



Tedd dated off and on, but never had a steady girlfriend. Quiet, a deep thinker interested in politics, philosophy and art, he longed to find a soul-mate who shared his passions. He finally found the woman of his dreams. . .on the internet.

Tedd matched up with Aleisha in a singles chat room. They talked every night for months about Renoir, Rousseau, and the Reagan years. Though Aleisha tended to misspell words and sometimes misunderstood a twist of logic that Tedd tried to expound, he was charmed by her interest in his topics. . .and by the photo she sent. Tedd fell in love with the long, dark raven hair, teasing brown eyes, full lips.

Then Tedd received exciting news. His company sponsored him for a weekend conference only fifty miles from where Aleisha lived. He decided to surprise her, to show up on her doorstep unannounced.

However, no one named Aleisha lived at the swanky apartment building number she'd given him. And no Aleishas worked at the modeling agency she talked about so much. When he showed them her picture, they laughed. "That's Rachel Wiesz, the movie star. That's her stock photo. Look it up on her website."

Later Tedd discovered he bared his soul to a brainy 13-year-old with braces and freckles.

The anonymity and potential for deceit on the internet tests the values and character of every user.

And it makes you wonder. . .is that the way it will be when you see God? Will you discover a common hoax played on you behind some celestial veil? Will you be dismayed? Or eternally awed?

It so happens that I'm betting my life on the latter.

Expectations of First Sight

Has someone's looks ever disappointed you?

Like Dorothy in search of the great and terrible Wizard of Oz.

Each of her traveling party thought him a different thing: a great Head, a lovely Lady, a terrible Beast, a Ball of Fire. Instead, he's a sham, a trickster, a humbug. He's a smoke and mirrors ventriloquist, a pipsqueak man playing wizard games behind a curtain.

What is it you expect God to be like?

At the least I presume him to be pleasant, delightful, perfect, complete. That he has a face to measure up to all the titles. I'm prepared for awesome glory, for an excitement in his presence that I've never quite experienced yet. He surely will display a perfect and flawless beauty.



*You may be one of those who sing,
"He's beautiful beyond description,"
and leave it at that. But there's those
other moments when you wonder,
who hides behind the curtain?*

Janelle Schneider is quite certain of this: "God is beautiful. His beauty demands a response that is shaped by that beauty. And that is art."

The classic old-time preacher, Jonathan Edwards, asserted, "The source of beauty is God Himself."

Sr. Sheila Joss has written, "We believe that in the next life we will not experience the sadness of beauty fading, that God who is the source of all beauty will always be there for us to enjoy. . . God is ever present and waiting to show us the wonder and beauty of that world, created from all eternity just for our benefit."

Many mystics have claimed he appeared to them in reveries. Or dreams. Some catch wispy glimpses on mountain tops. Or cloaks of comfort in dark valleys. Some spot God's form in cloud formations. Or shadows or mirages. But that presupposes the viewer knows what he looks like to begin with. How did they know that was him?

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By What Standard?

What do you mean when you call something or someone beautiful?

That can be very subjective, due to culture or taste. A theocentric view of beauty is God-centered. . . "a facet of wisdom, the skillful application of God's truth, and the ability to distinguish what has value from what does not" (Mark Harding).

There's a phrase "beatific vision", which comes from Latin, and means "a happy-making sight", that is, a view of God himself.

There's the whole aspect of physical beauty versus inner beauty.

"The goodness of a substance and its beauty are the same thing" (William of Auxerre).

Something beautiful can be without fault or defect. Unpolluted. Not marred by any flaw. It can be supreme goodness in fiery fervor, at its purest peak.

But Does It Really Matter?

I want an unclouded concept of God. To know the truth about Him, whatever that is.

I'd also like to know if infinite beauty exists in a Person who never ages, wrinkles, or dries up and blows away. After all, that's part of the excitement in words such as these . . . "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2b).

But how much does it matter to you what God looks like? As long as he takes care of you? Answers your prayers? Or lets you alone to live like you want?

If you're pulled out of a pit, you don't care what the rescuer looks like. That one's going to be like an angel in your eyes. What does beauty mean to you when you're hurt? Terrified? Beaten down or depressed? What does looks matter when you've discovered a true champion, your hero?

You don't judge a doctor or counselor's abilities by the length of their eyebrows or the highness of their cheekbones. You search for intelligence or courage, good reputation and able hands.

And when you're desperate to connect with God, at such a time, do you bother about his profile or portrait?

The Obsession With Outward Appearances

Abigail was beautiful and "of good understanding." Absalom had no physical blemishes. Joseph was "well built and handsome." Moses was "no ordinary child." David was "ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features." Esther won the king's beauty contest for young virgins.

It matters very much what humans look like—to tell one from another, to know more about their uniqueness. But the importance that's placed on physique can cause problems.

In our society, messages everywhere pound out the importance of a beautiful face, body, and clothing. Spend the time and money to achieve the ideal. Very pervasive preoccupation to the point of dangerous eating disorders and rampant plastic surgery.

But that's nothing new.

Disparate notions of human beauty run rampant through history and cultures. Men and women across the globe, for thousands of years, have gone to enormous and elaborate lengths to change their natural appearance.

The Bible says "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting" (Proverbs 31:30), but do you believe it?

The Scriptures assert that "God designed your body to be glorious and beautiful at every point in life: The glory of youths is their strength, but the beauty of the aged is their gray hair" (Proverbs 20:29), but does that make you content at any age?

Beauty tempts and entices. Just ask King David. . .or Jacob: "Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful and lovely" (Genesis 29:17).

Helen of Troy, "the face that launched a thousand ships", was renowned as the most beautiful woman in the world. All the kings of Greece wanted to marry her because of her beauty. She chose one and got kidnapped by another—thus, a war began that lasted ten years.

Other stories tell of women such as Greek sirens who transformed themselves into beauties, then lead men to do what they want. . .or to their deaths.

We know a young man who chose the prettiest girl in class to marry. But she died young because her arteries were like those of an old woman.

Attention to beauty only as a choice breaker can apply to other situations too. You finally find a beautiful place to live, where the 'beautiful people' hang out. . .but you're harassed by cranky neighbors. What does that do for your quality of life?

Why do you even care about beauty? Where does that come from?

For some, it's an ache in the heart, a longing for joy, for knowing that your world makes sense, for hope that things will be all right.

She tried very hard to teach her grandchildren how to extract the last drop of beauty out of all the small things of life, words and scents and sounds. Many little joys, weighed against the few heavy griefs of existence, could give some sort of balance to the scales and preserve the sanity of life.

from *The Bird in the Tree*, by Elizabeth Goudge

On the other hand, skeptics could confess God as the most exquisite creature in the universe, yet have no other interest in Him. If He is a God who also demands things, they shy away. No matter how beautiful God is, if he gets in the way of plans and purposes, you may resent him. He can get rough in his discipline, run roughshod over pet projects.

Martin Luther's rebuke to Erasmus applies here: "Your thoughts of God are too human."

The Philosophy of Beautiful

Aesthetics is the study of beauty as a value.

Many people worship beauty. Yet it's so illusive.

Like a dream, it can be better than reality, but it's also a mirage.

You can be touched in many different ways by beauty, but it's so brief, transitory. You can't hold onto it. The sunset always sinks within moments below the horizon. You cannot own beauty, no matter how hard you try to purchase it. Beauty will always escape.

C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory* put it this way. . . "What more, you may ask, do we want? ... We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it."

You secretly long to possess beauty when it seems distant, unattainable, impossible to assimilate into one's being. To bottle it somehow. That may be why the urgency, at times, to know what heaven's like, and whether God is beautiful.

What Seems Beautiful To You

What's the most beautiful sight you've ever seen? Here's a few, quick examples given to me by friends. You add your own.

Yosemite Valley...a newborn in my arms...Beethoven or Mozart symphony...sunset in the Caribbean or over the ocean or in Colorado...in Guatemala as the sun slipped behind twin volcanic peaks...as sun disappears behind Pikes Peak...the sunset from a plane as it dipped below us into the clouds, stirring them into soft balls of fire...a violin solo...series of arpeggios fields of daffodils...Pleiades star cluster...three trillion neurons inside your brain...nebulae that light up space in hues of deep purple...Van Gogh or Monet or Michelangelo's paintings...spires of great cathedrals...songs of birds...the air etched with calm...a new Ferrari...your kid dressed up for the prom...sparkles of diamonds in snow...a butterfly sipping nectar from a coneflower.

Any and all of the above things could be totally eclipsed by a single view of God's beauty, if his persona is all that I imagine. Like how lightning strikes fade out the most impressive fireworks display. Our family saw that happen one July 4th, standing near our hotel in Kansas City, Missouri, watching a lightening storm brew out of Kansas. It seemed like a divine voice laughing and saying, "You think that's big stuff? Take that!"

If a God who created everything that is does exist, the cathedrals on earth lined in one monumental row can't compare with his matchless beauty.

"In a created order, beauty can only be a simulation of heavenly glory, of things no eye has seen" (Paul Mizzi).

The ordinary meaning of beauty comes from a dictionary: The quality that gives pleasure to the mind or senses and is associated with such properties as harmony of form or color, excellence of artistry, truthfulness, and originality.

What you consider beautiful can be complex. A beautiful human usually has regular features, smooth complexion, graceful walk, pleasant expression. Real beauty also requires health and well-being. Anything beautiful includes a sense of symmetry with perfect proportion, visual perception, balance. Think of an exquisite horse that evokes smooth form, along with power and speed. It makes you think of freedom. . .to roam, to hunt, to escape from danger. So, beauty's not always a static thing. The best beauty resonates with a touch to the depths of your spirit. . .something gorgeous, lyrical, in motion.

Beauty is a kind of perfection. Symmetry in nature provides the foundation for physics and science. You can't develop theorems if you can't depend upon fixed or developing patterns. Symmetry is the orderly, mutually corresponding arrangement of various parts of a body, producing a proportionate, balanced form. Beauty – something that's good, that's true.

Moral and spiritual beauty provide a deeper complex of qualities. That's why no human is completely beautiful—there's always some defect, a flaw, a fault somehow, somewhere.

All these considerations provide hints of what God may be like.

"Beauty is always related to God, for it proceeds from Him; and since this is so, it gives us all the more reason to enjoy the Chorale, recite Paradise Lost, and frequent the Museum of Fine Arts" (Paul Mizzi).

The Power of Beauty

"Pretty is as pretty does," a cliché my mother often recited.

Most societies are controlled by the cult of beautiful, that is, what they deem beauty.

Mean tempered, but attractive movie stars rule at the box office. A comely, spoiled princess hogs tabloid headlines. A handsome, charismatic politician boondoggles voters.

Externals exploit the masses. Appearance means fame, fortune, lots of photo ops, and maybe getting away with murder.

The Purpose of Beauty

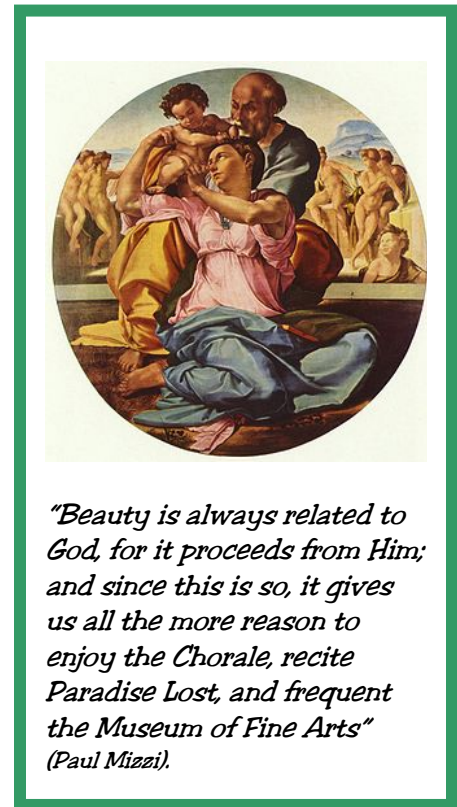
Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless:

peacocks and lilies, for example.

John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*

Beauty delights the senses. It gives pleasure to the soul. In the right context of wholesomeness, it's a spiritual experience to enter.

But what is its intrinsic value?



"Useless beauty worried (Charles Darwin) as an apparent exception to the ruthlessly practical workings of natural selection" (Matt Ridley). Anything beautiful had to be useful in some way, such as for survival. No room in evolution for beauty for its own sake.

So evolutionists figured out something.

"Survival of the prettiest. . .the science of beauty argues that looking good has survival value, and that sensitivity to beauty is a biological adaptation governed by brain circuits shaped by natural selection" (from www.beautyworlds.com/theoryofbeauty.htm).

But there's much more to the existence of beauty than that.

■ To counter the world's ugly

We have descended into the garden and caught three hundred slugs.

How I love the mixture of the beautiful and squalid in gardening.

It makes it so lifelike.

Evelyn Underhill

Beauty is a special grace of God.

War and rumors of war. Scams. Liars and deceivers. Political intrigues. Famines and earthquakes. Thieves. Computer viruses and crashes. Murderers. Terrorists and traitors. Firestorms. Vandals and cruelty. Diseases. Revenge and love grown cold. Betrayals by friends. The potential for pain penetrates everything. It surrounds you, sometimes engulfs you.

But, you might say, if God is beautiful, and he created the world and all that is in it, why is there anything ugly at all?

"The effect of all this ugliness upon us is no small thing, either. . . it sucks the life out of us. Ugliness makes our souls sick, leaving us dissipated and eventually deformed. Ugliness is one of the three anti-fruits of human rebellion, alongside falsehood and evil" (David Taylor).

To even see glimpses of beauty can mock and hurt when your own life's full of ugly.

And what good's being beautiful, if everyone hates you because of it?

With God all things are possible. That's a part of what makes him beautiful. For one thing, he could never prove this, if challenges didn't exist. "If we never had a problem, we'd never know that he could solve them" (Andrae Crouch, "Through It All"). He can turn any ugly into a thing of beauty. For instance, consider the Cross. Battered and bloodied and crucified, Jesus suffered an unjust, illegal, and totally unfair death. But God turned this vile event into victory over every evil deed and force in human history.

■ to lead you ultimately to God

"(Beauty) has enormous power to enchant, enthrall, seduce, and captivate. . .recognize the beautiful for what it is—the best hint we have of what God is like" (Andrew M. Greeley).

A study of His beauty increases His value as worthy of worship--a Person to be esteemed, adored. Creativity is our response to God's beauty, and to seeking God's face.

"But always, the effect of beauty upon us will be the same—to evoke longing for the Source of all beauties. . .a longing for God Himself" (David Taylor).

Beauty is the hard-to-define essence that draws you to God. It nudges a holy longing, for God is the ultimate source of beauty. Beauty makes you long for eternity. Kindness, beauty, and truth all emanate from God. . .make you hunger for God, whether you realize it or not.

God reveals Himself. . .in many ways;

and some men enter His Temple by Gate Beautiful.

F. R. Tennant

Try to find anything beautiful today. Consider it a personal, special gift to you from God. Welcome it as a blessing from heaven.

HOW TO KNOW IF GOD IS BEAUTIFUL

Since God masks himself in mystery, how can we ever know, this side of death's dread ditch, if he's beautiful? Do we depend on faith alone? Or do we assume it doesn't matter whether He's homely or not?

Signs That He Is

If God is invisible, how can he be considered beautiful?

Have you ever heard of a beautiful symphony?

Pastor Mike Harding

The following aren't presented as solid proofs, but they're propositions to consider.

God makes beautiful stuff.

He can heal all that's damaged around you and in you.

His beauty is the source of all lesser beauties.

There is the beauty of his self-sacrificing love, as seen through Jesus.

He is infinite in all his perfections.

The face of God is his likeness, his reflection. You can 'reflect' God in your own life, reflect his beauty to your world. Some humans are only beautiful when they shine with God's Spirit.

There's so much beauty in his words, his acts, his story.



You can admire God's beauty in his exquisite working out of the delicate details of human relationships. The complexity of it all, yet he uses the tiniest of scalpels to do quite sensitive surgery that gets to the cause, that heals.

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"What we see in this Trinitarian God is his ability to make beauty shine forth from all kinds of lovely and messy, magnificent and broken things—things from which we expect beauty to be absent" (David Taylor).

Cannot the fact that beauty exists at all argue for the existence of God? For of what practical, useful purpose does it provide the evolutionary process? No one survives by beauty alone, nor does that quality or value make one fit. And how did humans obtain the appreciation of beauty, the ability to even discern it?

You learn about God's beauty by studying the things he made—his artwork, his creations. This is how you see his "back parts," like Moses did. In heaven, so the promise goes, you will see his face. Can't wait!

The whole earth is filled with God's goodness, God's glory, God's beauty, in spite of the ugly. "When I look out upon the works of God's hands I always feel

moved to say, 'What a beautiful mind God has!'" (John Daniel Jones).

The Bible's full of descriptors. . .

You can see God's beauty in Jesus – "hair a blizzard of white...voice a cataract...face a perigee sun" (Revelation 1:14 MSG)—the beauty that captivated the heart of St. John.

Peter, James and John also witnessed Jesus' transfigured glory: "His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. Sunlight poured from his face. His clothes were filled with light" (Matthew 17:2 MSG).

God is described as a kind, gentle shepherd who takes care of sheep and lambs, to protect from harm (Psalm 23). As a lamb (Revelation 5:6ff). As a glorious king (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

Song of Solomon 2:1

What does God look like?

"If you want a literal answer, I'd have to say that he's a spirit, and invisible to human eyes. If you want a poetic answer, I'd say 'Love'" (Angela Elwell Hunt).

I've seen signs of God's beauty in times of harmony, in moments of splendor, in flashes of light, in parcels of fairness. But most of all his beauty emanates from his excellence, his honor, his majesty, his glory.

His Beauty as Holiness

He is majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory.

Exodus 15:11

A. W. Tozer says, "God is holy and he has made holiness the moral condition necessary to the health of his universe. Sin's temporary presence in the world only accents this."

What is holiness? That's a huge topic that will be only touched on here.

In humans, it's determined by what we do or don't do. Holy ones are sexually moral and disciplined. They are not greedy. They are not obscene or coarse in their speech or actions. They think pure thoughts and do impartial good deeds and are always thankful.

In God, it is his very essence.

In heaven all creatures worship God with the highest of praises: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty."

"God is a Spirit, and the beauty that characterizes Him is moral and spiritual beauty" (John Daniel Jones).

In one of the saddest scenes in the Bible, God informs Moses that he will not cross over into the Promised Land because, "You did not uphold my holiness" (Deuteronomy 32:51).

God's holiness is a multi-trillion points of light, but is seen in brief pinpoints on this earth because of the deep shadows of sin and human blindness.

His holiness can cleanse like a firestorm or be a torrent of retribution against rebel armies and nations. His zeal for truth, his hatred of lawlessness can humble the arrogant, the rich, the famous, no matter who they are, nor in what palatial estates they reside.

All of this is part of his awful beauty that penetrates to core motives, the most private of inner selves. Above all, he himself loves beauty of character within those he created.

A woman I met at a retreat confided to me:

"I had known God and did all I had been taught to receive Jesus as my Savior. I truly believed I was a Christian. But a few years ago I faced a dilemma. I wanted to do something with every fiber of my being, that I'd been taught to be wrong. I prayed and cried and asked God about this situation. I felt I had circumstances that should allow me a pass. All I got was silence.

"As I read the Bible, the only answer I got was, 'No.' No matter how I tried to rationalize, no matter how I attempted some other interpretation, this action was condemned. I prayed and cried again. Wouldn't God bend the rules just for me, just this once? I continued to pour out reasons for my request. But in time I realized that in pursuing something God didn't want me to have, I affronted his holiness. . .and what was best for me."

Can you imagine what raw holiness looks like?

It's a fiery kind of purity that's not only free from any evil conduct, but every vile thought. In a human, it's observing the honor of God's will, above all else. It's the recognition that you're set apart for a sacred use.

The human sensory system cannot stand to be in the presence of God's holiness. It makes everything and everyone seemed stained and soiled, especially one's self. You'd be like Isaiah who cried out, "Woe to me!" "I am ruined!" (Isaiah 6:5 NIV).

God's beauty emanates from his holiness, full of goodness and moral purity.

His splendor arises from his holiness and intensifies his appearance.

He is sacred. He is to be revered.

He is blameless, spotless. He has never had to confess a sin. He will never have to say 'I'm sorry' for any action.

He will never deceive you.

He is not ruled by inordinate passions. Or fear. Or ignorance.

Everything he does is right, beneficial to his creation. . .and to you.

He's ultimate integrity, faithfulness, sincerity. He is honor personified.

He cannot be bribed. He's always fair.

His anger is always righteous. His wrath both protects you from yourself and preserves his holiness.

He is the epitome of wholeness.

His holiness is his essence, the essential part of who he is. The Almighty's vital element. . .his heart, his core, his lifeblood, which was spilled out for you, through Jesus. Surely one who loves like that, one that compassionate, is beautiful beyond description.

God sometimes reveals a part of his holiness through earthly events, such as, earthquakes. Or hurricanes. Or volcanoes. Or lightning. Or even, believe it or not, through you.

God's holiness is the ultimate standard. He determines what is sin, that is, rebellion against him, and what is not.

Taken from the hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy":

His holiness. . .merciful, almighty, a blessed Trinity.

His holiness. . .adored by saints anxious to cast crowns of gold at his feet.

His holiness. . .perfect in power, in love, and purity.

His glory can fill a temple or church. A hush happens when his presence silences an assembly, for no one unclean or impure can go near him. Except by the power of his indwelling Holy Spirit.

His holiness is the epicenter of purest beauty. He's the only being who truly deserves the accolade, "His Majesty."

His Beauty as Goodness

For how great is his goodness,

And how great is his beauty!

Zechariah 9:17 KJV

God told Moses when he asked to see more of him, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you. . . ."

God is the greatest, the highest good.

Thomas Watson said, "He is a sea of goodness without bottom and banks."

God is the standard for goodness. If he is not, then what or who determines what is good. . .and what is evil? By what authority? Otherwise, the world's ruled ever and only by the vagaries of opinion. . .the maneuverings of motivation. . .the secret meeting power plays by those who have the most votes or biggest army or hugest stockpile of wealth or the best tech toys.

God's goodness is like . . .
 . . . a river that twists and turns and nestles in plains and valleys, then plunges through narrow gorges and plummets like a mighty waterfall
 . . . shimmery diamonds glittering like spun glass and sparkling all over
 . . . thick coils of strong rope thrown down into pits of despair
 . . . a glacier, solid and relentless and flows what seems slower than a snail's pace, yet drags and pushes debris and reshapes whole panoramas of landscapes

You cannot be good without God. The good you do never originates with you. It comes from God, your sole source of goodness. When you want to do good, it's because God's Spirit has prompted you. When you want to be good, it's because God's Spirit is filling you.

God's goodness may sear your soul. To be the recipient can overwhelm the most stubborn independent.

As the wise saying goes, God is good all the time.

His Beauty as Light

A brilliant light surrounded him,
 like a radiant rainbow.

Ezekiel 1:18

God's full of heavenly lights that burn glorious. He's like jasper and carnelian surrounded by an emerald rainbow. He's heaven's sun and only illumination (Revelation 21:23).

The glory in His face is like a thunderhead full of lightning flashes and trumpet blasts (Revelation 4:5).

He glows, bright and blinding as the sun. With no dark side. No depression.

He's the dazzling star of white-hot splendor. He's the first ray of sun after months of Arctic winter. He's pure brilliance.

The sun's a symbol of what God looks like—that 865,000 mile-wide ball of fire. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield" (Psalm 84:11).

His light can scorch our whole planet in a second.

Yet he comes to you and me like a soft candle to guide each step of life's weary way.

For with you is the fountain of life;
 in your light we see light.

Psalm 36:9

His Beauty as Fire

I saw what appeared to be glowing metal from
 his waist up,
 as if full of fire. He looked like fire.

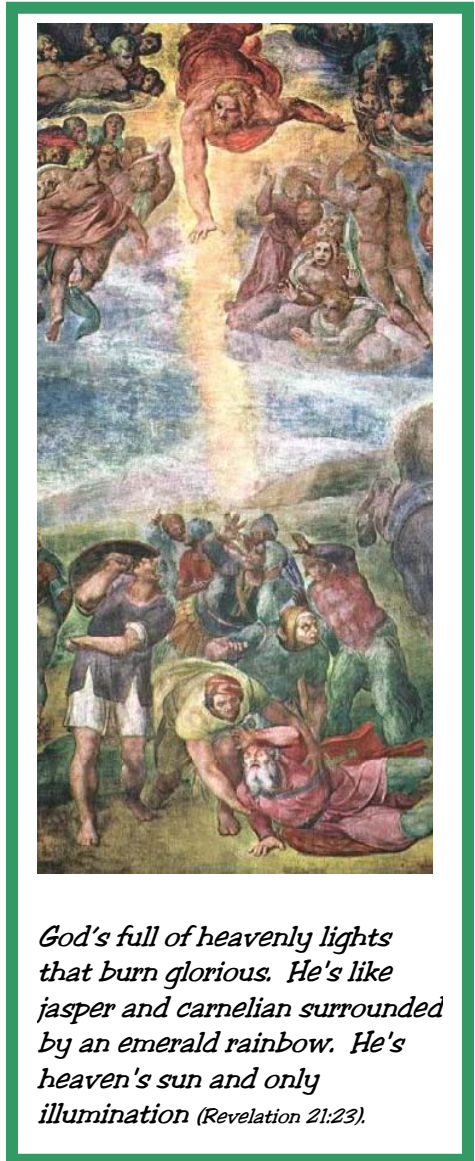
Ezekiel 1:17

He is a firestorm. He rages like the sun's geomagnetic storms. He radiates energy.

He's the fire of divine love, burning for all eternity. A luster of orange and red flash of light that enflames to action.

So fire came out from the presence of the Lord. . . .

Leviticus 10:2



God's full of heavenly lights that burn glorious. He's like jasper and carnelian surrounded by an emerald rainbow. He's heaven's sun and only illumination (Revelation 21:23).

Fire symbolizes the holy presence of God, the danger of approaching him with boasting or pride. He is not always a cozy hearth, but at times a 'consuming fire.'

On the day of Pentecost, he arrived as the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire, not to consume, but to inaugurate a change in divine-human relations.

He appeared as fire in the burning bush, to call Moses to an important task. His fiery glow transfixes, mesmerizes, beckons. A beauty that entices attention, but also respect and even fear.

SEEING HIM. . .BY FAITH

True faith settles on understanding as much of the heavenly Father as possible, even if you can't "look full in His wonderful face."

True believers do all they can to behold him, to fix their gaze on his face. That must be done by faith alone. "It means deciding, 'I won't move from this position. Before I do anything else, before I try to accomplish a single thing, I must be in God's presence'" (David Wilkerson).

Through His Word

If God's word were studied as it should be,
men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character,
and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.

www.egwestate.andrews.edu/sc/sc10.html

You want to see him? To know if he's beautiful? Fill your heart and mind with the words of God. He must gain first place in our affections, our attentions, to intensify your worship. To express appreciation of him gives him honor. But praise exalts.

Faith fully enjoys God. That's true joy in the midst of your very daily human detail.

Through His People

You can see God's beauty through other people.

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

Psalm 90:17

His beauty rubs off on people who get close to him.

Someday you'll be beautiful for all eternity. Like him.

Pray that the whole earth glows with his glory. . .as he works in, through, and in spite of folks just like you.

Some Day. . .You & I Shall Behold Him

He hovers in a misty blur. . .
until crossing death's dread ditch
fills in the hazy blanks.

Someday . . . sooner than I realize perhaps. . . I'll see him. I'll know for sure what he looks like, whether he's beautiful or not. At that moment, I'm sure I'll regret that I didn't do more for him, because I was just plain ignorant of all he was. Will I be stunned by his splendor? Astounded by his brilliance? Conquered by his charm? Captivated by his love? Somehow, I just know so.

He'll Finally Receive What He Deserves

Whoosh! His chariots fly like a whirlwind.
Thunder! His horses gallop swifter than eagles.
Wail! Worship! Your God passes by.

One day the heavens will open, the King of kings and Lord of lords will appear on a great white horse. He will rule everything, everyone. Every knee will bow in worship of the one and only worthy One. Then you will truly behold his face.

I can see it now. The most articulate thing I'll manage to say, with the most holy awe, lost in his grandeur, when heaven announces, "Behold your God!" is, "Wow!"

Worship is the proper response to the beauty of God, that he is worthy of full praise.

Worship him now. . .there's a planet full, a galaxy, a cosmos of reasons. Because of creation. Because of your salvation. Because of all his magnificent works.

Worship him with everything you've got, with your whole heart and soul and being. . . then you'll be alert to life, to the world around you, to the wonders he made

Worship . . . his glorious majesty.

Even with all eternity, you'll never exhaust the wonders of God. It will take that long to explore all that he's about and to finally, fully serve him.

I climb the sapphire stairs

And tiptoe the rainbow halls.

A concert of color melts me into white light.

In God's presence

The symphony never ends.

Enter into his beauty.

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Janet Chester Bly has authored 11 books on devotional topics, women's issues, and family, including *Awakening Your Sense of Wonder* and *Hope Lives Here*. She has also co-written 18 other books of nonfiction and fiction with her husband, Stephen, such as *The Hidden West Series* and *The Carson City Chronicles*. She serves as music director and teacher of special adults at Winchester Community Church in Winchester, ID. She enjoys classic old movies, instant spring gardens of hanging petunias, and wearing dressy denim. You may contact her at address below or by e-mail: janet@blybooks.com or janetbly@connectwireless.us

STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is God Beautiful?

Janet Chester Bly

- 1.) What makes a human beautiful, in your opinion?
- 2.) How does your craving for beauty express itself?
- 3.) Only a God who is beautiful could create beautiful creatures. But what if you consider yourself plain? What does that do to your perception of God?
- 4.) Do you think it's harder for beautiful people to have a lovely inner character and why? (Matthew 23:27)
- 5.) What emotions do beautiful places. . . beautiful creations. . . evoke in you?
- 6.) When's the last time you experienced a perfect moment of soul-restoring beauty?
- 7.) What do you think. . . Can a God who isn't beautiful create a world of beauty?
- 8.) "Beauty is one of the rare things that do not lead to doubt of God" (Jean Anouilh) – Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 9.) What does beauty do for you?
What do you think beauty adds to the world in general?
- 10.) Would you like to create something beautiful? If so, what?
- 11.) Describe God the best you can in one or two sentences.
Do you expect Him to be beautiful? Why or why not?
- 12.) What do you think of this statement by author Randy Alcorn: "Those who imagine they will tire of praising God in Heaven have not yet begun to grasp who God is, and the magnificent inexhaustible character of his wonders and joys."
- 13.) Some believe that the decline in quality art is related to the decline in faith in God. What's your opinion of that?
- 14.) So, explain how the beautiful world God created got messed up. Include scripture verses.
- 15.) Has something beautiful ever been a catalyst in some way of a spiritual change in you? Explain.