

# True Beauty

## **Session 1: The Heart of a Woman Part 1**

“Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. ‘Being man’ or ‘being woman’ is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity ‘in the image of God.’ In their ‘being-man’ and ‘being-woman,’ they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness.”

—CCC 369

- Pray one “Hail Mary”
- In your journal, write one question that you have about dating or marriage.

**Video 1:** Watch then read and answer the following questions in your journal

1) God created men and women to be different. Our bodies are different, our behaviors are different, and our brains are different. Why do you think He created male and female humans?

*(As it says in the Catechism, males and females are created in the image of God. Because God made two distinct genders, He wanted to reveal Himself through the complementarity of these genders. God made it evident in the differences of our bodies that we were made to give ourselves to one another in love. So the goal of the differences in gender is to grow in selfless love...and God Himself is a community of selfless love—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words, the plan is that through the self-giving love of complementarity of genders.)*

2) How do you think a guy’s physical, visual, and competitive nature can be put to the service of the good?

*(A man’s visual nature draws him to a woman, and her beauty can lead him to do heroic things; his physical and competitive nature can help him provide for, protect, and defend others.)*

3) In what ways are you glad men are not like women?

4) In what ways do you wish men were more like women?

**Video 2:** In this second video segment, Lisa will talk about the two types of attraction and how the devil

1) What are the two types of Attraction that Lisa talks about in the video?

*(The Catechism states in paragraph 1768 that “emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices.”)*

2) What do you think this means?

Dr. Edward Sri, in his book “Men, Women and the Mystery of Love”, writes, “If we’re not careful, we can become enslaved to our emotions in ways that prevent us from truly being able to love other persons.”

1) What are some behaviors of women who are enslaved to their emotions?

*(A woman becomes enslaved when she feels she is “less of a person” or “incomplete” in some way unless she is emotionally and romantically involved with a man. This can lead her to become preoccupied, even obsessed, with having a man in her life. This obsession could lead to jealousy and envy with other women. It can also lead her to use manipulation and/or seduction to attract a man and keep him. In the end, this makes it difficult to love because the relationship is used to address her own insecurities as opposed to being mutual self-giving.)*

2) How have you seen lust hurt girls in your own school?

3) What do you think “strength and dignity are her clothing” means?

*(She is noticed more by these qualities than by her appearance.)*

4) Why does she “laugh at the time to come”?

*(In the heart of those who have abandoned themselves to God, there is no room for fear or worry there is peace.)*

#### **Closing Commitment:**

Are you willing to make an intentional effort this week to commit to the following areas-

- » I will dress modestly.
- » I will not gossip.
- » I will avoid negative humor.
- » I will not emotionally manipulate.

**PRAY:** God promises to provide the strength to resist temptation. Let’s commit to cooperating with His grace. And, let’s ask our Blessed Mother, whose heart we seek to emulate, to intercede for us, as we say the Memorare:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

*Thank you for completing the make up work for True Beauty Sisterhood. Please show your journal with the completed answers to your group leader for credit for this session.*

## **Session 2: Heart of a Woman part 2**

“Passions are said to be voluntary, ‘either because they are commanded by the will or because the will does not place obstacles in their way.” (St. Thomas Aquinas) —CCC 1767  
“Emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices.” —CCC 1774

Take a few minutes to answer these question in your journal:

Who would you like to be?  
Where would you live?  
How old would you like to be?  
What time in history (past, present, or future) would you live?  
What would your personality be like?  
Who would you have as friends?  
What would be your occupation?

In this session we’re going to learn how Jesus is the one man who will always fulfill your emotional desires and lead you to a man who is worthy of your heart. We’re going to talk about concrete ways to avoid the temptation to use others as objects of emotional fantasy while growing closer to Christ and His unfailing love for you.

St. Ignatius of Loyola taught that our imagination is a powerful tool that we can use to come to know and love God. He invites us to place ourselves in a story from one of the Gospels and use our imagination to engage our senses.

For example, when reading a story about Jesus, read it slowly and imagine what you see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. Most importantly, focus on Jesus: the look in His eyes, the expression on His face, the way He talks, and His movements. Listen to His words but also imagine what He might be saying to you.

Open your bibles and read Luke 7:36-50 twice. Picture the scene and be attentive to whatever stands out to you.

- » Are you a main character or a spectator?
- » What are you wearing?
- » Who is with you?
- » What are the sights, sounds, smells?
- » Is Jesus looking at you?
- » Is He speaking to you?

SAY: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Did anything stand out to you from this prayer experience with the Scripture?

Video: Watch the Scene 3 video segment.

*(Since this is Part 2 of "The Heart of a Woman," the videos begin with Scene 3.)*

At the end of the segment, read and journal:

Emotional images like chick flicks and love songs can tempt a woman away from Jesus. As women, we see these images and get impatient. Temptations are played out in our minds through "mentally stalking" and "creeping." By allowing our emotions to take over, we find ourselves completely attached to a person in our own imaginary relationship.

The Girl Scout Research Institute discovered that reality shows such as The Bachelor and The Bachelorette are watched mostly by females. In fact, the survey found that 75% of teen girls believe that these shows are not scripted but rather depict real life. Why do you think these kinds of shows are so appealing to females? *(Write in journal)*

The exercise we did coming up with our fantasy identities points to the fact that we all have hopes and dreams for our futures. Most likely, one aspect of those dreams is who your future husband will be. Take a few minutes to write down the "Top Ten" qualities you would like your future husband to have, and then we can discuss them.

Allow time for brainstorming and sharing of ideas. Then continue.

What help do you think young men need in their lives to develop the qualities you are looking for?

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### **Session 3: Sisterhood Part 1**

“So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Martha the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” —John 19:-25-27

Please pray 1 Hail Mary as you begin

**Video:** watch the first video segment. The video will last about three minutes. At the end of the segment, read and answer questions in your journal.

We look to other people and the media for examples of true friendship. Female friendships are often portrayed negatively and revolve around drama. A biblical image of true sisterhood is shown at the foot of the cross when Jesus took his final breath. Finding true sisterhood helps women thrive in life.

» **What qualities are you looking for in a friend?**

» **Would you rather fit into any group and never be popular, or fit only into the popular group?**

**Be honest with your feelings.**

Many times popularity is based upon superficial things like looks, talents, having cool things, etc. You don’t really have to have the qualities of being a good friend in order to be popular. However, being able to fit into any group indicates you have abilities to relate well with people and those qualities are born from a strong self-concept. But truthfully, it is hard not to desire popularity in our culture, which emphasizes superficial things.

» **Would you rather be famous, or the best friend of someone famous? Be honest with your feelings.**

Jonathan, the son of Saul, king of Israel, preferred to be the friend of someone famous rather than be famous himself. David was famous, and Jonathan was his true friend. Even as son of King Saul and heir to the throne, Jonathan preferred that David become king because of his love and respect for him.

» **What would a group of girls with a true sisterhood look like? In other words, what qualities would the girls possess?**

In this session, Steve Angrisano speaks about the characteristics of true friendship according to St. Augustine: 1) necessity of virtue, 2) frankness of speech, and 3) unity of heart and mind. In other words, virtue is willing the good of the other—building that person up through listening and encouragement; frankness of speech is being honest and accountable with each other and not being afraid to say what needs to be said; unity of heart and mind is helping one another with the mutual goal of becoming saints!

» **Why do the women at the foot of the cross give a good image for true sisterhood?**

The women were not thinking about themselves but rather had their eyes fixed on Jesus; they gave each other comfort and courage to be heroic in the face of persecution and difficulty; they were united in a great cause.

» **St. Thomas Aquinas said, “Friendship is the source of the greatest pleasures, and without friends even the most agreeable pursuits become tedious.” What do you think he meant by that?**

We were made for relationships. Virtuous friendships help us to grow in selfless love and this is the source of great joy in our lives. People who have experienced true, Christ-centered friendships discover that they would rather spend time with those friends than entertain themselves with other things like agreeable pursuits.

**Read** a story of a virtuous friendship in Luke 1:39-45.

**Video 2:** Watch, read and journal

The friendship between Mary and Elizabeth is an example of true sisterhood. True sisters are on the same page, path, and place in life; they help each other grow closer to God; and they encourage one another in good times and bad. The two biggest challenges of true sisterhood are competition and comparison. Facebook/Instagram and other social media can increase our tendency for competition and comparison. Society has created an idea of perfection that is impossible for women to achieve. How different do you think life would be if mirrors and photographs had never been invented? With less focus on ourselves, we could have more freedom to focus on others and have more joy in our lives as a result.

» **In what ways does Facebook/Instagram/twitter etc make your life better?**

» **In what ways does Facebook/Instagram/twitter etc make your life worse?**

» **Why do you think girls bullying other girls has become such a problem in school?**

Optional: Watch this five-minute clip titled “Carol Dweck – A Study on Praise and Mindsets” on You Tube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY)

The tendency for women to compare themselves to one another can lead to one of the seven deadly sins: envy. It is “deadly” because if entertained it will quickly become a way of life and poison a person’s relationship with God, with self, and with others. We commit the sin of envy when we desire that others not have what we want. St. Thomas Aquinas defines envy as “sorrow at another’s good.”

Read Genesis 4:3-8 aloud.

» **Here, in Genesis 4:3-8, we see envy is literally deadly. Why was Cain envious of Abel?**

(Abel had the virtue to give the Lord his very best offering. He held nothing back. His generous offering demonstrates his love for the Lord. Thus, the Lord looked on him with favor. Cain did not offer his best. Cain envied Abel's generosity, his strength, and his relationship with the Lord.)

» **Envy is often confused with jealousy. Do you know the difference?**

(Jealousy happens when someone is afraid of losing something that is important to him/her. For example, a guy may be jealous when his girlfriend talks to another guy because he feels he might lose her. Envy is a reaction to lacking something. Jealousy is a reaction to the threat of losing something—usually someone. Scripture even calls God a “jealous God” in Exodus 20:4-5 because He does not want to lose us.)

» **What do you think are some practical ways to overcome feelings of envy?**

(Pour out your heart to God in prayer and ask for His light to shine into the darkness you are experiencing; ask God for peace; share your heart and struggles with those who know and love you—this group, for example; remind yourself that God has created you uniquely and has a special plan for your life and His infinite love is as much for you as anyone else; remind yourself that you are just passing through this world and your destination is heaven; do something generous for the person you are envying.)

Elizabeth's first words to Mary are encouragement. Have you noticed that the word “courage” is in the word encouragement? Encouragement means to “give courage to another” and is at the core of true friendship.

» **How can we give courage to one another in this group?**

» **There is a saying that “virtue is its own reward.” How does that relate to friendships formed in faith?**

Also, in response to this session, are you willing to be honest and accountable to this group in the following areas?

- I will avoid comparing myself to others.
- I will fight to overcome feelings of envy.
- I will talk to a close friend when struggling in these areas.
- I will seek ways to encourage my friends—to give them courage to be their best selves.

Ask the Blessed Mother for help and guidance in this area.

Pray 9 more Hail Mary's to complete the decade (or feel free to pray a whole rosary focusing not on the joyful mysteries)

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## **Session 4: Sisterhood Part 2**

Read: John 15:12-15

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank You for the beautiful definition of true sisterhood that is expressed in the greatest commandment. Help us to love one another as You have loved us! Help us to lay our lives down for one another so that we might come to know You more deeply. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**Video**: watch Scene 3 of the Sisterhood session we started last time.

The greatest weapon against comparison and competition is compassion. We are all wounded, and we internalize our wounds and insecurities differently. “Hurt people,” hurt people. When a person hurts you, consider the pain in her life that is causing her to hurt others. Jesus loves us in our brokenness and accepts us as we are. True sisters accept us as Jesus does—just the way we are! Read the following and answer the questions in your journal:

**» Would you rather have no one show up to your wedding, or no one show up to your funeral?**

When people come to your wedding, they want to show their support for your marriage. When people come to your funeral, they want to pay respects and honor you for the life you lived. What would you value more? Mother Teresa, for example, had 15,000 people attend her funeral in Calcutta. Among those present were delegates from more than 50 nations—queens, presidents, and cardinals—who were there to honor her life of service for five decades to the poorest of the poor in Calcutta.

**» The Gospel message can be summarized with one sentence: “God loves you just as you are, but too much to leave you there.” What does this mean to you?**

We do not have to be perfect to come to God. Jesus drove this point home when he told the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son had a plan to earn his way back into relationship with his father. He would simply become one of his hired hands. But the father embraces the son and immediately restores him to his place in the family. We can’t earn God’s love. All He asks is that we turn our hearts back to Him and receive His embrace. He accepts us as we are. This is the reality of what takes place every time we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However, God loves us so much that He wants us to experience the joy of growing in our ability to love as He loves.

**» What do you think prevents people from turning their hearts back to the Father?**

**Video**: watch scene 4

» **The movie character Shrek says: “After a while, you learn to ignore the names people call you and just trust who you are.” From a Catholic perspective, what does it mean to trust who you are?**

The Christian life is about growing! The Catechism # 1832 states: “The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: ‘charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self control, chastity.’” The fruits of the Spirit demonstrate our growth in the power of the Holy Spirit. When you have authentic joy and peace what other people think and say about you means very little.

» **Would you rather be paralyzed from the neck down for five years and then recover, or be in a coma for five years and then recover?**

Another way to think about this is would you rather suffer but still be in relationships with family and friends or would you rather not suffer but allow five years to pass without relationships. If compassion means to “suffer with,” then suffering becomes meaningful when it is for the sake of others. In other words, being paralyzed would be very difficult but the consolation would be that you could still offer love, support, and encouragement to others and they to you.

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised”  
—Proverbs 31:30

» **What do you think it means to “fear” the Lord?**

The Bible uses the word “fear” over 300 times in reference to God, and its meaning in the original languages is “respect” and “reverence.” To respect and have reverence for God is to put Him in the first place of our lives. We understand that He made us for a purpose and has a plan for our lives. We “fear” Him by surrendering our will to His. The irony is that when we do this, He casts out fear from our hearts. First John 4:18 says: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” So, in a sense, to fear God is to not fear anything else!

**VIDEO:** Watch the Scene 5 video segment, which will last about five minutes. Then read/answer questions.

We should find our sisters in Christ and share our lives with them. Embrace the real you, and let your interior beauty shine. Be accountable to each other. Remember that “iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). Be the friend you are looking for.

» **Would you rather live on a beautiful tropical island all by yourself, or in a horrible polluted city with true friends?**

(The reality is life is tough no matter where you live. True friends make life worth living.)

» **Why is it important to find your bridesmaids before your groom?**

(If your bridesmaids are true sisters, then they will help you grow in the virtues that prepare you for a joy-filled marriage.)

» **Fr. Robert Barron says that “to love is to break out of the black hole of the ego.” What does he mean by that?**

(The ego is focused on your own understanding of yourself: your personality, talents, and abilities. It is often used to describe self-centeredness. St. John Paul II said we discover ourselves in the sincere gift of ourselves. In other words, the more we learn to love others, the more we understand who we are and love ourselves as God loves us. When we have difficulty loving ourselves as God loves us, we tend to stay focused on ourselves and not others.)

Please share one “take-away” from tonight. In other words, share something that resonates in your heart as a truth to live by.

**COMMIT:** In response to this session, are you willing to commit to being honest and accountable to this group in the following areas?

- » Place more emphasis on interior beauty than exterior beauty
- » Come to Jesus “as you are” and go to Confession in the next week or two
- » Pray for someone you know who is hurting others

Pray: Bring to mind the others in your group and your closest girl friends. Think about what their needs or intentions might be at this time. Then begin to pray for them...

Father God, thank You for calling us to true sisterhood with the women You place in our lives. I ask that You give us the grace to grow in virtue and that You remove anything within our hearts that is not beautiful and glorifying to You. We want our entire life to be a response to the great love You have for us as Your precious daughters.

Mother Mary, you are the perfect model of true sisterhood. Bring us closer to your Son. Help us become like the woman you are! Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

St. Maria Goretti, pray for us!

St. Therese of Lisieux, pray for us!

St. Catherine of Siena, pray for us!

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!

Amen

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