

# True Beauty

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Of the Seventy

*It isn't just about cosmetics or clothing. What makes a young woman truly attractive comes from her heart.*



*A young woman whose countenance is aglow with both happiness and virtue radiates inner beauty.*

**W**hat makes a woman beautiful? The world tries to convince us that cosmetics, perfumes, jewelry, fashionable clothing, diets, and even surgery are necessary for beauty. While some of these fashion aids are desirable and lovely, they can change only surface appearances.

The gospel teaches us that true beauty is more than skin-deep. A young woman whose countenance is aglow with both happiness and virtue radiates inner beauty.

**"Happiness is the most attractive accessory a young woman can have."**

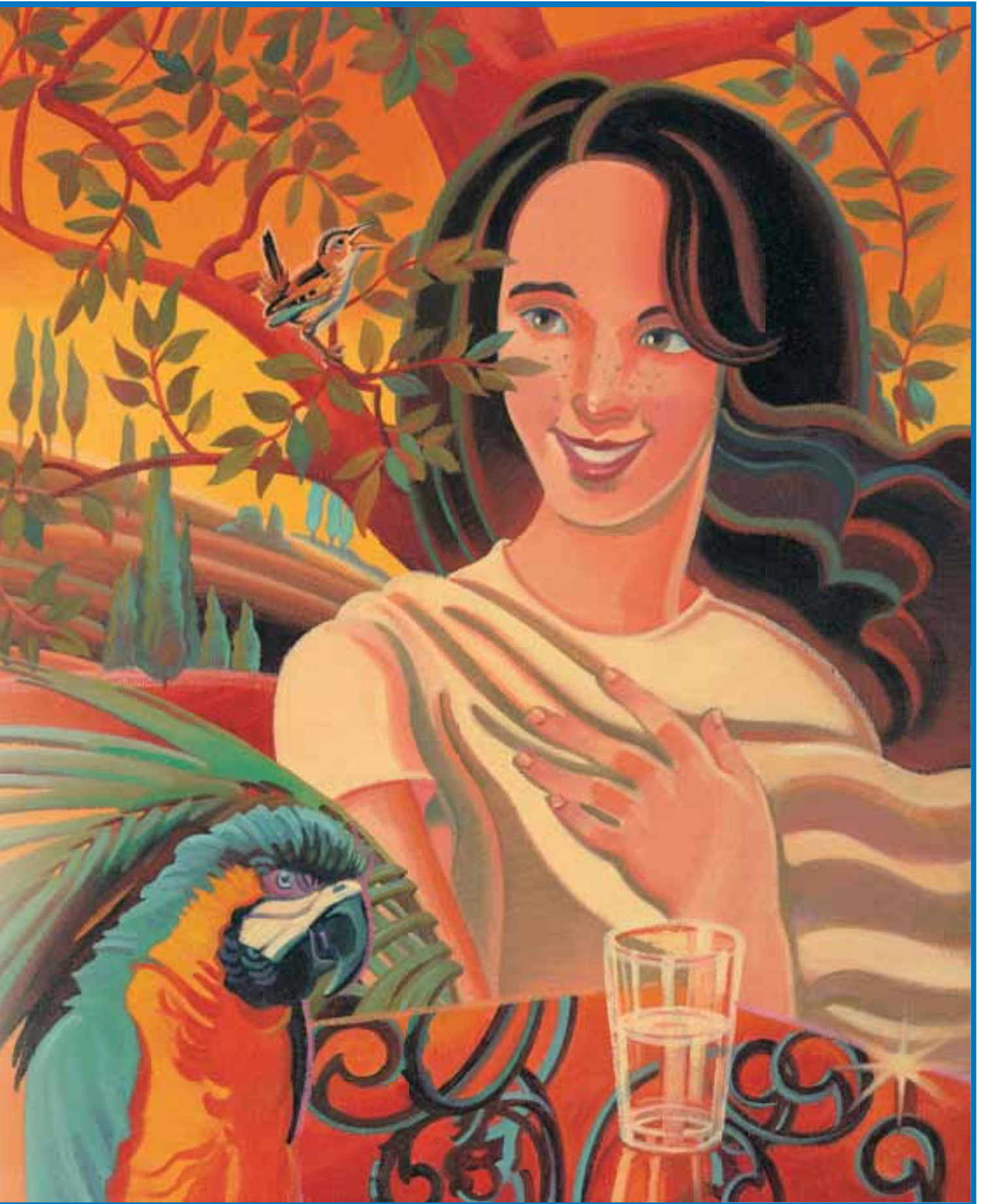
I came across this one-line sermon in an old magazine article. I thought it was profound. If happiness is the most attractive accessory a young woman can have, then a smile would have to be the most charming cosmetic. Make-up, if applied tastefully and in moderation, can enhance appearance. But no amount of eye shadow, lipstick, or mascara could possibly compete with the natural attractiveness of a genuine smile. It brightens the room. It cheers others. It communicates

friendship, love, and optimism so much more than any cosmetic ever could. It puts people at ease and is welcoming. Truly in the world of glamour, there is no close second to a genuine smile.

## **Is happiness a choice?**

One of the discoveries that our Father in Heaven would have us make is to learn that we have far more control over our happiness than we sometimes think we do. How we see life's glass—half-full or half-empty—is primarily a choice. And with our Father in Heaven's help, our faith, hope, and optimism can grow. The story of Nephi, Laman, and Lemuel in the Book of Mormon is an interesting case study in choosing or looking for happiness.

Laman and Lemuel seemed to always see the glass half-empty. They constantly murmured and complained. Their cynical nature blinded them to any blessings that might have been present. Consequently, the misery upon which they constantly focused was what life handed them. Nephi, by contrast,



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always saw the very same glass as half-full, and happiness was his reward, even though he suffered the very same burdens and trials.

As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe put it, "A man sees in the world what he carries in his heart."<sup>1</sup> The world becomes a creation after our own image, a reflection of our own faith or lack thereof.

Even when trials come, the wise choose happiness. They are lovely people to be around. Conversely no cosmetic, perfume, or wardrobe can ever compensate for the unpleasantness of a complainer or pessimist. "But what if that is the way I am?" someone might ask. Or "what if I don't feel like smiling?" Ben Franklin referred to pessimism as a "bad habit" to be broken and advised avoiding people so "infected."<sup>2</sup>

Of course, there are times in everyone's life when it is difficult to smile, times of trial and tragedy, times of distress and misfortune. But even in such depressing times it is helpful and wise to look to the future with hope and optimism, just as Nephi did.

#### **Mirror, mirror on the wall . . .**

If you are discouraged about your appearance, it will help to see yourself through the eyes of those who love you. Hidden beauty seen by loved ones can become a mirror for self-improvements. This phenomenon of the person internalizing the expectations of others with subsequent positive change has become known as the Pygmalion effect, after the famous play in which the "guttersnipe," Eliza Dolittle, becomes the refined *My Fair Lady*. The beauty was always there; Eliza only needed help from others to discover it.

Our Father in Heaven provides the perfect example of this principle. He sees our divine nature. We are His children. The way He sees

us, because of His love for us, is perfect. The mirror which He holds constantly before us, if we will only raise our sight to look, is the one in which we should trust. Its image is always true and never distorted. He reminds us, as He did Moses, "Thou art my son [or daughter]" (Moses 1:4).

#### **Choosing the right leads to happiness**

Our Father in Heaven expects all of His children to choose the right, which is the only way to lasting happiness and inner beauty. We read in *For the Strength of Youth* that "wrong choices delay your progression and lead to heartache and misery. Right choices lead to happiness and eternal life" ([2001], 4).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve (1926–2004) said, "Though Christ was called a 'man of sorrows,' that description refers to His bearing of our sorrows. It does not describe His day-to-day bearing."<sup>3</sup>

Because our choices have so much to do with our happiness, the phrase "men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25) could be considered an expectation. Why would the Lord expect us to be happy? Because He has borne our sorrow that we might have joy, and He blesses us when we are obedient. The Savior atoned for our sins that we might be happy.

#### **There is a beautiful radiance in virtue**

It is not the smile alone that is beautiful. Delilah surely smiled at Samson, and Potiphar's wife at Joseph. These were women of the world whose smiles were devoid of inner beauty. "Tell me what you smile or laugh at, and I'll tell you who you are."<sup>4</sup>

The virtuous smile is truly beautiful as it radiates in a totally natural way. This true



beauty can't be painted on but is a gift of the Spirit. It is literally letting your light shine before men. When virtue is combined with obedience to the Lord's laws of health and respect for the human body, young people truly become temples in which the Holy Ghost dwells, giving them a beautiful aura. It is this beauty that is most becoming and enduring.

Truman G. Madsen expressed it well: "This Light of the Spirit cannot be faked. All of the theater lights and stages and camera trickery and Photoshop manipulation may convince the unaware that artificial light has the same effect. It does not. Artificial light ends with the flipping of a switch. It is merely a backhanded tribute to Light. Christ is the Life and the Light—the Light that lightens hearts through thick and thin."<sup>5</sup>

President Brigham Young said, "There is not a man or woman on this earth, whose peace is made with God, and who are associated with holy beings, and seeking after holy principles, but their countenances are lit up with a lamp of divine cheerfulness."<sup>6</sup>

Modesty is an outward sign and requirement for inward beauty. Without modesty, the radiance of *divine cheerfulness*, which is a gift of the Spirit, vanishes.

#### **A pure and cheerful heart**

The world prizes body-baring "beauty." Hollywood markets it, advertisers exploit it, and the media promote it. The Lord, however, "seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). The kind of a man a virtuous woman wants to marry also "seeth not" as the natural man seeth. He will be drawn to the true beauty she radiates from a pure and cheerful heart. The same is true for a young woman looking for a virtuous young man.

In pageants, there is only one declared the fairest of them all. But with the Lord there is no competition. All have an equal privilege to have His image engraven upon their countenance (see Alma 5:19). There is no truer beauty. **NE**

#### **NOTES**

1. *Faust*, Part I, line 179.
2. "Handsome and Deformed Leg," in *The Works of Dr. Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Richard Price (1853), 146–148.
3. *Even as I Am* (1982), 103.
4. Marcel Pagnol, quoted in *Reader's Digest*, Sept. 2007, 95.
5. "The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength' (Nehemiah 8:10)," *Brigham Young University 2000–2001 Speeches* (2001), 7.
6. Quoted in "The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength,'" 7.