

REDEEMING THE BEAST

*A Devotional Adventure through
Beauty and the Beast*

Sample Chapter



Christlit
Book Award

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*Redeeming the Beast: A Devotional Adventure through Beauty and the Beast
(Sample Chapter)*

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INTRODUCTION



I'm pretty sure that I had never been more excited about owning a movie in my life. It was 2010 and I was a sophomore in college. While it's true that I had purchased several DVDs for myself, this one was truly special. It was my favorite movie of all time, one I'd watched since I was a little girl. Despite knowing the movie so well, I was beyond excited to own and watch that DVD.

As I'm sure you have guessed by the title of this book, that DVD was the diamond edition of Disney's animated classic, *Beauty and the Beast*. Since my family owned the original Classics Collection VHS from 1992, we did not get the first DVD release in 2001. Needless to say, I was disappointed, especially since this release had a music video from my favorite music group at the time, Jump5 (Seriously, I was pretty bummed). Several years later, our last VHS player broke, so we had no way to watch the film. So

thanks to the crazy but brilliant Disney Vault strategy, I had to wait until 2010 to fulfill my dream of owning my favorite movie again.

As much as I was excited about watching the movie, there was something else I was even more excited to watch: an extra DVD full of bonus features. I spent hours watching the full-length documentary *Beyond Beauty*, as well as the countless other featurettes on the disc. But there was one featurette that I found that uncovered a powerful truth about this classic film and inspired this book. It has changed the way I watch the film, and I believe it will for you too.

This featurette is called “Glen Keane – A Transformation,” and it described how Glen Keane, the supervising animator of the Beast, found inspiration for animating the scene when the Beast transforms back into a prince. At first, Keane shared how he anticipated animating this scene and took inspiration from some different statues. But then, he came to explain that the reason why the transformation scene was significant to him was that it became symbolic of his own spiritual transformation. He even said that he had 2 Corinthians 5:17 written at the top of

his exposure sheet as he was animating the scene:

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (KJV).

Keane further explained that he was grateful for the opportunity to express his spiritual transformation as a real-life parable through his animation. He concluded,

“I don’t know if there’s ever an illustration more clear as to what really can take place in a person’s life spiritually than this animated character transforming from an animal to a prince.”¹

In addition to this, I also later discovered that Keane was the author and illustrator of a Christian children’s book series called *The Adventures of Adam Raccoon (or Parables for Kids)*. He was working on this series around the time that he was animating some of the most iconic characters of the Disney Renaissance, including the Beast.

From the moment I heard this interview, I saw this scene in a whole new light. I had always loved the transformation scene: the

colors, the music, the sorrow turned to joy, and, of course, the happy ending. But when I realized that there was a deeper spiritual meaning that was literally drawn into the pages of the animation, I realized that this knowledge not only impacted my perspective on this scene, but the whole film, as well as all the other adaptations of this classic fairytale.

With this knowledge as the foundation, I invite you to embark with me on a devotional adventure into the biblical and practical truths that are present in the story of *Beauty and the Beast*. This journey will be full of twists and turns, very much like Belle's and Beast's personal journeys. Through it all, I hope you will come to see a powerful tale of redemption, sacrificial love, and hope pointing us back to the God who is the source of it all.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



Redeeming the Beast is meant to be both a devotional and a guide through the spiritual themes present in the story of *Beauty and the Beast*. Some of the themes will be truths that are biblical in their nature. Others will be illustrations of the consequences of our sins if we choose to reject biblical truth. While none of these adaptations nor the fairytale versions are written as literal allegories, there are many biblical and spiritual parallelisms that should be explored. All of these truths will weave a tale of redemption, sacrificial love, and hope that you won't soon forget.

In each chapter, there will be a summary based on one or more scenes of *Beauty and the Beast*, reflections on the story, Scriptures (which are italicized for distinction), "Going Deeper" questions, and additional Scripture references related to that chapter's theme.

It's important to clarify that this book will be drawing primarily from the Disney adaptations of *Beauty and the Beast*. While there have been several adaptations done by Disney (at least six by my count), there are three main versions we will be discussing:

- Animated Film (1991)
- Broadway Musical (1994)
- Live-Action Film (2017)

There will also be references to the two main versions of the original fairytale by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont. (And yes I agree, those names are a mouth full!)

Due to copyright restrictions, I will be limited in my ability to share story dialogue and song lyrics in this book. Therefore, direct quotations from any version of *Beauty and the Beast* will be limited. Instead, I will reference song titles and give brief scene descriptions that should help you know to which part of the story I am referencing. If you are unfamiliar with the scene or song, I encourage you to go look it up, on Disney Plus, on Blu-ray/DVD, on YouTube, or

elsewhere on the internet, so you can follow along with the story.

I also want to clarify that when our male protagonist is in his beastly form, I will refer to him as “Beast” or “the Beast” since he is never given an alternative name. But when the Beast is a human prince, I will refer to him as “Prince Adam” or “Adam.” While this name is not included in any of the Disney adaptations and some fans disagree with its legitimacy, a video game gave the prince this name sometime after the original film was released.¹ Hopefully, using these names will help me clarify who I am talking about so my thoughts are clear.



To prepare yourself for these devotional adventures, here are a few recommendations:

- 1) Familiarize yourself with at least one version of *Beauty and the Beast*, especially if you haven't watched any of them in a while. Consider looking

up the soundtrack to the Broadway musical if you are unfamiliar with it.

- 2) Have a pen/pencil and paper handy if you want to take notes, especially if you plan to use them for the “Going Deeper” questions.
- 3) Have your Bible or Bible app ready when you read. I recommend using the ESV or NIV since those versions are the ones that will be used most often in this book. In addition, some verses will be shared in the NLT, MSG, or KJV.

As far as the reading plan, this book can be used one of two ways. The first option is to read five devotionals a week for five weeks, which will take 35 days to complete. That is the way that the book is already divided. The second option is to read one devotion every day for 25 days. The first option is specifically designed for those that want to go through this devotional as a Bible study with a group. Instructions for leading a Bible study through *Redeeming the Beast* are available in the back of the book (starting on pg. 214). Let’s get started.

CHAPTER 1

BECOMING A BEAST



Scene: Prologue

Version(s): Animated

There was once a selfish young man named Adam who was meant to become king of a small kingdom in France, but then one night, the prince was visited by an old woman who asked for his help in exchange for her rose. Because of her unattractive appearance and his cold heart, Prince Adam turned her away. Then, it was revealed that the old woman was a beautiful enchantress. She placed Prince Adam and his household under a curse, turning him into a terrifying

Beast, and his servants into household objects.

The enchantress left the enchanted rose to the Beast to be the reminder and hourglass to the permanency of his curse. She offered one way for the curse to be broken: the Beast had to learn to love a woman and earn her love, all before the last petal fell from the rose. As time passed and more petals fell, he began to lose all hope in redeeming the worst mistake he ever made. How could anyone learn to love him as he was?



Have you ever taken a closer look at the first stained glass window from the prologue of *Beauty and the Beast*, the one that features the prince? In the anticipation of what's coming next, there's a detail there that even some diehard fans miss. In this first window, you see Prince Adam's subjects, working hard in the fields and living well both night and day. There are also a few dogs and a few roses. Almost everyone will notice the castle at the top and the prince standing in the

center, assuming his kingdom, and the world as he knew it, revolved around him. However, the most significant detail to notice is the words that surround the crest at the bottom of the window:

“VINCIT QUI SE VINCIT”

In case you are a little rusty on ancient languages, this is a Latin phrase (bet you didn't think you were going to get a Latin lesson from this book, did you?). This short, insightful phrase translates as, “He who conquers conquers himself.”¹ This phrase in many ways will set the tone for the journey that Prince Adam will go through over the course of this story.

While most of us would like to think that we would never be as self-centered as Prince Adam, self-centeredness will be a struggle for all of us as a result of our sinful nature. While we may not be snubbing off old women with roses, we all struggle to put the needs of others before our own.

For us as Christians, it's important to remember that we are all called to live lives that are bigger than ourselves. The second

greatest commandment of the Law of Moses was to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Part of what it means to love our neighbor is to learn how to put others' interests before our own.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3-4 NIV).

This call to put others' needs ahead of our own goes even further by bringing us back to the heart of what Jesus did for us through His humanity and sacrifice on the cross.

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with
God something to be used to his own
advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself*

*by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

*“Therefore God exalted him to the highest
place
and gave him the name that is above every
name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should
bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the
earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus
Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father”
(Philippians 2:5-11 NIV).*

How does this relate to what happened to Prince Adam? I think this part of Adam’s journey can be a great illustration for us about what can happen to our hearts if we choose to get consumed with ourselves. If we cannot get out of our own way long enough to recognize and do something about the needs of those around us, we will become unable to reflect the light of Christ. In time, it will cause us to get caught up in pursuing temporal pleasures and make us callous to the needs of others. Some of us even run the risk of becoming like the Beast. While we may not physically transform into an animal,

we may make ourselves into a self-centered “ugly” person that no one wants to be around.

Although most of us would like to think that we will never become as incapable of love and compassion as Prince Adam did, it can happen to any of us, if we don't learn how to put the needs of others ahead of our own. Hopefully, it won't take being cursed by an enchantress to convince you that you need to start looking beyond yourself. Instead, I hope, through the power of Christ's redemptive transformation, that by the end of this devotional adventure, you will learn, just like the Beast, how to conquer yourself.



GOING DEEPER

1. What do you think the phrase “he who conquers conquers himself” means? Why do you think the filmmakers chose to use this phrase to describe the prince?
2. What do you think it would be like to have no love in your heart towards others?
3. Why do you think it’s so hard for us to look past what we can see, especially when it comes to our perception of others?
4. How does looking at Christ’s example help us to look beyond ourselves?
5. What are you going to do to look beyond yourself today?

OTHER VERSES ABOUT AVOIDING SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Luke 14:7-11, Luke 17:33, Romans 7:5,
Romans 12:10

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