

# BEWARE! ARE YOU SENDING THE RIGHT MESSAGE?



## PRIMARY SCRIPTURES

Proverbs 6:25, 11:22, 31:30

## OBJECTIVES

- Examine our motives for seeking the perfect appearance.
- Explore the lies that convince us that our appearance is all that we are.
- Discuss the outcome of our decisions about our appearance.

## OVERVIEW

Preppy, jock, tomboy, slut, nerd, punk...the list could go on and on identifying the different labels or groups that exist in the world of a teenager. The labels change over time, but the process of labeling doesn't. I can't remember the first time I put someone in a certain "group" based on what they were wearing or how they had their hair done because it feels like I've been doing it my entire life. And I am sure I would be surprised to find out some of the many "groups" I was put into based on other's judgment of my appearance. Why do we think we can really know a person solely based on outward appearance? Can we really be known by our own appearance?

## TIP:

Think back to your high school days, however recent or distant. Think about your "label" and the different groups at your school. Most of us have been where your girls are today!

Because celebrities get so much attention, we allow the way they dress and act to influence us. We try to emulate them with hopes of receiving the same type of attention. We want attention and we want to be desirable. What we often forget is we are desirable. God desires us. He loves us no matter what clothes we wear, what kind of make-up we wear or what friends we hang out with. No matter what.

Society says the way we look on the outside determines our character and who we are. God knows our character based on the state of our heart. What we don't always realize is the way we dress and act can reflect the state of our heart.

*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised (Proverbs 31:30).*

## LEADER'S STUDY

Proverbs 6:25, 11:22, 31:30

Let's take a quick look at the scriptures used today in our Bible study:

Proverbs 6:25 – The “her” in this passage is an immoral woman. The writer is telling us not to be blinded by her appearance. Though her outside is captivating and beautiful, something is deeply wrong on the inside.

### TIP:

Get some comments from the guys in your church about the traits they look for in girls, and what kind of girls they respect the most.

Proverbs 11:22 – Being too consumed by or “showing off” your appearance is like dressing up a pig in jewelry. You can't disguise what's in your heart—it will find its way out sooner or later.

Proverbs 31:30 – This passage is actually directed at men as the writer is telling a young man how to pick a wife. Don't look for outward beauty because eventually it will fade; instead search for someone whose heart is totally devoted to God.

## 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE...

### 1. Am I trying to hide something?

Am I focusing so much time and energy on what I look like so people will never really notice me? A lot of times we use the exterior to distract people from really knowing us because we are afraid that we aren't good enough. Beware: the message you are sending is that you are only skin deep.

### 2. What kind of attention am I trying to attract?

Am I making attempts to get people to notice me by wearing things or doing things to myself that I don't necessarily care for? Sometimes when we don't feel so good about ourselves, we think people feel the same way about us, and so we begin to take drastic measures to get the attention we think we so badly need. We are sure that this attention will validate our self-worth and provide us with the love we need. Beware: the message you are sending is that you'll do anything for attention.

### 3. Do I spend the same amount of time and energy on my heart as I do my appearance?

Am I focusing so much on my outside appearance that I am neglecting the care of my heart and my faith? It's so easy to get sidetracked by “looking good” that before long it becomes all that we think about. We want to be in control and since our appearance is something we can control, we spend all our time and energy on it. However, in the end beauty doesn't last, but our heart does. So it is imperative that we give care and attention to our heart and soul. Beware: the message you are sending is that looking good is worth risking your heart.



## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (OPTIONAL)**

**The List** (Bring a Barbie doll) – Together as a group make a list of the messages that the world has described as perfect. Most of our lives we have been trying to live up to the standard set by a Barbie doll. Did you know that if a real person had the actual measurements of a Barbie she would be so top heavy that she wouldn't be able to stand?

**Making the comparisons** – Have the students compare the difference of Britney Spears (or any other young “beautiful” celebrity) to Mother Teresa. After completing the list, have the students talk about the realities of what the world ranks as important.

### **TIP:**

Younger girls may not know much about Mother Teresa's life. Do a little research online so you can tell them more about all of the things she did.

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

### **Open Up**

- How are people in your school or community “classified”? By their appearance or by their actions?
- What do the media tell us about our appearance?
- How often do you classify people?
- Do you think people send a message with the way they dress or take care of their appearance? Do you believe that boys and girls think the same about appearances?
- What message do you want to be sending with your appearance? Do you think you are sending that message?

### **Dig In**

Transition into your study by explaining the common messages we send with our appearance (that we are only skin deep, that we'll do anything with our appearance for acceptance, and that what is on the outside is more important than the heart). Does everyone in the group agree? If not, why? The Bible teaches that appearances can be deceiving: What's on the outside of a person may not be what's inside their heart. While the world focuses on appearance, God's Word makes it clear that beauty won't last forever but character does. Today we'll explore what God says about focusing on our appearance.

Read and discuss Proverbs 6:25, 11:22, 31:30

- What do you think the word “captivating” means?
- Have you ever been captivated by a person's appearance? In what way? Did you get to know that person? Were their looks deceiving? How?





- Why do you think our society is “blinded” by appearance? What message does that send to you about your appearance?
- Describe how you would react to seeing a pig with an expensive nose ring. How does that apply or compare to a woman who focuses too much on her outward appearance?
- Discuss as a group what amount of time is appropriate to care for one’s outward appearance.
- How is beauty fleeting? How is charm deceptive?
- What does this passage communicate is “most” important? Why is this not valued more in our world?
- How can we begin to put more attention on that which is the “most” important?

#### **CLOSE OUT**

- What’s the common theme from all the Bible passages about appearance?
- Are you working extra hard on your appearance to hide something? Why?
- Are you dressing to attract someone or some kind of attention? Why?
- Are you spending equal time on your heart and character as you are to improve your appearance? Why or why not?
- How can we be a part of changing the culture that puts too much importance on appearance?

