

Series: Born to Be Me

Lesson 3: Inside Out Beauty (For Girls)

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify that models and celebrities do not provide realistic body images for the average girl or woman.
- Affirm the real traits that make each other beautiful
- Identify the kind of beauty that God values: inner beauty.

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Copies of page A-36 (quiz)
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Prize for lead-in (optional)
- ☐ A picture of a beautiful model, movie or television star
- ☐ Board and markers
- ☐ Blank sheets of paper, washable markers or pencils, and masking tape

Notes on this Session:

This session was written for girls only. It should be lead by a woman. The next lesson, page 195, was written for boys only and should be lead by a man. In most groups, it will make sense to run these two lessons simultaneously.

Also, be cautious of easy answers for girls dealing with their physical appearance. This is a major and complex issue for many people that won't be solved with simplistic Christian platitudes. For example, remember that for many teenage girls the old adage "you're beautiful on the inside!" is often a poor comfort if they truly feel unattractive. They may have many questions about finding balance such as: how much is too much to spend on or worry about your looks? Does God want me to look ugly? Allow their questions to shape where you go. This is the essence of a student-empowered classroom.

Lead In:

Give every pair of students a copy of page A-36, a quiz on popular beauty facts and figures. Also, give each pair a pen and a few minutes to answer the quiz. When they are done, take up the quiz. Award a prize if you like or simply ask who has the highest score. Here are the answers.

1. False. Beyonce Knowles is true, but Nicole Richie is actually 95 pounds.
2. True.
3. True.
4. False. 90% gain it back.
5. True.
6. False. 95% overestimate their body size; they overestimate the size of their waist by an average of 25% and their hips by 16%, although they can accurately estimate the size of a cardboard box.
7. True.
8. True. Teenagers represented 22% of the procedures in the U.S. in 2004; the total industry made 12.5 *billion* dollars in 2004 in the United States.
9. True. There is a risk of death in any surgery, including cosmetic surgery.
10. True.
11. True. One study found that 70% of women felt more depressed and angry after looking at fashion models.

Task One:

Display a picture of a fashion model or movie star that most girls would agree is beautiful. Ask them to work together as a whole group to make a list of ten things that they think are attractive or beautiful about the person (such as nice hair, good skin, nice clothes, etc.). Write all their answers in a list on a board.

Tell the students that you would now like them to consider the people in their lives that have each of the traits they listed, one by one. For example, if one of the traits is “beautiful hair,” ask them to agree on someone they know in real life that also has beautiful hair. Continue with this activity, going through each of the traits. Write the name of the person they suggest by each trait that the girls have said they go with.

When you are finished, you will likely have a list of many different names. Say to the girls something like: *Many of us would spend time aspiring to be like this beautiful woman. We may feel discouraged when we see beautiful pictures like these, because we feel that we do not measure up. Even if there are many beautiful things about us, we still feel badly about the things we don't like about our looks or bodies. Yet, if you look at this list you will notice that we did not come up with just one name to match all the traits of this beauty. The reason is that it is almost impossible for just one person to have all these traits. The girls in the magazines rely on makeup, lights, and airbrushing to have it all. Do you think it is realistic, then, to aspire to look like this star? Why or why not? If this is not a realistic goal, what should be our beauty goal? What should we aspire to be like?*

Task Two:

Note: This part of the lesson involves exploring 1 Peter 3:3-5a. This passage can be a tricky one because it is book-ended with verses dealing with submission to husbands. There are many excellent resources that can explain the context of these verses and their message of Christian women living in submission in order to show Christ's example to a non-Christian husband in order that they might be won for the kingdom. (Note that in the previous verses a very similar message is given to slaves in regards to their masters). For this lesson, however, it is best to avoid the surrounding verses and focus on the message contained in verses 3-5a about focussing on inward instead of outward beauty. This is a biblical message that extends far beyond the marriage relationship and applies well to teenage girls.

Transition by saying something like, *Today we are going to explore together a passage from the Bible that helps us know how God understands beauty.*

Ask one girl to look up 1 Peter 3:3-5a and be ready to read it. Ask the other girls the following question, What do you think God would say to _____ (the model) from Task One? Does God think that she is beautiful? Why or why not? When the reader is finished reading, ask them to imagine what God would say to the woman in the picture. Look for complexity in their response. They may be tempted to be judgemental: “God doesn’t care that you are beautiful! You’re wasting your life on meaningless things!” A more nuanced and complex answer would be something like, “You are created in God’s image and God values you because he made you. He loves you for who you are inside. Develop your inner self. You are beautiful but the essence of who you are is more than that!”

Ask the girls why they think that God favours inward beauty. They might say something like the problem with focussing mostly on outside beauty is that it quickly fades. Anyone can be beautiful outside for a little while but it can fade quickly, as we age or our bodies change. When we focus on the inside beauty, however, it is something that will last. It is also something that allows us to do good in the world for others and not just ourselves.

Task Three:

Ask the girls whether they feel pressure to be beautiful on the outside. Ask those who said yes to share the factors that make them feel this pressure. Keep a list on the board. Add to it as new factors are shared. Some common answers will be fashion magazines, television and movies, moms (believe it or not), pornography (believe it or not), and so on. Some girls will have heard positive messages from men (brothers, fathers, friends, boyfriends, etc.) while other will have heard negative messages from men. It would be a theological shame and a loss to blame the isolated negative influences on men in general.

Help your girls to avoid this if it does arise as an issue. More than likely, the aforementioned factors such as fashion magazines and movies will be stronger influences. Guide some discussion around these issues of pressure.

When you have a few significant factors on the board, five to ten, ask the girls to suggest one way to counteract each one of those negative pressures. For example, if one is fashion magazines, it might be helpful to a) not buy them, or b) read about other hobbies like travel or horses or dance. Put up a counteractive action next to each negative influence.

Closing:

Many students have probably done an activity called Warm Fuzzies. This is a game where students each tape a blank piece of paper to their back. They then go around the room and write a compliment about each student on the piece of paper attached to them. Students love this activity because they feel affirmed and valued by their peers. Another way to do it is to pass the paper with a name on it around the circle.

Explain to the girls that you will be doing Inside Beauty Warm Fuzzies (if they have not done Warm Fuzzies before, explain what they are – when someone says something nice about you and it makes you feel warm and fuzzy inside!). Explain that they will each go around and write something on the back of each person that is something you value about her; however, they are *only* allowed to compliment inside traits and not outside traits. Remind students that they must write something on everyone's sheet of paper and that they should not sign their names to their compliments.

When everyone is finished, allow the girls to read their sheets and share how they feel about what their friends said about them. Close in prayer, praying that God will give your girls the strength to be beautiful inside and out.