

Unfading Beauty (Part 1)

One day while standing in one of those endless lines at the super market my eyes caught the following headlines on a newspaper, “World’s Most Beautiful Woman Hospitalized.” Quickly whipping out my cell phone, I called Bonnie and immediately knew it was a false story. Actually, it was about Elizabeth Taylor married countless times, unhappy, overweight, and in ill health. The world probably has no better candidate for the role of “most beautiful woman,” but God does.

Who is presented as the most honored woman in the Bible? Mary. Who was chosen out of all the women in the whole world to raise God’s Son? Mary. Who is the greatest living, breathing example of Proverbs 31 in ordinary everyday life? Mary. Without exception who is probably the most beloved and best known woman in the world? Mary.

In summary of our last two studies, Mary was great because she listened to God, she humbled herself before God, she said yes to God’s grace, she surrendered to God’s will, she experienced God, she served God joyfully, she immersed herself in the Scriptures, and she never stopped growing spiritually.

In God’s eyes, Mary was a beautiful woman. God defines beauty as inward, not outward: “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3–4).

Ten Secrets of Eternal Beauty

How did Mary cultivate the beauty of godliness? She discovered God’s secrets for eternal beauty! Mary would have applied herself to God’s Word to avoid the portrait of the foolish woman in Proverbs 7 and to emulate the godly woman’s portrait given in Proverbs 31. Let’s look at some of the lessons she would have learned as she studied these passages of Scripture.

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being immodest and alluring in her dress: “Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent” (Proverbs 7:10 NIV). The woman of Proverbs 7 wears clothing that points to her not to her Father in heaven and His holiness. Remember the words of Paul in the New Testament gallery of beautiful women? God emphasizes a beauty of the unseen character. The flesh flaunts the body; God beautifies the spirit! “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes” (1 Timothy 2:9 NIV).

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to hate and avoid sin and never play with God’s mercy: “She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: ‘I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows’ ” (Proverbs 7:13–14 NIV). There is no fear of God in this woman’s life for either the present destructiveness of her actions or the future consequences. Scripture exhorts us, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from

God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20 NIV).

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being deceitful and manipulative in her goals: “With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it *would cost his life*” (Proverbs 7:21–23).

An ugly woman is self-driven and wants her own way. A beautiful woman seeks God’s will and wears heavenly beauty: “And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:17). A heavenly beauty is a submission to God and comes from within: “Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3:4 NIV).

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being loud and assertive in her communication: “The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge.” “She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home” (Proverbs 9:13; 7:11 NIV). This woman’s words, actions, and attitudes are disrespectful, hostile, aggressive, and cunning. All in all, she is bad news. Contrast that with the characteristics of a wise woman: “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17 NIV).

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being a fighter, quarreling to get her way: “It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel” (Proverbs 20:3). Selfish ambition is a way of life that is not from God. It is as James said, earthly sensual and devilish.¹ Instead, a beautiful woman is gentle and not argumentative. “And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful” (2 Timothy 2:24 NIV).

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being ungodly in these areas. Moms and dads what are you raising, a wise woman or a foolish one? Bring your daughters up to the X-Ray of God’s Word and see what He finds.

- Is she loud, assertive, boisterous, whiney, or always the center of attention? Or is she quiet, submissive, gentle, and humble?
- Does she dress in a way that draws a young man to think about her body and its enticements or her spirit and its beauty?
- Does she have a holy hatred of sin, or does she have a desire to watch sinners (TV and movies) as they live out their fleshly fantasies?
- Does she use all her powers to get her own way? Does she manipulate by tears, looks, and whatever it takes to accomplish her ends? Or is she submissive to the decisions of her authorities?
- Is she argumentative, easily quarreling and fighting with you or her siblings? Or is she peaceable, gentle, and easily intreated?

If these symptoms are present in any degree or amount the prognosis for the future is bleak. One gifted expositor in writing about these verses said, “We may say with a surgeon’s frankness, her home will be like Scarlett’s—troubled, torn down, and literally *Gone with the Wind*.”

Mary not only learned from God’s Word what to avoid, but she also learned what qualities to emulate and develop. As we continue in our study, we will discover the remaining secrets of eternal beauty.

¹ James 3:15.