

The world defines beautiful as young, skinny, and perfect. Magazines and digitally enhanced pictures of supermodels encourage girls to dress, act, and live in ways that can negatively affect themselves and others around them. Pop culture equates this image with acceptance and happiness. As a Christian, I believe I am to be different: to live truthfully, to pursue justice, to build healthy relationships, and to benefit others selflessly. The principles of the Rotary Four-Way Test can serve to guide girls through the pressures imposed by pop culture.

Girls struggling to attain this elusive standard of perfection should ask themselves, "Is this truth?" Is it truthful to conform to the world's definition of beauty, or am I simply living a lie? Girls who seek truth must not be deceived. Instead, they should choose to be themselves, embracing their unique styles and personalities. When we fail to be who we are, we live a lie.

Young women should also consider the question "Is it fair to all concerned?" Masking my personality and style to conform to worldly beauty is not only unfair to me, but it is unfair to others as well. Girls can be ridiculed for not wearing the right brand of jeans or for wearing conservative skirts. When I conform to the style set by pop singers or supermodels, I limit diversity in the world. God did not make us all the same; he made us beautifully diverse and unique. Hiding my true self deprives others of a unique personality that can brighten their day, and I inadvertently influence others to desert their own styles and tastes to conform to the world. In addition, I am chasing after an image that is impossible and a standard of perfection that I can never achieve. By seeking this impossibility, I am setting myself up for failure.

Girls must also challenge their motives with the question, "Does living by the world's standard help me make better friends?" If I change myself to fit in with a popular group, it is impossible to be a friend. Friendships are based on trust, and when I cannot trust these girls to love me for who I am, I cannot trust them to be loyal to me. Shallow friendships are deceiving;

they become bridges that crumble under the slightest stress. I have seen girls go through this experience. By becoming something they are not, they are accepted into the 'popular group' and seem to win new friends. They are at the top of the world for a while, but their newfound friendships don't last. These girls eventually crash, hurtling to the ground, set aside by the very ones they called friends. They are left with no one to turn to, having deserted their true friends for connections with the 'popular group'. It is ironic that in an attempt to win new friends, many times girls will lose their real friends, and are ultimately all alone.

Finally, girls need to ask themselves, "Does chasing after this elusive goal of perfection benefit everyone involved?" The only answer I can honestly give is no. In the end, it is not beneficial to live a lie and hide my unique style and personality: it is not beneficial to be unfair to myself and others around me: and it is not beneficial to lose good relationships and construct feeble relationships with girls who really don't care about me. Girls need to think through the benefits and disadvantages of their actions before they choose the path that seems the easiest and most promising. The benefit of resisting pop culture's negative influence is greater than the apparent pleasure of being accepted.

Girls throughout America struggle with the temptations to act, dress, and live differently in order to fit in the standard of beauty celebrated by the world. Skinny models with dark tans and perfect clothes promise a better life. Media tempts girls to buy certain outfits that will make them fit in. Girls without a standard to live by are susceptible to these enticing lies. However, the Rotary's four questions can save relationships and help girls resist the negative influence of pop culture. Girls like me, who have been influenced by these four questions, are able see that true happiness and acceptance can never come from dressing, acting, and living differently to conform to the world's standard of beauty.