

Beauty, Discretion

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[0:00] Please turn to Proverbs 11 with me this afternoon.! The Old Testament book that records for us so much wisdom, Proverbs 11.! Are you a beauty or a beast?

! Perhaps some of you are offended by the very question. I hope not. There's a reason for it. Are you a beauty or a beast? The children's story shows that not everything is as it seems.

The stunningly handsome and strong Gaston is a boar of a man. And the hideous beast masks a surprisingly kind and gentle man.

And the Bible sets before a similar contrast. Just because someone is appealing to look at or popular doesn't mean that it's the kind of person you want to spend the rest of your life with or to have as your king.

King Saul was tall and handsome and maybe dark too. But he was at least tall and handsome. But he was a wicked, proud man and a terrible king.

[1:14] Or Proverbs 6 speaks of a woman who's beautiful, but she is immoral. And she is a wayward wife.

And here in Proverbs 11, in verse 22, we have a proverb that addresses some of these discrepancies. Things that aren't always as they seem.

And Proverbs 11, in verse 22 says, Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion. And from this verse this afternoon, we want to think about beauty, discretion, and you.

How these things relate to you. And we want to be encouraged to show discretion in the use of the gifts that God has given us. And to warn that beauty or other gifts without discretion are not only ugly, they're dangerous.

And so we start with beauty this afternoon. And Solomon compares beauty to a gold ring. One of the ways that women adorn themselves. And that symbolism and importance continues today.

[2:22] We admire and appreciate articles of gold. Like wedding bands that symbolize that enduring relationship between a husband and wife. That precious and beautiful union that they have.

People adorn their ears and their necks and their wrists and their ankles and their toes even. With articles of gold. And I would bet this afternoon.

With rings and bracelets and necklaces and so on. And that we could probably come up with a hundred or so gold rings. In our midst. Maybe more this afternoon. And that was true for Israel as well.

Aaron was able to collect enough of their gold rings to fashion a golden calf for them. And later when the tabernacle was built. There was enough gold from the Israelites.

Gold rings and such. That they were able to adorn the tabernacle with gold. It's a symbol that transcends culture and time. A symbol of beauty. Beauty. And the beauty to which it's compared here is the physical beauty of a woman.

[3:28] Now the word beauty here is used of men and women in the Bible. But more often of women. Sarai. Abram's wife was so beautiful that Abram was afraid the Egyptians were going to kill him.

So they could have his beautiful wife. Rachel was beautiful in face and form. And she caught Jacob's eye. The woman in the song of Solomon is beautiful.

Frequently referred to that way. Joseph and David are referred to as, our translations say, handsome. It's the same word. Beautiful. Beautiful. And the word can refer to both beauty of face and of form.

That was true of Rachel, Abigail, Esther among women in Scripture. Joseph among the men in Scripture. Their faces attractive. And so are their bodies. I say that simply because Scripture does. And because it has relevance for how we apply the proverb this afternoon. And one other note about beauty. There's nothing wrong with this gift from God.

[4:31] The problem comes when it is paired with a lack of discretion. And discretion is far more important than beauty. We could take this principle about beauty and this principle of the proverb and extend it for gifts from God besides beauty and for people besides women.

We can learn something, as we've noted, about handsome men with chiseled bodies from this verse. But we could also speak of other gifts. Those of strength and musical talent and athletic ability and intelligence and wealth and others.

All of these gifts from God that can be a good thing in a person who has discretion. Matthew Henry says about this proverb that it may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments. It is a pity that those should have them who have not the discretion to use them well. So you can apply it to things besides just beauty. There's a word about beauty, but now a word about discretion.

The discretion, the word here, is literally the word taste. And it's used figuratively of somebody with good judgment or, as we say, someone with good taste. Some people have poor taste in clothing when they can't match or when their fashion sense displays a lack of sense.

[5:48] Or when house hunting, you find orange shag carpet going up the stairs and green shag and orange shag in the rooms upstairs. Or in a basement, you find red shag carpet on the walls.

And you think that these houses were decorated in a day when there was different taste in decorating, different discretion in decorating than we have now. And we think that they had rather poor discretion.

And we found all of those things when we were looking for a house in Bremen, by the way. Some of them in our house. Someone with discretion or taste will evaluate the circumstances and they will draw wise conclusions of what to do in that situation.

It's knowledge rightly applied. It's wisdom. It's what the book of Proverbs is all about. Knowing what to do in a given set of circumstances. In a particular situation.

And so, for example, someone with a lot of money and no discretion looks only at the immediate pleasure that money can bring. But they don't consider the long-term implications of blowing all that money in the present.

[6:55] Because they have no discernment. No discretion. They'll live like the prodigal son and spend it now on women and drink in an extravagant lifestyle. But with a little discretion.

They could have thought ahead and anticipated where such a lifestyle would land them. They run out of money. It's not a pretty picture. And where does the prodigal son land? With all of his money and no discernment. No discretion.

But he lands in the pigsty. And isn't it interesting that Proverbs, Solomon, compares someone who has no discretion to a pig. The prodigal son didn't have any discretion.

And he ended up like a pig. And so will you. If you misuse the gifts that God has given you. Now a gold ring is a thing of beauty.

But when you put it in the snout of a pig. That's rooting around in the mud and manure with that snout. With that nose. Doesn't take long before that's not a beautiful gold ring anymore.

[7:55] It's been ruined. It's been obscured. And when you think that the pig wasn't just an animal prone to rooting around in the mud. But was also unclean in Israel. Forbidden. Not to be eaten.

The picture is all the more repulsive. No girl in Solomon's day. Let alone any in our day. Would want to be compared to a pig. And yet.

If you have beauty with no discretion. That's what you are. Sadly. This is what happened to the nation of Israel herself. You know the nation of Israel is often compared to a woman.

And a woman without discretion. God had blessed Israel. And adorned her. And made her beautiful. But she had no discretion. She proved unfaithful to him.

Listen to some verses from Ezekiel 16. God speaking of Israel. I adorned you with jewelry. I put bracelets on your arm. And a necklace around your neck. And I put a ring.

[8:52] And that's our word. I put a ring on your nose. Earrings on your ears. And a beautiful crown on your head. So you were adorned with gold and silver. Your clothes were of fine linen. And costly fabric. And embroidered cloth.

You became very beautiful. And rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations. On account of your beauty. Because the splendor I had given you. Made your beauty perfect. Declares the sovereign Lord. But you trusted in your beauty. And used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by. And your beauty became his. At the head of every street. You built your lofty shrines. And degraded your beauty. Offering your body with increasing promiscuity. To anyone who passed by. Israel was a beautiful nation. But they turned out like pigs. Rooting in the mud. Because they had no discretion. They misused and abused the gifts. [9 : 50] And the blessings that God had given them. Until they were like the pigs. That they were forbidden to eat. They degraded their beauty. By rooting around in the wickedness.

And idolatry of pagan nations. Beautiful nation. But no discretion. Well the same is true of. A literal woman. Says Solomon.

God gifts her with great physical beauty. And she loves her beauty. She wants others to notice it. So she dresses in a way. That attracts the attention. Of men to her beautiful body. She likes that attention. She thinks that she accentuates her beauty. With the way she looks with her eyes. At men. And speaks flirtatious words to them. But Proverbs warns about women like this. Doesn't it? Listen to just a few things. From the book of Proverbs. And how it speaks of such a woman. For the lips of an adulteress. Drip honey. [10 : 47] And smoother than oil. Is her speech. She gives no thought to the way of life. Her paths are crooked. But she knows it not. The immoral woman. The wayward wife.

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty. Or let her captivate you with her eyes. And out came a woman to meet him. Dressed like a prostitute. And with crafty intent.

If you don't gather it from those verses. Proverbs doesn't speak favorably. Of such a woman. One who has beauty. And acknowledges her beauty. But she has no discretion.

Though beautiful. She is the epitome of folly. She destroys those who fall for her trap. And she herself will be destroyed. Because the end of folly is always death. But it's not this way for all beautiful women.

The Bible paints a picture of one woman in particular. Who is both beautiful. And discerning. And her name is Abigail. We won't have time this afternoon.

[11 : 49] But you can go home and read 1 Samuel 25. And you'll find that both of these words are used to her. She was beautiful. And she had great discernment. She showed great discretion.

In turning the wrath of David. Away from Nabal. Her foolish husband. She didn't use her stunning beauty of form and face. To seduce David. She used her wisdom.

To appeal to his reason. Later. When her husband Nabal died. She and David did marry. And he enjoyed the beauty of her face and form. And the bonds of marriage. Now that's true beauty. That's a beautiful woman with discretion. You want to be like Abigail. You don't want to be like the woman in Proverbs 7. Or think of Bathsheba for a moment.

And understand that I'm not taking any of the blame off David. For a single moment. For his sin. But 2 Samuel 11 and verse 2 says. One evening. David got up from his bed.

[12 : 46] And walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. Bathsheba was a beautiful woman. But surely she must have known.

That she could be seen from the rooftops. Wherever it was that she was bathing. And could have chosen a better place. Or a better time. To be doing that. Maybe she enjoyed knowing that.

Maybe not. We don't know. But it seems as though there's some measure. Of a lack of discretion. And the whole thing perhaps. Could have been avoided. Now men you're not off the hook.

You can't say. Well there's all these indiscreet women around. I can't help it. We're going to talk to you in a minute. And David had no excuse because of that.

So. A woman without discretion is. Is an ugly thing. A beautiful woman without discretion. Is like a pig. But we could talk about other gifts.

[13 : 46] Of men or women. And you can do the same thing with other gifts. You can take something that God has given you. And use it for your own satisfaction. And for your own pleasure. And to receive the praises of men. You can take an intellect.

The wisdom that God has given you. And you can use it to excel in your classes. Only for the praise of men. And your teachers. And your parents. And to make yourself feel good. And to do better in

school. So that you can do well in college.

So that you can get a good job. And make a lot of money. So you can be happy. And so everybody can say. How successful he is. What a wonderful student she is. What a wonderful person. You're taking a gift that God has given.

And you're making it ugly. Because you're using it only for yourself. Or you can take that wisdom.

And apply it in a way that praises God. And does good for his kingdom.

And when you praise. You praise the God of wisdom. Who's so given the gift to you. That's to possess gifts and discretion. There are athletically talented people. Who play the game.

[14 : 39] Because it makes them feel good. And they love the praise that comes from it. And they never once give a thought to the one who made their body that way. So that they can do it in the first place. They don't think about playing the game and feeling God's pleasure.

Enjoying Him. Only enjoying themselves. Imagine the disgustingness. Of a man gifted to preach. Who uses that gift only to draw attention to himself. He gets in the pulpit.

Because he wants people to praise him. And he's in the ministry. Because he wants to have power over people. He's been given a gift. But the way he uses it makes it ugly. He's obscured its beauty and its usefulness.

By covering it in the mud and pride of the praise of men. If you're gifted and you have no discretion. It's no good. So we talk about beauty.

We talk about discernment or discretion. And now about you. And we've perhaps already talked a little bit about you. If we've touched on one of your gifts. First of all to each of us.

[15 : 43] To all of us generally. We must have discretion. And we must exercise it every day. God is the one who has given you your gifts. Your beauty. Your talents.

Your abilities. And you must use those things in his service. And for his glory. Not your own. Are you faithful first and foremost to God? Do you serve him and not yourself?

Your primary goal is not to make you happy. But rather to make God happy. And you'll only be able to do that. As you pursue the wisdom that comes from above. The wisdom that we find recorded. In the pages of scripture. Lady Wisdom is a beautiful woman. She's portrayed for us in Proverbs. She makes an appeal.

Come. Get to know Lady Wisdom. And you'll have discretion. Listen to what she says in Proverbs 9. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[16 : 39] And knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through me your days will be many. And years will be added to your life. If you want discretion. Listen to Lady Wisdom when she speaks. Wait daily at Wisdom's doorpost.

Seek her face. Which is to say. Seek the face of God who gives this wisdom. Listen to Him. Listen to His Word. The more you soak up of this Word.

The greater your discernment. Discretion will be. And if you have discretion. Then your gifts really will be beautiful. Don't we love a fabulous ball player. Who's so humble that he almost doesn't know how good he is.

He just loves the game. And he loves to play. And there's this innocence about that. That we enjoy watching. But then there's an athlete who's good. And he knows it. And he plays it for the money. And for the praises of men. And they've got the same gift. One of them's got more discretion than the other. And in one the gift is beautiful. And we love to watch it. And the other one we're just almost repulsed by.

[17 : 37] And we'd rather not watch if that team is playing. Because he's got a beautiful gift. But no discretion. So to each of us generally. Pursue discretion by pursuing God's Word.

And exercise it in your gifts and graces. But a second thing for all of us generally. And that is. Don't only look for physical beauty in a potential spouse.

This is especially obviously for those of you who aren't married yet. Don't only look for physical beauty in a potential spouse. If you're wondering what to look for in a spouse.

Here's a good place to start. Faithfulness to God. And discretion. If you find that they're not faithful to God. They're not using their gifts for His glory. They're proud.

And they're not faithful in sitting under His Word. And reading it. And obeying Him. Then you have good reason to wonder. If they'll have the discretion to be faithful to you. Once you're married.

Nothing wrong with physical attraction.

[18:36] Don't misunderstand. But if that's all you've got. Then that's all you've got. She might be a beauty. But if she has no discretion with money again. For example. Or only spends it on herself and her looks.

Then you've got a pig with a gold ring. And if he looks good. But he's so into his good looks. That he neglects you. You're not going to be happy. Look for a spouse that's in love with lady wisdom. That's in love with the Lord. And you'll find a good spouse. If you're both pursuing that. You're both pursuing wisdom and discretion. Then you've got a foundation to build your marriage on. You've got something to start with.

Something to work with. Because your goals are both the same. But if you've got a self-centered person over here. That thinks she's beautiful. And self-centered person over here. That thinks he's beautiful. And they're going to pursue their own beauty.

And their own goals. That doesn't make for a good marriage. Self-centered marriage doesn't work. God-centered marriage does. So girls. You're looking for a guy who's good looking.

[19:34] And buff. He's handsome of face and form. That's fine. How is he in the classroom? If he's all brawn and no brain. Chances are he's going to be more into himself.

Than you are. He's going to spend his time and attention on himself. Not you or God. He's not going to be able to provide for you very well. What are you looking for in a spouse? And you know.

What are you going to do when he hits 30? He was an athlete in high school. And he could eat Burger King as much as he wanted. And he was no problem. Hit the weight room. And run a little bit. He's good. At 30 man.

You hit Burger King all you want. And you're not playing all those sports anymore. And he's not going to be the man you married in a few years. He's going to look a little different. And if that's all you fell in love with.

When that's gone. What are you going to love? Or guys. If you're only looking for a girl. That's easy on the eyes. What will you do when her aim continues to be attracting the attention of other men besides you?

[20:44] Not going to like that. Are you? And the jealousy will tear your marriage apart. But what do you expect? She didn't have discretion before. She's not going to suddenly get some. Because she married you.

And what will you do when that beauty fades? The curves that held your attention shift to different places. The smooth, beautifully tanned skin shows signs of aging.

Wrinkles. And if all you fell in love with was your beauty. When it's gone. What will you love? Seek discretion above beauty in your spouse.

But now a word particularly for women. I say this with all of the love in my heart. Don't be opaque. When you dress in a way that attracts lustful attention to your beautiful form. For someone other than your husband. You're showing a tragic lack of discretion.

[21:48] In fact, it's not beautiful at all. You're hiding. You're spoiling your beauty like a pig does to a gold ring. You say, I'm supposed to use my gifts for the glory of God.

How can I use my beauty for the glory of God? Well, you can save that beautiful body to give pleasure to your husband. And in so doing, you'll fulfill and honor God in fulfilling His purpose for sexual pleasure in marriage.

He designed it. We shouldn't be afraid of it. And it's a good thing. Within the bonds of marriage.

There, your beauty can be used for the glory of God. To bring joy and fulfillment to your marriage.

Proverbs 5 speaks to men. But there's a lesson for the ladies. Solomon says, may your fountain be blessed. And may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

A loving doe. A graceful deer. May her breasts satisfy you always. May you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress?

[22:55] Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? A husband and wife are to enjoy each other's beauty in marriage. But if you young ladies are spreading your beauty around for all to see and exhilarating many men with your beauty, then you're spoiling what God has given you as a gift for your husband.

Save it for your marriage. And once you're married, keep it in your marriage. If you don't know what you're wearing, if what you're wearing is drawing the wrong kind of attention, ask yourself how it makes you feel.

And why you picked it out in the first place. And if you still don't know, ask your husband or your dad. And they will know. I'm not saying to not dress in a manner that's pleasing or attractive. But use discretion in what you wear. A gold ring is so out of place in the snout of a pig. It just doesn't belong. And so is a lack of discretion in a beautiful woman. It's a sad thing. It's out of place. And so again, be an Abigail, not a Proverbs 7 kind of woman. If you want to really be beautiful, 1 Peter 3, 3-5, your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. [24 : 10] Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty. Unfading beauty? You guys want a beautiful wife that will be beautiful for the rest of your life? Find one with unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is of great worth in God's sight.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. You remember how the book of Proverbs ends? It's a portrait of a truly beautiful woman. A wise woman. A noble woman. A discreet woman. And you remember its conclusion in verse 30. Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting. It doesn't say beauty is bad. It doesn't say it's wrong. It just says it's fleeting. It doesn't last long. Beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. And you remember that Lady Wisdom said the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And so if you want to be truly beautiful, pursue the fear of the Lord. Pursue a relationship with Him. [25 : 14] Gain wisdom and apply it in all of life. Spend time cultivating your walk with God each day. You spend time in front of the mirror each day.

So you can be beautiful. That's fine. But make sure that you... What's more important? Your physical appearance? Or the fear of the Lord? Make sure you're in His Word each day. Make sure that you're pursuing true beauty. A gentle and quiet spirit. A walk with God. And it's profitable and a blessing. But a word for men as well. Are you married and good looking? Well, of course you are. Don't use those good looks and charming ways and words to flirt with women who are not your wife. It's a lack of discretion. And it makes you ugly. Are you single and good looking? There is more to life than how much you can bench. That ain't going to support a wife and a family. [26 : 25] And pretty soon you won't be able to lift as much as you once could. Pursue wisdom instead. You too. You spend a lot of time in the weight room. You're going to take care of that body. You want it to look good.

Are you spending that kind of time caring for your soul? Pursuing the fear of the Lord? It's not just for women that the fear of the Lord makes them beautiful. The fear of the Lord makes you handsome as well. There is something worth pursuing. A right relationship with Him. And then don't go looking for women who have no discretion. I think that's obvious. But sometimes it will be unavoidable. You will encounter women who are attractive in face and form and have little or no discretion. You will find them at work. You will find them at school. You will find them pretty much wherever you go. Again, understand that their discretion or lack of discretion is no excuse for you. But whenever you see a seductive woman, remember Lady Folly in Proverbs and how going down that road always ends in death. [27 : 31] And have some rules. I remember Andy Hamilton preaching at a family conference and he said, Men, neck up.

You fix your eyes from the neck up. If you encounter a woman and you can't avoid her who is not discreet. The neck up. Control your eyes. But a couple of other things you can and should be doing. One, love your wife. If you have any discretion at all, you'll be cultivating that relationship with her. Cultivating that walk with the Lord together. And loving her. The more you love her, the less the so-called beauty of other women will attract you. Cultivate love for your wife. And then cultivate a relationship with Lady Wisdom. And your wives won't be jealous of her. Lady Wisdom is a right relationship with God. You pursue that relationship. [28 : 30] And you'll find the closer you are to God through Christ, the further you'll be from a desire for folly and sin. If you're feasting your soul and your mind on Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom.

The wisdom from God that is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. If you're feasting on Him, then women without discretion will hold much less attraction for you. Neck up. Love your wife. And pursue a relationship with Lady Wisdom. What about a word for the church? For you, the church as a whole. We thought about Israel for a moment, didn't we? The people of God. God made her beautiful, but she wasted it. And God has made us beautiful. He has blessed Grace Fellowship Church beyond measure. We have an abundance of blessing here. God has been good to us. And we have a beautiful building, don't we? And we have a beautiful church, which is the people. A beautiful body of believers.

[29:28] The question is, what will we do with it? Are we wasting it? Are we wasting it only upon ourselves being selfish and self-centered? Or do we have an outward concern that looks to others?

May God give us discernment not to choose the tragic path of Israel and being degraded by the wickedness of the culture around us. We don't need to go rooting into pagan culture and idolatry like they did.

We'll lose our first love. Well, let's keep the main thing. The main thing. May give us discretion and discernment to use our abundance of resources and gifts and our building and all that we have. Not to draw attention and praise to ourselves, but to the God who has so graciously given us these things. We are blessed. May we not waste it. Let's be a blessing to others and service.

Use for service in God's kingdom as a church. And then one last note. You know what the final nail in the coffin of beauty being some all-important thing that is more important than everything else?

[30:33] Obviously it's not. Discretion is more important than beauty. But still, the way many people live, the way many people act, the way they look is the most important thing. There's a final nail to put in that coffin that has that attitude, that view.

And it's Christ our Savior. You know that Isaiah 53 is a prophecy about Jesus. And it says that He grew up before Him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him. Nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men.

He wasn't popular. He didn't receive the praises of men. He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and familiar with suffering like one from whom men hide their faces.

He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten and afflicted.

[31:39] But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him. And by His wounds we are healed.

Jesus wasn't beautiful by physical standards. But He certainly had discretion, didn't He? Knew what to do in every situation. Never gave in to these temptations.

Never looked upon a woman with lust in His heart. And He really is beautiful, isn't He? A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord.

And so shouldn't we seek to be like Him? But more than that, we should seek forgiveness from Him. For all of our vanity and lack of discretion.

You see, this verse exposes me. I know it's about beautiful women with no discretion. But it exposes my lack of discretion. Discernment. And so it should send us running back to the Savior.

[32:41] We find forgiveness for sins only at His cross. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him. And so if you have fallen short of this standard that we've seen today, you can find forgiveness.

He can take away the guilt of your seeking the attention of men. He can purify you and make you clean. He can give you the strength and grace to save yourself for your spouse from now on. May we be truly beautiful as He was. Have the kind of wisdom and discretion that He had. And find the forgiveness for our sin and shortcomings in Him. so we end where we began are you a beauty or a beast if God has made you beautiful by his grace praise him truly beautiful if you're a beast he can change you so you run to him for salvation for forgiveness and strength and you will find it by his grace let's pray father we thank you for Jesus our savior and we thank you that though he was despised and rejected by men that he was pleasing in your sight and that his work was perfect and acceptable to you and we thank you that in him we find forgiveness of sins redemption freedom from the power of sin and so we pray that you would deliver us from the power of loving the praise of men too much of not loving lady wisdom and you the source of all wisdom enough grant us discretion that we might use the gifts graces that you have given to us in a manner that is pleasing

and honoring in your sight and not in a way that only brings pleasure and praise to us forgive us where we fall short give us grace to go from here committed to living for Christ bringing honor to your name and we pray it in the name of that wonderful that marvelous that beautiful savior Jesus amen