

Mirror Mirror...

Am I Beautiful?



Looking Deeper to Find Your True Beauty

by Shelley Hitz

"Shelley Hitz knows just what to say to today's teens. She hits on all the vital issues they deal with on a regular basis. She has the answer to these issues and shares in such a personal way that challenges one to examine their heart and do something about it. We will definitely invite Shelley to speak to many more teens about God's love and forgiveness and how He is the only One who can make a difference and change a life. I have enjoyed getting to know her on a personal level. She is genuine and has a deep desire to see others victorious in Him.

-- *Debbi Witt, Co-Founder/Associate Director of Teen Quest*
(www.teenquest.org)

Wow. This is an awesome resource for girls. Praise God! I have a blog that I posted one of your videos on, as well as a link to your website. I pray that it encourages the girls that see it and that they check out this website. It's really an amazing resource (I wouldn't put it up there for them if I didn't think it would be spiritually edifying for them).

-- *S'ambrosia, author of datelesswonders.blogspot.com*

I think what you've done is amazing! This is a really informational site, really uplifting and it's terrible yet comforting to know so many other girls feel the same way I do! It's great you have so many opportunities for your viewers to contribute as well! Shelley, you must be a really caring person and I appreciate this site so much!! Thank you! God is most definitely using you well.

--*Meghan*



**Looking Deeper to
Find Your True Beauty**

Mirror Mirror...Am I Beautiful?

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Printed in the United States of America

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www.ShelleyHitz.com



From:

Date:

I dedicate this book to the One who has rescued me from destruction...Jesus Christ. He is my first love and my Savior. Without Him, I am nothing.

*I also thank my husband, CJ, who continues to love, encourage and support me on this journey.
I thank God for you every day!!*

Isaiah 61:1, 4

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners...

They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.”

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Part One

Find Your True Beauty



Introduction

Did you know...

- 24% of women would sacrifice 3 years of their life to be thin.
- Girls as young as five have expressed fears of getting fat.
- 90% of high school junior and senior girls diet regularly even though only between 10-15% are considered overweight.

Does this surprise you? Do you wonder why this is happening?

I believe one of the biggest influences on girls today regarding beauty is the media.

The reason I decided to write this book is to help you recognize these influences and discover your true beauty. It's always been there, it just needs to be found and rescued.

What is the one question all girls ask, even from a small age?

"Am I Beautiful?"

I remember that my dream as a young girl was to be "Miss America." At our slumber parties in my basement, we would actually hold our own Miss America contests...dressing up and coming down the steps to the familiar tune of "Here she comes, Miss America."

Unfortunately, we become disillusioned by life and the lies from the media destroy our hope....the hope that we will be found beautiful.

Girls, it's time to relight our hope and find our true beauty!

We need to uncover the lies we've believed and replace them with the truth. "Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Jesus invites us to take this journey to discover our true beauty. Let's embark on this journey together. Will you join me? I'll be your guide, but we will both have many stories to share along the way. I look forward to sharing mine and hearing yours.



Share Your Thoughts

Advertising and body image....is there a connection? As a teen girl, do you think it is fair that the media portrays an unrealistic "perfect image" for how you should look? How do you think this impacts your self esteem and body image?

Share your opinion and read what others have to say here:

<http://Share.TrueBeautyBook.com>



The Truth About Beauty

What is the truth about beauty?

Well, let's start by looking at the word authentic. It's another word for truth or true. Authenticity, what is it?

Think of it this way...would you rather have a homemade turkey

Thanksgiving dinner or a frozen TV dinner? Would you rather have a genuine diamond ring or one with cubic zirconium? It's a no brainer, right? We want the real stuff. The authentic. But, so often, in life, I give in and settle for less than the best. I choose the TV dinner and the cubic zirconium.

What is authenticity? What does it mean to be genuine? I believe it's being able to accept myself and be who I was created to be. It's not about what others think of me or even what others want me to be. *It's about being who I was created to be.* That's where I begin to find the truth about beauty.

So, what was I created to be? What were you created to be?

Hmmm...this is a question that has stumped me many times. Let's just brainstorm a little bit.

I know I was created by Jesus and for Jesus. "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things were created by him and for him.*" Colossians 1:16

So I was created to be God's creation. I was created to be in a relationship with Jesus. What else?

Romans 8:16-17 says, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that *we are God's children*. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

Therefore, I am created to be God's daughter and as the daughter of a King, a Princess. With this role come both privileges and responsibilities. But, is there more?

Ephesians 3:19 says, "And to know this love that surpasses knowledge—*that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*." The Amplified version says, "flooded with God Himself." I am created to be filled to the measure with God's love. That means there are no empty spots. My life is created to be full, not empty.

I am created for the display of God's splendor (Isaiah 61:3). I am created to be a reflection of Him. I am created to become more and more like my Father. The real deal.

I am created to be beautiful.

Whoa...did that catch anyone else off guard? It did me. So many times I don't feel beautiful. I feel the opposite. Homely and average. But, not always beautiful. Created to be beautiful? That one is sometimes hard to believe. But, it's true.

What is authentic beauty...true beauty?

And why am I afraid to embrace my true beauty? Why do I instead do the easy thing and settle for so much less, striving for outward beauty and the world's approval of how I look? Because it's the easy thing.

Just like popping a TV dinner in the microwave is easier than cooking a full blown turkey dinner for Thanksgiving. It will not have the same rewards and results, but it's easier.

Plus, our culture screams at us from every billboard, commercial, TV program, movie, magazine, etc. that our outer beauty is more important than our true beauty. That to be valued by others, we have to "look" a certain way. They are teaching us to settle for what they say beauty is instead of embracing the truth about beauty, our authentic and true beauty given to us by our Creator.

This is a picture I get of my true beauty.

I see my beauty radiating from the inside out. That when I love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind (Matthew 22:37), it will naturally spill over to all my relationships and every area of my life. It's as if God's light and beauty is in my heart. And it is being pumped into every cell of my body, my brain, my muscles, my organs through my bloodstream. And as long as God's Spirit is living inside of me, I will have that beauty radiating from the inside out. People will see the light in my eyes. They'll be drawn to the joy in my smile. And they'll want to find comfort in my friendship.

What about you?

Have you been settling for this world's beauty instead of discovering your true beauty? If so, I encourage you to discover the truth about beauty! Ask God to help you change your thoughts and desires about beauty. And He will. It may not be instant, but He will slowly begin to change you from the inside out!



Self Esteem

Why Do We Struggle So Much?

There's emptiness in many girls around this globe, what is the problem? We struggle with insecurity. We are ashamed of how we look.

In fact, I have a quiz on my website where over 50% of girls admit that they are ashamed of how they look. Over fifty percent!

There is a problem.

Don't believe me? Check out these body image statistics I found in Dr. Deborah Newman's book, "Comfortable in your own skin, making peace with your body image¹." These statistics show the depth of our problem.

- Americans had 11 million cosmetic plastic surgery procedures in 2006 - up 7%.²
- More than half of teenage girls are, or think they should be, on diets. They want to lose some or all of the 40 pounds that females naturally gain between ages 8 and 14. About 3% of these teens go too far, becoming anorexic or bulimic.³
- The *Medical Journal of Psychiatry* conducted a general population study on men with eating disorders and found that 2% of men, compared to 4.8% of women, have anorexia or bulimia.⁴

- The average American woman is 5'4" tall and weighs 140 pounds, while the average American model is 5'11" tall and weighs 117 pounds. Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women.⁵
- 80% of American women are dissatisfied with their appearance.⁶
- Female athletes are six times more likely to develop eating disorders than other women.⁷
- 80% of women say that the images of women on television and in movies, fashion magazines, and advertising makes them feel insecure.⁸
- 42% of girls first through third grades want to be thinner.⁹
- 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.¹⁰
- Without treatment, up to 20% of people with serious eating disorders die. With treatment, that number falls to 2 to 3%.¹¹
- The average woman spends 2 1/2 years of her life washing, styling, cutting, coloring, crimping, and straightening her hair at home and in the salon.¹²

Wow Am I Fat or What!

By Amber

I have not always thought I was fat. My addiction with my size did not start until my freshman year in high school. It seems as though once I started verbally abusing myself I could not stop.

At first I would say, "Oh, if I only lose 10 pounds I would look so much better and I would have so many more friends. And maybe (insert a guy's name) would even talk to me more." Then I looked in the mirror again and said, "Wow my head is way too small for my body size. I just need to even it out, and then I'll look better."

This constant self bashing continued, and got worse than ever when I heard that some of my so called friends had been talking about me. This cycle continued until the middle of the semester when I got a boyfriend. Our relationship made me feel better. It made me feel like I was pretty because he liked me and I thought that someone saying I was pretty or beautiful made it true.

This feeling of self worth was soon dashed when I found out that he wanted to break up with me. I came up with so many reasons why he would break up with me: my hair, my stomach, basically everything but my honey brown eyes were the problem.

I went through the rest of the term fine. I eventually got over it and moved on, but I still held on to my self hate with my body weight. All my real friends would tell me that I was not fat; I was "thick." And my best friend told me that the only real body problem I had was that I thought I was fat when I wasn't.

She said that "No, you aren't skinny but you are most definitely not fat."

This year I am a sophomore and I go to a new school that I hate with a passion. Where I always end up comparing myself to someone else and not being myself. I feel like I can't wear this or that because I'm not a size 6 or 7.

And I know that the reason that I may not have as many friends is not because I'm over weight, but because I don't love myself enough to let people into my shell. I am very surprised at myself that I am even writing this, so hope you read it.

I feel that I need to start loving myself no matter what I weigh because I know that God made me special and I look the way I do for a reason. And even if I am overweight I should not stress about it and deal with it by working out and eating better. And reading God's word so that when someone says something mean about me it won't matter because I will know that I am beautiful and that God loves me.

P.S I don't think I'm ugly I just think I could lose some weight. :)

Amber,

I am so glad you were able to share this with us! Part of the battle is secrecy...for instance mold grows best in darkness. So, just writing this helps to break some of the strength of this struggle in your life.

*I want to share this verse as encouragement...
Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."*

~Shelley

Feeling Empty Inside

I have felt this emptiness before. For me, it tends to be a *deep loneliness* that threatens to engulf me. I often feel left out and rejected. I feel like I am on the outside. Even though I have loving and meaningful relationships, it isn't enough. I still have that gaping hole inside. For you it may feel different, but I bet it's still there. Some of you may not even know it's there. I lived with it for many years before I recognized it.

So, What's the Problem?

Ultimately, the problem is that we are trying to find our self esteem and worth *apart from God*. "All things were created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). That hole inside us is meant to be filled by God and so nothing else will be enough. We will always still feel "hungry" for more.

I tried to get my worth from many other things....my relationships (husband, family, and friends), my work (succeeding at what I do), my looks (clothes, make-up, hair, etc.), attention from guys, shopping, etc. We can try to fill this emptiness and void with anything and everything. Many of those things can become addictions over time. I've had a couple of those too.

And that is the enemy's purpose. He has come to steal kill and destroy us (John 10:10). He wants to plant many weeds in our lives to choke out the life giving, fruit bearing plants.

However, I do believe there are other influences in our culture today that also contribute to this emptiness inside us. And I believe one of the biggest issues impacting us today is the pressure the media places on us to look "picture perfect."



Barbie Body Image

How toys like Barbie influence our body image

How many girls have grown up playing with Barbie dolls? A lot. Statistics show that two Barbie's are sold every second somewhere in the world. In fact, the average American girl from ages 3 to 11 owns 10.¹³

Barbie's Body Type

If you met Barbie as a human being, what would she look like? Well, there are differing views.

One source says Barbie would stand about 5'6", weigh nearly 120 pounds, and have the measurements 38-18-34 (38 inches for her chest - 18 inches at her waist - 34 at her hips).

It is speculated that if Barbie were human, she would be so thin that she would not be able to menstruate or have her monthly cycle. This is because she would not have the body fat needed to do so.¹⁴ Statistics say the Barbie's body type is likely to occur in one out of every 100,000 women.¹⁵

No matter how you look at it, Barbie's body is not average, and is not easily attainable.

Barbie's Impact

What impact does this have on young girls that spend hours and hours playing with these dolls? Do they want to become like Barbie and look like her?

We know that the more time we spend with anything, the more influence it has on us. If you spend weeks studying for a test, you'll probably do better than if you just spend a few minutes studying.

I think the same is true with our time. If we spend hours and hours playing with Barbie dolls, they are bound to have an influence on us. Just as if we would spend hours and hours playing video games.

Barbie Body Image...One Woman's Quest to Become Barbie

There is one woman, Cindy Jackson, who was so influenced by Barbie that it became her life mission to look exactly like her. Her obsession to look like Barbie started when her parents bought her first Barbie at the age of 6.

And she didn't give up until she reached her goal. She ended up spending about \$55,000 and underwent 20 plastic surgery operations to reach her goal of becoming Barbie.¹⁶

20 operations!

This is just one more example of how impossible it is to reach this ideal image without major alterations of our natural beauty.

A 1965 Barbie Body Image Message

I couldn't believe this when I read it....In 1965 Mattel came out with a "Slumber Party Barbie" that came complete with a bathroom scale permanently set at 110 pounds.

The doll also came with a book entitled "How to Lose Weight" and inside this book it gave the advice: "Don't Eat". The matching Ken doll also came with slumber party accessories, but his were milk and cookies, sending a very different message.¹⁷

Barbie Transformed

Mattel received many criticisms about Barbie and the impact she was having on young girls around the world. In the summer of 2000, they decided to change Barbie to a more modern look.

"The new Barbie will have a more natural body shape – less busty with wider hips."

What caused Mattel to make these changes? One influence may have been a drop in sales. According to the Los Angeles Business Journal, Barbie sales dropped from \$2 billion to \$1.5 billion in 1999.¹⁸

What about you?

What influences in your life have shaped the way you see your body image? Consider the media you take in on a daily basis: the magazines you read, the websites you surf and the television shows you watch. How does seeing all these images impact you and your self esteem? Are there any changes you need to make in your media choices?



Share Your Thoughts

Share Your Reactions to Barbie. Do you think Barbie influences girls today? Do you think playing with dolls like Barbie gives us an unrealistic “standard” of what we should look like?

Share your opinion and read what others have to say here:

<http://Share.TrueBeautyBook.com>



Body Image Lies

Have You Fallen for This One?

I think as females, most of us have struggled with body image lies, especially this one.

Body Image Lie:

If I can change something about my body, others will finally accept me and I will be able to accept myself.

It is so easy to base our self worth on our looks and our outer appearance because it is the first thing others see in us.

Plus, there are mirrors (or windows) everywhere that constantly remind us of our appearance.

As I started to work on this area in my life, I realized one day that I was addicted to mirrors. I was always checking my appearance to see if I looked okay. Some days I would feel good about what I saw and thought that my hair and/or outfit was cute. However, there were other days I couldn't wait to get home and hide.

Ever feel this way?

Note: One way to know whether or not you are also addicted to mirrors is to deliberately try to avoid them for a day or two. Like me, you may realize it's more of an obsession, or "addiction", than you realized.

What Would You Change About Your Body?

What if you could change one thing about your body, what would you change?

I know my answer without even thinking about it. I bet most of you already know your answer too.

The thing I've struggled with the most has been my acne and the scars it has left behind.

In high school I had a perfect complexion. I even remember someone commenting that my skin looked like a china doll. Well, that soon ended when I entered college.

I'm not sure exactly what caused it -- possibly the combination of bad eating habits and hormones. I thought it would just be a short phase and then be gone. But, here I am, now in my 30's and still struggling with breakouts of acne.

UUUGGGGHHHH!!

I've tried most everything from Mary Kay to ProActiv to Arbonne to supplements and vitamins to hormone creams, etc. Nothing has worked. Plus, I have the scars that the acne has left behind to look at every day in the mirror.

So, how did I cope? To compensate for the acne and try to cover it up, I began wearing a lot of makeup.

One day I felt challenged by God to go out to eat with my husband, CJ, without wearing any makeup. I wasn't sure I understood correctly. Go without any makeup?? Surely not.

So I asked God, "Are you sure you want me to do this?"

You see, I was using makeup as a means of self-protection and to feel better about myself. So to go out without any makeup literally felt like I was leaving the house naked! How embarrassing and devastating!

Well, anyway, I did end up obeying God that night and left without a trace of makeup. After a few minutes, I couldn't stand it any longer, so I asked my husband if he noticed anything different about my appearance.

He looked at me and hesitantly said, "You're wearing a new headband?"

I said, "Yes, I am wearing a new headband, but do you notice anything else about my appearance?" He said "No, I don't."

How ironic. Here I felt "naked" and self-conscious and he didn't even notice!

What I learned from that experiment is that most people don't notice my imperfections nearly as much as I do. I'm much harder on myself.

What is The Truth?

The truth is that my value comes from God, my Creator, and not from my appearance and what others think of me.

God is teaching me this truth that my value comes from Him and not from my outward appearance. It is okay to desire beauty -- it's a God-given desire -- but not to base my self-esteem on it.

Our Beauty Comes From God

I wanted to close with something a friend of mine, Annika Lampmann,¹⁹ wrote.

“My precious daughter, your body is not an object.

I made you fearfully and wonderfully. My works are marvelous and your soul can believe this. (Psalms 139:14)

You are BEAUTIFUL and PERFECT, just as you are.

All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you. (Song of Solomon 4:7)

Look at yourself through my eyes and be amazed.

Your Dad, Your God, Your Creator.

Father, show me my beauty. Show me what you see when you look at me and show me what you put inside my heart. I want to be rooted in your love and bloom like a beautiful rose.

Fill me up with your spirit and with your thoughts. Let me see others and myself through your eyes, Jesus. Amen.”

Here is Rehan’s story...

I’ve always had a problem with my nose as it’s too big. Whenever I make new friends, I always get a feeling that they don’t like talking to me much because of my physical appearance. I just don’t know how to deal with the loneliness and eternal depression which I’ve had since I was 14 or so.

--Rehan

Overcoming the lies with the truth

Rehan,

Thanks for sharing so honestly. I know loneliness has been one of my deepest hurts. It connects back to some things that happened when I was a child.

Ultimately, I realized that I was "drinking from a broken cup - trying on my own to find satisfaction from life and that I really can only get that from God. God is healing me, but it is still a struggle not to believe the lie *that I am alone, that I don't fit with the others, that I am left out and on the outside, that I am different.*

In fact, just yesterday I was feeling that same thing again, believing that same lie again. And I wrote out the lie above and then I wrote out the truth.

The truth is that I'm never alone. Jesus, my biggest fan and supporter, the life of the party, is always with me. I am always included in what Jesus is doing if I decide to join Him. I am Jesus' friend and he tells me his secrets and connects with me deeply.

See the difference? Once I realized the lie I believed and replaced it with the truth, the melancholy feeling that came over me began to lift.

I want to share a few thoughts from the book "Comfortable in your own skin, making peace with your body image" by Dr. Deborah Newman.²⁰

One thing she says is, "Your self-esteem isn't as much about how you look right now as it is about what you think about how you look right now."²¹ She gave an example of how a woman lost a lot of weight and afterwards was asked out on a date.

The guy canceled and she automatically thought he canceled because he didn't like her and he thought she would gain all her weight back and wouldn't stay thin. Well, she came to find out that he really was sick and those thoughts were lies she still believed. Even though she had lost the weight, she still struggled with her self esteem.

The truth is "Healthy self esteem comes from believing in the value God places in you, not in the value man assigns to you."²²

Another lie she addresses is that "My outward appearance is the most important thing about me... The truth: Your outward appearance is what people will first judge you by, but your personality, confidence, talents and abilities, and spiritual sensitivity are each vital to who you are as well."²³

The last thing from her book I want to share is this. She says, "I like to think of our bodies as the garage for our souls, where we are parked temporarily while we live on this earth. The health, appearance, and abilities of our bodies affect what we do on this earth, but they are not all of who we are. They are significant to us for our time on earth, but will not last for eternity."²⁴

Finally, check out these personalized verses and start reading them over and over. Allow them to soak into your mind!

You can download and print them at this link:
www.personalpromisebible.com

Don't give up your search to finding your true beauty!

~Shelley

Luann shares her story...

I can definitely relate to Shelley's story about acne and stuff. I'm suffering from acne and acne scars too.

My self esteem is crashing down right now. Too bad I'm going to college. I have built this thing on my head saying that if only these blemishes were gone then everything would be alright.

It keeps haunting me night and day.

At first it didn't bother me but when my classmates started to tease me and then my maternal relatives started to humiliate me about it my world came crashing through. They tease me, even my 7 year old cousin.

I had depression too. I keep crying every night. Well not just that. My mom adds the pressure. She's always criticizing me and it did hurt me so bad. That's why I'm like this.

This person that I don't even know. This person who doesn't even know how to believe in herself and even though my dad keeps telling me I'm beautiful I never believe him because I know deep inside myself that I'm ugly as a monster.

I wanted to change this attitude towards myself because it's not helping me at all. It's destroying me. I get to only live once and I don't want to waste this chance.

It's really really hard to change and I definitely need your help. Can you help me recover? Let's help each other. Please I really need this so bad.

--Luann

A new kind of beauty...

Luann,

You are beautiful. I don't even need your picture to see that. Every one of us is perfect in God's eyes. I am so happy to be able to believe that because I'm just starting to realize it myself. I believe that with each and everyone one of us women, we introduce the world to a new kind of beauty. A new perfection. It comes with self confidence and a trust in God. We must try to give self consciousness to God. All of that gets in our way with a relationship with Jesus.

You are in my prayers, along with every other girl who feels the same way. (And you ARE gorgeous, my dear.)

--*Kristin*

You are beautiful!

Luann,

It breaks my heart to hear what you're going through. Especially for you to say "I know deep inside myself that I'm ugly as a monster." That is a lie. You are beautiful. The Bible says, that God has made EVERYTHING beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11). That verse includes you, Luann.

I prayed for you today, and I believe that God can help you to overcome this difficult time in your life when you seek Him.

Keep your head up!! You don't have to live under the control of what others say about you!

--*Stacey*



Share Your Thoughts

How About You - What is One Thing You Want to Change About Your Body? Feel free to share how this has impacted your self esteem and your relationship with God or others.

The Lie: *"If I can change something about my body, others will finally accept me and I will be able to accept myself."*

You have read my story, as well as Amber's, Rehan's and Luann's stories...now it's time to tell yours. I look forward to hearing your stories!

Share your opinion and read what others have to say here:

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What Does the Bible Have to Say About Body Image?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "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.

Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Psalms 139:14-16 "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Philippians 3:20-21 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."



Evolution vs. Creationism

***Does it have an impact
on our self esteem and
body image?***

We all know that there is a big debate about evolution vs. creationism in our culture today. I'm not here to debate.

What I am here to do is to challenge you to consider its impact on girls today. Is there a connection at all? Read on and you decide.

A Deeper Issue?

Is there more to the onslaught of low self esteem and body image issues teen girls and women face today? Could there be something deeper going on?

I think there is...

I believe there is a battle for our souls.

And I believe it is a spiritual battle. A battle against good and evil. A battle waging in the heavens against God and Satan. For you. For me.

It's subtle. Many times it comes through our thoughts. Subtle lies that we end up latching onto and believing.

Our enemy, Satan, may try to convince us to believe that...

- We have no real value and are worthless.
- We have no real beauty to offer to anyone and are ugly.
- We have no real purpose in life and our life is meaningless.
- We have no real relationships and no one truly cares about us.

Wow! Did you read those subtle lies?

Those thoughts can have major implications if we begin to bite into them...if we begin to believe them.

What is the result?

Broken, lifeless, defeated lives. We may experience sparks of real life from time to time, but in general we live with a deep ache inside. A sense that we don't belong. A sense that there's something wrong with us. Like I did for years.

The Connection to Evolution vs. Creationism

What if some of these thoughts could originate from something even deeper?

What if our enemy convinces us to believe that science has found the answer to how our universe began. And that if science can explain our origins, we don't need any other explanation. It's as if there's been a debate between science and God, and we've been told that science wins every time, hands down. And many of us have believed it.

What is the result?

We come to the conclusion that there is no need for an intelligent designer of our universe, that we are simply animals that evolved from lifeless cells millions of years ago.

You see, when we believe that there exists an intelligent designer or Creator of this universe that created us with love and value and thought, then we see ourselves differently.

How does evolution vs. creationism impact us in our search for true beauty and meaning in life? Think about it. If you evolved from lifeless, meaningless cells over millions of years, does your life really matter?

But what if there is more?

What if there is more to what we see all around us? Doesn't the beauty, complexity and magnificence of it all ever make you wonder?



I recently read something by Mark Cahill that made sense to me. He says, "every time we look at something built by man - a house, for example -- we know it had a builder, someone who assembled it. When we see something that has design, like a watch, we know it had a designer who planned it. When we see artwork, like a painting, we know there is an artist who painted it. When we observe order -- say 20 Coke cups lined up in a row -- we know there was an "orderer" who set them up that way.

When we look around the universe at things not made by man, what do we see? We see creation, design, art, and order. So if everything man-made has a creator, designer, artist, or orderer behind it, why would you not think there is a Creator, Designer, Artist, and Orderer behind the universe?

Why is it that when we look at Mount Rushmore, we don't say 'Wow, erosion is an amazing thing! Look how it formed the heads of four presidents of the United States'? We realize that would be a foolish statement. Whenever we see creation, design, art, or order, it's obvious that there was some intelligent force behind it to make it happen."²⁵

He then goes on to tell the story. "I was talking with a man one day in downtown Atlanta, and I asked him a question about spiritual matters. He replied that he was an atheist, and there was no way to prove there is a God. We were standing among tall buildings, so I pointed to one of the skyscrapers and said, 'Prove to me that there was a builder for that building.' He answered, 'That's easy. The building itself is proof that there is a builder.'

He was 100% correct. We know that you don't just gather some concrete, pipes, windows, paint, wires, etc., then turn around and look back to suddenly find a building. A building requires a builder.

I said, 'Exactly. The building is proof that there is a builder.' I then added, 'The sun, the moon, the stars, the oceans, the sand, each unique snowflake, the 3 billion pieces of your DNA that are different from mine, are absolute proof that there had to be a Creator of this universe.' He looked at me. I could see the light bulb flash on behind his eyes and then he glanced away. As he thought about the statement, he realized he had proved his own proof.

The fact that you can't see, touch, taste, smell, or hear the builder of a skyscraper doesn't mean that such a person doesn't exist. You don't need any amazing faith to believe there was a builder of a building you can see; you just need to look at the evidence and make an informed decision. And the best piece of evidence you have is the work that builder left behind.

The same holds true for the God of the universe. The evidence left for us to look at is all the evidence we will ever need in order to know that our universe has a Creator." ²⁶

So what if we had an intelligent designer, a Creator?

That would mean that...

- We are created with real value, and are worthwhile.
- We are created with true beauty to offer to others.
- We are created with real purpose and meaning in life.
- We are created to have meaningful relationships with our Creator and others.

See the difference?

If you're still struggling with the evolution vs. creationism idea, I recommend reading chapter two of Mark Cahill's book, *One Heartbeat Away, Your Journey into Eternity*.²⁷ He explains microevolution vs. macroevolution, transitional forms and more. It helped me better understand why Creation really does make sense when you truly take the time to examine the claims and evidence of evolution. I realized that it really does take more faith to believe in the evidence of evolution vs. creationism.

Now it's time for you to decide for yourself.



Daddy's Little Girl

The Importance of a Father's Love and What to Do if You Grew up Lacking It

You'll often hear someone say, "She's Daddy's little girl." Deep down, I think being "Daddy's little girl" is something we girls long for...to be loved, cherished and treasured by our fathers.

However, the reality is that many of us grew up without the stability, security and protection of a loving father. Instead, our fathers may have been distant emotionally, absent from the home, too busy working, abusive or neglectful. And we may have left childhood feeling unloved by our dads for one reason or another.

Fathers will have an impact on their daughter's life...

...either positively or negatively.

Don't get me wrong. A mother's nurturing love is essential. We need the love from both our mother and our father. But, our dads have a different impact on us.

- They teach us how to interact with guys.
- They teach us how a guy should treat a girl.

- They are the first man in our lives that has the opportunity to affirm our beauty and teach us that our beauty goes beyond skin deep.
- They model to us how a husband should treat his wife.
- And so on and so forth.

Did you feel secure in your father's love and protection growing up? Did you know that he had your best interests in mind? Did your dad affirm your beauty and worth and show you respect?

Unfortunately, many girls do not receive affirmation and love from their fathers. And therefore, it's easy to go looking for it somewhere else... usually trying to feel loved by other guys. You can read more about this when I share my story on dating.

The Impact on our Relationship with God

Sometimes we end up projecting our feelings about our earthly father onto our heavenly Father. If we feel like our earthly father is distant emotionally from us, we may assume that our heavenly Father is the same. If our earthly father has disappointed us and let us down, we may think that our heavenly Father will disappoint us as well. If our earthly father wasn't safe for us, but instead was abusive, we may have a difficult time trusting our heavenly Father to be a safe haven for us.

Do you see how this can happen?

I know it did for me. And I had to realize that God is not like my dad. He won't let me down or disappoint me. I had to be reminded of the character of God, my heavenly Father, through His Word, the Bible. It shows over and over that God is loving, trustworthy, and has my best interests in mind.

I had to slowly begin to change the way I saw God, or my view of God. You may have to do that as well.

You Can Have a Father that Loves You Completely

Are you longing for someone to love you completely and unconditionally? Well, before you try to find that love “in all the wrong places” like I did, realize that you can find that love in your heavenly Father. It may be hard for you to accept His love right now. You may not feel very love-able. Or you may doubt that God really cares for you.

It’s okay to wrestle with those feelings. You are on a journey. A journey of discovering your true beauty. A beauty given to you by your heavenly Father, your Creator, who loves you completely. You were made by Him and for Him. (Col 1:16)

Will you allow Him to love you and satisfy all your deepest longings? Will you let go of your past and forgive your earthly father for the ways he didn’t provide that love for you?

Your heavenly Father is waiting for you. He says, “Come near to me and I will come near to you.” (James 4:8) He offers to love you completely (Ephesians 3:19) as a Father should. And nothing can separate you from His love (Romans 8:35-39)

Will you accept His invitation?





How To Gain Self Esteem...

By Breaking Free from the Lies We Believe

What do lies have to do with learning how to gain self esteem? Well, let me start by sharing an illustration. It has to do with weeds.

Let me ask you a question.

What is important when weeding a garden?

The recognition of which plants are weeds, right?

Otherwise, you may uproot the good with the bad or allow certain weeds to continue to take root, thinking they are life giving, fruit bearing plants!

Isn't the same is true in our lives, in regards to our thoughts? We need to develop "weed recognition", the ability to recognize when the enemy is planting those weeds of lies into our lives. Even Jesus said that they will know you by your fruit (Matthew 7:15-20).

In my life, this has made a huge difference as I've learned how to gain self esteem.

In his book, "Waking the Dead", John Eldredge²⁸ says, "most of us simply try to 'put things behind us,' get past it, forget the pain as quickly as we can. Really – denial is a favorite method

for coping for many Christians. But not with Jesus. He wants truth in the inmost being, and to get it there he's got to take us into our inmost being...to go with him into the deep waters of the heart, uncover the lies buried down there, and bring in the truth that will set us free. Don't just bury it quickly; ask God what he is wanting to speak to."

Recognizing and uprooting the weeds or lies in your life is the first step in learning how to gain self esteem. Often times those thoughts that keep coming up in your mind again and again that tear you down instead of build you up will be those lies. In other words...."Stinkin' Thinkin'" as my mom calls it.

Realize that those defeating thoughts are not from God, but from your enemy, Satan, who wants to destroy you and keep you captive. (John 8:43-45, John 10:10, Isaiah 61:1-4)

Some examples of "Stinkin' Thinkin'":

- I am worthless
- People I trust will hurt and betray me, therefore I can't trust anyone
- I'm not as good as my friends
- Something's wrong with me
- I am ugly
- I have to be perfect for people to like me.
- I am a failure and always mess up.

In place of those lies, begin to plant the seed of God's truth into your mind (2 Corinthians 10:5). We are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) and the only way to renew our minds is to change what goes into it.

Did you know that one way people are trained to recognize counterfeit money is by studying the real thing?

Therefore, one way we can get better at recognizing the lies is to know God's Truth in the bible so well that we can quickly recognize those thoughts that aren't from Him. Unfortunately, there is no shortcut for this step. The seed of truth may take time to grow, it's hard work but worth it!

One great way to do this is to memorize bible scriptures. I know it sounds boring, but think of it as a way to prepare for battle. I have found it to be one of the most effective ways for me to have victory over Satan in my life (see the appendix for more details).

Something else that has really helped me is praying God's word. If you are having difficulty overcoming a specific struggle in your life, I'd recommend trying it. It's changed my life (see the appendix for more details).

Starve the flesh and feed the spirit.

The more we feed the flesh, the bigger this "monster" grows and the more damage is seen. It seems innocent at first.

If you feel overwhelmed, don't! That's just another lie Satan is telling you to keep you from learning how to gain self esteem and true freedom in Christ. I have felt the same way and have had great friends to help me. You're not alone and if you need help or someone to listen, feel free to contact me.

Practical Steps to Replacing the Lies with Truth...²⁹

1. **Identify possible lies** in your life. Pray for God's wisdom and ask someone you trust to help you. Write them out on a paper or journal.
2. **Choose** one of the lies.

3. **Confess** the sin of believing this lie rather than the truth and living your life according to this lie.
4. When applicable, **forgive** your parents or family members that have passed down this lie to you. Also, forgive any others that have influenced you to form this lie.
5. **Repent**, asking for God's forgiveness for living your life based upon this lie.
6. **Reject the lie** and break its power from your life based on what Jesus did for you by dying on the cross.
7. **Plant God's truth** into your mind in place of the lie.
Write out this truth.
8. **Receive this new truth** into your belief system as the replacement for the previously removed lie. (repeat above steps until you have gone through the entire list of lies)
9. **Pray:**
 - Pray that God would bring an end to the effects of this lie in your life.
 - Pray for this truth to be planted in your heart.
 - Pray that the Word of God already in your heart will be brought to the surface of your mind to use as a weapon against future defeating thoughts. (Ephesians 6)
 - Pray for the discipline to meditate on this new truth for at least 30 days.
 - Pray that the Holy Spirit would make you sensitive to falling back into old thought patterns and to be able to take captive any such thoughts.
 - Pray for new habits to be formed in your mind as you learn how to gain self esteem.
10. **Accountability** – Have someone you trust hold you accountable.

Remember, this is just one step in learning how to gain self esteem. But, I can tell you from personal experience that it is powerful when you apply it.

Princess Kandace

by Kandace

It all started when I was in elementary school. People made fun of my forehead and at first I didn't think it was big but then I started believing it since I heard it more. Middle school was torture. I always had a boy who liked me that would be mean to me. This particular boy who liked me would pick fun at me. I didn't know why he would be so mean and hurt my feelings but he did.

I cut my hair to make a bang so I could hide my forehead. That solved my problems for a little while. He still would make fun of me, only him. He had a friend who he hung around with and his friend thought I was cute and we were cool.

I would always compare myself to the popular girls. I caught myself trying to be like other girls. Why did all the cute guys like those girls? Since I'm African American, guys are attracted to girls who have big butts and loud mouths. I had none of these traits.

That 7th grade summer I went to a camp for teens with my church. That's when the healing began. I started being my own self and I started getting more friends. But I still had the forehead issue. 8th grade was still torture. This time it was a new guy (the other one moved to Alabama). He was kind of popular and that was kind of hurtful. He was the class clown and he would clown on me, knowing deep down he liked me. I wish I would've known he liked me. I did however manage to get the word of God known to some people at the school.

High school was the breaking point for me. I started to get acne because I wore "swoops" and bangs so much. One day in the 9th grade I was just tired. I think God troubled my spirit so much that I just put my bang back for the first time in my

life and did not care. That was the best thing I could have ever done.

Yeah I got comments but I trusted God and you know what, I didn't care what people had to say. Yeah there was this guy who had a joke but I could've cared less.

I've been showing my forehead for a year now and I see nothing wrong with the way God made me. I look at myself as unique, if I didn't have my forehead or my eyes then I would look like guys expect me to look like and I don't want that. I want to look like KANDACE, a child of God, not some video girl who has no significant value. Since my father is a King I'm royalty, I'm a princess.



Share Your Thoughts

What is your story? How has God been working in your life lately? It could be something big or something little. Share your opinion and read what others have to say here:

<http://Share.TrueBeautyBook.com>

"Who Am I?"

Self Esteem Poem

by Shelley Hitz

I had an identity crisis several years ago and wrote this poem as I began to find my true identity. Maybe you can relate as well.

Who am I?

My first answer would probably be my name.

But, my name does not describe who I am on the inside. I could then give the title of my profession.

But that is what I do. I could then tell you I am a wife, a sister, and a daughter. But those are my relationships.

I ask again...Who am I?

I could describe myself as an extrovert and outgoing. That is my personality. I am organized in planning events. But that is a gift God has given me. I could describe my appearance, but that is not who I am either.

So many times I have believed what others say I am. If I receive affirmation, then I feel worthwhile.

However, when I receive criticism, then I feel like a failure. I have chosen to ride the roller coaster of emotions, Instead of believing the truth of what God says about me. I have tried to work harder to prove that I am worthwhile. Yet every time I mess up or fail, I am reminded that I will never measure up.

I will never be pretty enough or talented enough. I will never be skinny enough or do enough good things of the church. I will never be a good enough wife or sister or daughter.

But, I keep trying harder and harder. I believe the lie that if I continue to try harder, I will finally be "good" enough.

One day, God gently said to me, "Stop trying so hard to prove yourself to others. Get your worth from me. I've already given it to you. Remember my grace. It's a free gift and nothing you can achieve by trying harder.

Rest in my grace.

You are working so hard to have a certain position in the eyes of others, To be well-liked and to have popularity. You want to be appreciated for what you do.

But I want you to know that you already have an elevated position.

Because you have a relationship with my son, Jesus Christ, You are a part of my kingdom as my daughter, and co-heirs with Christ. Because you are the daughter of a King, You are given the position of being a princess.

You are my princess, a royal princess.

Remember that an earthly princess is not special because of who she is or what she does. She has status and position because of who her dad is, a king. She has royalty in her blood.

You have royalty in your blood as well.

You are the daughter of a King. And no matter what you do,
your status will never change.

I have chosen you and I have a plan for your life.
I will not forget you and will be with you always.
I have engraved you in the palm of my hands.

Rest in the knowledge of who you are in me.
Nothing else will ever be enough.
You are my daughter and I love you!"



Share Your Thoughts

What are your comments and thoughts? Could you relate at all
to this poem? Do you have your own story of finding your
identity and self esteem?

Let us know what you think! Share your opinion and read
what others have to say here:

<http://Share.TrueBeautyBook.com>

Inner Beauty Tip

Let Your Inner Beauty Shine!

Because beauty is such an important topic for us girls, I want to share an inner beauty tip with you and give you the chance to share your inner beauty with others.

Most of the time, when I think of beauty, I automatically think of someone's outer beauty. How they dress, what their hair looks like, what type of make-up they wear, etc. I have to admit that inner beauty is thought about and talked about a lot less....at least for me.

I have to make a conscious effort to focus on my inner beauty. It's a lot easier for me to look in the mirror and know that I need to wash my hair than it is to look inside myself and see where I need to grow emotionally or spiritually.

But, when I take the time to do so and then offer forgiveness to someone or connect with God, it shows! I am more fun to be around and have more joy that naturally shines through my personality.

I also believe that your inner beauty can shine through the abilities, gifts and talents God has given you.

What gifts or talents do you have? Are you a writer? Maybe you write in a journal or write poetry. Are you an artist? Maybe you paint, draw, sculpt, design graphics, etc. Are you a musician? Maybe you write lyrics or compose songs? Maybe you love to sing or play an instrument.

There are countless ways that your inner beauty and the creativity God has given you can shine through.

This is my inner beauty tip...let it shine through by sharing your creativity with others. The sky's the limit. Don't hide your inner beauty....let it shine!!

Matthew 5:14-16 *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before men**, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*



Share Your
Thoughts

Let Your Inner Beauty Shine!

Do you have a gift or talent to share that displays your inner beauty? It can be anything...from a journal entry to a picture of your artwork to a video of a song you performed (or wrote) or a great photo you took.

Let's share and display the inner beauty God has given us!

<http://Share.TrueBeautyBook.com>

My Journey to Becoming One Of God's Prized Beauties

By Julie

Because of the influences our culture has on us as youth, especially the media and our peers, it is very difficult to go through school without being concerned with what everyone else thinks about you. It's also hard to not prescribe to the one size fits all perspective when it comes to standards of beauty, popularity, and relationships. This was true for me growing up.

- For as long as I can remember, I was dreadfully afraid of not fitting in. Even though I had many friends from different groups, I never had a best friend. No one seemed to need me as much as I wished they would. I wasn't liked by many boys.
- I grew up in a challenging school system where there were a lot of bullies and people were quickly labeled. There were a lot of cliques. I always seemed to enjoy the social environment, being friends with almost everyone, but deep down I felt unloved by all socially.
- I was always fearful of confrontation and internalized these feelings. I felt paralyzed when my family members fought with each other and with me. I tried to keep the peace in our household, sometimes by giving in and apologizing or taking the blame for things I didn't even do.
- I never thought I was pretty. Or thin. Or anything special on the outside. I knew I was worthy on the inside, but that *wasn't enough* because I was completely insecure with my appearance, thinking it wasn't up to the world's standards of worth.
- I started caring much more about how I was perceived by others than how I perceived myself.

- I thought I was a victim because I had a lot of physical conditions, including chronic pain, that made me miss out things growing up and made me feel like I was different than my peers, fighting an invisible and lonely illness no one understood.
- I gave in to stress in almost all areas of my life.

I came out of high school with a lot of bitterness, but it wasn't until after college that I began to realize how much it affected my choices and beliefs. I was prone to being influenced by those directly around me, and the reality is, during college a lot of us are still facing an identity crisis, and we tend to rub off on each other. During this time, because of some close peer interactions and the effect the media's portray of health was having on me, I started paying attention to things like healthy eating.

Because this obsession with healthy eating satisfied me temporarily, and was a way I thought I had finally reached a mark of self-discipline and worthiness, it was easy to slide into destructive eating habits and disordered thinking.

I'm convinced that Satan tries to deceive young girls where they are most fragile. For me, this was with health. Issues of health and wellbeing were always close to my heart, as I'd suffered from debilitating chronic pain in much of my upper body for as long as I could remember. I longed to feel well and "normal" and I believe that as a way to numb the pain I felt, I tried to control any aspects of my health that I could, through "better" eating habits, more exercising, and following many of the prescribed techniques magazines give for how to be happy.

Do you know how many times I've wanted to hit the erase button on all of the sin I fell into?

Now, I don't believe God wants to hit the erase button on me or anyone. He wants to use the experiences we've gone through to shape us into someone who learns that apart from Him, we can do nothing (*John 15:5*).

This leads me back to Christ. I grew up in a Christian home, but it wasn't for many years that my faith became my own and I began to actually etch God's truths into my heart, placing my identity more firmly in Him. When I finally realized what God's love for me meant, there was nothing left for me to do but repent of my sinful ways and unpeel all the layers of defenses I'd built up over the years.

What I didn't realize was how dangerous it could be to become so obsessed with health, to the point where it really skewed my perception of body image. It wasn't until about a year after college when I finally started realizing what these habits were doing to me: controlling my life and seeping joy out of me.

It would not help to place blame elsewhere; I needed to own up to those things. What helped me do this was to realize that God knew the feelings in my heart, and I couldn't hide from him. In *Jeremiah 16*, we learn that the first step of repentance (experiencing sorrow for and seeking change for wrongs), is to acknowledge that God knows about our sin. I had to release what was holding me back from a living a more full life, inhibiting me from truly loving myself and others, and even God, the way I needed to.

To do this, I had to look at where I'd been placing my influence. I was constantly trying to reach a level of perfection that was unattainable and not part of God's plan for any of us. He wants us to be who we are, as He knit us each perfectly the way He wants us to be.

I had to realize that some aspects of who I was and also trials I went through were part of God's plan for who I was and maybe it was that way to bring me closer to Him.

It was then that I became convicted to change a lot of my behavioral patterns that had taken hold of me, especially the ways I tried to control my eating patterns and fixation on good health.

Because of all the patterns I had entered into, it was an extremely difficult process to change. Some days, I wanted to give up, but I knew that through His son, God had sacrificed so much that my sins could be washed away. Because of that, I knew it was possible to get through it all.

Day-by-day grace. That's how I got through. And continue to get through, I couldn't worry about the next day, because one day at a time was hard enough. Eventually, my absorbing thoughts controlling my eating started to diminish. Little specks of joy that I didn't think I'd ever feel again came back into my life, this time with an overflowing sense of freedom that I'd never felt before.

It was in these times that I truly learned that God's truth had meaning in my life. I began to rely on God's word to get me through tough times, as well as constant support from the godly people He placed into my life to be His hands and feet and comfort me when I needed it most.

I allowed my internal struggle to be verbalized and also allowed myself to feel emotions that had been pent up for so long. Through this process of letting go of the power all my obsessions and false idols were having on me, I was able to get healed in more ways than I could have imagined.

God healed me from the inside out, allowing me to want to get help for things that were wrong with my body, and He provided a path to do that. Jeremiah 16:19 says, "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me." With the physical pain I'd always had, I wondered what it would be like to truly be able to serve Him if I could just have greater energy and without distracting ailments. Surprisingly, what I've found out recently is that if my heart is hungry to serve Him, He allows me to serve, and won't let physical pain stand in the way.

I believe that whatever struggles we go through in the flesh and in our thought patterns can be renewed, and God can bring all of us, body, mind, and spirit together again, showing us that He made all of us to work as one for His glory. All my life I have wanted to be free of health issues, I have wanted a different body, but now, thanks to God, that feeling is gone.

I've had an enormous peace that God knows what He's doing with me, and He has made no mistake with me or any other girl who cries out to Him, wondering why she has to feel different. We are different, and God wants us to be. We are the only one of us that will ever be, so it's important to try and accept and even relish in that thought.



Share Your Thoughts

What is your story? How has God been working in your life lately? It could be something big or something little. Share your opinion and read what others have to say here:

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Also, send your prayer requests, so that we can specifically pray for you! You can send them to my address above, or submit them through my website online here:

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Fixing our eyes on Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

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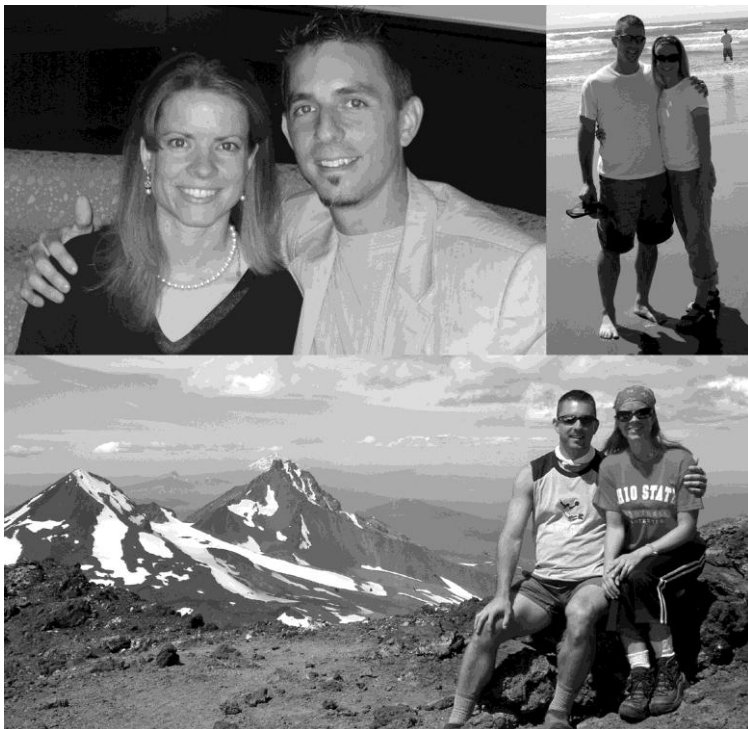
Written by Shelley Hitz, Heather Hart
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C.J. and Shelley Hitz



C.J. and Shelley Hitz enjoy sharing God's Truth through their speaking engagements and their writing. On downtime, they enjoy spending time outdoors running, hiking and exploring God's beautiful creation.

To find out more about their ministry or to invite them to your next event, check out their websites at:

www.shelleyhitz.com
www.cjhitz.com

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