

## Wonderfully Made - That's Me

An essential part of our knowing ourselves truthfully is to recognize and affirm those things in us that are life. God wants to build wellness and ministry into the fabric of our days as we respond to the truth about who we are. God knows us better than we know ourselves. Who does God say that we are? One writer in the Bible gives all of us words to speak to God about who we are:

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.* (from Psalm 139)

How do you see yourself? How would you describe yourself? Most of us tend to identify ourselves primarily by name, by what we look like, by what we do (carpenter, mother, musician), and also by our accomplishments or lack thereof. We take pride in the good things we have accomplished and we feel shame for the negative things that we have done. The shame is often reinforced by parents, teachers, bosses, friends, etc. who do not hesitate to point out our flaws and shortcomings.

All of us are well aware of our mistakes and how badly we have messed up our lives. We are ashamed of the things we have done. But our mistakes are not who we are. This is not our identity. When we confess our sins and repent, we receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. He has removed our sins "*as far as the east is from the west*" (Psalm 103:12). We need to stop thinking of ourselves as failures but rather as beloved children of God who happen to have a problem with money, kids, relationships, education, alcohol, drugs, or food, etc. We need to focus on who God says we are and all the potential that God sees in us and build on those gifts. One Christian writer has said, "You can only build life on life." We need to see the work of God in our life. We need to see our efforts, feeble though they might be on occasion, to welcome and give love and hospitality, to fight for what is right and good, and to live in wonder and gratitude.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.* (Philippians 4:8)

God says that we are the light of the world and invites us to shine the light of His love to the world. God believes in our ability to bring light and hope and healing to others, as we live in relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* (Ephesians 2:10)

Let's consider some of the positive character strengths we already possess:

**Spiritual** - the good ways I relate to God ....

**Moral** - ethics and behaviour in my thoughts and actions that line up with God's word are ....

**Authority** - ways I stand for what's right and listen for new things to learn

**Responsibility** - ways I do what I say I'll do as well as accept my limitations and ask for legitimate help ....

**Self-Esteem** - positive gifts God has given me in personality and abilities are ....

**Relational** - positive and supportive ways I interact with others ....

**Intellectual** - quality attention and energy that I devote to reading, writing, and learning new things ....

**Self-care/nurturing** - healthy ways I take care of my whole person (physical, mental, nutrition, rest, recreation, etc.) ....

**Social** - ways I reach out to be with others, to enter into their lives with care, respect, and support ....

If we try to produce these character qualities on our own outside of relationship with Jesus, we will stumble and fall, exhausted and defeated. But, as we surrender our lives to Jesus and invite Him to build new life in us, we will be amazed at all the good that will pour through our lives as God transforms us into a brand new person.

### Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. How do we recognize and affirm growth in ourselves in a healthy way?
2. What's the difference between character growth and trying to produce good works in our own power?
3. How do we involve God in our lives so we build a healthy character?