

Beautiful
Leader's Guide

By: Courtenay Bowser

Beautiful **Small Group Guidelines**

This program is to be used over an eight-week period, either in a small group setting, or for personal devotions. I think it is most powerful when used in a group, and I really encourage you to organize a group of women/girls to go through this study with you. If you are planning on using it in a small group, I suggest you nominate someone (usually the person who initiates organizing the group, or whomever your group chooses) to lead the group in the discussions. I also suggest every leader finding a co-leader to help them each week, assist with discussions, and lead the group in case of absence.

I have purposely made some concepts/thoughts in this program repetitive. We live in a world where we are bombarded with our culture's concepts of beauty and self worth incessantly. In order to counter this, we must repeatedly remind ourselves of what freedom and true beauty are for us.

The Beautiful Pre-Party and Post-Party:

The first and last week of the series are parties—more specifically, a meal together as a group, preferably in someone's home.

Pre-Party:

The pre-party was created to provide an opportunity for groups of women who may not have history with one another to get acquainted. The first official week of the program, I ask the women to begin opening up their hearts deeply and quickly—this is a lot to ask! So, the pre-party allows an opportunity for fun, getting to know each other, and the beginning of relationship building (see the Week One outline on page 7 for more information).

Post-Party:

This party brings the group full circle after weeks of getting to know one another and seeing God move powerfully in one another's lives! It is a time to celebrate what has taken place and to look forward with hope for the future (see the Post-Party outline on page 14 for more information).

The Collage:

At both parties, the women are asked to make collages. At the pre-party, the collage is meant to symbolize who they are right then, at that moment—their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, hopes, and fears.

Many weeks later at the post-party, they will revisit their first collage. They will decide which parts of that collage still truthfully represent who they are and which do not. They are going to make a second collage.

They can cut out and include anything from their first collage that they still deem accurate. However, anything that they have realized over the weeks is *not* who they truly are, they will leave out. They can even color or paint over it in black if they would like. The new, second collage is meant to be a vision for how they see themselves now and who they want to be moving forward!

See the *Beautiful* facebook page, www.facebook.com/thebeautifulcommunity, for different collage ideas/materials. Also, in both videos I explain what the collages are meant to represent.

How the *Beautiful* Program Works:

1. Each week the group reads the assigned chapter from *Beautiful* before the group meets.
2. At the beginning of the meeting, the group takes time to discuss their daily questions and journaling from the previous week (except for the first week).
3. The group watches a brief, 10-minute video.
4. After the video, jump right into the week's questions and discussion points. Please open your hearts and share. It is the point of the entire program!
5. Finally, read the closing thought and pray together as a group.

Tips for Group Discussion:

1. Privacy is of the utmost importance! What is shared in the small group stays in the small group. Every woman or girl must feel safe. She must feel that she can share her heart in a loving atmosphere with no judgment, and no chance of her story spreading.
2. Every member of the group should be considerate of not dominating the conversation. It's important for as many as possible to be able to share.
3. The group leader should try to encourage each one in the group to make answers personal. How does it relate specifically to them? What is their story? What steps will they make moving forward? Etc...
4. Last but not least, have fun!!!

What you will need for each week:

1. A place to meet together.
2. A computer or other device to play the *Beautiful* DVD.
3. Everyone should bring their *Beautiful* book, *Beautiful: Daily Guide*, and Bible if they have one.
4. Optional: Photocopies of each week's discussion questions for each member of the group. This is at your discretion, depending on what you feel will work best for your group.

*If you choose, you can also have coffee, drinks, or refreshments each week. You set the atmosphere for your group—be free to do what seems fun and life-giving for the women involved.

The *Beautiful* Daily Guide:

Everyone needs a journal specifically for this program. The guide provides daily Scriptures, a thought for each day, which includes a quote from my book, and journaling questions. The journaling is a very important part of this program. Please encourage one another to keep up with it! It is not meant to be an overwhelming burden though, so reinforce lots of grace for the women on the days that they just can't get to it.

***Beautiful* Partners:**

If possible, it is great for everyone in the group to have a *Beautiful* Partner. This is another woman in the group whom they can call, text, or email throughout the week for accountability, encouragement, and prayer. These women will stay partners throughout the entire series and hopefully beyond. How these partners are chosen is totally up to the groups and their leaders. Encourage the *Beautiful* Partners to communicate with one another at least once during the course of each week outside of the small group setting.

Beautiful **Pre-Party**

Planning for the Party

- Find a home to hold the party; our “perfect world” scenario is to hold it in a home so it feels more intimate, but it is understandable that this may not work for all groups. Do whatever you need to do in order for the group to share a meal together.
- Plan the food and drinks—get the women in the group involved, having everyone bring a different item.
- Have table-talk questions printed in a container (see the *Beautiful* facebook page, www.facebook.com/thebeautifulcommunity, for ideas).
- Have a computer or other device to play the *Beautiful* DVD.
- Have all of your items for the collage ready.
- Be prepared with your method for choosing *Beautiful* Partners within the group (refer to the *Beautiful* Small Group Guidelines on page 2 for more information).

Collage Items

- Card stock or other sturdy paper.
- Scissors, glue sticks, and tape.
- LOTS of different magazines (You can even ask the women to bring magazines of different kinds—just don't tell them what it's for).
- Any other creative things you might want to have available for the collage (see the *Beautiful* facebook page, www.facebook.com/thebeautifulcommunity, for pictures and ideas).

Flow of the Party

- Once all the ladies have arrived, watch the *Beautiful* Pre-Party video.
- Begin the meal; have the group share names and maybe one significant detail about each person's life (be creative—you pick whatever you want that to be).
- As people are eating, begin passing the table questions. Help facilitate conversation when needed.

- Once people are done with the main meal, this is probably the best time to do the collage.
- Explain the collage (refer to the *Beautiful* Small Group Guidelines on page 2) and get them started on making their own. Encourage them along the way. If time allows, have them each share a bit about their collage.
- After they are finished, assign each one's *Beautiful* Partners—they will remain partners for the rest of this journey.
- Before everyone leaves, give them each a copy of *Beautiful* and *Beautiful: Daily Guide* (unless they have pre-ordered individually) as well as these reminders:
 - o Where and when you will meet the following week.
 - o Read the Introduction and Chapter One of *Beautiful*.
 - o Be sure to buy a journal this week if they didn't pre-purchase one.

Weekly Outlines

Week One

Introduction: *The Fairytale* and Chapter One: *The Reflection*

1. Watch the introduction video. Reiterate the importance of a safe atmosphere, no judgment, no gossip.
2. Discussion: *The Fairytale*
 - A. Have someone read *The Fairytale* aloud.
 - B. What do you picture when you hear what is being said about the woman/girl?
 - C. Would you want those things said of you? Do those words evoke a response in your heart, or maybe you don't feel anything when you read the fairytale?
 - D. Why do you think we as women pursue beauty the way we do?
3. Discussion: *The Reflection*
 - A. When did you first start becoming aware of the way you look?
 - B. Have you ever had a situation where you felt like other people were judging your worth by the way you look?
 - C. What does it feel like to constantly compare yourself to other women? Does it ever bring forth anything good in your heart?
 - D. Courtenay mentioned scales, attention from guys, and how much she ate as triggers to her self-hate. What kind of things trigger you to look negatively on yourself?
 - E. In this chapter, Courtenay talked about the rape and sexual abuse that caused her to look at everything differently. After reading this chapter, would any of you like to share anything, not even necessarily sexual, that occurred in your own life that changed the way you see yourself and those around you?
 - Some women in the group may feel better able to answer this question the first part of next week—after a week of journaling and looking back. However, try to get everyone at least thinking about it. This will help them to recognize the root causes.
4. Closing Thought

At the end of *The Fairytale* Courtenay writes, “...*what the man saw in the story was true beauty—true beauty that comes from deep within and can only be obtained through one source—the Creator of all things beautiful.*”
5. Pray together.

Week Two

Chapter Two: A New Journey

1. Discuss the previous week.
 - A. What were the biggest triumphs and difficulties?
 - B. Were there any days in the journaling/daily guide process that really stood out to you from the rest? Why?
2. Watch the Week Two introduction video.
3. Discussion: Our Relationship with Christ
 - A. Courtenay talks about God drawing her to Himself slowly. Have any of you ever experienced this feeling?
 - B. Would anyone like to share their story of coming to truly live for Christ? *Note to leader: realize that not everyone may have accepted Christ at this point.*
 - C. What, if any, are the things that make it hard for you to believe the magnitude of God's love for you?
4. Discussion: God Healing Our Hearts
 - A. Read pages 17-19 of *Beautiful* aloud.
 - B. Talk about the idea of us carrying around our abuses and tragedies as part of who we are, rather than allowing God to heal us from them.
 1. Is anyone starting to see the things from the past that they are filtering present-day relationships and situations through?
 2. What about identity? Have you allowed the pain of the past to actually become a part of your identity?
5. Discussion: Breaking the Destructive Cycles
 - A. What are the repetitive cycles you see yourself going through where your self-image is concerned?
 - B. Do you always want to try a new diet or the newest exercise in order to have great legs, abs, arms, etc? Where are the proper boundaries?
 - C. What relationship do you have with food? Do you tend to try not to eat or do you binge out of emotion?
 - D. Have you ever felt like you would never be free from seeing yourself the way you do or seeing food the way you do? Do you feel trapped?

- E. Have you ever considered that freedom from the mentalities/behaviors you have could simply lie in your own choices to walk away from them?

6. Closing Thought

“I knew He was real and He had been there all along. I knew He loved me and wanted so much more for my life.”

“What I didn't realize all along was that by trying to solve the problem my way, I was making it worse. In my pursuit of beauty, I was neglecting the things that could truly make me beautiful.”

7. Pray together.

Week Three:

Chapter Three: *The Choice*

1. Discuss the previous week.
 - A. What were the biggest triumphs and difficulties?
 - B. Were there any days in the journaling/daily guide process that really stood out to you from the rest? Why?
2. Watch the Week Three introduction video.
3. Discussion: Choosing Freedom
 - A. Have you ever considered that freedom from your battles with body image, eating disorders, self-hate, etc...could actually be as simple as a choice?
 - B. What do you see as the prison(s) in your life in which you are standing?
 - C. Can you imagine simply walking out of them?
 - D. Read John 8:36. If you are familiar with this verse, do you normally think of this Scripture as something that has already been accomplished, or as something that you are waiting on/praying for God to do for you?
 - E. Read John 10:10. In what ways has Satan tried to lie to you, kill you, and destroy you? Is it hard to believe that Jesus never wanted you to be in any of those prisons?
 - F. Read page 26 (starting with "That day") through page 28 (ending with "elsewhere") of *Beautiful*. What things sabotage your freedom? What boundaries do you need to put in place to walk free?
 - G. Discuss the "triggers" Courtenay mentioned: scales, mirrors, diets, counting calories and fat, exercise for the wrong reasons, etc... What do you think? How do these specific things affect you?
 - H. How hard do you think it will be to "stop thinking like a slave" as Courtenay mentions in the video?
4. Closing Thought

"But, I was so busy looking at myself, trying to fix myself, trying to fight my way out with my own strength, that I did not realize I had been staying in a prison I had long ago been set free from."
5. Pray together.

Week Four:

Chapter Four: *The Final Test*

1. Discuss the previous week.
 - A. What were the biggest triumphs and difficulties?
 - B. Were there any days in the journaling/daily guide process that really stood out to you from the rest? Why?
2. Watch the Week Four introduction video.
3. Discussion: Staying Free
 - A. Satan does not want us to stay free. Every one of you will be tested repeatedly along this journey. Courtenay says in *Beautiful* that she couldn't fight her way to freedom; she simply had to accept it (pg. 32, 1st paragraph). Discuss this concept. Has anyone begun to feel the difference between fighting and simply receiving—"turning your back," as Courtenay says, and just walking away from the battle?
 - B. In the video, Courtenay talks about "not playing with dead people"—the person you no longer are. Can any of you apply this to your own lives?
 - C. Courtenay talks about her jean shopping experience. Can any of you relate to this story? In what ways?
 - D. Can any of you imagine finding joy and peace with the exact body you have right now?
 - E. What are the keys to doing this? (Hint: it all has to do with our focus!)
 - F. Courtenay writes, "If you have never been bound by something, you have no idea how wonderful freedom feels! All the years of beautiful life I wasted, all the days spent depressed! Periods of my life were sacrificed to this obsession that kept me bound in a prison of self-hate—never again!" Is it important to recognize what Satan has already stolen from you? Can this fuel your determination to stay free? Discuss this as a group.
 - G. Read 1 Peter 5:8. Rather than seeing it as a struggle with your own image, can you picture this issue as simply a tool of Satan wanting to destroy you? Can you see the roaring lion? Does it make it easier to stay free when you recognize who is really coming against you?
 - H. Read page 36 of *Beautiful*. Courtenay references her husband's image of building the brick wall. Can you think of instances already in this journey that you have laid a brick in the wall between you and this struggle?

4. Closing Thought

"You have learned how to stand in the freedom that is yours because the fight was already won 2,000 years ago. And with this freedom comes a revelation of the true beauty that can be yours."

Remind the women, as Courtenay talked about in the video, to begin to worship every time they begin to struggle in their mind as they go throughout their week.

5. Pray together.

Week Five

Chapter Five: True Beauty

1. Discuss the previous week.
 - A. What were the biggest triumphs and difficulties?
 - B. Were there any days in the journaling/daily guide process that really stood out to you from the rest? Why?
2. Watch the Week Five introduction video.
3. Discussion: Discovering True Beauty
 - A. Do you agree that at the core of our struggle with body image and self-worth is our natural desire to feel special and loved?
 - B. Courtenay writes on page 40 of *Beautiful* about buying “counterfeit beauty.” Discuss this. Can you think of ways that you have done this in your life?
 - C. Is it a complete change of mindset for you to think of *love* as the source of true beauty?
 - D. Have you ever been around someone who is rude or mean, and no matter what they actually look like, they are just not attractive to you? Discuss this as a group.
 - E. Can you think of women/people you are drawn to—people you find beautiful because of the way they live their lives?
 - F. If true beauty comes from love, it can only be received from God, who is love. What new practices can you implement in your life in order to draw closer to God? (Courtenay mentions some in the video.)
 - Share personal ways that some of you already use to “spend time” growing in relationship with Jesus.
 - G. Can you think of a moment in your own life when your eyes were off of yourself—either focused on God or on helping/loving those around you? How did it make you feel?
 - H. Courtenay writes, “True beauty comes from within as you are looking outward—making the most of every day, loving the unlovely, sacrificing for family, choosing the tough decision, making an impact, leaving a legacy.” Can you imagine what it would be like to live your life this way? What would you need to do to keep this perspective at the forefront of your mind?
 - I. What are some actual ideas of things you could do this next week to focus outward and love others well?

4. Closing Thought

“Instead of watching the reflection in the mirror, you are watching the eyes of those passing by, connecting with people in a real way.”

5. Pray together.

Week Six

Chapter Six: *Your Beautiful Story*

1. Discuss the previous week.
 - A. What were the successes and the difficulties?
 - B. Were there any days in the journaling/daily guide process that really stood out to you from the rest? Why?
2. Watch the Week Six introduction video.
3. Discussion: Living Beautifully
 - A. Read Jeremiah 29:11-13.
 1. First, do you believe this is true? Does God have a good plan for your life?
 2. It says in verses 12-13 that in order to know this plan and to believe in its goodness, we must seek Him with all of our heart. What does this look like to you?
 3. What can you set in place in your every day life in order to ensure that you are regularly seeking God? Maybe some of the things you started last week can become regular habits.
 - B. You've been on this journey for many weeks now, have there already been times that you have lost sight of the goal: walking in freedom? Can you identify what you were doing, or not doing, during these moments that could help you for the future?
 - C. Courtenay writes in this chapter about the many types of "beautiful" women. Share and discuss women that you find beautiful because of the way they live their lives.
 - What do you admire most about them that you can model in your own life?
 - D. Read pages 45-46 of *Beautiful*, starting with "What kind of beautiful girl or woman do you want to be?" and ending with "just like the woman in the story." It is all about focus. Have each person share two areas where they will have to guard their focus.
 - E. If you had to write your obituary or epitaph what would you want it to say?
 - F. What are some of your talents or passions that may be indicators of how God could use you in the future?
 - G. How can you live a healthy lifestyle without obsessing and losing focus on what matters?
 - H. As a group, how can you partner together from this day forward? How can you continue to help one another focus on God, His love, and His purposes through you? How can you help one another become and remain the reflection of Christ's love to others? How can you begin to show others the road to freedom?

4. Closing Thought

*“The more you get to know Him, the more His love will shine through you to others and **that** is what makes you beautiful.”*

5. Pray together.

Beautiful **Post-Party**

Planning for the party:

- Find a home to hold the party; our “perfect world” scenario is to hold it in a home so it feels more intimate, but it is understandable that this may not work for all groups. Do whatever you need to do in order for the group to share a meal together.
- Plan the food and drinks—get the women in the group involved, having everyone bring a different item.
- Have a computer or other device to play the *Beautiful* DVD.
- Have all of your items for the second collage ready.
- Remind the ladies to bring their first collage with them to the party.

Collage items:

- Card stock or other sturdy paper.
- Scissors, glue sticks, and tape.
- LOTS of different magazines (You can even ask the women to bring magazines of different kinds—just don't tell them what it's for).
- Any other creative things you might want to have available for the collage (see the *Beautiful* facebook page, www.facebook.com/thebeautifulcommunity, for pictures and ideas).
- Black paint or markers (if desired for covering over things from the first collage that no longer apply)

Flow of the Evening:

- Once all the ladies have arrived, watch the *Beautiful* Post-Party video.
- Begin the meal; after all these weeks together, you don't need any table talking questions from us, just have fun!
- Once people are done with the main meal, begin the collage.
- Explain the collage (refer to the *Beautiful* Small Group Guidelines on page 2) and get them started on making their own. Encourage them along the way.

- Before everyone leaves, plan how you will stay in touch. Some ideas:
 - o Have dinner once a quarter.
 - o Meet for coffee every month.
 - o Go out on fun dates together.
 - o Think of anything else that works for your group!
 - o Check the *Beautiful* facebook page, www.facebook.com/thebeautifulcommunity, and the Ignition Point Ministries website, www.theignitionpoint.org, for other recommended ideas, conferences, gatherings, books, music, etc.