

Fearfully & Wonderfully Made

A Reflection Guide for Living as You Were Created

There is a set of questions many of us carry, even if we've never said them out loud:

- Am I supposed to know myself... or forget myself?
- Is self-awareness faithfulness—or pride?
- Why would God want me to pay attention to myself at all?

If you've ever felt that tension, you aren't alone. For many of us, the idea of looking inward feels uneasy. We were taught—either in church or by example—that focusing on ourselves too much could become self-centered, indulgent, or even spiritually dangerous.

It often felt safer to focus only on God, better to serve others at all costs, and better to stay "outward-facing" without lingering too long on what was going on inside our own hearts and minds.

Yet, Scripture keeps returning to the language of knowing.

It speaks of knowing God, knowing the truth, and knowing exactly what has been entrusted to our care. To pay attention to yourself in this light is not to elevate yourself; it is to honor the One who formed you.

The truth is simple: *You simply cannot steward what you refuse to acknowledge. You cannot take care of a design you haven't taken the time to understand.*

A Gentle Place to Begin

Most of us don't spend much time thinking about the lens through which we view our lives. We assume that if we are successful, we will finally feel confident. We assume that if we fail, we will naturally feel insecure. We think if we just try harder, believe more, or push through the stress, things will eventually settle down and we will finally feel "right" in our own skin.

But long before you started "trying," something quieter was already forming inside you.

You were developing what I call an internal picture, or your self-image.

Your self-image is the picture you carry of yourself on the inside. It isn't just your resume, your history, or what you say you believe on Sundays; it is the set of expectations you have for yourself when no one else is watching.

This is a deep, subconscious sense of who you are, what you bring to the table, and what you should expect from yourself. This picture—your self-image—shapes how you help others, how you lead, and even how much income you allow yourself to earn and keep.

That picture quietly decides how you handle pressure when things go wrong, how you deal with arguments in your relationships, and how much you trust your own voice when it's time to speak up. It even acts as a ceiling, influencing how far you allow yourself to go in your life and work.

Most of us didn't choose this picture on purpose. It grew slowly over time through our earliest experiences, our most important relationships, and the ways we learned to survive the world around us.

Most of the time, this picture is running in the background without you even knowing it is there. This guide isn't here to "fix" you, because you aren't a broken machine.

This guide is here to help you see yourself more clearly—and to look at that inner picture with a lot more kindness.

Design Comes Before Effort

"For You formed my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." — **Psalms 139:13–14**

In the Bible, God talks about your design long before He ever mentions your effort or your output.

- He knew you before you were ever productive.
- He saw you before you had a job, a title, or a role to play.
- He loved you before you ever succeeded or failed at a single task.

You were known before you were ever "useful." You were formed before anyone else ever had the chance to measure your worth or give you a grade. This matters more than we often realize.

When we forget how we were designed, we spend our entire lives trying to earn things—like worth, love, and permission—that were already given to each of us for free.

How the Picture Gets Scratched

(Without Blame)

If your inner picture feels a bit blurry, small, or "off," it isn't because you don't have enough faith. It isn't because you are weak or lacking discipline. It happened because you were trying to fit in, be helpful, or stay safe in a complicated world.

As you grew, your system learned patterns to keep you safe. You learned:

- When it was "better" or "holier" to stay quiet even when you had something to say.
- When you needed to do more, work harder, or perform better to feel loved or noticed.
- When you should shrink back or minimize your gifts so you wouldn't be seen as "too much" for others.

These habits might have helped you navigate your past, but they might be the very things limiting your future now. Learning about yourself isn't about judging those old habits or feeling guilty about them. It's about realizing they were just tools for a season—and they don't have to run your life anymore.

Knowing Yourself is Good Stewardship

Sometimes, paying attention to yourself can feel like a distraction from your mission. But in reality, knowing how you are made is a vital part of taking care of what God gave you. You can't manage what you refuse to look at.

When you start to understand how you were made, something quite powerful begins to happen.

You stop trying to force yourself into roles that wear you out and leave you empty. Helping others stops feeling like a heavy weight you "have" to carry to be a good person and starts feeling like a choice you "get" to make from a full heart.

Your responsibilities are still there, but the internal strain disappears because you are no longer fighting against your own wiring. Being aware of your "inner picture" doesn't make you self-centered. It makes you a much better caretaker of the life you've been entrusted with.

Is it Prideful?

As we've discussed, paying attention to how you were made isn't about bragging; it's about honoring the One who made you. **If a master artist created a beautiful painting, the painting doesn't honor the artist by pretending it doesn't exist or by claiming it is ugly. It honors the artist by being exactly what it was meant to be.**

When you acknowledge your strengths and understand your design, you aren't pointing to yourself—you are pointing to the Artist who knit you together. Knowing yourself is a way of saying, "I see what You did here, and I want to use it well."

Earning and "The Thermostat"

We all have an internal "success thermostat" that decides:

- What do I believe I'm allowed to receive?
- What level of success feels "too much" for someone like me?

When your self-image expands, your capacity for success often grows with it. This doesn't happen through more hustle or more stress. It happens through clarity. When you are finally at peace with who you are, you stop sabotaging the success that is trying to reach you.

A Moment to Reflect

Take a few minutes with these questions. There is no rush, and there are no wrong answers.

1. When I think about how I see myself today, where did that picture first begin?
Who helped shape it—intentionally or unintentionally?
2. Where do I feel most like myself, without effort or performance?
3. Are there parts of my God-given design I learned to quiet, hide, or minimize because they didn't feel welcome—or didn't seem to fit?
4. If I trusted that my design was intentional, not accidental, what might change in how I live, serve, or show up today?

A Closing Thought

Being "fearfully and wonderfully made" doesn't mean life will be easy or that you won't have challenges. It means you were made on purpose, with intention and care. It means you don't have to become someone else to be effective, loved, or successful. You start by seeing yourself clearly. That awareness might not solve every problem today, but it gives you a solid foundation and tells you exactly where to begin.

If you'd like more support:

- **Start Your Day (SYD):** A free 90-second daily audio to help you stay steady and grounded.
- **The Audio Lab:** A private audio sanctuary for strengthening your inner world and growing from the inside out.
- **The Self-Image Method Book:** A deeper walk through these ideas, helping you rebuild your picture one step at a time.

You are doing important, holy work. Take a breath. You are learning how you were built, and that is a powerful place to be.

This is Dr. A, and I will be right here when you need me.

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