

P MORE THAN JUST A
PRETTY FACE
LIVING IN BEAUTIFUL OBEDIENCE

More Than Just a Pretty Face: The Beauty of Obedience

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MORE THAN JUST A
PRETTY **F**ACE
LIVING IN BEAUTIFUL OBEDIENCE

KAREN MOREROD

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel
 **AMG Publishers**

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INTRODUCTION

BEAUTY ANALYSIS

I sat on the bleachers at the ballpark and watched my Little Leaguer. Another mother sat nearby, and I suspiciously eyed her golden, bronzed appendages and wondered, *Is that tan real?*

I chided my critical attitude and tried to refocus on the game, until I noticed another mom. Her silky hair fluttered as she bounded like a gazelle to her place three rows above me. How did she get her hair like that? I tucked my wavy, coarse hair behind my ears.

Within moments, another woman pranced in with, as usual, a perfect outfit, coordinated with necklace and earrings.

Before you could say, “Mirror, mirror on the wall,” my eyes darted around and analyzed every other female in the grandstands. Tanner. Skinnier. Silkier. Me? Pale. Frizzy. And poster child for Chocolate Overeaters Anonymous.

I reviewed my options at this point:

- A. Have my son join another team.
- B. Bring homemade cinnamon rolls to every game—maybe all the moms would gain twenty pounds.
- C. Wear a shirt that said, “BODY NOT AS BIG AS IT APPEARS.”

Momentary consideration rendered the verdict that God probably wouldn’t look too highly on these options. Then I panicked. I thought, *I sure need another source of beauty because this outside beauty thing isn’t going so well.*

Since that day, I have often had to remind myself: outward beauty does not guarantee happiness or contentment. I knew some of these women had challenging lives. But that seemed to be a smaller issue than what I knew deep down: God has higher concerns for me than my outward appearance.

10 Introduction

Queen Esther's beauty won the king's heart and landed her a spot as First Lady of Persia. But when I read about her in the Bible, I asked myself whether her beauty had any part in her courage to go to the king to expose an evil plot. Did all those oil treatments give her wisdom for making critical decisions? Did Esther's good looks help her confront the arrogant Haman? Surely she must have had another source of strength to accomplish her task.

Then I pondered: Esther must have realized life is more than just manicures and dieting. She was most beautiful to God when she was obedient to him. Could a closer relationship to God cause me to radiate beauty equal to that of the lovely Queen Esther? What if my obedience to God was my beauty?

For the next thirty-one days, I hope you'll smile as we peek at our culture's crazy attempts at beauty—as well as some not-so-brilliant efforts by yours truly. Then as we study Queen Esther, we'll discover how to follow God more closely and become the genuinely beautiful women he created us to be.

Our cast includes the following characters:

King Xerxes, the prideful, powerful, yet willing-to-right-a-wrong king of Persia;

Queen Vashti, his wife, who refused to report and then reaped the results;

Haman, high official at the palace and schemer of all things deceitful and prideful;

Mordecai, award-winning cousin of the year and doer of all things good and right; and

Esther, orphan-turned-royalty star of the show.

We know Esther was beautiful and the King thought she was hot. But there must have been something deeper.

Was it Botox?

And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her.

—Esther 2:15



PART 1

THE PLAN

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APPLYING FOUNDATION

THE BOTTOM LINE

I gazed at the foundation selection in the cosmetic department. What was the color I bought last time? I scanned the choices: ivory, classic ivory, natural ivory, creamy natural, buff beige, classic beige, natural beige, warm beige, creamy beige. And that was just the first row. Only Sherwin-Williams could compete with all those colors.

I'd always been told that foundation choice is vital. Even the word itself sounds, um, well, foundational. So I did what any woman of my caliber of beauty expertise would do. I closed my eyes and said, "Eenie, meenie, miney, moe."

Several days later an Internet ad popped up that said, "Foundation Specialists." I clicked to research. The website read, "Are your walls cracking or bowing?"

Well, wrinkles—maybe. But cracks? Sounds a bit harsh.

Then I read, "Are your doors sticking?" and realized I must have taken a wrong turn in cyberspace. But you have to admit, "Foundation Specialists" sounds like something a girl could use occasionally.

Foundations are important—and not only the kind you buy in a bottle or the one that supports your home. God desires a relationship with us, and the foundation of that relationship needs to be Jesus Christ. As we build on that foundation, we can follow the plan he has for our lives.

The apostle Paul reminds us, "**Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will** (Ephesians 1:4–5 NASB, emphasis mine).

There's that foundation thing again. Even before the foundation was set—the foundation of the world that God would create—God wanted a relationship with his people. And that is where all of our purposes intersect—a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Do you believe that God has a plan for your life? Do you wonder what that plan is? Or maybe you're wondering why God has your pretty face smack-dab in the middle of the life you're living right now.

Those can be tough questions, but we can know a couple things for sure.

First, God didn't go to all the trouble of creating the world and all humankind just for us to exist in misery. Oh, we're going to have problems within this plan called life, and we will touch more on this later. But God has a plan for us to live out. Consider these Scriptures:

“You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed” (Psalm 139:16 NLT).

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

Second, we can know that God is indeed offering us a foundation—a relationship with him. It's this foundation that allows us to live out the plan for which he created us.



THE ESTHER FACTOR

God certainly used Esther in a dramatic plan. But we have to wonder—the book of Esther never uses the word *God*, or *Jehovah*, the most common name in the Old Testament for *Lord*. We don't see Esther worshipping, talking about God, or even praying. However, she does fast when confronted with an overwhelming situation. And in biblical times, fasting by a Jew was consistent with prayer to Jehovah (God).

From the context and events, we can be confident Esther had a foundational relationship with her God. That is how she was able to carry out the plan God laid before her. She knew the source of her willingness and strength.

For any of us to live out God's plan, we first must have a relationship with the author of that plan. That's where it starts: acknowledging there is someone out there bigger than we are, and way more holy than we are, who will save us from our sinful selves and help us live out our intended purposes.

Is it easier for us to build a relationship with God than it was for Esther? We live two thousand years this side of Jesus Christ's coming to earth. We have historical and archeological evidence for the biblical account of God's Son. We have thousands of years of testimonies from people experiencing faith in Jesus. So if Esther could have faith in a God who had simply *promised* a redeemer, how much more can we believe with history on our side?

So how is your foundation? And not the kind in a bottle from the store. Is your life built on a relationship with God through Jesus Christ? If you've never laid that foundation for your life, see *Applying the Foundation* in the back of this book. It will show you the steps for beginning your life with God. It's one decision you will never regret. And much simpler than choosing the right foundation color.

Later when the anger of King Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what

he had decreed about her. Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

—Esther 2:1–4 NIV



BEAUTY TIP

The foundation always goes on first.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

YOUR FOUNDATION'S MAKEUP

I met Cover Girl when I was ten years old.

“Hey, come over and play in the snow with us,” hollered my neighbor Becky from her yard. I ran to get my sled, and we headed to the top of a hill between our yards.

I jumped on my round, aluminum sled. Becky gave me a twirl, and I spun down the hill. “Woo-hoo! This is fun!” I shrieked.

Suddenly, my spiraling fun turned into a smash finale on a fat tree trunk. Crying, I ran into the house to assess the damage to my face. “Oh no! I can’t go to school like this,” I moaned as I examined my swelling nose and the scrapes on my face.

But Mom had a secret. That next morning before school, she dabbed my multiple wounds with her faithful Cover Girl foundation, and I looked good as new. Or at least I thought no one would know what lay beneath my new, smooth facade. That was my first lesson in using makeup to cover a multitude of sins. Cover Girl worked wonders.

When we build a life foundation on Jesus Christ, it does much more than cover a multitude of sins. Of course I am extremely grateful that Jesus died to forgive all the wounds and sins of my life. But when we develop a deep relationship with Jesus Christ, we begin to see that we are each much more than a pretty face.

We weren’t put here just to get saved and look cute!

After we lay the foundation and accept God’s new life in Christ, we begin to see our value. How God created us. What we’re wired to do. But many of us sabotage our own self-images. We become haunted by past mistakes and too intimidated to be all that God intends for us to be.

We think and say things like, “I’m not all that great. What do I have to offer?” Or, “I know God forgave me, but my past is so bad, I’ll never be able to spiritually influence anyone else.” Or the biggest lie, “I don’t have any talents to really do anything for God.”

With enemies like that, who needs Satan whispering in our ears?

The truth is that God has equipped each of us with exactly what we need to carry out whatever he intends. He is our makeup artist! Look at these different versions of Psalm 139:13:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (NIV).

“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb” (NLT).

“Oh yes, you first shaped me inside, then out; you formed me in my mother’s womb” (MSG).

“You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother’s body” (NIRV).

Oh yes, girlfriends, we need to know that how we’re made and what we’ve experienced is for a reason. We might have experienced woundings, we might have emotional scars, and we might have once lived blatantly defiant lifestyles. Very likely we still have a few undesirable traits to work on. But God has this bizarre habit of creating something out of nothing and bringing good out of bad to accomplish his purposes!

One of the hardest prayers I’ve prayed is that I will see myself as God does. It’s too bad I know myself so well. I recall every ugly thought, shameful action, and nasty word that’s come out of my mouth. How could God love that?

But God sees the potential in me. He remembers the original plan for my life, how he wired me, and he is confident that, as I trust him, the one who sees beneath, I can do exactly what he purposed from the beginning.