

Melissa:

Well, thank you so much for doing this. I really appreciate it more than I can say. So, thank you.

Carlos:

Oh, you're so welcome. Thanks for having me. I'm sorry it took so long to get it down, but glad we're doing it.

Melissa:

Oh, no problem at all. How have you been doing with this whole quarantine situation? Are you guys still hanging out at home?

Carlos:

Yeah, we're still ... Nashville, the city of Nashville, still hasn't opened really anything. Most of Tennessee has, our governor opened up things halfway about a week ago. But Nashville, although Tennessee is very conservative in their politics, Nashville's very liberal in its politics. So, we, the city of Nashville is taking its time. And, honestly, I'm in no rush to get out there and test this thing.

Melissa:

I know. I know.

Carlos:

Once everything opens back up, I'm going to give it a couple of weeks and see how everyone else does as my guinea pig. And then I'll sneak on out.

Melissa:

No, that's a good plan. I know. I was trying to think about that too, like is it safe to go out? I don't know. It's a weird time.

Carlos:

It's a weird time, but we're actually doing good, not a whole lot has changed around here. We homeschool the kids, so nothing really changed there. It's just I'm not on airplanes all the time and it's been nice to be at home.

Melissa:

Yeah, I guess that might be nice actually.

Carlos:

Yeah.

Melissa:
No, that's great.

Carlos:
Yeah. How about you?

Melissa:
I mean, we're still, let's see, we have like a stay at home order until mid May. And I teach so I can do that online. I'll have the summer off and we'll see what happens in the fall. I don't know. We'll see how that goes.

Carlos:
Crazy, crazy time.

Melissa:
It really is. Yeah. Yeah.

Well, so Carlos, I wanted to interview you for a couple of reasons. I mean, I've been following you on Instagram for a while. It's so funny, I feel like such a creep saying that sometimes like, "I follow your family on Instagram," but just the way that your family lives out faith. And just balancing the vulnerability and the realness of how hard life is and with the beauty and adventure of life. I think that that's a really powerful example that you guys show to the world. So, thank you for doing that. And so, yeah, I was excited to talk to you about beauty today.

Carlos:
Well, I'm all in, so you can talk to me about whatever you want. I'm just honored that you let me do this with you

Melissa:
Awesome. Okay. Thank you.

Well, the first question I like to ask people is, I think this is a hard one, but just how do you define beauty?

Carlos:
Yeah. How I define beauty, I definitely define beauty a lot different at 45 years old than I did at 25 years old. And I think that life has taught me to do that.

It's easy, it's really easy for us to define beauty as something that we see. But gosh, I hadn't been, I was probably in my early thirties when it changed to something that makes me feel, as opposed to something that makes me see. I think it began like seeing beauty in nature. I was always a city guy. I was a city kid. I grew up in East LA. I never really saw God's majesty and beauty in nature.

And then the first trip that I went to Yosemite, I remember there was something when I drove through that tunnel and suddenly you enter into the valley, you see El Capitan...that took my breath away.

And that same feeling that I had then is like the same feeling now when...and it doesn't happen every day, but when I wake up in the morning and I look out the window and I see my wife in the garden.

And she's doing what she was created to do and it takes my breath away. The same way those mountains did because they're doing what they were created to do.

That's a very long, round way of defining beauty. Maybe I didn't even define it by that. I know what it makes me feel, and so now I think that I can see things for the beauty that they were intended to be. Does that make sense?

Melissa:

Makes a ton of sense. Yeah. That's really cool. Thank you.

You named a couple of things then. You saw beauty at Yosemite in nature and with your wife, are there any other places that you see beauty at work in the world?

Carlos:

Yeah. We're recording this during this pandemic and as much fear has been pumped into our veins by the media and society, we have such an opportunity to see such beautiful things as well. And again, this is just what I feel is beautiful.

But when our power went out the last couple days. It was out for three days and, first of all, you never realize how much you rely on power until you don't have any. So, it's hot in our house, there's no air conditioning, we're doing what we can, to make it through. And then once the power came back on, I went outside because I heard big trucks. And I saw the big NES Nashville Electric System trucks come by with these big burly men.

And it's so weird. I would never think that I would think that they were beautiful, but they were beautiful. There was something about the fact that they rescued us. I went outside and I started like cheering. They shook their fists at me and I got like teary-eyed.

There was just something beautiful about humans helping each other.

That's a very recent example of something that I saw that I felt was beautiful.

Melissa:

Yeah. I love that. And I think that that opened their eyes and we're all experiencing ways that unity and helping each other out, like those places that are really showing up when we really need it right now. So yeah, I think that's a great example.

So just speaking from my own personal experience, one of the things that gets in the way for me is all the brokenness in the world. And so I love to ask people about if you have any stories that come to mind where you were experiencing brokenness, but maybe in the midst of it, you had beauty that broke into the midst of that.

Carlos:

Yes, absolutely. This is an example, that again, is pretty recent, but I think it will be the example the rest of my life.

Last November, my daughter got extremely ill. She's 17 years old, actually she's 18 now, oh, my God, I'm an old man, but she was 17 at the time. And she got extremely ill and went to the hospital and for 21 days she had no diagnosis. They couldn't figure out what it was. And we're one of the best children's hospitals, the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, here in Nashville, in America. Those doctors can't even figure out what's going on. First, they thought it was cancer, then they thought it was something else, and then they thought it was something else. I'll never forget that.

I don't know, it was probably day 14, she'd gone in for another surgery to remove fluid in her lungs that was building up. She was in massive pain with where the tube had gone in. You would think that there's nothing beautiful about the situation, but then I just remember she started humming something. She could talk

and we were like, "What's she humming?" And we got closer and she was humming.

And then I realized she was humming the melody of this worship song that she loves. And she just had her little finger was going up in the air like this and I immediately ran to my phone and I turned on that song and she smiled and she started humming it, mouthing it really ... it was such a beautiful moment.

It was a holy moment. It was like beauty and holiness mixed together that showed me that even in the midst of tragedy, even in the midst of trauma and trials, that you can still find beauty and there's still beautiful things inside of those things. So, I definitely say that that is going to carry with me for a long time, that even in the midst of crisis, I still found that beauty inside of her.

Melissa:

Wow...I could totally see that. And I feel like your whole...I got really invested in Sohaila's journey throughout the fall. I don't know if that went into the winter, I can't remember now. But I feel like there were a number of moments that you really chronicled so well in the midst of that too. And how you guys kept hanging in there with faith, trusting that God would show up in the midst of it.

Carlos:

Yeah. Yeah. I think the part that I'm grateful for is that, looking back, and I'm glad I documented it like I did, because looking back now I can go back and look and actually watch.

It was in the middle of not knowing that we were finding the peace.

Thank God it turned out the way that we had wanted it to turn out. But I feel like seeing the way we were walking through it, that even if it turned out a different way, I felt like we were anchored in a way that it wouldn't change for us. Like our mindset wouldn't change for us, the beauty that we saw wouldn't change for us. And so, yeah. I'm just glad that I documented it that way.

Melissa:

Yeah, yeah. Thank you. That's cool to hear about too, that peace that was there in the midst of it.

So the other thing I like to ask people about is, just lies about beauty that

you've encountered. You painted this beautiful, not to overuse the word, but like this great picture of this deep type of beauty. And then I think also there are lies about beauty in the world. I'm curious what you've encountered around that.

Carlos:

Yeah. I mean, seeing something beautiful, if we go back, even in the Scripture, we go to Song of Solomon, we see that there is natural beauty in humans, that's not something that's not real. There are people that I think everybody would see as, "That's a beautiful looking person." And I feel like we always need to add the word, "looking," to the end of all those things, because for far too long, beauty has, I think, been defined poorly. I think that it's not something that's diminishing right now.

Hopefully podcasts like this and conversations that you start can help that. But we're not the perfect family. We've got Keeping Up With the Kardashians on TV, I'm as addicted to that family as people are mine.

But now, I think, maybe even the last four years of my life and growing in the way that I've grown, even in my faith, I think sometimes watching things like this now makes me sad more than anything.

I see the desire for acceptance. And I see the desire for true beauty to be seen inside of people for more than what they just look like on the outside, even though they're using what they look like on the outside to maybe take a hit. That's what I would say. It's like a quick hit, like you would take any sort of drug.

That's what the outer beauty facade can do for us, it can provide quick relief and quick comfort to a lie that you believe.

I think, once again, and this is what I've been talking about for a few years now, once we can get to the lie that we believe about what our identity is really placed in and we can break that lie, well, now watch this. Now people that are beautiful on the outside, beautiful looking, when the inside matches the outside, I'm telling you, these are the most unstoppable people on the planet.

There's something about just being beautiful on the inside. I don't think humanity will ever stop godding over beautiful looking people. I think that's just, you know. But I always appreciate when a beautiful looking person is even more beautiful on the inside. And suddenly, you don't even see the outside anymore because you see

what they're doing. You see the social justice issues that they're leaning into, you see a bunch of these things.

I don't even know if I've answered your question, but that's where my mind went when you asked that. Is again, just that we can redefine beauty and also not dig on people that may be beautiful looking. There's nothing wrong with that, but I think that that's not the goal.

Because not everyone is going to have...the version of what beautiful looks like has changed throughout. You look back at the 17th century drawings and those women that were painted and looked at as beautiful would never be looked at as beautiful now. And, so, my wife and I always joke, we're like, "We just can't wait for the pendulum to switch back." So yeah. It's fun to look back at ways that, historically, people viewed beauty as well.

Melissa:

Totally. Yeah. It seems that it's not like this eternal thing, like some of those deeper characteristics are.

Carlos:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Melissa:

The last thing I like to ask, are there any experiences that have transformed your ideas around beauty?

Carlos:

Yeah. I think that...I mean, I'll go even deeper for a second. So even like my marriage, there was a season 2009, 2010, where everything fell apart for me, everything in my marriage, everything. And it's because I was actually chasing, this as man who was, I guess, in the early thirties at the time, I was chasing beauty, like portraying beauty on social media and on the internet of myself.

I was painting a beautiful picture of myself that wasn't true and wasn't real. And for far too long, I played a character on the internet that many people were like, "Oh, that's beautiful. You're beautiful," this and that. I mean, I don't remember, if I go back in my feed now, I can see the unhealth. I was taking so many selfies in bathroom mirrors and posting them for the immediate result of somebody complimenting me, wherever it would be.

I think that when I finally broke and when I finally realized that the world's view of beauty is not going to sustain my soul, like what the world tells me is beautiful about me is never going to sustain me unless I honestly believe that I'm beautiful without the need of anyone else telling me that.

And that took work, that took therapy, that took counseling. But ultimately when I found that healing inside of me and then when the definition of beauty for me was redefined, then my marriage gets redefined, gets restored. My relationships get restored. My work.

Everything suddenly became so much greater when the goal wasn't for people to think I was beautiful anymore. When the goal was just to exist in the beauty that God has created me to be in and God thinks I'm beautiful.

Yeah, I think that, for me, was a pretty redefining moment in my life as far as what beauty means.

Melissa:

Yeah. That's awesome. Thank you. Is there anything else, Carlos, as you were thinking about the topic of beauty that you wanted to share, or any other thoughts on this that we haven't specifically talked about?

Carlos:

Sure. Yeah. For anyone listening out there, something that I've had my daughters do since they were five years old, and now again, they're 16 and 18, is once a week I take them out on a date. I take them on a date every week, as many as I can since they were little, and I make them tell me five things about themselves that they think is beautiful.

And it's so funny because I've watched their answers, when they were five and six, it would take them two seconds, like two seconds flat. And they were like, "Oh, this is beautiful. This is beautiful. This is beautiful. This is beautiful."

But the older they got, it's funny, the harder it was for them to figure that out. And I just think it's such an important exercise for us to find things inside of ourselves, that's beautiful.

I still make them do it now and now they really roll their eyes. I'm like, "No, tell me now, what are five things you think are beautiful about herself?" And gosh, sometimes it'll take them an hour, but we'll get there.

And just constantly pull beauty out of yourself, constantly look at yourself and find things that you think are beautiful. I just think it's an important exercise for all of us to do.

Melissa:

That's a brilliant exercise. That's awesome that you started that so young too and have ingrained that throughout the years.

Carlos:

That's right.

Melissa:

Also, for people who are listening too, I know you had mentioned like the lies and going deeper, and I want people to know just about where they can find more of your stuff. And is that from your *Kill the Spider* book idea? That idea?

Carlos:

Yeah, that's *Kill the Spider*. That's my book on breaking agreements of lies. And then my next book's coming out, which kind of takes even a deeper dive into that. It's called *Enter Wild*. That's really taking a story arc for people, and the story arc is really me battling and finally achieving victory over my anxiety.

Yeah, so both of those books. And I've got a book called *Moment Maker*, but you go carloswhittaker.com, with two t's, there's way more about me there than you'd ever want to know. You can get all my books there.

Melissa:

Perfect. Okay. Awesome. Well, that's all I have for you today, Carlos. I can let you get on with your day at home.

Carlos:

Oh, thanks so much. Yeah, thanks so much.