



Kylie Bisutti

Includes a
30-Day
TRUE
BEAUTY
Makeover

I'M NO
Angel

From Victoria's Secret
Model to Role Model

I'm No Angel

Kylie Bisutti

I'M NO
From **Victoria's**
Secret Model to Role
Model *Angel*



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I'm No Angel: From Victoria's Secret Model to Role Model

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PROLOGUE

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

PROVERBS 31:30

I'LL NEVER FORGET finding that first tweet just after Thanksgiving 2011:

Oh great . . . the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show . . .
another reason not to eat.

It was followed almost immediately by another.
Then another.
And another.

All over the country, teenage girls and young women were taking to their Twitter accounts to pour out their angst and frustration over how they didn't measure up—how they felt physically inadequate in every area, from their weight to their appearance to their bust size.

Then, out of nowhere, amid all the anxiety and insecurity, came the tweet that would change my life forever:

I'd rather have a Proverbs 31 woman than a VS model.

The words came from Alex Eklund, the founder of Live 31, an organization committed to helping women gain a healthy, biblical self-image.

I couldn't help but smile. *Would anyone believe this is exactly my journey?* I wondered.

Then I tweeted:

I quit being a VS model to become a Proverbs 31 wife.

Little did I know what that single sentence would lead to. Within minutes, Alex contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in writing a blog post for his website, sharing my story.

I'd never spoken publicly about giving up my career as a lingerie model to become the woman God wanted me to be, but I felt like God was nudging me to do this. I said yes.

Later that evening I sat down at my computer and started writing.

I QUIT VICTORIA'S SECRET TO BE A PROVERBS 31 WIFE

I started my modeling career at the very young age of fourteen. It was always my dream to become a supermodel, and to be a Victoria's Secret model was my ultimate goal. . . .

As I typed the final words of the blog post, I thought, *Well, if my modeling career wasn't over before, it will be now.* And yet I had total peace about my decision. I knew it was the right message—and hopefully one that might help free others who were trapped in a world of insecurity, self-loathing, eating disorders, and emptiness—a world I was all too familiar with.

I wanted no part of it anymore.

This is career suicide, I thought, hitting the Send button.

ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

FEBRUARY 7, 2012

“DAD JUST TEXTED ME AGAIN.” My husband, Mike, glanced up from his phone, shaking his head in surprise. “He says Dr. Phil called. Anderson Cooper wants you on his show. Rosie O’Donnell wants to talk to you, and someone from *Inside Edition* just left a message for you at the house.”

What’s going on? I wondered. *Why is everyone suddenly so interested in me?*

Before I could even finish my thought, my phone rang. It was my agent, Sabrina.

“Kylie, where are you?” She sounded a little frantic.

“I’m in Fargo, North Dakota, with Mike. What’s going on? All these talk shows and news outlets keep calling Mike’s dad, looking for me.”

"You're all over the news, Kylie!" Sabrina sounded shocked that I had no idea what was happening.

I'd been traveling with Mike on business, and we hadn't been online or watched much TV for the past few days. Besides, it had been months since I'd stopped modeling. I figured the media had completely forgotten about me—and frankly, I was fine with that.

"Apparently the interview you did with FoxNews.com about quitting Victoria's Secret to become a Proverbs 31 wife went live today. It's all over the news, and *Good Morning America* has offered to fly you to New York today so you can be on their show tomorrow morning." She paused, waiting for me to respond. I just stared at Mike, stunned.

"Kylie? How soon can you get to an airport?"

I caught a glimpse of my reflection in the front window. Dressed in a puffy ski coat and hunting boots, with no makeup and my hair pulled back in a ponytail, I was about as far from media ready as I could get. And there wasn't a single thing in my suitcase that was going to be an improvement.

"Well . . . we're about four hours from the nearest airport," I said. "And I really didn't bring anything with me that I could wear on TV."

"That's okay," Sabrina assured me. "Just get yourself on a plane. When you arrive, we can shop for something appropriate. I'll bring a few backup outfits just in case. See you in a few hours." And before I even could respond, she hung up.

"Well?" Mike asked.

I looked at him and sighed. "I guess I'm going to New York."
God, let me get this right.



I didn't have much time to ponder the whirlwind of events. Within a matter of hours, I was on my way to New York. I threw a few things into my suitcase, and then Mike drove me to the airport.

As I settled into my seat on the plane, I closed my eyes, trying to rest for what was bound to be an emotionally and physically exhausting couple of days. But I was too wired to sleep—there was just so much to take in. In addition to appearing on *Good Morning America*, I would be on five other shows before the day's end.

My mind was racing. *I thought I'd stepped out of the limelight when I gave up modeling. How could one little blog post lead to all of this? Does the media want to hear about a Proverbs 31 wife? Do they even know what that means?*

I was used to media attention, but this was new territory. I opened my eyes and pulled out my Bible. Instead of sitting there worrying the entire flight, I figured I could get ready for the interviews by reading some of my favorite passages. I knew the stance I was taking in favor of modesty wouldn't be popular in certain circles—especially the modeling industry—and I wanted to make sure I was prepared. When my eyes skimmed over James 1:2-3, I couldn't help but smile: “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow” (NLT).

Wow. How perfect is that? I thought. And suddenly it all started to make sense. The blog post, the media interest, the opportunity to share my story with the world. There was no question—God's fingerprints were all over this.

A quiet calm came over me as I leaned my head back and

silently prayed that God would shine through me during every interview. As I shared my story, I wanted to reflect His wisdom, His compassion, His humility, and His love. Modeling had been about bringing attention to myself, but now I prayed that the focus would be on God and the work He was doing inside me.

After several hours of praying and reading God's Word from my airplane-seat sanctuary, I closed my eyes, flooded with a sense of peace. I knew that God would watch over me through each of the interviews and that He would give me each word I needed to say.



When I arrived in New York, Sabrina met me with enough outfits to accommodate all of my interviews. After looking through everything she'd brought, I opted for a basic black, knee-length dress for the *GMA* piece. The dress was simple and understated, and it reflected my new standards for modesty. But truth be told, I was far less concerned about my appearance than I was with my message.

My entire worldview had changed radically over the past six months, and I desperately wanted my interviews to reflect that. I had taken a self-imposed hiatus from modeling so I could concentrate my time and energy on studying the Bible, attending our church in Montana, and learning my true identity—who God had made me to be. The Kylie Bisutti who was about to step in front of those television cameras was an entirely different person from the one millions of people had watched strut down the Victoria's Secret runway two years before.

The difference in my outward appearance would be easy to see. No more spray tan. No more highlights or dyed hair. No false

eyelashes or heavy makeup. And a much healthier figure. But it was the changes that had taken place inside me—my commitment to Christ and to my husband, my deeper grasp on all God had done for me, and my understanding that true beauty comes from within—that I wanted viewers to see.

While getting my hair and makeup done, I could feel my heart pounding. I was nervous. Even more nervous than I'd been before I stepped on the Victoria's Secret runway for the first time. But this was different. This was important. I knew there were thousands of young girls out there who were trapped in the same debilitating cycle I'd struggled to break free from for years. The never-ending battle to be thin enough. Pretty enough. Perfect enough. I knew what it was like to constantly chase an ideal that's impossible to achieve—an ideal that's not even real to begin with. I had learned that the hard way. I hoped that by sharing my story, I could spare these girls some of the heartache and misery I'd experienced.

Just then, the stylist doing my hair leaned in and whispered, "We're all rooting for you." I looked up and noticed he had a Scripture verse tattooed on his forearm. We exchanged smiles, and my nervousness subsided a fraction.

Thank You, God, for small mercies.



The energy in the studio was electric, and my hands still were shaking a bit as I was led to my seat next to George Stephanopoulos. We exchanged a few pleasantries, and then he asked, "Are you ready?"

I took a deep breath. "Yes. I'm ready." And so it began.

George opened the interview by complimenting me, but I knew

what was coming. The questions were bound to get more difficult—and more pointed—as the interview progressed.

“Back in the Victoria’s Secret model search in 2009, you were very determined to win,” he said. “Here’s what you said then: ‘I have a very sweet personality, but don’t let that fool you. I want this, and I’ll do what it takes to get it.’ So what changed?”

That’s a fair question, I thought.

“Well, a lot,” I answered aloud. “I was newly married at the time and growing in my relationship with the Lord. . . . I just became so convicted about wanting to honor my husband with my body and wanting to be a role model for other women out there who look up to me.”

“Was there anything you learned from inside the business that turned you off? Or was that not really it?”

“It was really more of a heart issue for me.” I tried to collect my thoughts and figure out how to expound on that in a way that would make my stance clearer, but before I could find the words, George continued.

“You had one encounter with a young cousin of yours that really made a difference,” he said. “Tell us about that.”

Perfect.

“Yes . . . I was doing my makeup in the mirror one day, and she was watching me. She was about eight at the time. I looked at her and said, ‘Hey. What’s going on?’ She just looked at me and said, ‘I think I want to stop eating so I can look like you.’ It just broke my heart.”

“And you realized that she wasn’t alone, either,” George said. “There are thousands of girls all across the country just like her.”

I nodded. “Yes, thousands of girls who think that being beautiful is an outer issue when really it’s a heart issue.”

I wanted to continue on this topic, but George fired another question at me: “How did your husband handle all this? Did he have a problem with your modeling?”

“He was so supportive of me,” I answered. “He obviously prayed about it, but I’m thankful he let me grow and come to this decision on my own.”

“And when you came to it?” George asked with a wry smile.

“He was very thankful.” I shared a laugh with George. “Very, very thankful.”

“So what are you going to do now?” George continued. “You’re not going to give up modeling completely.”

“No, I’m definitely going to pursue modeling,” I said. “I just want to be more wholesome about it. And the jobs that I choose are always going to be honoring the Lord.”

And that was it.

The interview was over in less than three minutes. I was disappointed I hadn’t been able to go into more depth, but given the time constraints, it was understandable. What was more disheartening for me, though, was that the entire time I was sharing my heart about modesty, the producers were running old video footage of me walking the Victoria’s Secret runway in racy lingerie. As I was speaking about my desire to respect the Lord and my husband, they’d cut away to shots of me in skimpy bikinis looking anything but God-honoring. It was a complete disconnect from the life I was living now, and frankly, it was devastating.

Unfortunately, this part of my story was—and always will be—out of my control. Thanks to the Internet, all the inappropriate images that have been taken of me are out there, and as much as I’d love to, I can’t flip a magic switch and make them go away.

But while it hurt to know that those images were flickering

across the screen behind me as I told about my journey, they also provided proof of the drastic change that had taken place in my life—the kind of change that only can happen as a result of God's grace.

I love the verse in Romans that says, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” That footage is evidence that God can—and will—use even the most ungodly things for good.

In interview after interview that day, I shared my story and my faith. Of course, not every reporter was as fair and kind to me as George had been. Some tried to bait me into criticizing other models who were still in the industry, and others accused me of using my faith as some kind of marketing ploy to get some cheap PR. They offered me false praise for being a marketing genius, when in actuality nothing could have been further from the truth. I'd never seen any of this coming, and I was more shocked than anyone else that my decision had given me this opportunity to talk about my faith in front of a national audience.

Through it all, I leaned on God to keep me calm and focused, and I relied on the Bible to help me answer the tough questions. One of the verses I had memorized on the plane—“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10, ESV)—was fresh in my mind, so whenever things became heated or difficult, I tried to just meditate on those words. True to His character, God saw me through.

After one of the last interviews of the afternoon, the female news anchor grabbed my hand and said, “I'm so thankful you're taking a stand, because I have a daughter who is caught up in all this body image stuff. It's about to destroy her.”

This conversation was just one more confirmation that I was

doing the right thing. And although I was exhausted and hungry and more than ready to head home after almost ten hours of interviews, I felt peace about how the day had gone—even if there would be repercussions in the weeks ahead.

As soon as my plane touched down, I called Mike, who was still traveling on business, to tell him all about the interviews and the positive feedback I was receiving.

“It all makes sense to me now,” I told him. “I think God allowed me to have this platform so I could share my story with other people. I was never meant to be a top model—I was meant to be a role model.” I realized I was gushing, but I was so moved by everything that had happened that day.

I could almost hear Mike smiling through the phone. “God is amazing. And I’m so thankful for the work He’s done in you.” There was a pause, and I could tell Mike was choking back emotion. “This is an answer to my prayers,” he said. “I’m so proud of you, honey.”

As I settled into bed that evening, I tried to turn off my mind, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t stop thinking back over the past nine years—working in the modeling industry, becoming a Christian, marrying Mike, winning the Victoria’s Secret contest. And through it all, God had been carefully guiding my every step—long before I was even aware of His presence. Now He was opening doors I never could have imagined.

The interviewers were right on one count—my story *was* the stuff of sheer genius. I just wasn’t the genius behind it.