what it's getting at.

It's trying to reset the way we think and the way we live and the way we relate. And if you're going to have true beauty, you must follow this woman. Now, I want to try to illustrate this and how this makes all the difference.

[36 : 05] Jane Eyre, which I think I got assigned to read like 10 times over my life. Jane is an orphan girl. You remember that story?

She's picked on and abused throughout her life. Really, it's a hard book to read. She becomes a teacher in a state and falls in love with her employer, Mr. Rochester. She later learns that Mr. Rochester is married and that his mentally ill wife lives in an upper room in the estate.

You probably remember that. That's kind of a mystery that she's the Boo Radley of the book, so to speak. Nevertheless, Mr. Rochester urges her to stay with him, to be his lover.

Remember that? She said, stay with me and be my lover. And maybe the most provoking scene in the book, she describes why she cannot.

[37 : 06] She says, while he spoke, my very conscience and mind turned traitors against me. So they turned against me. You ever felt like that in temptation?

They turn against you. They charged me with crime for resisting him. They spoke almost as loud as feeling. They said, comply. Think of his misery.

Think of his danger. Soothe him. Save him. Love him. Tell him you love him. And we'll be his. Who in the world cares for you? And who will be hurt by what you do?

She's describing the agony going on in her heart and mind. Everything within her is pushing her to receive this offer. Who will comfort her? Who will love her? Better yet, who will care for her? Who will give her what she deserves?

Love. But she resists. She says, I care for myself. Then she says, I will respect myself.

[38 : 11] You know, modern readers would assume that she resists because of her self-confidence, because of her self-esteem. I will resist because I'm confident in who I am. I'm not going to fall for that. I won't stoop for this committed man.

But she doesn't look at herself and find confidence at all. She finds all this wrestling. And she continues, I will keep the law given by God. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane and not mad, as I am now.

Laws and principles. This is very good, wise. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation. They are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny and battle against me.

If my individual convenience, I might break them, what would be their worth? There I plant my foot, and I did.

Now my point is, she ignores what her heart says.

[39 : 29] She ignores what her mind says. She looks to what God says. In the moment of temptation, it doesn't make any sense. It's not what she wants. Not what she desires. Not what she longs for. Doesn't feel like she's telling her story.

But she fears God. She bows and listens and obeys, letting God tell her who she is and what is right. If you're going to have true beauty in this world, you have to be like her.

You have to fear God. You have to bow before the Lord and let who he says he is and who he says you are define the way you live. You have to let his voice overpower the images of this culture.

You are to this, to that, whatever. You have to let his voice overthrow the statements of others, against you throughout life. You have to let his voice overwhelm the feelings of your heart.

You have to let his voice lead you to Jesus, who welcomes you and accepts you and frees you to live a life that's deeply pleasing to him and truly beautiful. You're not a nice girl with a good personality and a plain face.

[40 : 34] You're a child of the king. And you're wonderfully made unlike any other creature in the world. You're not a washed up mom whose days of beauty are a thing of the past. You're an apple of your father's eye and you are being made new into something this world cannot dream of.

You're not a waste stained by sexual sin and failure. You have been washed. You have been made clean. Don't look back. Don't turn back.

No woman is more beautiful or worthy of praise than a woman who fears the Lord. Don't listen to the headlines. Don't listen to the images.

Take up this woman and take her into your eyes and learn true wisdom and beauty. In so many ways, what I tell you young women, take it in. Get a good look. Follow her all the way. Let the sounds of God's approval in Christ drown out the voices. Young men, find a woman like this and marry her. What are you waiting for? [41 : 37] I mean, go do it. Marry her. Church, praise her. Give her the fruit of her hands. Letterworks, praise her. Four or five years ago, I had the privilege of doing my grandmother's funeral.

Now, I stood in the pulpit of a church in Gastonia, North Carolina, where my grandfather, my great-grandfather, my great-great-grandfather were elders. It's a great privilege of having godly family.

I had the privilege of honoring my grandmother, and I read these verses. If you had met my grandmother, she wouldn't have made an impact. You wouldn't have thought, oh, man, I want to get to know her better.

She never left her hometown. She never wrote a book. She never made a lot of money. She never found the success that this world measures and says is best.

But her hands and her heart were all in to where God had placed her. Working with all her might in the mundane moments of every day for her family, her church, and her community, week in, week out, she was there.

[42 : 39] Year in, year out, she was there. She sang in the choir until she was 91 years old. That's what I want to do. I want to serve the Lord to the very end.

As I concluded my comments, I couldn't help but conclude, just like the wise father, a woman who fears the Lord is worthy to praise. I announce, I will praise her. I will honor her.

I will remember her. I will follow her. Not because she was a great woman. She was an ordinary woman. But because she devoted her life to serve a great God.

And therefore, she's worthy to praise. Give her the fruit of her hands. I just want to say two things by way of conclusion. I didn't have anywhere else to stick this. And I think I need to stick it somewhere. Husbands, I have two final comments for you.

It's your privilege to set the tone of praise in your home. If you're not seeing anything worthy of praise, it's probably because you don't know what to praise.

[43 : 42] Because your praise creates what needs to be praised. No put downs, no fault finding, no insults. Praise her. If you're married, give her all your romantic desires.

I want one assignment for you. You know, we have kids in the room, so I couldn't read these verses. Go home tonight. Please do this. And read Proverbs 5, 18 and 19 with your spouse, with your wife.

You'll thank me later. Because that's what you should honor and love, a godly woman.

And women, we honor you in the Lord. I honor you in the Lord. I praise you. I thank you.

I need you. This culture needs you. The only thing I would say to you is help younger women get it.

[44 : 49] You don't understand what it's like to grow up right now. And they need you. I have eight copies of True Beauty. If it's a book you'd love to go through with your daughter, with a friend.

In fact, if you want it, I'll get you other copies. But I have eight up here. You can come grab one after the meeting. Young women don't need a teaching.

They need a mom to come alongside them, help them navigate this. So, let me pray. Father in heaven, we cast ourselves onto you. We need you.

We confess our need. And we hide in you. Lord, there's nothing we want more than to live a life that's worthy of praise and pleasing to you. Not because we've kind of done everything and checked all the right boxes and something silly like that.

But because we found Jesus Christ to be the most wonderful, amazing person in the universe. And that we want to give our lives completely to him. And so we do, Lord, we invite you.

[45 : 56] And we lay down our life. We bow before you. Lord, come to find who we are. To find the way we live. Come redefine True Beauty for us.

That we might give our lives for what is truly beautiful and honorable in your sight. We thank you and praise you. In Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com. Thank you.