

The Question Every Woman Asks

by Angela Thomas

Let me just tell you right from the beginning, I know that you've tried. And you know that you've tried.

Lord knows that you have scratched your head in wonder and profound confusion when it comes to the woman that you love. You've tried to hear and understand. You want to give and respond.

Ten fabulous dates. Seven promises. Five love languages. Three counselors. Anything. Everything. But whatever you do, it's never enough. The target of her desire moves and you can't seem to hit the bull's-eye.

You've tried; we both know it. But the truth is that you can't.

In a hundred different ways, she has asked you, "Do you think I'm beautiful?" and in just as many ways, you've tried to tell her, "Yes, oh my goodness, yes, you are incredibly beautiful to me."

She may not have asked you directly, but everything about her is wired to long for beauty ... especially to be known as beautiful. One of the questions that our Creator attached to her feminine soul is, "Do you think I'm beautiful?"

The beauty that a woman longs for isn't all about body image. (Well, maybe it's a little about body image.) The deeper beauty that she longs for is about complete acceptance.

Does anyone see her flawed and sinful and still call her beautiful? Do you see the loneliness? Do you see her struggle? Do you see the unmet desires of her heart? Do you see her yearn for the life she has dreamed of? Do you see her in the middle of all that mess and still call her beautiful?

Somehow, somewhere, she got to thinking that you could answer the question attached to her soul. Maybe you did that wonderful thing that a man can do to a woman: Turned her world upside down and made her believe she couldn't take another breath without you. How cool that God planned such a ruckus when a man and a woman fall in love. He must certainly enjoy watching His created find pleasure and peace in one another.

But somehow in the middle of all that, a woman can begin to believe that a man might just be all that she needs. He will answer my questions. He can heal my wounds. He can fill up the cup of my soul. He will make me whole. But she has lost sight of the design: God has made us for Himself. Eugene Peterson paraphrased Paul's words from Ephesians 1:4-5:

"Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!)

"He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son" (The Message, emphasis mine).

You and I and the woman that you love have been made by God, for God. The part of us that aches to be filled is the soul, and the soul was made for His presence. In this passage, Paul says we will not be whole, apart from the love of God.

But God also made us relational. We have been made to long for the other lovers, giving and receiving love and intimacy. It's just that we have lost sight of the order. We've misunderstood the design. Wholeness comes from God, not from any other relationship or thing or feeling.

So what about the love of a man and a woman? It can be fabulous when your soul is full of the love of God. But it can be devastating when you have expected someone to fill up the

dry and empty places.

A woman who has known healthy love from a man is stronger and more self-assured. This covering of healthy love becomes a touchstone of sorts.

A safe place to run back to.

A haven to rest in. A shelter in the storm. There is someone to come to her rescue. There is someone to hold her in the night. There is someone to call her beautiful.

Perfect. It might all be just perfect, except that one day the woman can wake up and look at the man who calls her beautiful and decide that he's not enough. Maybe if he'd come home in time for dinner or pick up his socks or make more money or part his hair differently ... then maybe he'd be enough to fill every longing ... then, maybe he'd make her whole.

A woman can gaze across her backyard and dreamily believe that her neighbor's man could get it right. He owns his own business, can barbecue for 50, smiles a lot and brings her expensive gifts.

She could imagine that he wants to know what she is thinking, rubs her feet at night and asks her which video she'd like him to rent. Well, he might be all that, but probably not. He is just a man. Beyond the personality she glimpsed across the picket fence is a real person with fallen places and wounds that keep him from being able to meet his wife's deepest needs too.

In the effort to make things perfect, a woman can beg her man to be like the one over there. She's hoping that if he could change, then she'd finally be whole.

When the man feels like he is asked to be something he wasn't ever made to be, when he senses the pressure to meet expectations that seem unattainable, when he wants to fill but

doesn't really understand how to pour, after years of talking and trying and talking some more, then the man can step back in frustration.

There is a distance the woman tries to counter, so she leans in and desperately asks him for more. And he might try from miles away, but he can't.

So he looks across the backyard and wonders if his neighbor's woman has these needs. Maybe a woman like her could appreciate a man like him. And his heart wanders away. And he gives up on romance with the one he has loved and the passion dies. And the heart of the woman who has expected the man to be enough dies with it.

Here's the deal ... you weren't made to be enough to fill the woman's soul. You already knew that. You are just a man and can only give as a man and interact as a man and love as a man. You were not designed to fill the depth of a woman's longings, anticipate every need and jump through every hoop.

You can't. Those deep places inside of the woman were made for God.

You are a vessel. God uses you to give her a part of the filling of His holy love. But you are not the only vessel, nor are you able to fill from your own strength, nor are you the only thing she will ever need.

When a woman cries out, "Do you think I'm beautiful?" the only answer that's enough comes from God. He says to her in Psalm 45:11, "the king is enthralled by your beauty" (NIV). For a woman to be filled in the depths of her soul, the love of God is required ... knowing Him ... hearing His voice ... believing that He's wild about her.

So you're off the hook. You can't ever be enough. You can't ever really answer the question attached to her soul.

But you still have a responsibility. If the Holy Spirit directs you to speak words of blessing to her, then for goodness sake don't hold back. If God instructs you to pamper her, then get moving. Obey God's promptings. Through your obedience, she will taste a part of the love God has for her.

Even though you will never be enough, please keep trying. Even when the target moves, don't give up; keep aiming for her heart. Even when you are discouraged, look up and He will give you grace. This is a spiritual act of worship ... to love her well is to worship God.

Now put down these words and get in there and kiss that woman like it's the first time.