

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Seeing the Heart” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for January 5, 2020. The lesson is found on page 37 of *Young Teen Teacher* by 21st Century Christian.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

Now that 2020 is here, many people are taking the time to look back on the past decade and examine what good or bad things have come out of those 10 years. One such phenomenon that has emerged is “Instagram Face.” It’s the face that generally gets the most “likes” and “followers” and is a kind of vaguely exotic, young, feminine, Caucasian face, marked by perfect skin, high cheekbones, bold eyes, long lashes, a small nose, and big lips. It’s the face of Kardashians and Hadids and a thousand other young, beautiful models, actresses, performers, and other sundry famous persons.

Since the launch of Instagram in 2010, posters have been striving toward the creation of perfect, aspirational images that translate to large followings and ad dollars. But the concept of commonalities across populations existing to create a singular idea of what is beautiful has been around for a long time. It’s just that now what used to be accomplished with smoke and mirrors and a bit of makeup is now being achieved through app filters and cosmetic technology. And the other difference is that it appears everyone knows this.

In the past, actresses might travel in secret to plastic surgeons to have some work done, stay low for several weeks or months until the healing process was complete, and then emerge in some new role and have everyone marveling over how they achieved such radiance, dropped 10 years from their face, or suddenly looked so surprised all the time. But now everyone confesses to using FaceTune, and plastic surgeons have become celebrities in their own right, advertising on Instagram right alongside their clients, sometimes even rivaling the number of likes and views those clients have collected. And more and more, these physical alterations are not just for the rich and famous. In 2018, Americans spent \$16.5 billion on cosmetic surgery, and it probably comes as no surprise that 92 percent of the procedures were bought for women.

As *New Yorker* writer Jia Tolentino put it in her article, “The Age of Instagram Face,” “In a world where women are rewarded for youth and beauty in a way that they are rewarded for nothing else—and where a strain of mainstream feminism teaches women that self-objectification is progressive, because it’s profitable—cosmetic work might seem like one of the few guaranteed high-yield projects that a woman could undertake.”

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

What do you think about the idea of everyone striving to have the same “Instagram Face”? Do you think that’s a good thing or a bad thing? Explain.

Have you ever used a filter or app to make a photo of yourself look better? What did you think about the results?

Is it empowering for people to be able to change the way they look? What do you think drives people to want to look a certain way?

It’s true that the world we live in often measures people by what they look like on the outside. But we’re going to see today that God cares about what people look like on the inside.

