

“If it’s true that what we chase shapes our race, then how we see the world around us really matters. *Beautifully Distinct* is a much-needed resource that directs the way we engage with culture as women of God, and I’m grateful to these sisters for lending their wisdom—for such a time as this.”

RUTH CHOU SIMONS, Author, *GraceLaced* and *Beholding and Becoming*; Founder, gracelaced.com

“For the busy woman who wants to engage and live a life of biblical significance but feels unprepared, this book is for you! Trillia Newbell has done a wonderful job of recruiting women who can help us evaluate culture and articulate biblical truth as we learn to think, listen and speak to a world that in many ways has lost its mooring. Anchored in Scripture, this book will be a tool you will reference often. No more retreating: it is time for us to engage and be *beautifully distinct!*”

DONNA GAINES, Editor, *A Daily Women’s Devotional*; Founder and President, [ARISE2Read](http://ARISE2Read.com)

“The women who have written in this book know what it means to be in this world but not of it. Through their thoughtful reflections, they demonstrate how our salvation changes not just us, but also the way we relate to the culture around us. These are women I respect and feel privileged to learn from.”

AMY WHITFIELD, SBC Executive Committee; Associate Vice President, Convention Communications

“*Beautifully Distinct* is an important resource on culture written by Christian women. These authors bring a helpful perspective as they consider how being a disciple of Jesus Christ affects every area of our lives. Their insights will challenge and encourage every reader.”

PHILLIP BETHANCOURT, Executive Vice President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission



BEAUTIFULLY



DISTINCT



**CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS ON
FAITH, LIFE, AND CULTURE**



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INTRODUCTION

TRILLIA NEWBELL

It's amazing when you see God making a noticeable difference in your life. When I first became a Christian, I was thrilled about Jesus but didn't fully understand what my new profession of faith meant for how I related to the rest of the world around me. So every time I saw something new in God's word, light bulbs went off in my head about how that one fact should change the way I lived.

In the first few pages of Genesis I found that humans are made in the image of God. Since that's the case, it matters how we treat those not like us; it matters how we think about and relate to the opposite sex; it matters how we treat the immigrant. That one fact transformed my worldview and how I would then live in the world. That's only one! What would happen as I read the rest of what God had to say?

As Jesus said when he prayed for his disciples in John 17, we are being "sanctified in truth"—transformed to think and live God's way (v 19). That is what I was experiencing as I started to read God's word. It was changing me from the inside out.

Being sanctified in truth means that we become beautifully distinct from the rest of the world. We are given a new identity in Christ and set apart from the world. We no longer think and live as the world thinks and lives, but as God commands. And this can be compelling and attractive.

Even though I've now been a Christian for many years, I'm still continually evaluating what the world tells me and weighing it against God's word. But there are so many messages—from the government, from the internet, from our neighbors, from our family, from the TV—that this can be very difficult. What should I think about this issue or that news story? Who should I talk to and what should I say? What should I eat? What should I wear? What should I watch or read?

All of these questions can make being beautifully distinct seem unattainable. You may be confused by all the world's instructions for living. Or maybe your life is so full that you don't have time to stop and properly consider what is influencing you. Or maybe you are afraid of what others might think as you attempt to put your faith into action.

Here's the good news: our salvation really does change everything about us. Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2 v 9). This is who we are, and this is what Jesus has sent us into the world to do. Thankfully, Peter is addressing us as the church, not just as individuals. We are a people belonging to God, so we can help each other to fulfill the wonderful task of proclaiming him to the world. That proclamation is in both word and deed.

More good news: we aren't walking alone. It's not only that we have each other, important though that is. If Jesus sent us into the world, he isn't then going to leave us to our own devices. He is still praying for us (Hebrews 7 v 25).

In John 17, the same passage where Jesus asks the Father to sanctify believers, he expresses his desire for us to live in the world proclaiming the truth we have been given. Jesus prays:

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (v 14-18)

Jesus doesn't mince words here—the world will not be our friend. Instead he says the world will hate us as it hates him. That doesn't mean we need to retreat, nor does it mean we need to grow cynical; instead we need to be ready. Jesus prays for that too. He says that he is sending us into the world. As we've seen, he prays that we would be sanctified and that this would be a result of us knowing his word. And as we go “into the world”—as we live and speak in a distinctive way—we will find that even in a world that rejects Jesus, many people will come to know and love Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

So we pray: Teach us your word, Lord, so we can walk in it!

Beautifully Distinct contains a series of short chapters meant to help us navigate many different areas of life and culture. It won't provide all the answers, but it will be a helpful guide for us on our quest to be sanctified by truth. This is the beginning of a conversation meant to get you and me thinking and asking questions as we engage the culture around us. Have you considered how what you read affects what you believe? What about the movies you watch? Who have you had in your home lately? Is there a way for you to communicate your own story compellingly for the Lord to use for his glory and the good of others? These are a few of the topics we'll address.

The first part of the book looks at five areas of everyday life, highlighting some of the messages and influences we

meet in our culture on a regular basis, and encouraging us to be thoughtful about what we hear. We don't want to merely absorb the teachings of our age as we go into the world. If there are messages all around us—and there are—we need to be diligent in weighing what we hear by the word of God, which is what God uses to sanctify us.

A different temptation might be to retreat from the world and never expose ourselves to those things that seem counter to our Christian beliefs and morals. But God hasn't called us to an insular life, comfortably tucked away in our own homes and churches. He has sent us into the world. Jesus reminds us in John 17 v 15 that we have the protection of a good and holy God, who can “keep [us] from the evil one.” So we don't need to be afraid. Instead we have the opportunity to listen to those who are not like us, reaching out and seeking to understand new perspectives so that we can go “into the world” effectively with the message of Jesus. This is what the second part of this book is designed to help with.

The final three chapters consider ways of speaking well for Christ, proclaiming the truth about him in a way that can change your community. In a world where words are many, you and I will want to be cautious about how we speak. Our opinions can be shared at the click of a button and go out to hundreds or thousands within seconds. We ought not to be overly hasty in speaking out against the voices we don't like. Instead, the thoughts and opinions we share should be said out of love, covered in prayer, and backed by Scripture. Our ultimate goal is to share the message of Jesus.

Every chapter is insightful, biblical, and practical. Each one will encourage and equip you to be beautifully distinct as you engage the culture around you—all for the sake of the Lord Jesus. So, pull up a seat and make yourself comfortable. Maybe grab a friend or two to have this conversation with you.