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Can a Fat Person Be Made in the Image of God?

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Can a Fat Person Be Made in the Image of God?

Abstract

"I'm still only beginning to realize just how beautiful it is that our God doesn't look at us the way we look at each other."

Posting about seeing each other through God's eyes from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/can-a-fat-person-be-made-in-the-image-of-god/>

Keywords

In All Things, image of God, body weight, beauty

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Can a Fat Person Be Made in the Image of God?

 [all in allthings.org/can-a-fat-person-be-made-in-the-image-of-god/](http://allthings.org/can-a-fat-person-be-made-in-the-image-of-god/)

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Sarah Vander Plaats

A couple of years ago, a friend of mine posted a response on her Facebook page to an article about how obesity breeds obesity. She wrote, “Just eat right and exercise. It’s not that complicated, people!” This thin, athletic friend and several of her Facebook friends held an online conversation in the comment section of the response throughout the day, in which they shared condemnations of people that they called lazy, parents who “abused” their children by making them fat, and a nation full of selfish, overweight people.

I watched from behind my screen, eating up the condemnation from people I knew and respected. I watched and feasted on their disgust. But I said nothing—mostly because I was ashamed to be one of those people that she and her friends resented so much.

Conversations like this one and online rants about the obese are not hard to find. Just type in “fat people are...” in Google and it will fill in the blank with “fat people are gross” and “fat people are disgusting.”

Two years ago, feeling that I had no other alternatives and wanting to be free of the weight holding me down, I took drastic action and had about 90 percent of my stomach cut out. The procedure, called vertical sleeve gastrectomy, changed my lifestyle suddenly and dramatically.

Having lost more than 100 pounds, I found during the course of the year following surgery that people were suddenly using words like pretty and skinny to describe me.

Now, when people have conversations about weight, they include me. Before I lost the weight, I heard people talk about fat people, but I was never invited to be part of the discussion, or I just watched as others conversed on social media. Now, people tell me exactly what they think of my body—a new phenomenon that can feel pretty uncomfortable.

Please don’t get me wrong. I appreciate when people recognize the hard work that I’ve put into my appearance. I like a good compliment as much as anyone. What throws me is that being thin seems to equal being beautiful. And in contrast, being fat then equals being ugly. I certainly felt ugly when I was 100 pounds heavier, but my attitude wasn’t necessarily because of the image in the mirror. What stung was the image that I saw of myself through other people’s eyes.

Having lost weight, I’ve realized that seeing myself reflected through other people’s eyes does nothing but weigh me down further. I’d been listening too closely to negative conversations, and I’d been caring too much about other people’s judgment.

Since losing the weight and realizing that how *I* think of my body hasn’t really changed, I’ve found myself wondering more and more why I’m so bothered by what people say.

We’re told that people look at the outward appearance, but that God looks at the heart. I’m still only beginning to realize just how beautiful it is that our God doesn’t look at us the way we look at each other.

I don’t want to sit silently and not respond when people condemn others because of their bodies. My hope is that we will be able to see each other as image bearers of God. A God who is loving and forgiving. A God who is gracious and merciful, creative and intelligent. When we view ourselves in the mirror he holds up, these are the things we should be reflecting. Our conversations should be a mirror of his love, and our speech should build each other up and not condemn.