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Suggested hymns and songs, Bible readings, YouTube clips, prayer topics, books, Bible Study series, poems and drama.

PowerPoint slides are available as indicated. If desired, these slides can be downloaded from the PW web pages at www.presbyterianireland.org/pw Follow the links to PW Resources and then to Inspirations. Alternatively, they can be emailed to you from the Office. If you would like to use these but no one within your group has the required expertise, please feel free to ask someone else from your congregation or family to help out.

YouTube: If you wish to watch the suggested clips, it is important to ensure that your church has the appropriate **copyright licence** in place.

Introduction

Welcome to the 2018/19 edition of *Inspirations* based on the theme '*Beautiful*'.

What does the word *beautiful* mean to you? It can mean different things to people - as the saying goes, 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'.

While considering and producing the items in *Inspirations*, our contributors prayerfully, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, sought God's view on the subject. It is our desire that what is written will enable and encourage you to see yourselves, the world and its people through God's eyes. Our aim is to equip you with material you can use in a variety of settings, to enable women to look deeper into the beauty of His love and grace. It is then our hope that you will have a vision; a vision in which, as godly women, we reflect the beauty of the Lord; a vision where our attitudes, actions and words will be an influence on our families, communities, congregations and throughout the world; a vision where we attract others to come meet, respond to and share His love.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Valerie Stewart, Convener of the Women's Strategy & Coordination Committee, writes the following:

I believe Inspirations is a resource which will help envision, equip and enable women in congregations to be followers of Christ and encourage others to become His disciples. The new layout is attractive and engaging and the content should appeal to a wide range of women's groups across our island. I trust you will find that this resource will be helpful to you as you meet in the coming year. I pray that God, through His Holy Spirit, will transform us more and more into the likeness of Christ, reflecting His beauty.

Opening Devotions – Beautiful Beginnings

AIM:

to help set a 'beautiful' tone at the outset of meetings.

1. A beautiful perfume – the aroma of Jesus

How often do you wear perfume? Never - it makes you sneeze? Just on Sundays or on special occasions? Or are you someone who doesn't feel dressed without a splash of fragrance? Maybe you have one special bottle of your favourite, or maybe a whole collection from which to choose.

Do you ever realise that someone has just come in to the room because you recognise the perfume they always wear? Or maybe you recognise the smell of someone's work clothes!

The Bible tells us about a perfume that disciples of Jesus are to wear constantly in all of life, not just on Sunday or other special occasions. *"But thanks be to God, who... through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of [Christ]. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life."* (2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

When you enter a room, do people recognise the aroma of Jesus? In your conversations, do you spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ? Do your words and actions challenge unbelievers with the smell of death and encourage believers with the fragrance of life?

May we all ensure that we wear the aroma of Jesus every day.

Beautiful Beginnings

2. A career in modelling

There are usually some ridiculous and impractical outfits to be seen on the catwalk of fashion shows. Other outfits look like they could be worn as they are or with only a little alteration to suit the individual wearer. Many people like to copy the latest trends, or at least dress in the 'right' brand of clothing. They like to copy the style of those they admire.

Who is copying your style and your standards? What clothing are you modelling for the generation coming behind you? Modest clothing that is God-glorifying? Or clothes that do not leave much to the imagination and put temptation in the way of brothers in Christ?

What kind of character are you modelling? Are others attracted by the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in your life? (Galatians 5:22-23) Would a younger woman look at your character and think, "She's lovely! I want to be like that!"?

1 Timothy 2:9-10 (ESV) tells us that, "...women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness - with good works.

How's your modelling career going? Like it or not, we are all leading by example. Let's make sure our lives are modelled on Jesus so that we point those coming behind us to Him.

Beautiful Beginnings

3. A Beautiful Bride

A bride takes great care in choosing her dress, shoes, hairstyle, makeup, jewellery - maybe even a shade of fake tan! She is up early on the “big day” to have adequate time to adorn herself for her bridegroom. She probably also has a suitcase full of carefully chosen clothing to take on honeymoon. She will do as much as she can to look beautiful for her groom.

How much time and effort do we put in to preparing ourselves for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? He is the Heavenly Bridegroom and the Church is His bride. How can we adorn ourselves for His arrival? 1 Peter 3:3-4 tells us, *“Do not let your adorning be external - the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear - but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.”*

Let us get ready for our Heavenly Bridegroom by cooperating with the Holy Spirit as He works in our lives to make the hidden person of the heart more beautiful. Let us do all we can to develop a gentle and quiet spirit, because that is very precious in God’s sight. This is beauty which will never fade - it is imperishable. Unlike physical beauty, it improves with time!

Beautiful Beginnings

4. The Beautiful Temple of God

For what would you like to be remembered? In the Old Testament, King Solomon was remembered for two things, namely his wisdom and the beautiful temple he built for the Lord. No effort or expense was spared. Majestic, giant cedars from Lebanon were imported for the panelling which was richly carved and decorated. Solomon wanted to honour God with a beautiful, permanent building to host God's presence (1 Kings 5:6).

In the New Testament, Paul tells us that, as followers of Christ, we are God's temple as His Holy Spirit dwells within us (1 Corinthians 3:16). We are, in effect, being called to be as renowned for our beauty as Solomon's temple. What an amazing thought!

Our beauty is not determined by our appearance, human parentage, achievements, occupation, or by our own efforts, but by God at work within us. From within, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we fulfil the responsibility spoken of by Paul, to use our gifts to build up Christ's Church on earth (1 Corinthians 12:4-30). Do we earnestly desire to do this? Paul also reminds us that we should use our bodies to bring honour to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Our bodies do not belong to us but to Him. Do we seek to give of ourselves in Christ's service?

May it be our prayer that each of us will be known for the beauty of Christ at work in us.

Beautiful Beginnings

5. Beautiful Land

Many of us look forward expectantly to our foreign holidays and the opportunity they provide to recharge our batteries for the year ahead. Nevertheless, we can feel great pleasure to be back in Ireland as we drive home through the lush, green countryside. Perhaps the thought crosses our minds that there really isn't a country anywhere on the earth which is more beautiful and which has such warm, friendly people! Alternatively, perhaps the response of, "Typical!" may be on our lips as we rush across the airport tarmac to get out of the torrential rain which feeds all that green grass!

In the Old Testament, we read that when Caleb and Joshua reported back to Moses and Aaron regarding the land of Canaan, they described it as a truly beautiful land - one which was flowing with milk and honey. They had faith to believe that, with the Lord, they would make this beautiful land their own. However, not all of the spies saw the land in such positive terms! They emphasised the difficulties, and focused on how strong the tribes living in the land actually were (Numbers 13).

We can sometimes dwell on the problems we have and regard them as insurmountable because we look at them without putting God in the picture. We behave as if we have only our own very limited resources to call upon. God doesn't promise His followers an easy or comfortable life, but He *does* promise us that He will be with us every step of the way. Do we bring our problems and worries to God? Do we recognise that, with Him, all things are possible, just as they were for the Israelites as they first contemplated the beautiful land of Canaan? (Romans 8:28).

Beautiful Beginnings

6. A Beautiful Woman

What makes a woman beautiful? It is often said that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” and certainly what is perceived as beautiful has differed from age to age and from culture to culture. The Bible records descriptions of many women who were regarded as physically beautiful. One such woman in the Old Testament was Esther - a young woman who we read “...had a lovely figure and was beautiful”. (Esther 2:7)

Esther was a Jewish orphan living in Persia who had been brought up by her older cousin, Mordecai, when her parents died. The Persian King Xerxes was attracted to Esther for her beauty and made her his new Queen. Mordecai, a government official, continued to watch over Esther when she entered the royal palace. He advised her to keep her family background and nationality secret.

In time, the ambitious and self-serving Haman was appointed second-in-command to the king. When Mordecai (a devout Jew) refused to bow down to Haman he was highly offended and, as a result, he manipulated King Xerxes to issue a decree to have all the Jews living in Persia killed. The Jews were in great danger and Mordecai recognised that Esther was not immune to the threat but had been placed in a position by God where she could make a difference. Mordecai told her “*Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?*”. (Esther 4:14) Esther sought God’s guidance through collective fasting and went to King Xerxes, putting her own life at risk, but declaring bravely to Mordecai, “...*if I perish, I perish*”. (Esther 4:16) As a result of Esther’s intervention, she and her people were saved and the arrogant Haman killed.

The Bible makes it clear that what makes a woman truly beautiful in the sight of God is not her physical appearance but rather an inner disposition to follow Him. Esther displayed such a disposition. Faced with death she recognised that God had placed her in the royal court for a reason and, as God’s servant in that place, she risked her life by asking King Xerxes to save the Jews. God is sovereign and He has placed each one of us where we can make a difference for Him as beautiful women, even if we are not queens in a royal palace.

Beautiful Beginnings

7. The Beauty of Creation

This season's fashion trends are promoted on the catwalks of London, New York, Paris and Milan. Colours and designs are highlighted and then copied by the high street chains. To a lesser or greater extent our clothes shopping may be influenced by these trends. Sometimes we make expensive mistakes, realising only too late that we have purchased items which do not suit our colouring or body shape!

When we look at the world around us however, we can recognise that God does not make mistakes in His choice of colours or designs. The distinctive stripes of the zebra help to confuse predators and even smaller pests which may carry diseases. The colourful parrot may stand out starkly here in Ireland, but in its native rainforest environment its bright colours actually serve as effective camouflage. The bat is not the most attractive of animals, but its design enables it to fly through a complicated obstacle course or to catch an insect in mid-air.

God has made a beautiful world and His choice of colours and designs is perfect. He pronounced His work of creation as "*very good*" (Genesis 1:31). The Psalmist states "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands*" (Psalm 19:1). Paul tells us in Romans that God's existence and nature are revealed to all through the beauty of His creation (Romans 1:20).

The next time that you look at a beautiful sunset, a magnificent view, or an exotic animal, remember that they are all part of God's beautiful creation and praise Him for it.

Beautiful Beginnings

8. The Beauty of the Cross

Many hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a suffering servant of God who would have *“no beauty or majesty to attract us to him”* and who would be *“despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering and familiar with pain”* (Isaiah 53:2-3).

Death by crucifixion was a long, painful and lingering death inflicted by the Romans on those whom they regarded as their enemies. There was nothing beautiful about it - it was humiliating, harsh, brutal and barbaric.

But, as Christians, we can view the death of Jesus on the cross as beautiful because, through it, God demonstrated His great love for us. Through that long, painful and lingering death, Jesus took our place, paying the price for our sin so that, by trusting in Him, our sins can be forgiven. As Paul tells the Roman church, *“...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Death was the rightful punishment of God for our sin, but Jesus took our place instead.

As Paul again states, *“...the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). God transformed an act of hatred into a beautiful act of sacrificial love.

AIM:

To consider what makes us beautiful.

OUTCOME:

That we recognise true beauty comes from a right relationship with the Lord and our desire would be to radiate His beauty to all around.

IDEA:

This programme could begin with the drama *"Bargains at the Spa/Spar"* on page 74 and used after a pamper, skincare or make-up evening.

REQUIREMENTS:

One reader required. A make-up bag could be used containing the different products mentioned in the programme, lifting each one out as appropriate.

Beautiful Women

We all want to look our best no matter what age we are. When we get up in the morning and look at ourselves in the mirror, often it's not a pretty sight! Some women would not even leave their house before putting on makeup. Would you consider yourself to be a beautiful woman? What makes us beautiful?

Some time ago a cosmetic company asked people in one large city to send pictures along with a brief letter about the most beautiful woman they knew. Within a few weeks, thousands of letters were delivered to the company.

One letter in particular caught the attention of the employees, and soon it was handed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The letter was written by a young boy who was from a broken home and living in a run-down area of the city. The letter read, *"There is a beautiful woman who lives down the street from me. I visit her every day. She makes me feel like the most important kid in the world. We play draughts and she listens to my problems. She understands me and when I leave she always says she's proud of me."*

The boy ended his letter saying, *"This picture shows you that she is the most beautiful woman. I hope I have a wife as pretty as her."*

Intrigued by the letter, the CEO asked to see the woman's picture. His secretary handed him a photograph of a smiling, toothless old woman, sitting in a wheelchair, with grey hair pulled back in a bun. Wrinkles that formed deep furrows on her face were somehow diminished by the twinkle in her eyes. *"We can't use this woman,"* explained the CEO smiling. *"She would show the world that our products aren't necessary to be beautiful."*

True beauty is so much more than our outward appearance. True beauty comes from within. The Bible tells us that *"man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart".¹*

¹ 1 Samuel 16:7

Beautiful Women

Let's look in our make-up bag and think about some of the products and how they can relate to our inward beauty.

Cleanser is a facial care product that is used to remove make-up, dead skin cells, oil, dirt, and other types of pollutants from the skin of the face. The Bible has much to say about cleansing. In Isaiah ² we read that we are all stained and infected with sin. Romans 3:23 tells us that "...*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*".

But the good news is that we can be cleansed and forgiven. In Jeremiah, God said, "*I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me*".³ We also read in 1 John, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*".⁴ This is complete deep cleansing, which comes from God alone.

Moisturiser helps keep wrinkles at bay or make them less defined. We read In Ephesians ⁵ that Christ showed His love for His Church when He died for her, to make her holy and clean, so that He could present her to Himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Imagine not having any wrinkles, no matter what age we are. God has promised this for His Church, His followers. As moisturiser is used as part of our daily routine it reminds us of the need to meet with the Lord every day.

Foundation is used as the base for the rest of our make-up and it is also a barrier against pollution and toxins in the environment. Foundation is the basis of everything, including our lives. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that "*no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ*".⁶ The foundation that really matters is to base our lives on Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word. The Bible is our manual for living and should be the basis of all we do. The Psalmist gives this advice: "*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you*".⁷ God is also at work to prevent us from being polluted by sin. In the book of Jude⁸ we read that it is God who is able to keep His children from falling and will present them faultless before His presence.

² Isaiah 64:6

³ Jeremiah 33:8

⁴ 1 John 1:9

⁵ Ephesians 5:25-27

⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:11

⁷ Psalm 119:11

⁸ Jude 24-25

Beautiful Women

Blusher and Bronzers are used to give our skin a healthy glow. When Moses came down from the mountain after receiving the Ten Commandments his face glowed from being in the presence of God.⁹ If we are followers of the Lord Jesus we need to spend time in His presence and then His glory will be reflected in our faces. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians that *“we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him”*.¹⁰

Eye Makeup is mainly used to draw attention to the eyes and make the wearer's eyes look more attractive. We are told that the eyes are the windows to our souls. When out walking we may meet those who try to avoid eye contact, making it very clear they do not want to engage with us, while there are others who are happy to look us in the eye and strike up a conversation. As others look into our eyes, do they see us looking at them as God would, with eyes of love, interest, care, compassion and concern?

Lipstick comes in an array of colours and is used to draw attention to the lips and mouth. Beauticians give advice on the most suitable shade of lipstick depending on the skin tone and season of the year. Perhaps we need to be less concerned with the colour of our lips and more concerned about what comes out of our lips. In his letter, James has some harsh words to say on this subject. *“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be”*.¹¹ In Ephesians, Paul says, *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen”*.¹² Can we say like the Psalmist, *“I will thank the Lord at all times. My lips will always praise him”*.¹³ Do we speak *“Kind words which are like honey - sweet to the taste and good for your health”*.¹⁴

Our make-up bags are full of products which are designed to do amazing things, but they will never have any effect if they are just kept there and never used. It is the same with the Bible and the Good News of the gospel. We may have often heard its claims, but never applied it to our own lives. God wants to do a complete make-over in our lives. Maybe God is speaking to you. He wants you to move from knowing *about* Him to *knowing Him in a personal way*. This begins by coming to Him for forgiveness and cleansing, and surrendering our lives over to Him. Then, by the power of His Holy Spirit, there is an ongoing transformation to create beautiful women of God.

⁹ Exodus 34:29

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹¹ James 3:9-10

¹² Ephesians 4:29

¹³ Psalm 34:1

¹⁴ Proverbs 16:24

Beautiful Women

Wanda Burch Goines was an amazing woman, wonderful mom and extraordinary friend who went home to be with Jesus in February 2016. Meeting Jesus as her Saviour at the age of 25, she was a Bible scholar, prayer warrior and a very talented artist. She spent her life pointing to Jesus through her many Bible studies, art, and the love she shared with everyone she knew or met. In September 2015, Wanda, at the age of 92, recited one of her poems, *The Gift-Wrap and the Jewel*, to her carer, Kathryn, the video of which was viewed over 3.4 million times on Facebook, reaching a worldwide audience. With over 196,000 shares, Wanda's sweet poem went viral! This is her poem. ¹⁵ (*You may want to play the clip with Wanda reading her own poem from Youtube* ¹⁶).

"I looked in the mirror and what did I see,
but a little old lady peering back at me.
With bags and sags and wrinkles and wispy white hair,
and I asked my reflection, how did you get there?
You once were straight and vigorous and now you're stooped and weak.
When I tried so hard to keep you from becoming an antique.
My reflection's eyes twinkled as she solemnly replied,
you're looking at the gift wrap and not the jewel inside.
A living gem and precious of unimagined worth.
Unique and true, the real you, the only you on earth.
The years that spoil your gift wrap with other things more cruel,
should purify and strengthen and polish up that jewel.
So focus your attention on the inside, not the out,
on being kinder, wiser, more content, and more devout.
Then when your gift wrap is stripped away,
your jewel will be set free to radiate God's glory throughout eternity."

If we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ then we can be beautiful jewels, radiating His glory; Isaiah 62:3 says, "*You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God*".

¹⁵ Used by permission

www.wandaburchgoines.com

¹⁶

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YxCR2a-sxl>

YouTube: *If you wish to watch the suggested clip, it is important to ensure that your church has the appropriate **copyright licence** in place.*

Let us pray. Father, we thank You that You want us to be beautiful women. In today's society where there is so much emphasis on outward beauty, help us to remember that true beauty comes from hearts that are in a right relationship with You. As we use the products in our makeup bags, remind us that You want us to be cleansed and base our everyday lives on the truth of Your Word. May our faces display Your radiance, our eyes look at others as You would, and our lips speak words that are true, kind and helpful. We ask for the power of Your Holy Spirit to continue transforming us to make us beautiful women of God. Amen.

AIM:

To take a fresh look into our homes and consider the atmosphere they convey.

OUTCOME:

That more and more our homes become places where His love and beauty are evident.

REQUIREMENTS:

One leader and two readers required.

PowerPoint slides are available. See page 3.

Beautiful Homes

³ *By wisdom a house is built,
and through understanding it is established;*

⁴ *through knowledge its rooms are filled
with rare and beautiful treasures.*

Proverbs 24:3-4 (NIV)

Leader: Not many of us may have had the opportunity to build and construct our own home. Perhaps your only opportunity has been to create a Lego house or such like. It may surprise you however to learn that each one of us is actually in the construction business! Whether we realise it or not we are “building” homes, families and relationships no matter where we live - we are homemakers!

Reader one: Proverbs 14:1 tells us, “*The wise woman builds her house...*” It is unlikely that many of us have a degree in architecture or quantity surveying, so how does this wise woman go about building her house? Thankfully, King Solomon provides the answer later in Proverbs 24:3-4, “*By **wisdom** a house is built, and through **understanding** it is established; through **knowledge** its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.*” So, we discover that wisdom, understanding and knowledge are *all* required for this building project. It is amazing that these three attributes were demonstrated by **God Himself**, as He created the world. “*By **wisdom** the Lord laid the earth’s foundations, by **understanding** he set the heavens in place; by his **knowledge** the deeps were divided and the clouds let drop the dew.*”¹ God Himself is the great architect and builder, so we do well to follow His example!

Reader two: The first requirement then as we seek to “build” our lives, our home and family is **wisdom**. Remembering the wise man who built his house upon the rock, we also need to know *where* and *how* to construct our house to ensure we have good foundations; foundations that are strong and secure - built on God’s Word and commands. The second requirement listed is **understanding**. No matter how basic or elaborate a property, it needs ongoing attention. It will require time, effort and skill for the maintenance and upkeep of our household. And now for the really exciting bit - the interior design! Decorating the rooms, filling our lives and homes with *treasure...* that is why we also require **knowledge** so that we can discern what *real* treasure is! “*The wise woman builds her house,*” says King Solomon, but the second part of this verse is a sobering thought, “*but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.*” What a contrast there is between *construction* and *destruction*!

¹ Proverbs 3:19-20

Beautiful Homes

Reader one: But where can we get the wisdom, understanding and knowledge for this great task of building our lives and homes? “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*”² Praise Him for His gracious provision, “*For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*”³ Let’s seek His wisdom to build and manage our homes, and His understanding and knowledge so that we might fill them with “rare and beautiful treasures.”

Leader: Maybe you’re thinking you don’t own any rare and precious treasure! Let’s have a little fun together as we discover what is really valuable to each one of us in our home!

Over the next five minutes take an imaginary trip around your home with a suitcase. Go from room to room. Imagine you were asked to evacuate your home in a hurry, and list which treasures you would take with you and why. (See SUGGESTION).

Reader one: It’s amazing what treasures are hiding in our homes, isn’t it? Perhaps some of you retrieved that precious family heirloom such as an antique clock or piece of jewellery handed down through the generations. For others, you located the photograph albums that are irreplaceable. Maybe some found value in that scribbled note pinned to the fridge or that “masterpiece” painted by your child or grandchild. Perhaps some of you highly efficient women lifted the file with the house and life insurance details! Of course, we cannot put *people* in our imaginary suitcase, but for some the only treasure worth saving are our own “little treasures”!!

The words of Jesus spring to mind, “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”⁴

The Psalmist also records, “*Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendour of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies...*”⁵

SUGGESTION:

Find a template of a suitcase shape (such as the one below) to copy on to paper or card for each person to record answers. Time could be taken for feedback and discussion.



² Proverbs 9:10

³ Proverbs 2:6

⁴ Matthew 6:19-21

⁵ Psalm 49:16-17

Beautiful Homes

Reader two: Hopefully we've established some things of importance to us, things that really matter to us presently. But what are the *rare and beautiful treasures* that we should be filling our homes with, things that can transform them into beautiful places to live? Surely the greatest treasure and priority in any home should be **love**. It doesn't matter if that home is rented, mortgaged or owned. It doesn't matter if it's a shared student flat, a luxury apartment, a council house, a stately mansion, a caravan on a building site, a manse or a room in a nursing home. It doesn't matter if that home is extravagantly furnished or kitted out with second hand furniture. What matters is the atmosphere inside. What matters is the feeling of love. It is possible, with the Lord's help, to fill that home with love; a place where family, friends and strangers feel valued; a place of love and welcome.

SUGGESTION:

A variety of quotes, humorous and serious, could be displayed. Women could be asked to bring plaques, cushions etc with quotes; alternatively, find quotes on Google or Pinterest. e.g. A house is made of wood and stone but only love can make a home; Our house is clean enough to be healthy and dirty enough to be happy.

Leader: What do you think makes for a happy home? Which of these quotes sums up your idea of a perfect home? (See SUGGESTION).

Reader one: I wonder if we have ever considered that our homes are actually a reflection of ourselves? After all, we are the homemakers! Our personality, priorities, and the value we put on the place and the people who live there go to make up the character of our homes. Filling a home with rare and beautiful treasures includes creating a haven; a place of peace; a place of comfort and refuge for the hurting; a place where He dwells; a place of prayer and worship; a place of hospitality. That's a pretty big ask! No wonder Paul, writing to Titus, urged the older women to live in a godly manner and to teach and train the younger women in what was good. *"Then they can train the younger to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind..."*⁶ If the Lord places such an emphasis and importance on us managing our homes, so should we! Perhaps we need to search out an older woman we respect in the Lord and ask for good counsel and guidance on how we can aspire to be that woman of noble character referred to in Proverbs 31, *"She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness."*⁷

⁶ Titus 2:4-5

⁷ Proverbs 31:26-27

Beautiful Homes

Reader two: Truly beautiful homes then are not fancy houses with great kerb appeal which are snapped up when they first come on the market for sale, but rather homes filled with *love* and *His presence*. No matter which TV house programme we watch - *Location, Location, Location* or *Escape to the Country* - despite a comprehensive list of buyers' requests, so often the buyer falls in love with a particular house just because "it felt right" – "it had that homely feel."

Let's take a few moments and re-visit our homes in our mind's eye to get a sense of the "feel of the place."

Leader: We have all been in homes where, as the saying goes, "you could cut the tension with a knife," places we were looking forward to going to but couldn't wait to leave! Firstly then, as we enter our homes...

SUGGESTION:

These questions should be read slowly allowing time for thought and each line could alternate between reader one and two.

What do we FEEL?

- Is there a sense of warmth and welcome?
- Is there an atmosphere of love and respect or do we detect disinterest and disharmony?
- Is this a place of peace and calm?
- Is this a haven which family want to come home to?
- Is the presence of Jesus real?

Leader: Of course, we probably all know what it's like to have that unexpected visitor call and discover the place in a bit of a mess! There is a big difference, however, between a house that is so clean and clinical that we're afraid to sit down and a house of total mayhem where there's nowhere to sit! As we continue on our visit...

What do we SEE?

- Is this a place where furniture and fittings matter more than people?
- Is the television the central focus?
- Is this a place of total mess, managed chaos or order?
- Is love displayed in action?
- Is this a place where loving discipline and forgiveness are practised?
- Is God's Word opened, read and shared?

Beautiful Homes

Leader: We've all visited in homes where the television volume is so loud it drowns out any possible meaningful conversation. As we enter our homes...

What do we HEAR?

- Is this a home of fun and laughter?
- Is this a place that encourages healthy debate and conversation?
- Is bad language condoned?
- Is this a place of positive comments or one of criticism and back-biting?
- Is this a place where Jesus is openly talked about or is His name taken in vain?

Leader: Next up is... **What do we TASTE?**

Before anyone panics, we are not suggesting that our catering skills should mirror some celebrity bake off, but rather just some gentle encouragement to use our homes for hospitality. The wise words of Proverbs challenge us again, "*Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.*"⁸ "*Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred.*"⁹

- Is there basic, good food prepared for family, friends and guests?
- Is there room at the table for the unexpected visitor?
- Is there a cup of tea and biscuit available, along with an accompanying listening ear?
- Is there an option to host a church small group - without the need for elaborate catering?

Leader: And finally... **What do we SMELL?**

Whether it's the whiff of dirty socks, or even a wet dog, we all know how important first impressions are, and smell can certainly taint our opinions! When selling a house, it's good to display fresh flowers or have fresh coffee brewing to create an appealing aroma for potential viewers, because smell matters!

- Simply put, is the fragrance of Jesus a rare and beautiful treasure to be found in our homes?

⁸ Proverbs 17:1

⁹ Proverbs 15:17

Beautiful Homes

Reader one: Perhaps after revisiting our homes, there may be areas we feel we need to address. Just as we feel the benefit of a good spring clean, could it be the case that we need to ask the Lord to help us get rid of things that are not God-honouring in our homes? What an impact it could have on our language and behaviour if the words of this Celtic saying were true in our homes. “*Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation.*”

Leader: The seasons and circumstances of our lives are very different, each bringing their own joys and challenges. Some of us are dealing with toddlers and their tantrums, some with stroppy teenagers and their tempers. For others, those experiences are a long and distant memory leaving an ache of loneliness, and indeed, for some, the absence of family brings hurt and the longing of unfulfilled dreams. Whatever our age or stage, let’s ask the Lord to firstly open our *hearts* to His love and then open our *homes* that they may be places of blessing for all who live or visit there. Let’s look forward to that **perfect heavenly Home** that He has prepared for all those whose hope is in Him.

Let us pray:

Lord, may Your love overflow from our hearts into our homes. Transform our homes into beautiful places where all feel welcome and where You reside. May You fill our homes with the rare and beautiful treasures of Your abiding presence and peace. For Your glory alone, Amen.

The Beauty of Restoration

The Beauty of Restoration

KEY VERSE:

1 Peter 5:10

*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, **will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.***

AIM:

To understand that God never discards us even though we may feel broken and worthless. Through Christ Jesus, God wants to work in our lives to restore what's broken into something much more beautiful.

OUTCOME:

To leave the meeting with a desire to share with others the hope of Christ's restoration.

REQUIREMENTS:

One leader / facilitator required.

INTRODUCTION

Read **1 Peter 5 v 10**

When we think about the word 'restoration', we usually think of something crumbling or dilapidated being brought back to its original glory: furniture, buildings, paintings, cars and so on... Often the process of restoration is long, slow and painful, requiring much love and devotion by the restorer to ensure that the damaged and decayed can be beautiful once again.

The biblical meaning of 'restoration' is to receive back more than has been lost so that the final state is far greater or more beautiful than the original condition. Repeatedly throughout the Bible, God blesses and restores broken people by giving them much more than they had previously. Some examples include Job, Saul/Paul, Zacchaeus, Peter and the unnamed woman who touched Jesus' cloak.

Through Christ Jesus, God is able to restore us beyond measure, reaching out to us in our brokenness and gloriously rebuilding us so that we are far, far better than before.

OPENING PRAYER

As you open in prayer, consider the context of your own group and their needs. Focus on the beauty of restoration and the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. Pray that God will speak to the group through the programme.

The Beauty of Restoration

THE JAPANESE OFTEN REPAIR BROKEN OBJECTS BY FILLING THE CRACKS WITH GOLD, AN ART KNOWN AS KINTSUGI. THEY BELIEVE THAT WHEN SOMETHING HAS BEEN DAMAGED AND HAS A HISTORY, IT BECOMES MORE BEAUTIFUL. REFLECT ON THIS WHEN YOU FEEL BROKEN.

KEY POINT 1:

Often we can feel broken and beyond repair, but remember...

You are never too broken for God's restoration.

Here are some ideas for an evening's programme. You can choose from Idea 1, 2 or 3 depending on your group or context.

Idea 1: *The Japanese Art of Kintsugi*

We live in a throw-away world. Broken things are quickly thrown away as it takes too much effort to repair them and it's much easier to just replace them!

We also live in a *broken* world – with broken families, broken marriages, broken lives, broken dreams, and broken hopes. But often, God uses this brokenness to demonstrate new beauty, strength, and inspiration to others.

In Japan, they've made an art out of restoring broken things. The ancient practice of Kintsugi, meaning 'golden joinery' or 'to patch with gold', is the process of repairing broken pottery with lacquer mixed with powdered gold, silver or platinum. Through the use of beautiful precious metals, the cracks and repairs are highlighted as evidence of the previously broken life of the pot. And, as a result of the restoration process, the value of the piece becomes much greater than its original value. The art of Kintsugi demonstrates how a repair can not only make things as good as they were before, but actually far better.

You can find a wealth of information about Kintsugi online (just type Kintsugi into a search engine such as Google). For example, you may wish to show some images of the restored pottery as a visual depiction of the enhanced beauty. (Ensure proper copyright licence is in place).

It is unlikely that there will be anyone equipped to demonstrate Kintsugi in your group but there are a number of other ways that this concept can be illustrated through group participation. For example:

- Mosaic craft – use simple mosaic pieces to produce a beautiful work of art. This can be an individual or group effort.
- Découpage – decorate an old unwanted item (e.g. a tray, bottle, jar) by glueing pieces of coloured paper on to it and covering with gold leaf/paint effects.
- Paper mache – use some glue paste and coloured tissue paper and a little bit of creativity to make a beautiful sculpture or centre piece.

The Beauty of Restoration

KEY POINT 2:

We have a Maker – one who repairs and restores.

Through grace, He is working in our lives to fit the broken pieces back together to create a beautiful work of art.

KEY POINT 3:

God loves you wholly and unconditionally. However much you may have messed up in life, or how 'lost' or 'broken' you may have become, it is never too late to turn to God and ask for His restoration.

Just as a loving parent embraces their lost child, He will welcome you with open arms.

Idea 2: A Restoration Expert

There is an art and a skill to the process of restoration whether this is in relation to furniture, jewellery, paintings or otherwise. Restorers are often known as 'master craftsmen' (or women?) just as God is the ultimate 'master craftsman' of our lives.

Think creatively about bringing someone along to the meeting to talk about their 'restoration' work. This could be someone who is a professional restoration expert or someone who does it as a hobby. Examples would include furniture, photographs (some camera stores e.g. Jessops and chemists are able to restore old photographs), clothes etc. Alternatively, there may be someone who is involved in crafting and uses discarded materials to produce something of beauty, for example through patchwork quilting, card making, or jewellery making.

Invite them to come along and share their experiences of taking what seem like useless 'scraps' and transforming them into items of real beauty.

It is important to focus on the 'before' and 'after' of the restoration process - whether this is through an actual demonstration of producing something 'new' from something 'old' or through the use of photographs.

Idea 3: Experiencing Restoration

You may want to read the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15 v 11-32). Consider God's promises in this parable and the welcome received by the son from his father.

God has equipped many to bring His message of restoration to the lives of others, whether this is through mission locally or globally, to individuals, or in a community setting.

You may want to consider inviting a speaker either from within your own congregation or from a wider mission organisation (you could consider the range of previous and past PW projects) to talk about their experiences of witnessing the beauty of restoration in their area of work.

Alternatively, there may be someone who has a testimony to share about how God has taken their broken life and put it back together.

The Beauty of Restoration

APPLICATION – What should we learn or do?

Read *Isaiah 61 v 1-3*.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.

Watch or listen to this song: **YouTube:** *If you wish to watch the suggested clip, it is important to ensure that your church has the appropriate **copyright licence** in place.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxKLnySMbYM> (Hillsong Broken Vessels, Amazing Grace)

SUGGESTED MUSIC:

- *Jesus take me as I am*
- *Create in me a clean heart, O God*
- *Create in me (Rend Collective)*
- *Amazing Grace*

We are restored for a purpose. God is never finished with us and wants to use us as vessels (even patched together ones) to grow His Kingdom. There are many in our world, neighbourhood, workplace and street who feel broken.

How can we let them know about God's restoration through the Lord Jesus Christ?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord God, thank you! Thank you for your promises of restoration. Although we may feel lost or broken, help us in our brokenness to accept the grace offered through Jesus Christ and to know your restoration. Help us to always know that you love us wholly and unconditionally, and that you are not finished with us yet. Amen.

Beautiful Feet

KEY PASSAGE:

Romans 10:13-15

'...for, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

AIM:

To encourage women to become more involved in Christ's mission to the world.

OUTCOME:

That women will leave the meeting more intentional about playing their part in Christ's mission.

Appetisers: (10 mins) *You will need to do a little fact finding about these to enable you to give some background.*

Photocopiable version on page 33.

The following is a list of well-known missionaries. Can you unscramble the letters in their names?

1. shodun Taylor.....China
2. Eric dilleldChina
3. Helen voaserere.....Congo
4. aferd Algje.....Malawi
5. James gowlgas.....India
6. Gladys dawrayl.....China
7. Dr Jean Nonshan.....India
8. Naomi efkee.....Brazil
9. Amy Leahcimcar.....India

Answers: 1 Hudson Taylor; 2 Eric Liddell; 3 Helen Roseveare; 4 Freda Algje 5 James Glasgow 6 Gladys Aylward 7 Dr Jean Shannon 8 Naomi Keefe 9 Amy Carmichael

OR

Do some research on PCI Global Mission Workers, write and read a short resume of their background and work and ask the women in your group to identify them.

Example: We are a couple working in Kenya. We have lived here nearly 30 years but our home is near Waringstown. Along with Kenyan colleagues, we are engaged in helping people to help themselves through training and skills development, whilst also sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and nurturing those who have come to faith. A few years ago we were pleased that you, as PW, supported our work by supplying a bus to transport students to the local girls' school.

Beautiful Feet

Starter

'Come on! We can do this,' said Matthew Rees, as he gave up his 'personal best' time to help another runner cross the line of the London Marathon in 2017.

'That is another 2lbs off this week, well done!' the leader of the class announced as Pam's classmates broke into applause.

'You are doing so well... just one more step. I can see it is really hard work, but keep going, keep going, keep going,' were the words that drove a very physically broken, Lydia, on to the end of the parallel bars.

Encouragement - we all need it. It gives us a sense that who we are matters and a sense that we are not alone - someone is urging us on in the journey of life. As Christians, we are not immune to discouragement and the temptation in the world today - after all, it is not easy to be different and maintain a godly attitude and a godly life. Even with the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is sustaining and helping us to persevere, our journey may present us with what seem to be insurmountable difficulties. It is at times like these that we need reminded of the promises of God's Word. Is it not then important to meet together as Christians to talk about things of God? Is it not then important to be the family of God, seeking the best for each other?

Imagine, though, being separated from friends and family in a place where culture is totally different to what you have always known. Imagine an environment where Satan has such a hold that there is opposition to Christianity, and God's love and grace is seldom, if ever, spoken of. Imagine a life where you feel God has called you to serve but, no matter how creative you are in building relationships, there is little or no response to the message of the cross. Imagine a fellowship where you carry so many burdens, yet no one is available to help you carry yours. Imagine the loneliness, the discouragement, the doubts, and the desire to be home. In the midst of this, a card arrives. It contains a greeting from a PW Group – your prayer letters have been read, you have been the focus of group prayers and there is a reminder that God is with you. The card contains a verse that means so much to you at this moment. You are reminded that God has not abandoned you. Rather, many miles away, who you are and what you are doing, matters. It matters to God and therefore it matters to that PW Group.

Beautiful Feet

You realise that you are not working alone. You have a unique part to play in God's plan, but others are sharing with you in mission by doing *their* unique part – by praying, encouraging and informing others of your work. Others are giving the tired, but beautiful, feet that bring good news a massage – they are refreshing them and enabling them to keep bringing a message of hope and love.

Remember what Paul says in Romans 10, “*How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.*”

Main Course

Invite a PCI Global Mission Worker, a member(s) of a summer team, or someone who has visited a project to speak. Maybe there is someone from your congregation/presbytery serving overseas with a particular missionary organisation.

OR

Do it yourself - choose a country with which PCI has a partnership, research its social and religious culture, and host an information night on the culture, the food and the personnel involved in the work there. Some short DVD clips may be available on the PCI website:

vimeo.com/presbyterianireland or Skype/Face Time a worker for a personal contact. ***Before contacting any workers, PW Groups and others must contact the Mission Department in Assembly Buildings to check what contact is possible and what permissions have been given.***

OR

Consider how the work of global mission is relevant on our own doorstep as we seek to make foreign students, workers and refugees feel welcome in our community. Invite a speaker from an organisation working with foreign nationals, e.g. International Meeting Point. Alternatively, use a relevant video clip from vimeo.com/presbyterianireland (see endnote on page 32) and start a conversation with the following questions:

What opportunities are there in our community to reach into the life of someone with a different cultural or ethnic background?

How can we demonstrate acceptance despite difference? (e.g. invitations, listen to and learn from them).

What sacrifices are we prepared to make to encourage others into our church or a related group such as Parent and Toddlers or PW? (e.g. transport, accompany, include them in your circle of friends as you converse, explain, try doing things in different ways).

Beautiful Feet

Dessert (Prayer)

God of grace, we thank You for the good news of salvation and for the hope that we have in Christ's Name. Give us a deep desire that those who do not know You will hear that Your love extends to them. Help us seek opportunities to share in mission, Christ's mission, at home and throughout the world.

God of mercy, forgive us that, so often, we do not see beyond the boundaries of our own small world. Help us to remember that Jesus died so that *all* mankind could believe and be saved. Make us more aware of the work being done in Your Name throughout the world and help us to prayerfully support Your workers overseas.

God of Love, we believe that You are sovereign and that You will honour Your workers for their obedience to Your call. Therefore, we ask that You uphold those who serve You in very challenging places. Bring words and deeds of encouragement where there is discouragement. Let there be chinks of light where there seems to be nothing but darkness. Surround Your workers with a wall of protection where Satan would have his way, and place Your arms around them when they feel at their lowest.

God of wisdom, guide and lead those in positions of responsibility in Your sending Church. Let them know Your will and be equipped to meet the spiritual as well as practical needs of the workers overseas.

Endnote

Some of these were made a few years ago but can still raise relevant considerations for outreach to others.

Examples may be:

- International Meeting Point (2013) vimeo.com/85837684
- Strand Presbyterian Church as they presented in the Threshold Series (2013)
- Adelaide Road Dublin – The work of David Boyd. United Appeal (2017)
- And you welcomed me – Race Relations Panel (2013) vimeo.com/68448924

Father God, thank You that You are a God who hears our prayers and answers them in a way that brings about Your good purposes through all things. Amen

Coffee

- Make cards or bookmarks from the pictures of PCI Global Mission Workers on the inside back cover of *Wider World*. Distribute these to members so they can pray for the worker/s in small groups at meetings and/or at home. Encourage them to look for relevant prayer updates on their allocated worker from PCI website – Mission People. (Have some samples to distribute.)
- Arrange for your group to attend a PCI Global Mission event in your area to meet and to hear first-hand from some of our workers. Check out the PCI website for events.

The following is a list of well-known missionaries. Can you unscramble the letters in their names?

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The B.E.A.U.T.Y. of Christmas

The B.E.A.U.T.Y. of Christmas

AIM:

To consider what was beautiful about the first Christmas

OUTCOME:

That each of us would want to bring a Christ-like beauty into our present-day Christmas.

REQUIREMENTS:

One leader and three readers are required.

PowerPoint slides are available. See page 3.

IDEA:

Suitable carols may be inserted between each section.

Leader: I wonder what makes Christmas beautiful for you? For those who appreciate nature, it might be scenes similar to those found on Christmas cards - like snow-covered fields, icicles, snowflakes, robins and reindeer. Or for the more energetic amongst us, it could be the fresh, crisp air we breathe and the crunching sound of the snow as we go for a walk. Gardeners might say it's the berried holly and mistletoe, together with the ever-abundant supply of brightly-coloured poinsettias, while the artistic, creative people will probably find greatest satisfaction in a tastefully decorated Christmas tree, with beautifully-wrapped presents underneath. The romantics will associate beauty with the smells and aromas which abound at Christmas such as pine, cinnamon, spice, scented candles and roasting turkey. Add to these, a brightly-burning fire and a comfy sofa to snuggle up on and, to them, that is beauty indeed. Some women find beauty in the catering aspect of Christmas - a finely laid table with a perfectly cooked turkey just waiting to be carved and accompanied by all the trimmings. Finally, for others, it's the carol singing, choirs, parties and special church services that add beauty to their Christmas.

Then there are those who absolutely dread Christmas and have difficulty in finding anything beautiful about it. *"Oh, no, not Christmas again... shopping for food and gifts, wrapping and putting up decorations, trying not to burn the turkey, putting up with awkward family members for a whole day, calming over-excited children, being made to play charades"...* and so it goes on! I suppose everyone has their own ideas as to what makes Christmas beautiful, but sometimes our circumstances can influence our opinions.

Consider the very first Christmas and the circumstances in which Mary and Joseph found themselves. At first glance, there would seem to be nothing too beautiful about it - Mary, a young girl, engaged to be married but found to be pregnant, not beautiful for her reputation - and Joseph, probably initially disappointed, hurt and embarrassed, with doubt cast over his own reputation. From a human perspective, this was not beautiful for him either! In reality, however, this was God's beautiful plan of salvation materialising. Let's read about it in Matthew 1:18-25:

The B.E.A.U.T.Y. of Christmas

Reader one: *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

Leader: The very first Christmas was, in fact, actually *filled* with beauty, as God showed His love for us in giving us the gift of His only Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour from sin.

Let's now consider the events as we spell out their **B. E. A. U. T. Y.**

(Show each letter on PowerPoint or card at the appropriate time until the word "Beauty" is complete)

Reader two: B is for BETHLEHEM

We might ask, *"What beauty was there in it for Mary in having to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, heavily pregnant and with no comfortable form of transport?"* Caesar Augustus was taking a census and because Joseph was a descendent of King David, Bethlehem was their appointed destination. Then, to make matters worse, there was no room at the inn and Mary had to give birth in a stable. Difficult for us to see the beauty, but the little town of Bethlehem, that night, became the most "beautiful" place on earth because it had been chosen, by God Himself, as the venue for His Son's birth.

The B.E.A.U.T.Y. of Christmas

Reader three: E is for the Evening watch of the Shepherds

So, now we might ask, "*Where was the beauty in being a shepherd?*" Was it found in the long, boring hours of minding the sheep, or in experiencing the extremes of heat and cold which accompanied an outdoors job? Was it in being considered "low-class", poor and uneducated? Despite all this, that particular evening for the shepherds held a beauty beyond their wildest imaginations - the beauty of being chosen by God to be the first people, not only to hear about the Saviour's birth, but to actually witness it for themselves... and with a beautiful outcome. Luke records for us that...

"...they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this Child"¹ and they "returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen..."²

Reader one: A is for the Angels

Most of us love to see and hear a good choir. Well, what a beautiful sight and sound it must have been that night when the angels praised God in the presence of those shepherds. What a feast for their eyes and ears! No singing on earth could compare. Luke tells us that "*...the glory of the Lord shone around them*"³ and that "*...a great company of the heavenly host appeared...*"⁴ The word "beautiful" would be far too inadequate to describe this event. Also, let's not forget the beautiful message which was delivered. "*...Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.*"⁵

Reader two: U is for the Unimpressive surroundings

We move now to the nursery - **NOT** the beautiful rooms of pink and blue that are planned for many babies today, complete with musical mobiles and teddy bears, but to an unimpressive, smelly, cold animal shelter. There was no beautiful Moses basket or soft blanket to wrap up *this* baby boy. Instead, He was wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a manger - a feeding trough for animals. Where was the beauty in this? The beauty was found in the humility and love which lay behind this event. Jesus, the Son of God, who was in Heaven, was prepared to be made "*a little lower than the angels*"⁶ by coming into this world as a baby, with the sole purpose of dying on a cross to be our Saviour. He laid aside His majesty for us. He took His place in the manger and, ultimately, on the cross. What a beautiful act of love.

¹ Luke 2:17

² Luke 2:20

³ Luke 2:9

⁴ Luke 2:13

⁵ Luke 2:10-11

⁶ Hebrews 2:9

The B.E.A.U.T.Y. of Christmas

Reader three: T is for the Travellers

The arrival of these travellers, better known as the Wise Men from the East, must have been such a strange, although beautiful event for Mary and Joseph. Matthew 2:11 tells us that, *“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary...”*. There’s no direct mention of Joseph being present, but even if he wasn’t, no doubt Mary would have told him all about it. Can you imagine how she would have felt as she listened to how a brightly shining star led them to exactly where Jesus was; as she watched them worship this infant King and as they presented their strange, but beautiful gifts - not bibs and babygros - but gold, frankincense and myrrh! The gold is thought to have symbolised His Kingship; the frankincense, His priestly role; and the myrrh, His death. Surely, as these humble parents pondered all that was happening, they were overcome with wonder.

Reader one: Y is for YOU

The beautiful message of the first Christmas is that it was all for **you** and for **me**. Jesus, coming to this earth as a baby and ultimately dying on the cross to be our Saviour, was God’s beautiful gift of love to us. How do we know this? The answer is found in the familiar words of John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* God’s love for us is so great that He not only sent Jesus to the manger, He also sent Him to the cross.

Leader: At the beginning of this programme you were asked about what makes Christmas beautiful for you and we focused on the material things around us. Having just considered the first Christmas, let’s re-think our answers. Perhaps now, we will want to bring a Christ-like beauty into our Christmas - that beauty which comes from having a heart of love, humility and obedience like Mary and Joseph, and an attitude of praise and worship like the shepherds and travellers. May Christmas be beautiful for each one of us but, more importantly, may we be beautiful people, adorned with that beauty which only comes from knowing this Saviour in a personal way. Have a “Beautiful” Christmas.

Let’s Pray: Father, we thank You for the precious gift of Your Son, Jesus, and for every material blessing provided by You which makes Christmas beautiful for us. But, Lord, we pray that, increasingly, You will help each of us to be adorned with that *special* beauty which only comes when we know Jesus as our personal Saviour. May it be **His** beauty which is seen in us **this** Christmas. We ask these things in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

AIM:

To show that we are all part of God's beautifully designed creation.

OUTCOME:

That women would be encouraged and feel worth in understanding that they are made in the image of God, and would be motivated to live according to the Designer's instructions.

PowerPoint slides are available. See page 3.

Beautiful by Design

Programme options

Choose two or three people to present the script by taking turns to read out the paragraphs on pages 39-41, changing reader with each new section. Apart from the 'Introduction', it would be good to read out the headings and display each one on card or PowerPoint at the appropriate time.

If your group is small, you could all take turns to read, stopping to comment and discuss as you go.

Or...

use the Study on pages 43-45 and discuss questions in small groups and use the paragraphs on pages 39-41 as a help to the group leaders, or to facilitate a feedback time. **Note:** If the women in your group do not normally bring Bibles, you may want to print out the Scripture verses or provide Bibles. You might be able to borrow some from a BB or GB company or another organisation in your congregation.

Or...

mix and match. Read out some parts and discuss others. This might be a good way to introduce group study and discussion if your group is not used to it.

Beautiful by Design

Introduction

We live in a confused culture. '*Anything goes*' is the standard of the day, with the result that precious individuals, made in the image of God, struggle to find their identity. A person born as a biological female can choose to identify as a male, or vice versa, and now, to add to the confusion, a person can identify as 'gender fluid'. Nothing is fixed or definite as far as our culture is concerned.

How do we deal with confusion? Well, how do we deal with it in the practicalities of life? Have you ever been confused by a gadget you were given as a gift? Maybe you weren't sure what it was for, never mind how it worked! How would you find clarity and banish your confusion? You'd look at the instruction manual, of course - if there's not a paper one in the box, there'll be one online.

So, what are **we** here for? How are **we** supposed to 'work'? God has given us the Maker's instructions in the Bible. Disciples of Jesus need to consult those instructions carefully, firstly for their own benefit, strength and comfort, and secondly so that, when the opportunity arises, they can help others to see how beautifully God the Creator designed us all.

Designed in His image

Genesis 1:27 says, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*"

We have been designed and made, male and female, in the image of God. No other part of God's creation was made in His image. That gives every human being immeasurable worth! If we are made in God's image we should be like Him, so the question is, what is God like? Exodus 15:11 asks, "*Who is like you, majestic in holiness...*?" and Psalm 29:2b commands us to, "*...worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*" ¹

God is beautiful in His holiness but we are tainted with the ugliness of sin. Yet, Scripture tells us, "*...just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'*" ² How can we possibly be beautiful and reflect God's holiness? Don't despair! Jesus came to comfort those who mourn because of their sin, "*...to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...for the display of his splendour.*" ³

¹ New King James Version

² 1 Peter 1:15-16

³ See Isaiah 61:1-3

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SUGGESTION:

* If you want to take more time to mention other aspects of God's character, try this for a little variety in your programme. Have pieces of paper ready with "*Scripture tells us that God is...*" written at the top. Provide pens and ask everyone to write down a list of things that could finish the sentence. Ask them to provide proof from a Scripture verse if they can. Take time to allow sharing of a few answers.

If a friend asked you to recommend the best beauty product you had ever used, you would probably mention some kind of cream or lotion, but, according to God's Word, increasing beauty comes from increasing holiness – not out of a jar or a tube! *

Designed with order

We love order and beauty. Even if we never achieve order, we admire it! We love the pictures of organised and beautiful pantries and larders on Pinterest; we take an envious walk round IKEA wishing our home could be more organised - and also more beautiful. In admiring these things we reflect our Creator.

God's creation was very good; it was beautiful in its variety and abundance. He brought order out of formlessness, creating habitats and putting each type of creature in the place best suited for it. He put the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and the livestock on the land. He also gave order and structure in His design for society. He gave instructions to Adam and Eve: rule over creation, take care of the garden and multiply. He structured families for the coming generations: a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife.⁴

As we live according to God's instructions and His design, we reflect His image.

- We are made for community to reflect that God is three persons in one Godhead.
- We are all made equal in His sight to reflect the equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- We are made to be united, especially in a marriage, to reflect that God is one.
- We are made for different roles without any inferiority. For the purpose of salvation, the Father, Son and Spirit took on different roles without becoming inferior one to another. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit works in lives to bring about repentance and to give faith that leads to salvation.

There is order in how the three persons of the Godhead relate to one another and we are made to relate with order in our relationships as, for example, we submit to relevant authorities, or govern with love and wisdom.

⁴ See Genesis chapters 1 & 2

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Designed with purpose

2 Corinthians 3:18 describes what is happening to disciples of Jesus. *“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

If you are a disciple of Jesus, if He has given you *“a crown of beauty instead of ashes”*, remember that it is *“for the display of his splendour”*.⁵ Can others see that you are being transformed day by day into His image? Do you display God’s splendour, His character and glory to the world through every aspect of your life?

Paul puts it like this as he reminds Titus of the importance and the purpose of godly behaviour and attitudes. *“...so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.”*⁶

There is often much discussion about how we can attract more people to church services and events. Here is the answer from the Word of God. They will come and they will listen if your life and mine make the teaching attractive. What a privilege and a responsibility!

Designed from the Inside Out

“...The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

It is clear from this verse in 1 Samuel 16:7 that, in God’s eyes, beauty of **character** is more important than what any one culture or era defines as physical beauty. Proverbs 31:30 reminds us that, *“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”* Real beauty starts on the inside.

If there is one day when a girl longs to look beautiful more than any other, it is on her wedding day. It is not just for her own satisfaction but for the pleasure of her groom. Disciples of Jesus all have a wedding day to look forward to. Do you want to look beautiful for your heavenly Bridegroom? 1 Peter 3:4 tells us how, *“...let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.”*⁷

Outward beauty perishes and fades over time but inward beauty can improve with age if we attend to it. Proverbs 4:23 advises, *“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”* The beauty or ugliness of the heart is put on display in attitudes and behaviour. Are you increasingly displaying the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit as the wedding date approaches?

May Psalm 45:11 be said of each of us, *“Let the king be enthralled by your beauty...”* (NIV)

⁵ See Isaiah 61:1 - 3

⁶ Titus 2:10

⁷ English Standard Version

Beautiful by Design

Prayer

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we praise You for the beauty of Your design in everything You have made. Teach us to value ourselves and others since we are all made in Your image. For those who are disciples of Jesus, help us to live according to Your Word, becoming more like Jesus every day. We want to be beautiful for our heavenly Bridegroom. May others see Jesus in us and be attracted to Him and to the message of the gospel. We pray in Jesus' Name and for His glory. Amen.

Taking it Further

Group or individual study:

What does a beautiful character look like in practice according to Scripture? How many verses or passages can you think of? Encourage women to make this a personal study by writing the verses out in a journal or marking them in their Bibles. Encourage them to pray for themselves and for each other that the Lord will help them to become more like Him as they put on these qualities.

Optional activity

Tap in to the popular pastime of colouring and the trend for Bible journaling. Print out (on thick paper or light card) the text of 1 Peter 3:4 in outline (*"...let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."*) Give each person a copy, provide some colouring pencils and/or craft supplies and see what they can create in 5 or 10 minutes. Not sure what you are aiming for? Search "micro Bible journaling" on Pinterest. Encourage the women to focus on the words and see if they can learn the verse by heart - not just in the mind! The Word is more important than the art.

Beautiful by Design

Study & Discuss

Introduction

1. "We live in a confused culture." Give examples.

2. Have you ever been confused by a gadget you were given as a gift? You weren't sure what it was **for**, never mind how it worked? How would you find clarity and banish your confusion?

3. Where is **our** Maker's instruction manual? Where will we find the answer to questions such as "What are **we** here for?" "How are **we** supposed to 'work'?" How will those instructions help those who are already disciples of Jesus? What about those who are not disciples of Jesus?

Designed in His image

4. Read Genesis 1:27. What gives us worth?

5. If we are made in God's image, we should be like Him. What do Exodus 15:11 and Psalm 29:2b tell us about what God is like?

6. What are we commanded to do in 1 Peter 1:15-16?

Beautiful by Design

Study & Discuss

7. Why is that difficult for us? Why do we not need to despair about it?
See Isaiah 61:1-3.

Optional question: *How many other aspects of God's character can you list? Can you back up each one with a verse of Scripture?*

Designed with order

8. Where do you see evidence of beauty and order in Genesis chapters 1 & 2? How did God describe His creation?

9. How can our day to day lives reflect the image of God through order and beauty?

Designed with purpose

10. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. What is happening in the life of every disciple of Jesus?

11. Look again at Isaiah 61:1-3 and compare it with Titus 2:10. What is God's purpose in transforming His people? How should that affect our attitude to day to day living and to the people we meet briefly or spend time with in the course of our work, travel, family life or leisure?

Beautiful by Design

Study & Discuss

Designed from the Inside Out

12. Read 1 Samuel 16:7 and Proverbs 31:30. Where does real beauty start?

13. Disciples of Jesus are also His bride-to-be. What can they do to look beautiful for the Groom? See 1 Peter 3:4 and Proverbs 4:23.

*✧ May Psalm 45:11 be said of each of us, ✧
"Let the king be enthralled by your beauty..."*

Take it Further!

Study:

What does a beautiful character look like in practice according to Scripture? How many verses or passages can you think of? Write them out in a journal or mark them in your Bible. Pray that the Lord will help you to become more like Him as you put on these qualities.

Get creative!

Focus on 1 Peter 3:4 "...let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

Take a small, blank page and write out the verse. Use fancy lettering if you can, colour it if you wish. Decorate your page while you repeat the verse to yourself, taking time to focus on the words and committing it to memory and to your heart. Use whatever craft supplies you wish or keep it plain. If you choose to do this at home and are not sure what you are aiming for, search "micro Bible journaling" on Pinterest. Warning, you could get seriously distracted at this point! Remember, the Word is more important than the art.

The Beauty of the Lord

A Reflection

IDEA:

This short study/reflection could be used as part of an evening of worship songs and readings... For example, have a copy for each person. May be done as silent reflection individually, or discuss in two's or groups.

AIM:

To allow women to meditate on the beauty of the Lord

OUTCOME:

That women would be captivated by the beauty of the Lord.

Psalm 27:1-6

¹ The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?

² When the wicked advance against me to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

³ Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

⁴ One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

⁵ For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

From vv.2-3 what are the circumstances that David is experiencing?

What would your request be in such a situation?

Verse 4 sums up his prayer - what is his request?

In vv.5-6 he expresses his expectations from God - what are they?

How does he view God according to v.1 that make these expectations realistic?

What difference does the personal pronoun "my" make in v.1?

Verse 4 - What is the difference between asking for something and seeking it?

How important is it for us to be captivated by the beauty of the Lord?

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

IDEA:

Use this programme either as one longer study (about 50 minutes) or divide it up into smaller sections. A study handout is provided for copying. See pages 57-62.

PowerPoint slides are available. See page 3.

AIM:

To consider marriage as God designed it.

OUTCOME:

That women would be equipped to encourage biblical attitudes towards marriage.

Setting the Context

Marriage is under attack. It always has been. Since the days of Jesus’ ministry here on earth the issue of divorce has been discussed and debated and the impact of marital breakdown has been felt by countless thousands. But in our generation, there is a new challenge. Marriage is being redefined and is moving away more and more from the divine intentions of our Creator as He first introduced Eve to Adam. As men and women seek to satisfy their own desires, the biblical view of marriage is being portrayed as stifling, restrictive and outdated. But to God it is **beautiful**.

Let’s start at the very beginning.

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 lay the foundations for God’s plan and purpose for everything. It all originated and began with Him. In these two chapters we have outlined for us:

- God’s relationship with man and woman
- man’s relationship with creation
- man’s relationship with woman

Let’s look together at some scriptures and then answer the simple questions from the text to discover the truth for ourselves from God’s Word.

READ Genesis 1:27-28

‘So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”’

- How were the man and woman created? (both in the image and likeness of God)
- What was their God-given role in relation to His creation? (rule together over the creation)
- What do we learn here about their identity and value before God? (equal in their identity before God)

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

READ Genesis 1:31, 2:18

‘God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning - the sixth day.’

‘The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”’

INSIGHT:

Very good – in the Hebrew, has the idea of being “exceedingly good” - expressing delight and pleasure. This is a bit like a “Mr Kipling” moment!

The word “helper” does not simply mean someone to come along and do the dishes! The Hebrew word is **EZER** and means someone suitable and appropriate to come alongside and bring help. The same word is used of God as He comes to our aid. e.g. Psalm 33:20.

- How did God feel about everything that He had made - including the man and woman? (saw all He made - very good - see *Insight*)
- In chapter 2 we get more detail on the creation of the man and woman. What was the only thing God saw that was not good? (man being on his own)
- What did God decide to do? (make a helper suitable for him - see *Insight*)

We all know the story - God puts Adam into a deep sleep and removes one of his ribs and from it he fashions the woman. He then presents her to Adam.

READ Genesis 2:23-25

The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

- How does Adam describe the woman? What does he say about her? (bone of bone, flesh of flesh, taken out of man, called woman)
- vv24-25 What implications does this have for the relationship between a man and a woman? (leave parents, united to wife, one flesh, naked and unashamed)

These are the foundations of the marriage relationship in the Bible:

1. To leave father and mother - expressing choice.
2. To be united to his wife - expressing a committed, covenant relationship.
3. To become one flesh - expressing oneness and union.
4. Naked and unashamed - expressing intimacy and delight.

The beautiful book of Song of Songs is one that explores the emotions and desires that accompany such a relationship and graphically depict for us these four foundational truths. God wants us to understand just how beautiful He intended this relationship to be. And it goes deeper still. Marriage is not just an end in itself - but a picture of something more profound.

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

READ Ephesians 5:31-32 to find out more.

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.

- Where does Paul quote from when he is teaching on marriage? (Genesis 2:24)
- What does he then say this is actually speaking about? (It is what Christ did for us, His bride).
- How then is marriage as God intended it viewed in the Bible? What does it describe? (It is a picture of our relationship with Christ).

Let’s look at each one of the four foundational statements we discovered in Genesis 2 and find out what we can learn about marriage, and how this helps us understand our relationship with Christ.

1. CHOICE - Leaving father and mother.

The decision to leave the foundational family unit is a conscious **choice** to make a change, to make this new relationship the one of highest priority over all other relationships. It reveals a desire to be with this one person more than any other person.

We see this desire expressed in the words of Song of Songs as the bride recounts her beloved’s words to her and what he has done for her:

READ Song of Songs 2:4, 10-13

‘He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.’

‘My beloved spoke and said to me, “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me.”’

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

It is staggering to think that Jesus chose to come and be with us. **READ** the verses below and note under each of them what you learn about Jesus leaving His Father in order to be present with us.

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!

(He made Himself nothing, emptied Himself, humbled Himself, became one of us, a servant, death on cross)

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

(Though rich He became poor so we could become rich)

John 14:1-3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”.

(night before He died - going away - but plan was to prepare for us so we could be with Him)

John 17:24

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

(final prayer before the cross – that He wanted us to be with Him)

Jesus left His Father’s presence to the deepest extent on the cross when He cried out with a loud voice, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” He endured it knowing the joy that was before Him - having us with Him forever. He chose us and we are wanted.

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

2. COMMITTED - united with his wife.

The man would be united / cleave to his wife - this is about **commitment** - a decision to be with this one only for the rest of their lives together.

The Hebrew word for united means “***to cling, stick to, stick with, join to***” and has the idea of forsaking all other possibilities. It would be as if they were glued together - that is the meaning of the Hebrew word here – an absolutely solid, unbreakable commitment to be with her. It was a permanent relationship that was not to be broken. In the Bible, such relationships are called covenants - a binding agreement between two parties that was not to be broken - often being symbolised by the shedding of blood.

Again, let’s go to Song of Songs to find this expressed:

READ Song of Songs 5:16, 6:3, 7:10, 8:6

His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem

I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine; he browses among the lilies. I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me.

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

In these expressions of love there is a deep sense of belonging to each other and of total commitment to one who is deeply loved.

Kay Arthur, in her book, “*Our Covenant God*”, writes this: (*Used by permission of Precept Ministries International © Kay Arthur*)

“Suppose with me for one moment that God did something to help you truly recognise His loving commitment, so that in peace and joy you could freely trust Him with every fibre of your being, from the deepest corners of your heart and soul, for every moment of every day of the rest of your life on earth. This, my friend, is what Covenant is all about.”

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

Read the following verses and note what you find out about Jesus’ commitment to us in covenant, and what that means for us in our relationship with Him.

Matthew 26:26-28

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

(Jesus death was the commitment of His covenant with us - a blood covenant that could not be broken)

John 10:14, 17, 28-29

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...”

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

(He laid down His life willingly to make us His own. No-one can remove us from His hand or His care.)

3. UNION - they would be one flesh.

This speaks of **intimacy** - two lives now united and living as one life - joined bodies, joined goals, joined experiences, joined name, joined possessions - two people now living as though they were one - each with their defined part to play but incomplete without the other.

With Adam and Eve this was not so much a union as a reunion. Eve had come from Adam - one person had become two. Now they would be joined in relationship and intimacy and the two would once again become one - but now with pleasure and fruitfulness as part of that oneness.

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

Let’s once again go to Song of Songs to see the beauty of that oneness expressed:

READ Song of Songs 7:10-12, 8:3

I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom there I will give you my love.

His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me.

God created us for Himself. But that oneness was broken by sin. In Christ we are once again united with Him once and for all - in a beautiful fruitful union of Christ’s life united with mine.

READ the following verses and think through what they say about our union with Christ.

Colossians 1:27

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

(The glory of God that we have fallen short of is restored for us by Christ’s union with us and His indwelling of us.)

Colossians 3:1-4

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

(Our lives are hidden with Christ in God. We have died when He died and now He is our life. This is where now we must set our hearts and our minds.)

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Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

(This verse fully sums up our union with Christ. I am crucified with Him. He lives in me. My life now is lived by faith in Him - the One who loves me and gave Himself for me. We are inseparable and it is based on love and not force or legalism.)

The union of man and wife is a true expression of our union with Christ and our complete oneness with Him. We declare this oneness and the covenantal love He has shown for us every time we celebrate communion together. The bread and the wine tell of His body broken and His blood shed for us out of His choice to have us as His own. As we eat the bread and drink the wine we are demonstrating that He now lives in us and we are one with Him. God sees me clothed with Christ’s righteousness and in Christ I am fully accepted. My life is hidden in His. This changes everything.

God is not interested in the driven works of a dutiful spouse but instead longs for the romantic response of a delighted lover. If the things we pursue elicit greater pleasure than the presence of our divine Lover, then He has been replaced as the object of our soul’s affection.

(Tricia McCary Rhodes in “*Taking Up Your Cross*” - Used by permission of Tricia McCary Rhodes www.soulatrest.com)

Beautiful Marriage – God’s Way!

4. INTIMACY - naked and unashamed.

This speaks of total **acceptance and freedom** - a lack of consciousness of self when in the presence of the other. Adam found delight in Eve as she was. No hiding, no having to cover up.

This is part of the intimacy that is found in marriage - an enjoyment of each other and an acceptance of each other and having someone close enough that we can be exposed without embarrassment or shame. The book of Song of Songs is full of expressions of love and delight in each other and the pleasure that was to be found in that. Listen to the language here:

READ Song of Songs 1:15-16; 4:1a, 7

(The man speaking) ¹⁵ How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!

Your eyes are doves

(The woman speaking) ¹⁶ How handsome you are, my beloved! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant.

(The man speaking) Behold you are beautiful, my love, behold you are beautiful! You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

We live in a world where love and delight has been replaced with lust and selfish desire. However, this does not negate what God is teaching us here about His design for the beautiful intimacy and enjoyment there should be in the relationship between a husband and a wife.

It is interesting that the first impact of sin for Adam and Eve was embarrassment at their nakedness and the need to sew together fig leaves in order to cover up, and we still struggle with that shame today. The deeper impact for them, and for us, was their need to hide from God. The amazing truth of the gospel is that, in Christ, we have been made completely clean and can come into His light without shame or the need to cover up and hide.

READ the following verses and note what you learn about what we once were, what we are now and how that has come about.

Colossians 1:21-22

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - ...

(once alienated, enemies but now by Christ’s death we are holy, without blemish and free from accusation)

Beautiful Marriage – God's Way!

Titus 3:3-7

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

(once foolish, but because of the kindness, love and mercy of God, washed, reborn, renewed, justified, heirs.)

Jude 24

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - ...

(presented before God without fault and with great joy)

Let's conclude with the challenge of Paul's words to the church.

READ 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Beautiful Marriage - Study Handout

Setting the Context

Genesis 1: 27-28

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

How were the man and woman created?

What was their God-given role in relation to His creation?

What do we learn here about their identity and value before God?

Genesis 1:31, 2:18

³¹ *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning - the sixth day.*

¹⁸ *The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

How did God feel about everything that He had made - including the man and woman?

In chapter 2 we get more detail on the creation of the man and woman. What was the only thing God saw that was not good?

What did God decide to do?

Genesis 2:23-25

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

How does Adam describe the woman? What does he say about her?

Vv24-25 What implications does this have for the relationship between a man and a woman?

Ephesians 5:31-32

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Where does Paul quote from when he is teaching on marriage?

What does he then say this is actually speaking about?

How then is marriage as God intended it viewed in the Bible?

1. **CHOICE - Leaving father and mother**

Song of Songs 2:4, 10-13

He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.

My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.

Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

Read the verses below and note under each of them what you learn about Jesus leaving His Father in order to be present with us.

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

John 14:1-3

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

John 17:24

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

2. **COMMITTED - united with his wife**

Song of Songs 5:16, 6:3, 7:10, 8:6

His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he browses among the lilies. I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me.

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

Read the following verses and note what you find out about Jesus' commitment to us in covenant and what that means for us in our relationship with Him.

Matthew 26:26-28

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

John 10:14, 17-18, 28-29

¹⁴ *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.*

¹⁷ *The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."*

3. **UNION - they would be one flesh**

Song of Songs 7:10-12, 8:3

I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom there I will give you my love.

His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me.

Read the following verses and think through what they say about our union with Christ.

Colossians 1:27

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 3:1-4

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

4. **INTIMACY - naked and unashamed**

Song of Songs 1:15-16; 4:1a,7

(The man speaking) ¹⁵ How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!

Your eyes are doves

(The woman speaking) ¹⁶ How handsome you are, my beloved! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant.

(The man speaking) Behold you are beautiful, my love, behold you are beautiful! You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

Read the following verses and note what you learn about what we once were, what we are now and how that has come about.

Colossians 1:21-22

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...

Titus 3:3-7

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Jude 24

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy...

Let's conclude with the challenge of Paul's words to the church.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

1. Beautiful Promises - Heads and Tails

AIM:

To create an atmosphere of informality so that the women will feel more relaxed together.

OUTCOME:

That the tensions of the day would be eased so that women would be responsive to the out-working of the Holy Spirit in the meeting.

Verses, such as those suggested below, may be cut out and everyone invited to match the correct beginning to the correct end of the verse and perhaps the Bible reference. This activity may be completed around small tables of 4-6 people or alternatively each person could be given part of a verse when entering the meeting and invited to find their partners. This might be a good means of helping individuals to meet new people. Depending on the group, individuals may be invited to share other promises of God in Scripture which have been particularly meaningful for them or think of occasions when people might find a specific promise helpful.

A downloadable copy, which includes 9 extra verses, is available on the website at www.presbyterianireland.org/pw Follow the links to PW Resources and then to Inspirations. This can then be photocopied for your group.

"Whoever calls out to the Lord...	...for help will be saved"	Acts 2:21 (Good News)
"There is nothing that God...	...cannot do"	Luke 1:37 (Good News)
"The Lord heals the broken hearted...	...and binds up their wounds"	Psalms 147:3 (NIV)
"I will be with you always...	...to the end of the age"	Matthew 28:20 (Good News)
"Man looks at the outward appearance...	...but the Lord looks at the heart"	1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)
"Come near to God, and...	...He will come near to you"	James 4:8 (Good News)
"God is our shelter and strength...	...always ready to help in times of trouble"	Psalms 46:1 (Good News)
"Leave all your worries with him...	...because he cares for you"	1 Peter 5:7 (Good News)
"Everyone who believes in Jesus will...	...have his sins forgiven through the power of his name"	Acts 10:43 (Good News)

2. Beauty Brands

(Unjumble the letters to reveal famous beauty brands)

A L O Y	- - - -
N O V A	- - - -
F M A C A T X R O	- - - - - - - - -
A N E N U E T G O R	- - - - - - - - -
E A N V I	- - - - -
C L N M A E O	- - - - - - -
V E O D	- - - -
E E E E R D A L T U S	- - - - - - - - - - -
L M R M I E	- - - - - -
P N N E E T A	- - - - - - -
C S S N O S U	- - - - - - -
L L A O E R	- , - - - - -

3. Logo Quiz

What are the brand names for these beauty related products?



4. Beauty Brands and their Slogans

Match up these beauty slogans with their brand.

SLOGAN

1. Because you're worth it
2. The make-up of make-up artists
3. Let's feel good
4. Beauty with an edge
5. Love the skin you're in
6. Taking care
7. Easy, breezy, beautiful
8. The sensitive skin expert

BRAND

- A. Boots
- B. Covergirl
- C. Garnier
- D. L'Oreal
- E. Max Factor
- F. Olay
- G. Simple
- H. Urban Decay

5. Who are these beautiful and not-so-beautiful people?

Here are some descriptions of people's appearance and character from the Bible. Do you know who they are?

1. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved.
2. She was lovely to look at but refused to come at the King's command.
3. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at. She was winning favour in the eyes of all who saw her. She won grace and favour in the king's sight so that he set the royal crown on her head.
4. He was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.
5. She had weak eyes.
6. She had a lovely figure and was beautiful.
7. In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance.

6. How is your Beauty Routine?

Provide a sheet for each person with the following:

What is your beauty routine like? How much time do you spend on the following? Talk about your answers with others around you or use it as an excuse to get to know someone a little better! Don't take too long on the first ones – the last ones are more important!

How many hours per week do you exercise?

How many times per year do you shop for clothes?

How many minutes daily do you spend applying makeup?

How many minutes daily does it take to choose your outfit and accessories?

How long do you spend on your hair each day?

How long do you stand in the shop deciding which face cream to buy?

How long per month would you spend looking at magazines to help you stay up to date with fashion trends?

So much for your outward appearance! What about your inner beauty routine?

How can you work on your inner beauty?

How much time do you spend daily working on your inner beauty?

Can you help each other in any way? Accountability? Sharing or recommending books? Going to a conference together? Challenging each other to learn Scripture verses which highlight Christ-like character? What ideas can you come up with?

IDEA:

You might like to provide each person with a bookmark or small card with Hebrews 3:13 on it.

“...encourage one another daily...so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness” (NIV)

Encourage the women to pray for each other, especially the ones they have spoken with, that each one will increase in inner beauty.

7. Who decides what is beautiful?

Put up a display of pictures of women from other cultures (or run a PowerPoint presentation) for people to look at as they gather. Add questions or comments - printed or on screen - to challenge thinking and kick start conversations, for example,

AIM:

to get women talking informally about what makes someone beautiful.

Who decides what is beautiful?

What makes this woman beautiful?

Is this beautiful in our culture? Would someone from another culture think differently?

Satan's lies about true beauty - *It's only on the outside. Only socially accepted perfection will do.*

Connect with Global Mission: use pictures of women from places where PCI Global Mission Workers, or others from your congregation, are serving around the world.

For pictures and inspiration look online at theatlasofbeauty.com or google "beauty around the world". (*Ensure proper copyright licence is in place before presentation*).

2. Beauty Brands - Answers

Olay; Avon; Max Factor; Neutrogena; Nivea; Lancome; Dove;
Estee Lauder; Rimmel; Pantene; Cussons; L'Oreal

3. Logo Quiz - Answers

1. Wella; 2. Pantene; 3. Simple - Sensitive Skin Experts; 4. Dove;
5. Nivea; 6. Rimmel London; 7. Maybelline; 8. Clairol - nice 'n easy

4. Beauty Brands and their Slogans - Answers

1D, 2E, 3A, 4H, 5F, 6C, 7B, 8G

5. Who are these beautiful and not-so-beautiful people? – Answers

Scripture	Answer
1. 1 Samuel 25:3	Abigail and Nabal
2. Esther 1:11&12	Vashti
3. Esther 2:7,15,17	Esther
4. 1 Samuel 16:12	David
5. Genesis 29:17	Leah
6. Genesis 29:17	Rachel
7. 2 Samuel 14:25	Absalom

Suggested books, Bible study Series, poems, hymns and songs, Bible readings, YouTube clips, prayer topics and drama.

Books on the theme “Beautiful”

Adorned - living out the beauty of the gospel together by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth
Compared to her (Good Book Company) by Sophie de Witt
Disciplines of a Godly Woman by Barbara Hughes
The Remarkable Women of the Bible by Elizabeth George
Magnetic - Becoming the Girl He Wants (for teens) by Lynn Cowell
Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World by Joanna Weaver

Suggested Bible Studies

A woman after God’s own heart Study Series (Bible Studies for busy women) - all by Elizabeth George

“*Becoming a woman of Beauty and Strength*” based on Esther
“*Discovering the treasures of a Godly Woman*” based on Proverbs 31
“*Nurturing a heart of humility*” based on the life of Mary
“*Cultivating a life of character*” based on the life of Ruth
“*Putting on a gentle and quiet spirit*” based on 1st Peter

Poems

THE BEAUTY WITHIN by M. S. Lowndes

The beauty we have is found within
And is more than a pretty face.
It’s the beauty of God and is only found
In His love and transforming grace.

The world only looks at the outward shell
And not on what’s there inside.
But God will reveal the beauty within
As the beauty of Jesus Christ.

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<http://www.heavensinspirations.com>

REFLECTED BEAUTY by Georgina Smith

My Lord all the beauty I see around me,
Is only reflecting the beauty of Thee.
The snow-covered mountains
The flight of a bird.
The rainbow of colours
And the songbirds I've heard.
All creation proclaims Your glory and power.
The sun and the moon,
The wind and the shower.
You have opened my eyes Lord
And You've helped me to see,
And I bow to the splendour
I see around me.

I remember the cross,
I remember Your pain.
I remember Your death
So new life we would gain.
And all of creation
Proclaims You as King
And my voice joins with nature
And together we sing.
My Lord all the beauty
I see around me
Is only a fraction of what I will see
For when face to face Lord
We'll finally be
I'll behold the full splendour
And glory of Thee.

Georgina Smith. Used by permission
www.christianpoetry.org.uk

Monologue - The Butterfly

From *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* by Joanna Weaver.
Publisher Waterbrook. Use your imagination to present pages 152-155,
entitled '*The Butterfly*', as a monologue or as a narrated mime to
emphasise the transformation from brokenness to beauty. In this story,
one woman tells of the changes she experienced when she accepted the
life-giving water Jesus offers.

Or

Watch the same drama performed at a conference on YouTube - The
Butterfly - The Transformation. Freelif.

Please ensure that you run this video live and that your church has
appropriate licence for viewing.

Ideas for a Church Service or Worship Evening

Below is a pick and mix menu with hymns, readings etc for either a service or worship evening.

The Beauty of Creation

Hymns

Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook

- 17 All creatures of our God and King
- 18 All things bright and beautiful
- 19 Fairest Lord Jesus
- 20 For the beauty of the earth
- 28 Lord of beauty, Yours the splendour
- 31 O Lord of every shining constellation
- 34 There are hundreds of sparrows
- 35 Think of a world without any flowers
- 36 Who put the colours in the rainbow
- 37 God in His love for us lent us this planet
- 39 Sing praise to God on mountain tops
- 122 Like a mighty river flowing
- 124 Look and learn from the birds of the air
- 215 Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it

Complete Mission Praise

- 293 I sing the almighty power of God
- 419 Like a mighty river flowing
- 440 Lord of creation, to You be all praise
- 506 O Lord my God! (How great Thou art)
- 642 The earth is the Lord's
- 786 Yes, God is good - in earth and sky
- 832 God in His love for us
- 920 Praise the Lord, you heavens

Junior Praise 94 If I were a butterfly

- Keith Getty Creation sings the Father's song
- Keith Getty Hear all creation lifts its voice
- Keith Getty You're the Word of God the Father
- Chris Tomlin Indescribable
- Brian Doerksen Creation Calls

My Lighthouse Introducing New Irish Kids
You're the God of the sunshine & every blade of
grass

Readings

- Genesis 1
- Psalm 8
- Psalm 19:1-6
- Psalm 65
- Psalm 104
- Psalm 148
- Romans 1:20

Other resources

Use a video from YouTube:

God's Beautiful Creation, Awesome Scenery
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=F79Ck8rFles

Creations Call HD with Lyrics -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=28sqs5H5hao

Across The Lands -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qi0sdO7eTYM

Choose one of the hymns and make an accompanying PowerPoint with pictures from nature. E.g. *Indescribable* or *How great Thou art*

Prayer Topics

Thanks for the beauty of creation and how God reveals Himself through it

Ask for forgiveness for ill-treating God's beautiful world

Pray that God would work in our lives so that we can be a new creation

Pray for good stewardship of our earth and its resources

Pray for those who have been affected by natural disasters

Pray for the work of aid agencies

The Beauty of the Lord

Hymns

Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook

- 181 May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place
182 My God how wonderful You are
198 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
199 All my days I will sing this song of gladness
209 I am so glad that our Father in heaven
215 Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it
222 O God beyond all praising
242 To God be the glory
428 All heaven declares
500 God of grace amazing wonder
566 Over all the earth You reign on high
650 Mine eyes have seen the glory

Complete Mission Praise

- 100 Come see the beauty of the Lord
101 Come sing the praise of Jesus
147 Fill your hearts with joy and gladness
344 Isn't He beautiful
375 Jesus name above all names
410 Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
447 Lord You are more precious
513 O Lord, You're beautiful
788 You are beautiful beyond description
845 Holy and majestic awesome God of power
920 Praise the Lord you heavens
998 Jesus what a beautiful name

- Keith Getty Come people of the risen King
Keith Getty There is a higher throne
Phil Wickham You're beautiful
Hillsong What a beautiful name
Jeremy Camp Beautiful One
Keith Green O Lord, You're beautiful
Planetshakers Beautiful Saviour
My Lighthouse Introducing New Irish Kids
 Jesus priceless treasure

Readings

- Psalms 27:1-6
Psalm 47
Psalm 50:1-2
Psalm 68:32-35
Psalm 96
Psalm 97
Psalm 104
Psalm 105
Psalm 148
Psalm 149
Psalm 150
Isaiah 4:2-6
Isaiah 28:5
Isaiah 33:17
2 Samuel 22:47
1 Chronicles 16:25-36
-

Other Resources

Use a video from YouTube:

You're Beautiful - Phil Wickham {HD}

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGITzH9xkXQ

Beautiful One

www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9bC9CRv9oU

Prayer Topics

Praise God for who He is and what He has done in giving Jesus to be our Saviour

Ask for forgiveness for not giving Him first place in our lives

Pray that we will radiate the beauty of the Lord in our lives

Bargains at the Spa/Spar – can be used as part of the *Beautiful Women* programme on page 15

A telephone conversation between two friends who get confused about cream! Illustration of a jar of face cream and a tub of fresh cream either on PowerPoint or posters.

Phone rings

Gemma – Well, what's new?

Julia – Just got a real bargain at the Spa.

Gemma – Oh, what's on offer this week?

Julia – Treats galore - it was the deal of the week! I spotted it on Facebook.

Gemma – Anything I would be interested in?

Julia – Well, probably stuff you need!

Gemma – Are you trying to tell me something?

Julia – Well, you know me, always trying to help a friend in need...

Gemma – You are **so** kind - NOT! - well, maybe sometimes.

Julia – You need to try their cream - it was so smooth.

Gemma – My cream is always lumpy or too thick.

Julia – I'll let you try some of mine. I got a taster treat.

Gemma – Oh, I do like tasters!! But small samples always leave me wanting more.

Julia – Me too! But I just didn't have the money for the full works so a taster it had to be.

Gemma – It must be really expensive - I just buy the Spar brand. So how much do you get in the taster?

Julia – Just 30mls, but I'll use it sparingly.

Gemma - Only 30mls?? And you're going to use it sparingly? What size of cake or Pavlova are you hoping to cover with that? I can just about stretch 250mls if I'm desperate!!

Julia – Cakes?? Pavlova?? What are you talking about? Since when do you put skin cream on your food?!!

Gemma – Since when does the Spar give out skin cream tasters??

Julia – Oh you're an eejit! I wasn't talking about the Spar. I was at the **SPA** for a taster session of treatments!

Gemma – Oops, I think I need my hearing checked.

Julia – Yes, we better make you an appointment for that, but maybe I should be there in case you end up at the wrong place. Oh you do give me such a good laugh!