

## *AU NATURAL*

Jezebel was in trouble. Jehu was on his way to see her. She was a beautiful woman, but he wanted nothing she had to offer. He was coming to kill her in fulfillment of prophecy. If she did nothing, in a very short time she would die. Fighting back in the only way possible for her, she painted her face and her eyes, did her hair up as nicely as possible, and was leaning out the window looking seductive when his chariot rolled up. It was a great effort at diversion by the woman known for turning all of Israel away from God to the worship of Baal and immorality. Nonetheless, she died! So what was the point of the paint?

Historically, the use of facial paint has been predominately by men. The women of Jezreel are mentioned in the Bible as using it on their faces. Other history books record its use primarily as a mask or facial markings on warriors to strike fear into the hearts of the enemy. In Jezebel's time, the dark paint used was more appropriately applied by kings. Rubbed onto their crowns around precious stones, the contrast would make the gems stand out and seem more brilliant. Thus, the glory of their majesty would be increased. The women of Jezreel, following the example of the queen, used the paint in a similar fashion to make their eyes stand out and shine. Jezebel, it seems, had no qualms about competing with her husband, the king, for glory.

This continues in recent history with the use of facial paint, predominately by women. Without question or controversy, it has been primarily for the purpose of attracting the attention and desire of men. This was even mentioned in an anthropology course taken in college. According to the instructor and confirmed by observation, special attention is paid to the eyes and the lips. The eyes, as windows to the soul, are used to communicate emotions and to flirt. The lips are emphasized for several reasons. Fuller lips have been traditionally indicative of a fuller figure, wider hips (important in child bearing), and increased sensuality. They are also important in lovemaking. Facial paint, or makeup as we call it, is used to draw the attention of men to these features and make them seem fuller or more brilliant.

Hollywood and society both understand this. Jezebel painted her face in an attempt to turn Jehu's mind away from God's will and toward carnal desire. When a child dresses up as a harlot, she paints her face. A girl or woman wearing excessive makeup is termed as a Jezebel. Women in movies portraying whores are heavily made up. Conversely, when they are presented as pure and innocent, makeup is eliminated from their faces. Consciously intended or not, the message is clear. The heavier the makeup, the more attention is desired from men. This is why, even in our recent history, prostitutes in the American West were referred to as "painted ladies".

Using makeup also seems a little ungrateful. Imagine with us that you are the best of friends with Leonardo Da Vinci. He loves you like you are his own child. Laboring intensely, he paints your portrait. He pours all of himself into creating a unique masterpiece for your use and enjoyment. His style is so wrapped up in the painting that no one can mistake who created it for you. With a glad heart, you take it home, unwrap it, and set it where you can look at it every day. Eventually, little things begin to bother you. So you get out your little set of paints and you go to work. You darken a little around the eyes. You make the lips a tiny bit bolder. Highlights in the hair, shadows on the cheeks, you fix it up the way it looks good to you. Then you take the revised creation back into the presence of the master painter and say, "Look Leonardo, I made it better!" You might just as well have slapped him.

You were made by God and you are His masterpiece. It was not a quick job either! He knew you in the womb and the Bible says you were knit together. One hand made stitch at a time. He was even careful to put a specific number of hairs on your head. You were made for His purpose, exactly as He wanted you, and given senses with which to enjoy what He created. Now you take the paint and start daubing

a little here and a little there. So how do you suppose God feels when you take His masterpiece back into His presence and say, "Don't worry! You made a few mistakes, but I was able to fix them." Surely He knew exactly what it felt like when He instructed us to turn the other cheek.

If this were not insulting enough to our Creator, we allow carnal people to dictate to us what our beauty should consist of. We take the word of advertisers, who are unashamedly trying to coerce us into buying what they are selling, that what God created is not good enough. God says "You are beautiful in my sight." Madison Ave. says, "Only if you use our products will you be worthy of self esteem". We don't have a reliable source for this, but we have heard that for many years, the Catholic church did not permit their members to participate in beauty pageants. Their rationale was reportedly that it was not the prerogative of society to determine what constituted beauty. That was the prerogative of God alone. Amen!

Nowhere in the scriptures are we specifically told to refrain from the painting of the face by either men or women. In 1 Tim 2:9 though, we are given a line, or command, when we are told that women should adorn themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety. Changing our appearance to something we are more proud to display in public would seem to violate the application, or precept, of that command. Going even deeper though, why would anyone strive to attract immoral attention that if obtained, will lead to that which is definitely spelled out as sin? Why would we choose to compete for glory with the King we have sworn to serve? Why would we want to insult our Creator who not only made us beautiful in His sight, but stamped His image all over us? That image was meant to be revealed to the world, not painted over. For those who look for loopholes and a license to live however they wish, they are not bound by Law in this matter. The use of makeup is not specifically spelled out as a sin. Neither can it bring any joy to our Father and Creator. The decision just represents another choice, another chance to demonstrate love.

### ***STUDY QUESTIONS***

1. We often give our children names in hopes that they will grow to be like their namesake. Why do we never hear of mothers naming their daughters, "Jezebel? What traits and actions are identified with this historical character?
2. Prior to the last several centuries, how often have you read about the historical use of facial paint by women? Anywhere else in the Bible?
3. When admirers flock to the artificial image of someone heavily made up, are they admiring the person or the image?
4. What impression do you form of someone heavily made up when you meet them? Ever wonder what they really look like? Ever wonder if they are ashamed of their natural appearance?
5. What are the primary goals in the application of makeup? What is being attempted? When a woman sits down to begin the application, what does she want to accomplish?
6. Do you think that makeup can be used to increase the attraction that men feel toward a woman? If this is the case, if you are male, do you prefer that your wife or girlfriend, if or when you have one, wear heavy makeup? If so, why?
7. Do you feel that increasing the sexual desire of strange men toward women is the will of God or His perfect plan for His children?
8. Have you ever carefully made something for someone you love and had them fail to appreciate it, complain about it, or worse, immediately alter it to suit their taste? How did it make you feel?
9. Did you want to take back the gift?
10. When you change your appearance from what God designed, do you feel you have made an improvement? Do you think God does?

11. Have you ever gone back in magazines and looked at the changing looks that have been considered beautiful over time? If a beautifully made up woman is changed to look like a model from two decades ago, would she still be considered beautiful? Why or why not? Who decides what is considered beautiful? How secure do you feel with the wisdom of those who decide that?
12. What does the Bible have to say about beauty?
13. What do you think is meant by adorning ourselves with shamefacedness and sobriety?