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WHAT I SEE IN THE MIRROR:
INSIGHT INTO THE HEART OF MY STRUGGLE



I kneeled on the floor of my tiny bathroom gasping for control. For the third time in a week, the urge to take drastic measures consumed me after my scale screamed numbers that made me cringe.

Intense conversations with my Savior had helped me avoid purging twice before, but this time the battle was too fierce, and I surrendered to my temptation as tears of frustration streamed down my face.

“How did I get to this place?” I whispered. “I thought I was past this.”

That day in the bathroom and many other days like it stand out as monumental moments in my struggle to embrace my beauty. I whimpered those words early in 2003, a year when everything seemed to be going right. I was a new bride who had recently married the man of my dreams. We were gladly serving as youth pastors on staff at a welcoming church in a charming town. My career was taking off. I had many friends. I seemed to be in control. What could be wrong?

I knew the answer: me. I was wrong. Every time I looked in the mirror I knew that I was flawed, and my reflection confirmed that I was ugly, fat, and shameful.

On that day when I knelt on the floor after attempting to regain control of my beauty by doing whatever it took to control my weight, I heard lies being whispered that I had believed a thousand times before. Even though it had been nearly two years since I had acted out my eating disorder, I hadn't gone a single day since without thinking I had no value or worth or beauty to offer.

For as long as I can remember, the temptation to turn my eyes from the prize and toward my thighs—thighs that are too big and abs that aren't flat enough—has been

a thorn in my flesh. At times it seems that I am being hunted, literally chased by an enemy who knows that an obsession with my physical body naturally leads to an unraveling of my focus on all that God has for me.


I have had many, many moments of struggle in the area of beauty. These moments are my most intimate secrets, the deepest places of my heart. It would be easier not to admit these weaknesses to you. I would prefer for you to think that I have it all together. But I feel compelled to give you a glimpse into the heart of my struggle.

Why? Because I know you struggle too. I am sure of it. I am not the only girl to feel this way. I have learned this lesson as part of my healing. As the Lord began to call me out of the pit of self-doubt, He asked me to share my heart with others. I began, reluctantly at first, I admit, to travel the country to talk with girls just like you. I have heard you comment about your thighs and bellies. I see you watch each other and compare every curve. I have stood by and watched as the Enemy has whispered the same lies into your life that he spent years whispering into mine. "You are fat," he says. "You are ugly." "Other girls are more beautiful than you." "There is something wrong with you." "You don't have value."

And so we wonder: Are we flawed, are we a mistake . . . could we be beautiful?

The answers to these questions are the keys to our freedom. But we must seek them out. God's Word is rich with words of affirmation of our beauty and worth, but we must seek His truth in order to counteract the lies that are so tightly wrapped around our hearts. Maybe these lies have never led you to take the actions I have taken to be beautiful. But this is not a book about actions; it is an exploration of your heart. If you've ever doubted your beauty and worth, you





have heard a lie. Freedom from the lie—for you and for me—is important, and yes, you can find it!

We fight side by side in a battle with a slippery snake. I know from experience that this is a battle not easily won. But I also know that victory comes when you turn your eyes upon Jesus.

You are not the only one who has heard or seen the lie. You are not the only one who doesn't like what she sees in the mirror. You certainly aren't the only one to question your own beauty.

I want you to know that there *is* a mirror that does not mock. There *is* a place where we can look and be told that we are beautiful, lovely, treasured. That mirror is Christ, and believe it or not, He has dedicated much of His Word to exploring your beauty and affirming your worth.

What about You?

It is my deep desire for this book to become a conversation—both a conversation between you and me as we both examine our beauty under the microscope of God's Word, and also a conversation between you and Christ, the author of your beauty. But conversations require two-way communication. So at the end of each chapter, there is space for you to write about your own experiences and reactions. It might take some effort. For many of us, these issues of ourselves and our beauty are so deeply ingrained that it is difficult to sift through them and see what exactly our feelings are and where they have come from. You'll see questions to guide you, but feel free to write about what's on your heart. I am praying for the Holy Spirit to minister mightily to you through these pages.

Start by writing a letter to God. Tell Him where you are in your struggle to embrace your own beauty. Ask Him to begin to help you identify lies that you have believed in this area of your life, and be open to His truth in these areas. Tell Him that you are ready to have a conversation about your beauty, and invite

Him to guide the direction of the communication. I promise you that the words of love He has to offer will surprise you and affirm you in ways you never thought possible.

So will you come along with me on a journey? Will you join me as we examine together what Christ has to say about your beauty? Do you have the courage to look deep into your own heart as I continue to reveal the deepest parts of mine? Let's take the journey together. I am praying that you will walk away with a renewed sense of worth and the ability to see that your beauty is God-given and that you truly are His masterpiece.