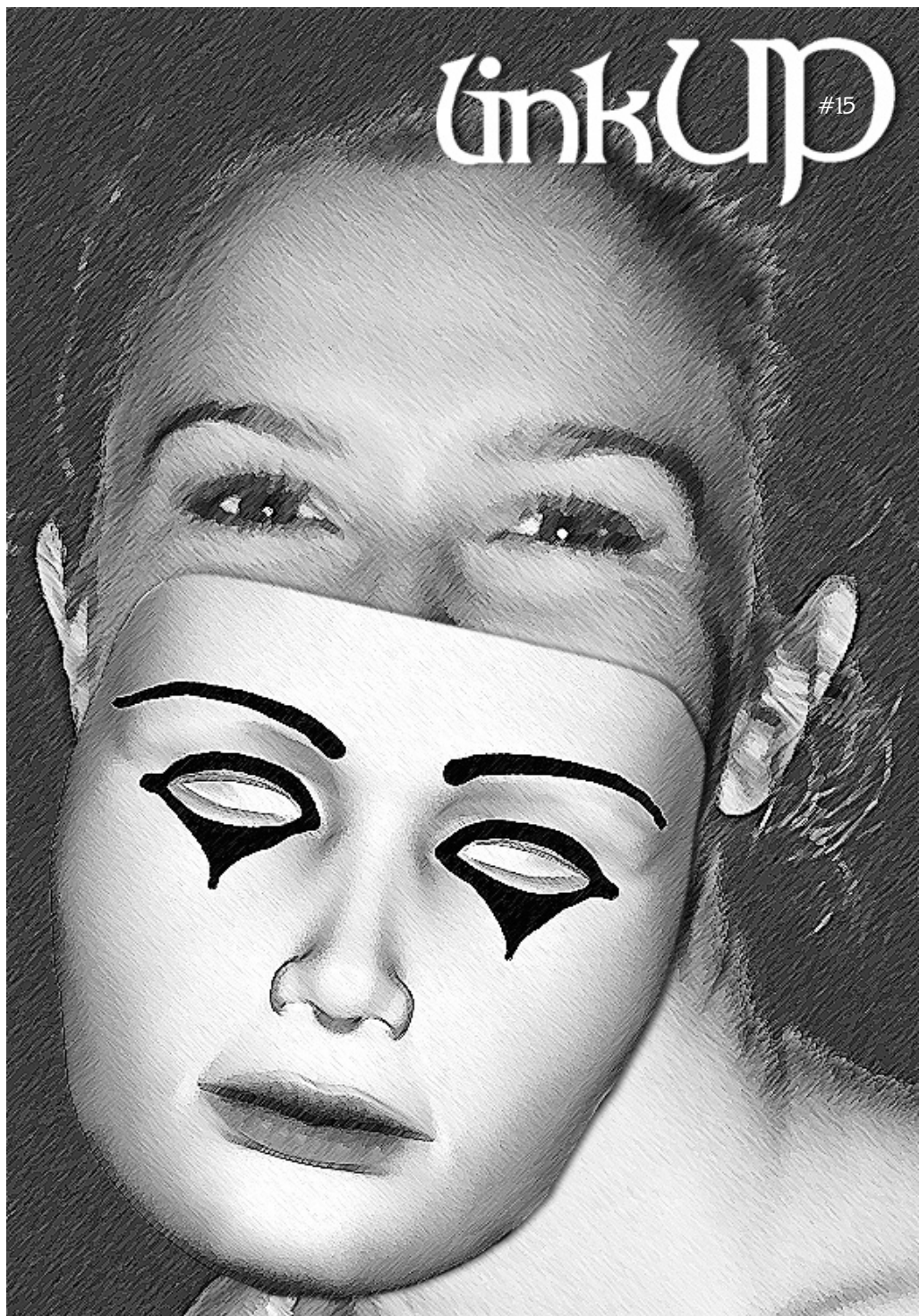


linkUP #15



# Stuck?

## Stuck at the Shallow End of the Dream Pool?

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### (Quinsy, spirit being:)

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I know comparing is a big thing. The list of things that you can compare with is almost endless. You can compare with beauty, good looks, height, weight, strength, fitness, talents, abilities, family trees, opportunities, jobs, ministries, haircolor, eyecolor, skincolor, and the list goes on and on.

Partial insanity kicks in if you don't pull in the reins and control your spirit in regards to comparing negatively. Comparing is a downward spiral that gets you nowhere, so you've just got to cry out to the Lord for the victory if you have a weakness

along these lines.

In Heaven we see things differently than you guys do on Earth. You tend to look at things through the eyes of the flesh most of the time. That's just human nature. The only way you can overcome that built-in mindset is through the power of the Spirit.

You've got to realize that the way you are is the way the Lord made you, and you are perfect to Him.

"But, how come I ended up in the shallow end of the dream pool as far as looks or talents go?" you may argue. What you've got to realize is that God's idea of perfection is different than yours. You were created as a rare, unique person—the only one just like you in the world. You are a masterpiece to your Creator, even if you don't feel like it.

Of course, some people abuse their

bodies and become unhealthy, too fat or skinny, and so on, but that's not God's fault. He made the beginning product just perfectly, but it's up to the steward of the body to take good care of it and keep it in tiptop shape.

When you get to Heaven, you'll realize that everyone is beauti-

**The way you are is the way the Lord made you, and you are perfect to Him.**

ful. You no longer look at things through the eyes of the flesh. Your carnal reasoning is no more. You realize that you're loved for who you are, and you are beautiful or handsome.—Everyone is! And if on Earth you wished you had certain talents and gifts, well, Heaven is the beginning of all eternity and you

have forever to learn about everything that you're interested in, and hone new skills and talents if you like.

Comparing or thinking negatively about yourself may be your thorn in the flesh, and the Lord allows this to teach you valuable lessons that you may have never learned any other way:

He teaches you lessons of trust.

He teaches you lessons of acceptance.

He teaches you lessons on fighting the Enemy's lies.

He gives you a whole storehouse full of experience so that you will be compassionate and understanding of others in the future.

In the Millennium, those on the Earth are

**Partial insanity kicks in if you don't pull in the reins.**

going to be just like you now. Well, almost. They're going to have many of the same battles, although to a

lesser degree because the Kingdom of God will be reigning supreme. The Lord's going to have to teach them the things that you learned while on Earth, and chances are He may use you as His instrument, as His vessel, as His teacher. See, all of your battles and tests while on Earth aren't just to fill up space or time or give you something to do. They're for a reason—and one of those reasons is so that you'll be able to be a help and strength to others in the days to come.

# Promote Me!

## Promote Me!—A Message from Jesus

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**T**here are so many great men and women throughout history whose brilliance has endured through the ages, despite the fact that their physical appearance was flawed or their bodies were handicapped in some way. Remember Paul? His bodily presence was weak,\* but this just glorified Me all the more, that I could use such a one who seemed so unsightly to the eyes of all who looked upon him. (\*2Cor. 10:10).

Handicaps and physical flaws are nothing more than wonderful, albeit disguised, blessings. Because you are not perfect, you are more humble. Because you are humble, you give Me the glory. And because you do not draw to yourself the vainglory of men, My beauty is admired.

So delight in your supposed flaws—those oft-annoying

little handicaps and blemishes you wish you could erase—for they are what set you apart as special vessels, fit to be placed the closest to My throne, for I know that you shall not draw attention from My person, but will point to Me through all the good that you accomplish.

**Delight in your supposed flaws—those oft-annoying little handicaps and blemishes you wish you could erase—for they are what set you apart as special vessels.**

**Tell me more!**



**Since Paul was apparently not nice looking at all, did he compare with others? Was that a trial for him?**

(Paul:) Ha, people have often labored over that description of me, trying to figure out how I looked. I just wasn't an impressive figure, physically speaking. Great orators—and orators were more important in those times I lived than writers were—usually had great physiques, strong features and a commanding figure. So when the early church read my writings, they just pictured some great orator—thus their mild shock when they actually saw me in person. I was just not that attractive to people because I was very short and stout and had a permanently furrowed brow that often made people think I was scowling at them. Sometimes I had a hard time speaking and I would slur my words without wanting to—which is why I was so thankful to be able to write letters to my flocks.

Let's see, did I compare. There were times when I wished that I had a more impressive outward appearance—I suppose you could say that. Sometimes people go by outward appearance too much, and it often separates the sheep from the goats, and in that sense I was thankful. I

certainly didn't have a cult following of my own person. I'm very happy to say that the Word was even more powerful coming from my mouth, because when it penetrated people's hearts and changed their lives, they had to attribute it to God.

I think when I was a young man I was more self-conscious about my physical appearance. I avoided people, and wasn't very sociable. But once Jesus transformed me on that road to Damascus, and I slowly saw that His love caused His followers to love me as a brother—regardless of my past, my appearance, and my at times ornery personality—something changed inside of me. As I grew in Christ, my personal image mattered less and less, and He mattered more and more.

You will find that too, as you grow in the Lord. Your priorities change. As you see your brothers and sisters battle long and hard, go under the waves and bob up again, suffer heartbreaks and personal losses, and yet stay true to Jesus, you will realize that the true beauty of those around you lies *within* them. And they will realize that about you too.

# The Secret

## The Secret of Beauty—From Queen Esther

**T**he perfection of beauty is fickle, for no one is perfect but God. We are all simply reflections of Him, and what counts is how it shines from the inside rather than our physical “perfections.”

Even though I was considered very beautiful, and history notes that it was my beauty that made the king’s eye land on me, I know that it was primarily the

**In time I became old, my youth faded and my physical beauty dwindled.**

beauty of God’s love shining through me.

When I looked at my reflection I could not understand the talk of my beauty that constantly surrounded the palace. Amid the countless beauties in the palace, I did not think my features were

overwhelming, or that they outshone all the rest. After all, I was very different in appearance from the revered yet now deposed Queen Vashti. Self doubt came in at times when I would compare my own

**It was an inner light.**

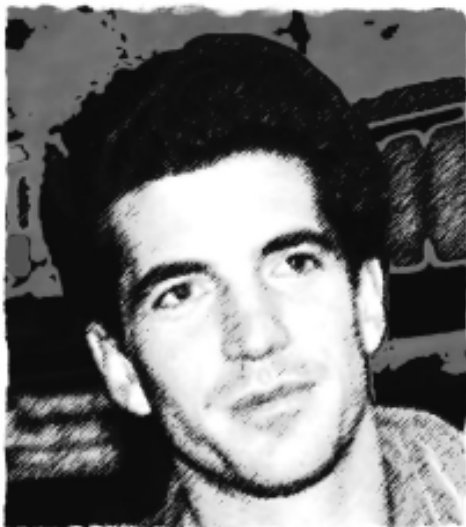
body—the shape of my hips, the slant of my eyes, and so on—to the bodies of other striking women in the palace. But God knew the type of beauty that was needed to capture the king’s interest, and so He chose me to fulfill His will.

In truth, it was not my beauty that helped me succeed in the long run, for in time I became old, my youth faded and my physical beauty dwindled, but my love for God increased and that was what shone through. The evidence of the most beautiful and awesome God, Who I knew and loved and trusted, created an inner beauty that drew others to me. Their only description was beauty, and beauty it was, but not how most people think of it; it was an inner light that far outshone the fickle physical beauty I had. This is the beauty that He places in all of His children, and it is up to them how much they want it to shine forth.

If you feel imperfect and you long to be beautiful and you spend long hours working at it, the secret is to spend time making yourself beautiful on the inside. It is *that* beauty that the Lord is able to use, far above any fading earthly beauty.

# Thoughts

## Thoughts from an “American Royal”—JFK Junior



**M**y brief life on Earth was filled with what is called “beauty.” Even *I* was considered beautiful! It was said of me that I was “blessed with a handsome face and a famous name, ample wealth and five-star celebrity.” “JFK Junior is the golden boy of his generation, a darling of magazine covers (the sexiest man alive, cooed *People* magazine) and a sort of American royal.”

Though I never professed to wanting the glory of man, I must confess that deep down inside I wanted and I craved it. I went for it. I was swallowed up and consumed by it. By all worldly standards I had it made.

I attained to all that man worships, but inside my bursting heart and troubled mind I felt no better off than if I were a bum on the filthiest street with my hair matted and my belly protruding. My custom-tailored suits and my perfected posture, my fast-paced New York walk, my so-called “perfect-face” was nothing to me because I was so so empty. My shallowness and the shallowness of all those around me disgusted me and became nightmarish representatives of the absurdity of man.

### Be the Right Student

(Katie, spirit being:) Let Jesus teach you about the real values in life—the value of loving others, being a blessing to other people, lifting the downtrodden, encouraging the weak, loving the unlovely. These are the things that will satisfy you! If you care about others more than yourself, you *will* be beautiful!

I didn't know which way to turn. I thought that if I could just please one more person I would be freer to pursue the real things of life, but I was wrong. Every step I took to remain the world's ideal of perfection, was another step to another step to another step leading to unhappiness. It drove me further away from my fellow man. Then, to top it off, my little plane crashed and I found myself in an unexpected and early grave.

What people consider to be beautiful stems from taste, which is adopted. You are in a material world, and with it comes an awareness of the fashions and the trends in the world. I know just how easy it is to fall prey to the wrong ideals, the ideals that pass away. So you must *see* rather than *look*. To look is human, to see divine.

Let your heart dictate what beauty is. Dare to think beyond what man has dictated. Dare to be what God has made you to be. You will know and behold true beauty when you love what God deems beautiful.

In times past people were judged much more on their character, their intelligence and their accomplishments—who they were on the inside. Perception of beauty has changed drastically in the last century. Preoccupation



**They didn't have any such thing as the '100 most beautiful people' way back then, so why does JFK, Jr. bring that up?**

(Jesus:) The point is that, although since the beginning of time people have worshipped good looks, it is only in the last century that this worship has driven people to starve themselves, to allow surgeons to cut up and alter their bodies, to burn their skin under the sun, and to do all sorts of strange things to their hair.—Just the last century!

During most of world's history, beauty was defined as good health, clear skin, and youthfulness. So although men and especially women have always competed to look attractive, it is only in modern times—with the advent of swift transportation and the spread of western culture—that the Enemy has been able to delude the masses on such a massive scale with his twisted definitions of beauty.

with looks, height, physique, color, weight, so on and so forth is so central these days. But all that is “in” now will pass away and no longer be “in.” So why struggle so hard with the outward when you can be cashing in on being eternally beautiful?

### **Perception of beauty has changed drastically in the last century.**

You should see what the “100 most beautiful people” looked like five or six thousand years ago. Considering the world's frame of mind and views on beauty today, you would likely laugh or say, “We have come such a long way since then.” But is the world a

Competition was one of the shams of the Devil. He knew that if he could make men and women compare and compete with one another, it would create division, foster hate, inspire jealousy, divide and conquer and get man so concerned about his body and the works of his hands that he would neglect his soul.

better place today? Is man's mind more refined? Or is it twisted and perverted and insistent on its own destruction?

Fashions have changed so entirely since the beginning of the world. In the Garden, along with sin and knowledge came competition, and especially physical competition. This was one of the shams of the Devil. He knew that if he could make men and women compare and compete with one another, it would create division, foster hate, inspire jealousy, divide and conquer and get man so concerned about his body and the works of his hands that he would neglect his soul.

Instead of considering what you can do to gain skin-deep beauty, why not consider all

that you can do to be truly beautiful forever, even as God is?

What is it that makes Him so divinely and eternally beautiful? It is none other trait than His vast love—and love is so opposite to the results of comparison and hate that come about when you strive for the passing trends of earthly beauty.

Worldly advertising gimmicks these days, telling you how you can be “beautiful,” are not much more than a ploy of the Devil to trick people into believing that what a person is like on the inside doesn't mean much anymore. It is no wonder to me now to see that my friends won't attain much in the way of real happiness, even as I didn't. They may achieve becoming the toast of fashion for a time, but they will decay and what will be left?



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**JFK, Jr.**, son of assassinated American president John F. Kennedy, was born in 1960 and died in a plane crash in 1999.



# A Natural Pearl

## A Natural Pearl—Helen Keller

(Helen Keller:)

**T**ry to imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly stricken deaf and blind today. Picture yourself stumbling and groping at noonday as in the night—your work, your independence, gone. A voice filled with love calls your name, but you never hear it. You live in a silent world.

**I went through life not remembering what a smile looked like, yet I knew a depth of joy that not many with sight can fathom.**

Stricken with an acute illness that left me deaf and blind in my 19th month, that is how I lived my life. I had so many



physical flaws that at first I thought I could never enjoy life, that I could never overcome; my flesh was *less* than imperfect.—It severely fell short of even *minimal* standards of normalcy.

I was angry with myself for it. I was angry with my family. I was angry with those who tried to help me and those who did not. I was angry with



**Helen Keller**, American writer and lecturer, lived from 1880 to 1968. Though blind, deaf and dumb from infancy, she learned to speak, read and write, and graduated from college with distinction. She published several books.

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**Anne Sullivan**, American educator, lived from 1866 to 1936. Visually impaired herself, she was the teacher and lifelong companion of Helen Keller.

God. Then God sent my teacher into my life and she taught me to appreciate all that I had and all the love that was mine. There are many things in life that can be enjoyed no matter who we are or what is wrong—or for some of us, what we *think* is wrong—with our bodies.

### **My flaws were my perfections.**

Anne [Sullivan] taught me that God loves us for our imperfections, for out of them He can shine His light and show the world that He still loves and cares. He can make the best things out of nothing. Is that not how He created the world and all the good that is in it?

Eventually, after accepting God's will in my life, God gave me courage to face each day, and not only courage, but a genuine appreciation for my flaws. It was then that God allowed me to impart that courage to others. I went through life not remembering what a smile looked like, yet I knew a depth of joy that not many with sight

God gives each human soul a great amount of beauty from the start. This beauty is developed and cultivated when you walk with God (JFK, Jr.\*).

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(\*Editor's note: In this mag, all quotations from famous people were received in prophecy.)

can fathom. My lacks enhanced all that I *did* have. Beauty came from my ashes, because that is what I let spring forth from the well of my life. Even so can it be for you.

I would never trade the difficult life that I lived for another life with sight and hearing, because I touched so many. Others identified with me because I was “flawed.” My flaws were my perfections, in that they completed the vessel God destined me to be. I will be eternally grateful for them. I am so thankful that I learned to love what God could do through me.

Be the most beautiful person someone has ever known, not because you are flawless, but because you are flawed and have overcome (Helen Keller).

If I hadn't, I would never have reached my full potential.

The opportunity for true beauty knocks at your door, waiting to be adopted. If you love and reach out, if you see beyond the physical—as I learned to do out of necessity—then love will indeed triumph over man's standard of perfection. You will be a radiant, natural pearl, worth a great deal more than a cultured pearl.\*

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\* Cultured pearl: A pearl which is produced under artificial and controlled conditions (Microsoft Bookshelf 99).

# Special Crowns

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## Special Crowns

**(Quinsy, spirit being:)**

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It's easy to wonder why people have to endure handicaps while on Earth. For example, people who are confined to wheelchairs. Well, for one reason or another, the Lord has required that of them. That's their cross, and if they bear it cheerfully the Lord's going to

reward them in a special way. Perhaps the Lord is teaching them endurance, yieldedness, trust and faith. Or perhaps He is using a handicap in their lives to teach others lessons of compassion or understanding. Each case is different.

In Heaven the handicap will disappear and in its place will

be rewards of the highest value—a special crown for enduring affliction. And these dear ones will be of great use in the Millennium, too. They will have compassion of the greatest kind, understanding of the deepest kind, sympathy of the most beautiful kind, love of the most heavenly kind and a brilliant radiance and shine as a result of their endurance through the battles.

**They will have compassion of the greatest kind, understanding of the deepest kind, sympathy of the most beautiful kind, love of the most heavenly kind and a brilliant radiance and shine as a result of their endurance.**

# Charlie Chaplin

## Charlie Chaplin's Question

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**(Charlie Chaplin:)**

**T**here is a secret to finding contentment in life and that is to realize that you were created exactly as you are, and the Lord deems you beautiful. He knows more about you than even you do, and still He thinks you're gorgeous. And the reason He does, is because He sees the love you have for Him and that makes you beautiful.

Look around you. The commercial faces that line the street, the plastic expressions that mark most of humanity—how many

have they bettered? How many can say that their beauty or bodies have brought them happiness? None. Man will never be satisfied with the physical, because it all fades, it's passing.

**It is something that grows from within, that shines despite physical flaws!**

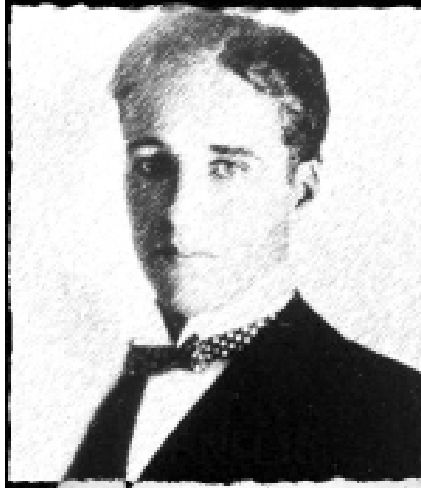
The famous and the rich live a wretched life of continually having to impress their fans. They live in the depressive carnal realm.

What is perfection? Is it the right height or the perfect bust-line? Do defined biceps determine perfection? Or is perfection within? Yes, it is something that grows from within, that shines despite physical flaws!

The people who lay aside their desire for physical perfection and give their all to

better causes are the true blessing to humanity. They are the ones who should be followed, the ones who should be respected and looked up to, not because of some perfect row of teeth or an attractive hairdo, but because they give their hearts and lives to help others.

There is nothing more worthy than giving yourself to help another. See those who sacrifice their image as the true gems of the earth.



**Charlie Chaplin**, British-born motion-picture actor, director, producer, and composer, lived from 1889 to 1977.

## A Winning Hand

(Quinsy, spirit being:) It may seem like some things aren't fair, or some things aren't right. Maybe you feel you've been dealt a bad hand in life, but I'm telling you, everyone is dealt a winning hand; it just depends on how you play it. In Heaven, you'll see that you were created perfectly, down to the very tiniest detail. Everything Here is beautiful because everything is seen through the eyes of Heaven—through the eyes of love.

# Her Quest

## Marilyn Monroe's Quest

**T**here once was a little girl who, like many little girls, loved pretty things. If this little girl saw something she liked, she decided it was pretty. And when she decided something was pretty, she wanted it.

Now, she was kinda spoiled, being such a pretty thing herself, so she usually got what she wanted. That didn't help, of course, because it sent her in circles, running toward the next pretty thing she wanted, while at the same time getting very dizzy from running 'round and 'round so many times.

*But after all, she used to think, there are plenty of pretty things in the world, and just*



The Lord's beauty is the only real beauty there is and Heaven is the only real world. Earth is but a chance to learn to love God and others more, to learn to be caring, to learn to see beyond yourself and into the heart of another. (JFK, Jr.).

Beauty without sympathy, love and interest in others is completely empty. (Helen Keller).



*looking at them won't do any good; I've got to have them!* So she went on her way, collecting many pretty things and then abandoning them when she saw a prettier thing to chase.

When this little girl grew into a slightly bigger girl, the pretty things were still around, so her desire for the pretty things increased also. She also found out that things other people liked and wanted were pretty too! So, her circles widened. She kept running 'round and 'round, looking for all the pretty things she could find.

She was very pretty by this time, and many people liked and wanted her too, so she soon had

lots of company. Everyone was thinking *I've got to have this pretty thing!* *Just looking at it will do me no good!*

The little girl (who had grown into a big girl on the outside) started to grow tired of this game that looked like it would never end. She was sick of

Everyone has their flaws, whether they are obvious or not. Accordingly, the Lord delights to use flawed individuals to be Him to others, because He knows that He will then get the glory (Helen Keller).

running in circles. Her head was spinning from running around. She wanted to be alone, to

leave all the people who were running after pretty things.

She decided the time had come to choose the very prettiest thing. After all, if she had the prettiest thing, why would she have to keep on running in circles? So she looked and looked. She

thought about the flower. She loved the flower ... it had been one of the first pretty things she had run after. *But*, she thought,

True beauty comes from the inside. (JFK, Jr.).

*after a while, the flower dies! Its beauty fades! And then I will have to start looking for another pretty thing! No, I have to find something that lasts a long time.*

She looked at the pretty clothes she wore. "But no, they also grow old, and I grow tired of them. I have to find something that will never lose its brilliance."

She imagined her pretty car and thought, "But it can break down and leave me stranded! I

must have something that will never drop in value."

She thought about the loves in her life. "No, they do not last. They will leave me someday. I have to find something that will never leave me alone."

She looked in the mirror. "I can't even keep my beauty. It will fade like the flower, it will grow old, it will lose its value. ...Oh," she sighed in despair, "will I ever find something pretty that will always be pretty?"

Then something caught her eye. It was a diamond! "Oh! I have found it! *Diamonds!* Diamonds can never fade! Diamonds will never lose their brilliance! Diamonds will never stop working! Diamonds will

never leave! They will always be pretty! *Diamonds* are a girl's best friend!"

And so this pretty girl thought she had found the most beautiful thing on Earth, something that would never die—diamonds. But soon she saw that, even after she had many pretty diamonds, she was still sad. She learned that even the prettiest diamonds fade in importance—and she became bored with them too. "What am I gonna do?" She felt so tired of running in circles.

Then, one day, she found the answer she had been looking for! She went to a Place where everyone



Worldly advertising gimmicks these days, telling you how you can be "beautiful," are not much more than a ploy of the Devil to trick people into believing that what a person is like on the inside doesn't mean much anymore. (JFK, Jr.).

**Marilyn Monroe** was born in 1926 and died in 1962. As a model and actress she became known as one of the most glamorous women of her day.



is happy! No one runs in circles looking for the prettiest thing, or runs after what they think will make them happy. They just give love away! They helped this little girl, and showed her that she could be happy too, by giving away all the love that she had in her pretty little heart! And you know what? She had so much fun!

Her pretty eyes sparkled with joy, her pretty smile brightened every sad

corner, and soon she realized that she didn't need all the pretty things in life! Her diamonds had never brought her even a tiny little bit of the happiness she felt now!

She only found happiness once she gave happiness. She only found beauty once she put beauty in another's life. And now she had found that the prettiest things of all ... everyone's *true* best friends ... are the diamonds of the heart.



# Bodybuilder

## A Bodybuilder's Story

**(Hank, former earthling:)**

I began bodybuilding when I was 15 years old. Everyone told me that I was far too young to begin; "It will stunt your growth," they told me, but I didn't care. I was small and thin and I got picked on by the roughest and toughest crowd in Monterey High School (California). They would tease me, beat me up and lie to the teachers



to get me in trouble.

So I guess you could say I began because I wanted to get revenge. During school vacation I turned to doing weights and long hours of exercise for solace, and in an attempt to grow too strong and big for others to pick on.

You know what it's like at 15. Every word someone says is important to you and you desperately want to be accepted. I guess what I was really looking for was someone to just accept me as *me*, not the dumb, skinny kid I appeared to be.

My family was fairly well off, and my father consented to buying me a weight-training set. I spent long hours in our basement training and working out. Often, because I wanted to push myself, I would lift weights that were too heavy and would end up with injuries.

After a while, I wasn't that "skinny runt" anymore; I looked somewhat normal. I can't say that was all due to my workouts, because I hit a growth spurt around that time too. On the first day of school after summer vacation I ran into Bill,

one of my classmates who had been away for a few months. He was one of the main ones who used to taunt me and pick on me. Much to my dismay, he was huge now! He too had been working out, so I was still a runt compared to him.

I went home that day and decided to dedicate an extra hour a day to my workout routine. I was already working out two hours a day, so that upped it to three hours of solid, tough weight-training.

Looking back on it now, I think my real problem was that I lacked confidence, both in myself and in the talents the Lord had given me. I refused to believe that I was good for anything except what I *wanted* to be good at. I wanted to be a "strong man" and all the rest that I was good at didn't count.

I despised the gifts the Lord had given me, a natural understanding of science and math. I'd also begun work with my dad on encryption for his systems. But I wasn't satisfied, because I wasn't strong enough.

Do you see how I got it all twisted? I thought that in order to be liked I



**"You know, I'd love you even if you didn't have big muscles."**

had to be some hunk of a guy. I thought that my body and my looks would make me friends, rather than realizing that it's not your looks but what's inside that counts.

I continued training for several years until I reached a point where I could walk down the street in summer without a shirt on and feel confident about myself. I had girlfriends and I began to become popular.

But still, when I looked in the mirror it wasn't enough. I still saw imperfections that I was determined to work on. I was never big enough. Every time I'd work out I'd look in the mirror, but what I saw was distorted. I still saw a skinny kid, when in reality it wasn't so. I was still desperately trying to find something to fill that empty spot.

I thought that if I was famous I might be happy. So what was my next goal? I wanted to be Mr. World.\* I had seen them posing on TV and I wanted to be up there too, so I dedicated yet another hour of my day to exercise. I was now working out for four hours a day and I really began to grow. I was also eating a lot more and majoring on foods that would build brawn. But I

was still dissatisfied. \**Mr. World is the American version of Mr. Universe, a contest for muscular men.*

I began to practice posing in front of a mirror in the basement. I began to imagine being up there in front of hundreds of people showing off the body I had built. But those dreams would be shattered by the sound of imaginary laughter and visions of demons of discontent, taunting me and laughing at me. Such things began to torment me so that I could hardly sleep at night.

I didn't know what to do but I continued to force myself to build harder and harder every day, until the day it was all over.

I was 23 at the time and was working out at the local gym. My girlfriend had come to see me, and as she left she said something that pierced my very being. She said, "You know, I'd love you even if you didn't have big muscles."

I couldn't believe my ears! Here I was, slaving away four to five hours a day in an effort to earn the respect and the love of those around me, and my own girlfriend who I thought I needed to impress, tells me that it doesn't even matter to her if I am big and strong.



You must see rather than *look*. To look is human, to see divine. (JFK, Jr.).

That took the wind out of my sails and I sat down on the bench and began to think. *Is it really worth it? Have I sacrificed so much just to look better, when that's not what really counts? Have I placed so much emphasis on my outward appearance that I have failed to tend to the garden of my soul? Have I become an empty and vain person who cares primarily for himself?*

These were the thoughts going through my mind as I stood up and headed for the mirror. I was trying to decide if this was indeed a good place to stop and place more emphasis on the rest of my life. I decided to take one last posing practice session.

As I was posing, the muscles in my neck tensed up so tightly that I began to have difficulty breathing. I tried to relax but the cramp continued to constrict my air passage and I began to suffocate. I dropped to the floor, pounding my neck to try to relieve the tension that had built up, but it was too late.

I passed out, and I believe I died right then because I became separated from my body. It lay there, still and lifeless, and

I stood by watching the trainer and the other guys around trying to revive me. I saw that the works of my own hands had brought death upon myself.

I wasn't a very strong Christian, but I began pouring out my heart in prayer. I begged the Lord to please spare my life and promised that I would give up my pursuit of vanity and would instead devote the time and money I'd spent on myself and my training toward helping others.

It's really easy to begin making deals with the Lord when your life is on the line, but I knew that I had to somehow get back and try again. I knew I hadn't done the job the Lord had called me for. I had been tripped off by the devils of vanity and self-glory, but I promised the Lord I wanted to make it right.

Then I saw Jesus. He looked at me and said, "Hank, you've made a lot of mistakes, but I'll tell you what ... I'm going to forgive them all, every one of them, if you'll go now and do what I tell you. I'll give you three more years on Earth, after which time I'll call you Home once again. During those three years I want you to give,

## Shine, Baby, Shine!

**(Mary Kemper, former earthling:)**

He's the maker of the tall and slender, the short and hefty. He shaped you with His Own hand and put all the curves and handles in the right places!

Stay fit and take care of your body by obeying His health rules! Live according to His health laws and you will be beautiful. You'll shine the way He made you to shine (ML#3125:78).

not only your money, but also your time to the homeless, the needy, those who don't have a place to stay. I want you to make them your mission and tell them about Me. I want you to go back and be a testimony of My goodness and My greatness. I want you to return and put others first. If you'll agree to this, then I'll give you another chance."

You bet I promised Jesus right then and there to do my best to accomplish what it was that He asked. The next thing I knew I was back on that floor, breathing and alive.

I was so thankful to be alive! As soon as I could I sold off my gym and exercise equipment and gave the money to a man whose landlord was about to throw him out for not paying the rent. The Lord had told me to find those who needed help, so I volunteered my time at a coffee shop for those who were in need, and served free food. I also told them about the Lord as they ate, and many came to know our Savior. I spoke at high schools about the dangers of excessive bodybuilding, and I believe the Lord used me to save a few kids from going down the same

path I had.

Three years later, I was diagnosed with high blood pressure. The doctors told me my heart was giving out. They said it was probably due to too much exertion at such a young age. Somehow I just didn't feel that this was the way the Lord wanted me to go. I cried out to Him and asked Him to make my life a testimony, even through my death. On my next check-up the doctor said that my heart had miraculously returned to normal and my blood pressure was only slightly above normal levels.

I continued on in my ministry for another year. I thanked the Lord every morning when I woke up 'cause I knew I was living on borrowed time. I knew that every second I was alive was a miracle.

One day I was walking toward the little coffee house when I saw a small kid in the road. A large truck was racing down the street on a collision course. Suddenly I knew what I had to do. I rushed out there and pushed the kid out of the way only to be hit by that truck myself.

I sustained multiple injuries but I was still alive. I was rushed to the hospital, and on my



deathbed Bill came to see me. Bill was the one I told you about, the one who always picked on me. Without knowing it, I had saved his child's life. With tears in his eyes, Bill thanked me. He got down on his knees beside my bed and sobbed out his thanks and apologized for all the mean and hurtful things he'd done to me in our younger years.

The Lord gave me the grace right there to forgive him and tell him about Heaven and where I was going. As we began to pray I could feel my body lifting once more. I knew that I was going Home.

The last earthly words I heard were, "Hank, I don't know how to thank you. Not only have you saved my son's life but now you've saved mine too. Don't worry about your work at the coffee shop, I'll take care of it." With that I was thrust into a world of incredible peace and love.

So it's not how you look that counts, it's what you do for the Lord. It's not what you build in the flesh, it's what you build in the spirit. Don't let the devils of vanity and comparison trap you into excessive bodybuilding. It's not the most important thing. Giving love and

the Lord's salvation to others is the most important thing.

A little workout is fine and it's good to be in shape.— Just don't make that your goal in life. Your goal should be to win souls for eternity, because that's the only thing that will count when you cross over to your heavenly reward. Don't build bodies, build souls.

## "Tell me more."

(Jesus:) It is not that bodybuilding is strictly wrong, it just depends on the attitude, whether or not it becomes an obsession, and whether or not the person who does it keeps it in place, doesn't get overly concerned with himself, and still puts emphasis on the spiritual and on loving others and serving Me.

The point is, your outer shell is only temporary, so invest in your inner self. People with eternal values will love you more for your spiritual side and your personality than for your outward appearance, which is going to be left behind someday anyway.

If you love, God can take the broken pieces of your life and make them shine the most (Helen Keller).

# Real Beauty

## Discovering Real Beauty—From Elvis

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**When I came to Heaven, one girl in particular caught my eye. I was strolling in the park and she was sitting on a bench reading a book.**

**S**ome people can become so obsessed with their image, the way they look and act—it's almost like they become their own idols. I was one of those people.

I'm sad to say that I didn't have my priorities right. I looked at the physical, at the flesh, at the outward appearance. But it drove me to despair and depression, which caused my premature death.

My poor wife. I loved her so much. But I had so much pride. I required too much of her. I wanted her to be perfect, to be the perfect woman, with never a hair out of place. It drove her to hate me eventually. She couldn't take it. She tried so hard to do it all right, and she *was* just about as perfect as you could get in the worldly sense. Yet it took its toll. It ruined our marriage.

I didn't realize all this until I came over Here and saw things the way they really are. I looked back over my life and saw all

my wrong attitudes, the way I drove people away because of my pride and love of self. My life could have been full of meaning and true happiness if I had seen and appreciated the true values, the inner person, the heart.

In the end I couldn't take it, I gave up. I turned to drugs and became overweight. It was so pitiful how I just threw my life away. I disregarded the things that really count, and so I was left with nothing.

**If she had been sitting on a bench on Earth, I probably wouldn't have looked at her a second time**

When I arrived in Heaven, I noticed how people were just themselves—natural! The women weren't caked in make up, fingernail polish, fancy hairstyles. Yet, I was drawn to them. Their eyes shone with the most beautiful light. On Earth when I was surrounded by women who were all dolled up, not much was real. It was all a bunch of gadgets and paint and fancy clothes. It wasn't the real them.



“Tell me more.”

**“What about Presley's wife?”**

(Jesus:) Their relationship was built on sand on Earth, and so when the floods of time washed over it, it did not stand. Elvis still loves his wife, but he loves her enough to know that she needed someone who didn't demand perfection of her. She's happy now and has plenty of companionship too. They're still on friendly terms, but they both agreed to stay apart in Heaven so they could learn more about the real values of life.

The point is, they both needed and wanted to grow when they arrived in Heaven, so even though the world looked at their earthly relationship as “perfect” they found others who could fill their needs for companionship in Heaven much better than they could for each other. It's not like they had a sense of loss in not being together any more.

When I came to Heaven, one girl in particular caught my eye. I was strolling in the park and she was sitting on a bench reading a book. She looked up at me and gave me the most beautiful smile. She had long hair, down to her waist, dark brown and slightly wavy. She had on a simple lucent dress, almost Grecian style.

She was a very simple, small girl, and if she had been sitting on a bench on Earth, I probably wouldn't

have looked at her a second time, except that her dress was a little more revealing than what you usually see down there. But that smile, it caught me. I felt a special sensation. I just had to go over and talk with her.

Well, that was the beginning of a romance between us—my dear Betty. You can imagine my surprise when I found out that she was a girl in my school when I was a teenager who I had



rejected because I didn't think she was my type—wasn't beautiful enough, didn't have big enough boobs, was too short for me, and so on. Yet now she was the most beautiful woman to me.

Her simplicity is what drew me to her. She was just her happy, funny self, and I soon found that I didn't have to be anything around her or try to be cool. She accepted me for who I was deep inside and not because I was some famous personality. It was a wonderful and

truly liberating experience.

I was the king of cool. But look at how my life turned out—sad and miserable. My advice is: if you want to live and enjoy life, don't put on

**If you want to live and enjoy life, don't put on those fronts.**

those fronts. Just be yourself, be natural and be real. That's how I wish I had lived my life.

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**Elvis Aaron Presley,**  
American Rock 'n' Roll icon,  
lived from 1935 to 1977.

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# Loveliness

## The Loveliness of Thorns

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(Angela, spirit being:)

**T**hose of you who feel that you don't have it as good as someone else, take heart and know that the Lord has His reasons and His plan. Do your best to trust and look for the blessings He's given you, the special gifts or physical attributes that make you special. That helps to take away from the comparing and wishing you had what someone else has.

You may not realize that others have their crosses to carry too, and under those roses are a few thorns that prick and hurt, if not at the moment, then somewhere down the line.

The thorns are the things that break and humble us and draw us closer to the Lord, because we see that we aren't perfect in ourselves and we need Him.

# Unwrap that Gift

## Unwrap that Gift

(Angela, spirit being:)



**O**n Earth there are so many people who are unhappy with their bodies or their looks, and they spend big amounts of money to go to a surgeon and have their faces redone, their lips enlarged, some fat in their bodies sucked out, or their breasts filled with silicone to make them larger. But the side effects are very dangerous, and many people permanently damage their bodies because it's not natural. They're tampering with nature.

It's so sad really, because the Lord made them just the way they are for a purpose and a reason, and if they didn't think so much about themselves and their own happiness, but learned to reach out to others and to value the true things in life that are important, then it wouldn't be a problem.

**He made each of us with some little part that may not be "perfect" to keep us humble.**

It makes the Lord sad because it's saying that you

don't think He did a good job and you would rather have it differently. But you see, He made each of us with some little part that may not be "perfect" to keep us humble.

I know you're probably thinking right now, "Well, why are there some women or men who look perfect and have everything just right, and some others who seem to have almost everything wrong with them?" Well, the Lord always compensates. There is always something that the Lord gives a person that is special to them. But you see, sometimes we get so wrapped up in what we think we're missing, that we don't see the gift that the Lord has given us, a gift that is beautiful and worth a great price. It's there all the time but our vision is clouded because we're looking at the hole instead of the donut.

There are people who don't have much in the physical or have it pretty rough in this life compared to others, yet the Lord has rewards and blessings laid up over Here. They get double the amount of reward and pleasure

and fun when they come up Here. It's all made up to them, so it really evens out in the whole picture of things.

So, some things that don't seem even to you on Earth, or fairly distributed, really aren't—but they weren't meant to be. You're all learning different lessons there and

fighting different battles on Earth which take different circumstances to experience and overcome. However, you can rest assured that in the scope of all eternity and the life to come, things do get evened out and the Lord does deal fairly with each and every one of His children.

**Sometimes we get so wrapped up in what we think we're missing, that we don't see the gift that the Lord has given us.**



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