

Beautiful When It's Real

My dad introduced me to Marsha for a reason, even though I didn't get it at the time. She was a singer and was 30 years old when we met. She had dark, wavy, auburn hair and a gorgeous smile. When I met her, I felt as if I'd known her forever. People loved being near Marsha. She wasn't over-the-top outgoing, but she was genuinely friendly, and people wanted to be close to her.

After we'd talked awhile, her husband introduced himself to me and asked if she was ready to do her sound check. She gave me her address and told me to keep her posted on what was happening with me. I was more excited than if I'd met a celebrity. She was gorgeous, with a cute, godly husband, and she was involved in full-time ministry. I wanted all that, too (what girl doesn't?).

But what made that meeting extra special to me is that Marsha was in a wheelchair and, at the time, so was I. We have the same bone disease. Mine is a mild form. I've only had about 12 fractures my entire life, and I'm currently walking with no wheelchair or walker. Marsha's was severe. She's had around 150 fractures in her life time and battled other serious side effects fairly frequently. Her body wasn't typical, but she didn't really care. She was confident in something besides all that, and, boy, did it show.



Outrageous Life

Marsha would always be in a wheelchair; she still chose to live an outrageous, wonderful life. The reason my parents wanted me to meet Marsha is because I'd hit this point when I had made the decision that until I looked normal, I wouldn't be happy. Suddenly I wasn't OK with the scars on my legs

or the way I looked when I tried to walk. I wasn't OK with how different my body was, that my legs were slightly twisted and my spine curved. My ideal beautiful woman was more vogue than every day. I compared myself to every girl I knew, obsessed over the way girls in magazines looked, and I sometimes cried when I stared at my reflection.

The truth is I was a little obsessed with myself at that point. But when I saw Bill, Marsha's "holy hunk," pull her wheelchair over the three steps onto the stage and heard her give a brief testimony, I was floored. She started singing a song she'd written about Christ's faithfulness, her voice weaving around the lyrics like a silk ribbon. I couldn't believe such a strong bluesy voice was coming out of such a tiny person.

Marsha was beautiful! She was beautiful in the way she made people feel comfortable, in how she used her talents to touch so many hearts. She was beautiful - scars, tough moments and all - because she was completely confident in Christ. As a matter of fact, all of that made her even more beautiful. People loved her just like she was, and she was cool with being herself. I wanted that.

Freedom

I think if we could see the world with spiritual eyes for a second, we'd see other sisters in Christ hobbling in chains of insecurity. I cringe when I think of the bondage that comes from my own self-obsession . I can get bent out of shape dwelling on what I think is imperfect. I think I'll be happy if I'm gorgeous, because when somebody tells me I'm pretty, I'll feel loved. But that isn't love at all. When I think and worry about only myself, all I have is this fake kind of warmth that doesn't hold me when my heart is breaking, that leaves me staring at the ground when I walk, that leaves me in tears in the dressing room if I go up a jean size.

God created His girls to walk in freedom, joy and hope. Instead, we walk around like zombies looking for one quick thing to fill us up, when Jesus is standing in front of us, arms wide open, tears falling down His face, longing to give us a wholeness we can't even imagine. He promises: 'The truth will set you free" (John 8:32), "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). What's the way to stop comparing ourselves to other girls and stop constantly battling insecurity? By knowing what He says about us, and believing Him!



Makeup Tips

Marsha understood that. She knew that comparing herself to other girls was a waste of time. She knew that whether she had to use a wheelchair, a walker or whatever, she would do it and trust God and not complain. She understood that she was gorgeous, not just physically, and she had some thing special to offer the world. She knew her God intimately. She decided to believe Him. Her friends saw it. The people affected by her ministry saw it. Her husband saw it and fell in love with it. She was genuinely beautiful and being near her changed my life.

I love clothes, makeup, hair and all that stuff, and I know there's nothing wrong with enhancing my appearance.

But the funkiest jeans ever created can't substitute for being shallow. Here's a makeup tip: The truth Jesus wants us to know and lock inside our hearts is way more important than anything we will ever put on our face or wear. Beautiful begins when we know God intimately and know He wants to use us exactly the way we are. I'd love to say insecurity is something I've kicked, but there are too many moments when I'm not abiding in Christ, not believing the truth. If my standard is some "It-Girl" with great style, I may never measure up. But what God teaches me, over and over, is that I'm His girl, created for a future that will blow my mind. When I start believing that, other people see it, too. It's a real kind of beautiful that starts in the corners of our hearts and literally makes us more attractive.

Let's help each other realize that fact and start listening to the King who is completely in love with us right now, just as we are. That kind of beautiful, the kind that comes from knowing Him, changes lives and lasts even when we're cute, wrinkly, old women. Beautiful, truly beautiful, lasts forever.

“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the lord looks at the heart”

1 Samuel 16:7