

Need a Face Lift?

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There can be many reasons why people desire a change in their appearance. Perhaps they are not happy with some facial feature like their nose or wrinkles or blemishes. There might be some sagging skin around the eyes or throat. Or maybe they just scare themselves in the mirror each morning! Perhaps there is some disfigurement that they feel is repulsive to others and inhibits forming relationships. Maybe they think they would be happier “if only I looked like so-and-so!” The list goes on!

Vanity is nothing new, of course, and will be with people as long as self-focus persists. It will continue to fuel the cosmetic industry and related professions such as elective cosmetic surgery. There will continue to be man-made “solutions” to “problems” of appearance and, unfortunately, the tendency to bow to the opinions and approval of others can often lead to bondage to an “ideal image” that itself becomes an idol!

The Scriptures have much to say about focusing on the heart rather than outward appearance. For example, when the Lord told Samuel that he would show him which of the sons of Jesse he was to anoint as future king of Israel [1Sam. 16:1-13], Samuel at first thought [v. 6] it would surely be Eliab,

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” [1Sam 16: 7]

Good advice in the choice of a wife is found in the Proverbs. For example,

*“Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout
is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.”* [Prov. 11:22]

and

*“Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”* [Prov. 31:30]

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were sharply rebuked by Jesus for their hypocrisy:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.” [Mt. 23: 27]

These scriptures, and many others, clearly steer our focus to the more important matters of the heart, rather than outward beauty and appearance. Nevertheless, there *is* a strong connection between the two that has become apparent countless times through ministry to people who experienced a wonderful “face lift” as a by-product of healing in the heart. There is very often a remarkable transformation in the faces of those who have been set free from the awful presence of anger, bitterness, envy, etc. Those of us who desire to become more attractive to others would do well to take care of ugly conditions of the heart!

A Window to Your Heart

Is there indeed a connection between our heart condition and the way we appear to others? Most certainly! A prime example is found in Cain's response to the Lord's rejection of his sacrifice [Gen. 4: 3-5]:

"...So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?'..." [Gen. 4: 5-7, NAS]

This is the first example of a heart condition being "written" on a face (the Lord, of course, did not need to gaze upon Cain to know his heart condition!).

Nehemiah, the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, was frightened by his inability to disguise his sadness over the ruinous condition of Jerusalem [Neh. 2: 1-3]. It was a dangerous thing to show sorrow before the king!

"...I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; so the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.'" [Neh. 2: 1,2]

When the rich young man asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life [Mk. 10: 17-23], he was admonished to sell all his possessions and give to the poor. The young man's love of money was exposed by his response:

"At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth."

Facial Fashion Tips From the Father!

We all know of numerous examples when we could "see" the anger in someone's face or their despondency, worry, sadness, etc. But our countenance also reflects the joy in our hearts, our delight in the Lord, the peace that guards our hearts, etc. One of the best-known examples in Scripture is the famous face of Stephen when he was brought before the Sanhedrin on trumped-up charges by the elders and teachers of the law:

"All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like heaven." [Acts 6: 15]

It is not hard to tell when someone's face is reflecting joy, delight, peace, etc. Such a countenance captures the attention of those close by and causes a wonderful attractiveness to manifest in the owner! This was no secret to Solomon, who wrote

"A happy heart makes the face cheerful ..." [Prov. 15: 13]

And he wrote further to mention the benefit to those around such a person:

"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart ..." [Prov. 15:30]

Happiness is not alone in bringing about improvement in one's countenance:

"...Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance." [Ecc. 8: 1]

Another “tip” for improving one’s countenance comes from the story of Hannah [1Sam. 1: 1-20] who suffered severely from depression to the point of weeping and not eating because of her barren womb and the merciless taunts of Elkanah’s other wife, Peninnah, whose was blessed with many sons and daughters.

“In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD .” [1Sam. 1:10]

When Eli the priest discovered her anguish and grief, he blessed her, and she was comforted:

*“... ‘Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.’
...Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.”*

God eventually answered her prayer and gave her a son, Samuel, which sounds like the Hebrew for “heard of God,” but the lesson here is that her face was changed *before* the answer to her prayer! This is the blessing of peace from simply *asking* your Father, with thanksgiving that comes from trust:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
[Phil. 4: 6,7]

These “facial fashion tips” from the Father can be summarized by saying that the key to a beautiful countenance is *right relationship* with your heavenly Father!

In the course of our ministry to hurting people, we have seen many examples of “face lifts” as the Father touches hearts and brings lasting change to the souls of his children. In fact, it has become so commonplace that we often suggest to visitors that they pay a visit to the rest room to take a good look in the mirror! We are continually amazed at the dramatic changes that occur in their faces and often they are themselves shocked by their own “reflection improvement!”

“Sleeping” Beauty!

One person’s “face lift” has impacted several of our ministry team members in a life-changing way! When Susan (not her real name) was in the delivery room about to give birth to her only child, her body reacted to the anesthesia in an unexpected way, and her heart and lungs stopped! An emergency procedure saved her baby boy, but in the rush to save him, someone forgot to give her oxygen for about ten minutes and the resulting brain damage left Susan in a coma!

When The Father’s TouchTeam learned of her situation, she had by then been in a sub-acute coma for two years and, although she was breathing on her own, she was being fed through a tube to her stomach and could only communicate by blinking her eyes and through grunts and groans. She would brighten a bit when her two-year old son came to visit, or when her mom, aunt and grandmother (all believers!) were in the room, but the striking feature the team noticed in her face were the constant, deep furrows in her forehead that were not characteristic of a young woman in her prime.

After a couple of visits with Susan, the team realized that her face was reflecting deep anger and bitterness toward those who had mishandled the delivery, not to mention her husband who had begun to find other companionship and visited much less often. Susan was able to understand when spoken to and the team gently led her to a place of forgiveness for those responsible. The love of Jesus had its victory over the entrenchments of Satan! The furrows and anger evident in her face had disappeared by the next visit a week later! Instead there was peace and gentleness in her face and lovely was now an appropriate description of her countenance!

But the praise report does not stop there! What happened in the weeks and months after her deliverance from anger serves as an awesome testimony to the redeeming power of the Lord! As the team continued to visit over the next year, they witnessed the development in Susan of one of the most wonderful, intimate relationships with the Lord that they had ever encountered! She would get excited when she “knew” the team was coming down the hallway to her room in the rehab center. She longed so much to worship the Lord and she tried to sing along with the team. What could have been a frustrating experience instead was a beautiful expression of Susan’s love for Jesus!

Susan’s relationship with the team continued to grow and the Holy Spirit began to reveal what was on her heart so that she could “communicate” with them. So, even though Susan couldn’t talk, the Lord’s mercy enabled her to still “tell” the team how much she loved him and worshiped him. One of the burdens on her heart was to pray for others; her focus had shifted from her own plight to the needs of others, particularly for healing. So, Susan was grafted into the Father’s TouchTeam and began praying for visitors while she herself was in a coma! One lady who came for prayer from Susan was powerfully touched by the Holy Spirit as soon as she grasped Susan’s hands and she received relief from her condition!

Even Angels Long to Look!

Many other stories could be related regarding Susan’s wonderful “walk” with the Lord, but one in particular serves to illustrate the blessing of right relationship with God. One night as the team was worshipping with Susan, one of the team members was gripped by a vision of many angels outside her room. The angel in front of the rest asked to come into her room, explaining that they longed to be in Susan’s presence because of her intimate relationship with the Lord, which was so evident in her face! So, half a dozen angels joined with the saints in Susan’s room that night in singing praises to the Lord! The Lord’s light was shining through Susan and they all longed to look upon his beauty in her! Susan’s limitations had been superseded by the Father’s loving touch that had given her a most wonderful “face lift!”

Susan is now home with the Lord, but her powerful lesson remains with us. We can desire with all our hearts that the light of the Lord would shine so powerfully through us, that no earthly surgeon could match the heavenly face lift performed by the Father! It’s another way that you, as the apple of his eye, can bless your Father in heaven!

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