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Christian Living Study Guide 7: “Accepting God’s Design”



DESIGNED
ON
PURPOSE

MASTER DESIGNER

GOD is our He is the Potter, and we are the “clay,” as the Bible says in Isaiah 64:8, “But now, LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy Hand.” When we are discontent with some unchangeable feature, we are criticizing GOD’s design, as it says in Romans 9:20-21, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor?”

1. Isn’t “Self-Acceptance” Selfish?

ANSWER: If Christians were to be motivated by self, or focused upon self in pride or vanity, it certainly would be self-centered and ungodly. But, the kind of “self-acceptance” we’ll be talking about in this lesson isn’t prideful or centered on self. Right “self-acceptance” is really “God-acceptance,” as it acknowledges Him as our Master Designer.

Far from your life beginning with some chance encounter and combination of cells, God prescribed your physical features before you were even conceived. It was He, who fashioned you, and it was He Who formed you to fulfill His great purpose for your life. He did not make a mistake, and does not have accidents. Understanding this key concept will radically alter how you see yourself, and God, and allow you a deeper reason to be humble before Him, submitting yourself into His great plan for your life.

Psalm 139:13-16 “...Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Thy works...Thine Eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect (unformed); and in Thy Book all my members (body parts) were written... fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”



LESSON STUDY—7 continued

5) Why does God allow us to have deformities or defects? (pg 10)

6) How is Low Self-Esteem usually a form of idolatry instead of humility? (pg 11)

7) What Name does God use to reveal Himself to help us get over our negative focus upon self and our insufficiencies? (pg 11)

8) What does this Name mean to you, personally? (pg 11)

9) How is a self-centered person like a black hole? (pg 12)

10) What is the only Thing in the universe that can fill the black hole of our need? (pg 12)

11) When we have this one Thing, how are we different? (pg 13)

12) If you want God to transform you in this way, please pray this prayer, “Heavenly Father, I see that I have been very self-centered in my thinking and focus. Please forgive me. Please take away this old heart and give me a heart centered on love for You. Thank You for Your design of me. I choose to submit to Your Plan for my life. Please make me a channel of Grace. Amen.”

LESSON STUDY— 7

- 1) Why is accepting our physical features really God-acceptance? (pg 2)
 - 2) _____
 - _____
 - _____

- 2) In the Bible, we find personal reminders about God’s involvement in our design: (page 3)
 - God _____ you before you were _____.
 - God _____ you to perform His great _____ for your life.
 - God _____ you, intentionally _____ your _____.

- 3) God creates us with a plan. He uses people with “flaws” or challenging circumstances to accomplish great things. List the challenges these great leaders of the Bible faced yet, God used them: (pg 3)
 - Jephthah— _____
 - Elisha— _____
 - Jacob— _____
 - Joseph— _____
 - Paul— _____
 - Moses— _____
 - Zaccheus— _____

- 4) Every person is born with 10 unchangeable features. These are given by God for His good purpose, for which He should be praised. (pg 5-9) List them below as you thank God for them:

1- _____	6- _____
2- _____	7- _____
3- _____	8- _____
4- _____	9- _____
5- _____	10- _____

- **GOD KNEW you before you were born.**
Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee (set you apart for holy use), and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”
- **GOD FORMED you to perform His great PURPOSE for your life.**
Isaiah 49:5 “And now, saith the LORD God that formed me from the womb to be His servant...”
- **GOD DESIGNED you, intentionally coding your DNA**
Job 10:8-9 “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about... Thou hast made me as the clay...”
Isaiah 44:2 “Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee. Fear not...”

When we better comprehend that *God* formed us with love and intent, we are better able to rest in Him, as His “sheep.” When without this understanding we may have been inhibited and self-conscious, with this perspective, we can praise *God*.

Psalm 100:3-4 “Know ye that the LORD He is God. It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name.”

2. Wouldn't God have designed me without these “flaws” if He had a great purpose for me?

ANSWER: *God* creates us with a plan, “flaws” and all. Many great men of the Bible had “flaws” or “challenges” in their body or family, yet *God* used them to accomplish great things.

- **Jephthah** was the illegitimate son of a harlot, rejected by his family because of his parentage—Judges 11:1-2
- The prophet **Elisha** was bald, and was mocked about it—2 Kings 2:23
- **Jacob** had a pronounced limp caused by a shrunken sinew in his thigh—Genesis 32:31
- **Joseph** was born into a family of cruel brothers, who sought his death and sold him into slavery—Genesis 37:4
- The apostle **Paul** had a problem he called a “thorn in the flesh,” which he asked *GOD* three times to remove—2 Corinthians 12:7
- **Moses** had a speech problem—Exodus 4:10
- **Zacchaeus** was too short—Luke 19:3

Most notably of all, our dear Saviour Jesus, was manifested in a physical body that was not handsome, or in any way attractive, as it says in Is. 53:2-3:

“...As a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”

3. What are some signs that show we are rejecting God’s design of us?

ANSWER: If asked, most Christians would probably say that they have no problem with self-rejection. But, once we know the signs of self-rejection (which is really a rejection of *God’s Workmanship*) we discover that this is a common problem which effects most, to some degree. What are the symptoms of rejecting God’s design in us? Check the signs that apply to you (*Self-Acceptance test taken from “Principle of Design” p 4*)

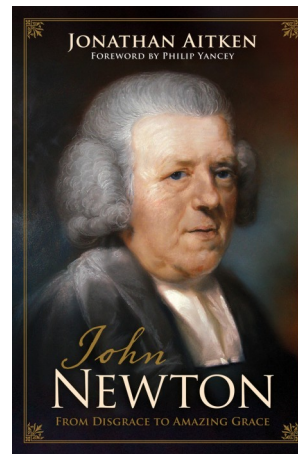
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate attempts to hide defects | <input type="checkbox"/> Neglect of appearance or hygiene |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over-attention to clothes | <input type="checkbox"/> Boisterous or argumentative behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change hair color | <input type="checkbox"/> Criticism of other people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to trust <i>God</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to give compliments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Styling by fads | <input type="checkbox"/> Downgrading my personal abilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive shyness or self-consciousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Flirting with the opposite sex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to love others | <input type="checkbox"/> Overdone makeup |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-criticism | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of elevator shoes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wishful comparison of self to others | <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive talking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attitudes of superiority | <input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupation with dieting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mocking physical features in others | <input type="checkbox"/> Forcing my children to excel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disabling fear of failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor eye contact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous underachievement | <input type="checkbox"/> Need for constant approval |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name dropping | <input type="checkbox"/> Comparison of unchangeable features |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social climbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection of family or background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to accept a life partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Exaggeration of achievements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flattery of admired people | <input type="checkbox"/> Neglect of family to please others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extravagance in purchasing items | <input type="checkbox"/> Violation of standards to be popular |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living beyond income | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hypersensitivity to criticism | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “fishing” for compliments | |

NUMBER OF SYMPTOMS _____

If you have 5 or more symptoms of not accepting God’s design, this is a serious problem which needs prayerful attention in order for you to fully function as the son or daughter of God you are called to be.

One such transformed life, was John Newton’s. In the 18th century, John lived a wasted and self-serving life. He drank, caroused, gambled and cursed. When it seemed he couldn’t sink any lower, he became the loathsome captain of a slave-trading ship.

John was so self-centered and so depraved that even his ship’s crew hated him, affiliating with him only because they stood to profit financially from the sale of the slaves. On one of the many occasions when John drank himself into a stupor, he stumbled on deck and fell overboard. Too inebriated to save himself, it seemed that John’s wasted life would come to an early grave. But, the disgusted crew decided to rescue him. In clear demonstration of their disdain, the sailors rescued John by throwing a harpoon into him and pulling him back to the ship. From that day on, John walked with a limp. Not long afterwards, John met the Saviour. His life was transformed from being a hated and self-serving black hole of a man, into a channel of Grace. So powerful was the change in him that the influence of his life still pours forth Living Water to thirsty souls.



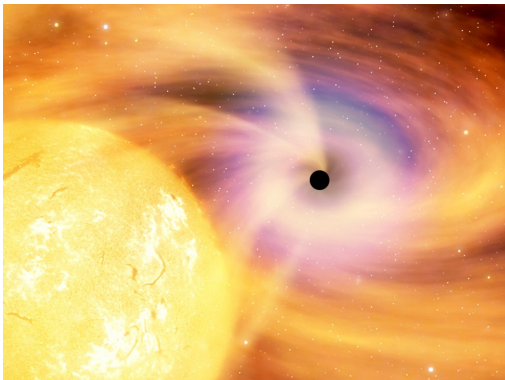
John Newton is not remembered for being the self-serving, hated captain of a slave-trading ship. He is remembered for being the composer of one of the all-time best-loved, gospel hymns, “Amazing Grace.” John’s was a first-hand account of God’s amazing Grace.

Like John, won’t you ask the Saviour to transform your life as well? Ask Him to take away your selfish center, which may have revealed itself in negative thinking about yourself or in serving your own self-interests. Rest in the hands of the Potter. Thank Him for the gifts He has given and ask Him to fill your life, transforming you into a person motivated by LOVE for Him.

John 7:37-38 *“...Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of Living Water.”*

When we submit to God, we allow Him to perform spiritual heart surgery. In the process, He changes our motivating force from self to love. Instead of being black holes, we “die to self,” and become channels of Living Water, which then pours through us to all. This demonstrates Amazing Grace!

7. Changing Black Holes into Clear Channels...



ANSWER: In space, astronomers tell us of a powerful anomaly called a “black hole.” This is an insatiable vortex which pulls everything around it into its own emptiness. Its drawing power is unstoppable, with a sucking power great enough to swallow planets and mighty stars alike. But, nothing sucked within it can possibly satisfy or slack its voracious

thirst. The black hole just goes on devouring and destroying. It is as hungry and empty after swallowing a galaxy of stars as it was before it began.

The selfish, destroying power of a black hole is an excellent analogy for a life motivated by self. Like the black hole, when we are motivated by self-centeredness, we are empty and self-serving. We sap at others, demanding, “make ME feel good,” or “fill MY needs.” Everything may be tried to fill the unquenchable hole which SELF creates in the center of our souls: drugs, relationships, entertainment, money, or fame.

We run from one relationship or indulgence to the next with the desperate cry, “Fill ME!” But, nothing can really satisfy or fill this black hole within. This, Solomon discovered and lamented, “...*vanity (emptiness) of vanities; all is vanity. What profit (true satisfaction) hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh...*” (Ecclesiastes 1:2-4).

Sadly, as long SELF remains our motivational center, we are doomed to live a life as fruitless and destructive as a black hole. We are like an astronomical vortex swallowing up every helpless star within its ravenous reach. But, there is One Who can quench and dethrone self. God is the only Being in the universe that can fill the deepest needs within the human heart. Not only does He fill our needs, He pours out so great a supply of life-giving Water that we overflow. We are transformed from sucking the life out of all who chanced upon our paths, into fountains of Living Water to other dry and thirsty souls. If we invite Him, God will take our lives of selfish emptiness and transform them into channels of Grace.

4. What are my Ten “Unchangables?”

ANSWER: We need to understand what features about us cannot be changed. These features were selected by *God*, for our good. They are areas which need to be accepted, appreciated and viewed as *God’s* marks of Ownership in our lives. **There are ten features about you that you cannot change. These are *God’s* Ten Design Features which you need to accept as from *God*:**

1. Your Parents

God chose to bring you into the world through your father and mother. Since the fall of Adam, *God* has had to work through imperfect parents to accomplish His purposes. He designed you so that the imperfections of your parents would be passed on to you. But to compensate for this and to help you deal with the imperfections, He has given a promise:

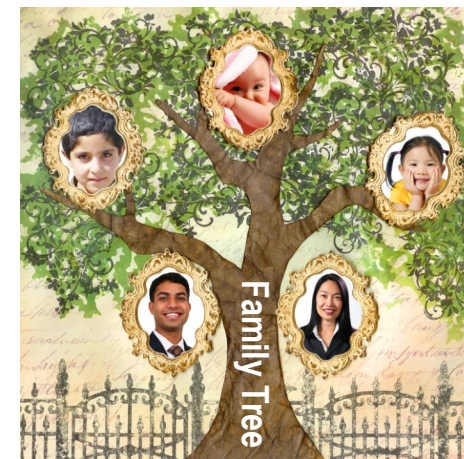
Romans 5:20 “...*But where sin abounded (in my ancestry and parentage), grace did much more abound.*”

God even chose your parents if you were adopted. Remember *God* chose Amram and Jochebed to parent Moses and to give him his early training, but then *God* chose Pharaoh’s daughter to become Moses’ adoptive parent.

God has a special purpose for your life. If He allowed you to be brought up in more difficult circumstances, you can rest assured that He has also provided the promised extra grace to you while in it, so that you may accomplish His special purpose in your life.

2. The Time, in History, when You were Born

Because *God* has a special purpose for your life, He has brought you into the world at just the right time in history. Some wish they had been born long ago, so that they wouldn’t have to worry about living in the time of the last days. But, all need to submit in this area also. *GOD* wanted you to be born exactly when you were born, to best serve the purpose He has for you (Esther 4:14).



3. Your Race

Everyone alive has descended from Noah and his wife. All races with their unique cultures and characteristics have descended from these parents. This reality clearly shows that there is no “better” or “worse” heritage. All are the distantly related descendants of this godly man.

Rejecting one’s racial background will produce attitudes of either inferiority or superiority. Attempting to deny your racial background or racial differences produces self-rejection.

But once you accept God’s choice of your racial background, you’ll be better able to view other races and your own as the special work of God’s design. You are God’s child.



Galatians 3:28-29 *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Jesus Christ. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

4. Your National Heritage

The apostle Paul was born a Jew, but his national heritage was Roman. This probably caused some prejudice among the Jews. But, *God* had made no mistakes in making Paul a Hebrew by race and Roman by national heritage. God used Paul’s Roman citizenship to help him in his public ministry. Because of it, he was better able to be an “apostle to the Gentiles.” God’s choice for Paul’s race and national heritage was perfectly suited to the purpose Heaven had for Paul’s life. This is also true with you.

You need not look at other nations and wish our citizenship were there. Some have said, “If only I were Swiss, I would have an easier time in the economic crunch, or when the final end comes.” But, wherever you go and whatever purpose you have been created to fulfill, *God* chose your national heritage for a good purpose.

Jeremiah 29:11 *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith God, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”*

6. Isn’t Low Self-Esteem Being Humble?

ANSWER: Many believe that negative “self-talk” (“I’m ugly, fat, or stupid”) is being meek and humble. Actually it’s quite the opposite! When we are busy thinking negatively about ourselves, our focus is on self instead of God. Notice the self-centered basis for the following thought patterns:

- ”**I am** too sinful for God to save, use or bless.”
- ”**I am** so ugly that I cannot share God with people.”
- ”**I am** too stupid to study the Bible and understand Truth.”
- ”**I am** too _____ for any good purpose to be accomplished.”

Notice that this way of thinking always starts with the self-centered focus of “I am...” Significantly, one of God’s most powerful Names is the Great “I AM,” (Exodus 3:14). This Name shows that God IS everything that we will ever need. By focusing on self, with “I am...” we are putting ourselves in God’s Place and missing the transforming view of The Great I AM. Thus, in a twisted way, the devil has actually caused many to become their own idolatrous “gods,” all the while believing that they are humble and meek.



Moses had this problem when God first gave him the assignment to lead Israel out of Egypt. Moses was so busy being focused on himself and his own deficiencies, that he couldn’t see God. Notice the words, “I am.”

Exodus 3:11-4:12 *“And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?...And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM...Thus shalt thou say...I AM hath sent me unto you...And Moses said unto the LORD, ...I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech...And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”*

It is only when we are on our own, disconnected from the Father’s power through focusing on ourselves, that we are unable to glorify God and perform the mighty deeds He’s called us to perform (John 15:4-8 and Philippians 4:13). Far from being humble, being focused on our own insufficiencies, weaknesses and defects is actually a form of idolatry. It is yet another proof that self is on our heart’s throne, instead of our Heavenly King.

5. What about Deformities or Birth Defects?

ANSWER: With the entrance of sin, into our world, came death. And with death entered disease and deformity. These are direct products of sin, yet the Heavenly Father is mighty enough to lift and remove these deformities, if He sees fit (Exodus 4:11). Why does He not see fit to lift defects and deformities from His children in every case? God continually allows circumstances to come into our lives that cause us to need Him and rely on Him. Only He knows if His good purpose for us is best served with a deformity. But, if He has allowed it in the first place, we can rest assured that the deformity is for the working of His good purpose in our lives.

Romans 8:28 “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*”

When we cease to be bitter and ungrateful to Him for His design of us, He can better work through our physical features for His glory and our eternal gain. Consider the true story of a terrible accident which resulted in a baby becoming permanently blind.

In 1820, a six week-old baby girl was given medicine for a minor eye ailment. It turned out to be the wrong medication. When the wrong medicine was applied to the baby’s eyes, she became permanently blind.



Instead of becoming bitter, this girl learned to praise God. Because she couldn’t read the Scriptures, her grandmother taught her to memorize the Bible. As a child, she memorized verses, chapters, and could finally quote entire books of the Bible.

She began writing poems of praise at 8 years old. These grew into writing powerful songs to worship God. By the age of eighty-six (her age in the picture on the left), there had flowed from her dedicated pen about 9,000 gospel hymns, including “Blessed Assurance,” and “He Hideth my Soul.” Her songs were used by God to strengthen the lives of millions. When she would give her testimony, her listeners would sit in rapt attention

as she gave praise to her Saviour. Her powerful songs are still bringing people to salvation today, long after her death. Her name was Francis Jane Crosby, affectionately known as Fanny Crosby. Looking back, Fanny praised God for her blindness, which bore much fruit.

5. Your Gender

A severe form of self-rejection is wishing that you were born the opposite sex, or dressing so that no one can clearly tell which gender you are. God created humanity as “male and female.” He made a clear distinction between the genders. He wants men to dress like men and women to dress like women. God didn’t make a mistake, when He selected your gender.



Deuteronomy 22:5 “*The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment....*”

6. Your Birth Order

Everyone has special characteristics, tendencies, and needs which are directly related to his or her birth order. These tendencies are especially evident when a family has several children of the same

gender without a large age gap between them.

- The first born child tends to have a greater capacity to respond to authority. In Bible times, the first born was given a double portion of the inheritance to enable him to care for his mother and to fulfill other family responsibilities in the absence of his father.
- The second born tends to need greater acceptance and approval. To get this, he or she may be more competitive. The second-born usually has a greater capacity for loyalty and tends to be believing and trusting of other people.
- The third born is usually more independent, sociable and persuasive. He or she will often be more influenced by older siblings than the parents.

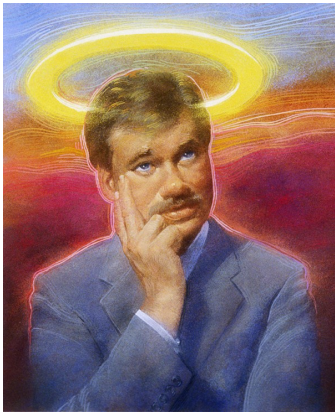
God knew all of this, when He selected your birth order. By accepting your birth order, you are better able to bring your tendencies under control of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 31:14-15 “*But I trusted in Thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in Thy Hand...*”



7. Your Siblings

We may acquire friends and make enemies in our lifetimes, but our siblings are given by God. We've all read the poems about sibling love and how it lasts the test of time. Yet, perhaps it is more common for siblings to fall short of that glorious goal. As a result, numerous books



have been written about sibling rivalry and even full-blown family feuds. Sometimes, the strife and bitterness between siblings continues into adulthood. Events like the division of a family estate, expose the selfish rivalry in its full magnitude.

If you find your sibling(s) to be more of a trial than a blessing, you may be tempted to doubt God's wisdom in giving them to you. Yet, He did choose your siblings with a good purpose.

For one thing, God uses our siblings to refine and develop character in us. It may be possible

to put on a sanctimonious front when in the company of those outside the home. Yet no hypocritical "halo" can endure under family friction. It is only when we consistently demonstrate the Fruits of the Holy Spirit at home that we are genuinely living a changed life in Christ.

For this reason, it is important to acknowledge God's intentional placement of you in the specific family in which you are placed. Even the most difficult sibling relationship is an opportunity for Christian character development. And as we partake more deeply of Divine Grace, we will grow in our love and care for even our most challenging family members. In this manner, God uses these formerly "troublesome" brothers and sisters to polish the rough edges off, developing us more and more into the lovely Pattern of our Saviour.

8. Your Physical Features

Society today is plagued with an extreme dislike of one's own physical features. This dissatisfaction with one's personal design and Designer is an epidemic that clearly has no basis in reality. Even people considered physically "perfect" and "beautiful" in the eyes of others view their own features as flawed. Many models and movie stars seek the redesigning work of plastic surgeons in an attempt to remove their original design "flaws." Clearly, it isn't our physical flaws that are the problem, as much as our discontentment with how God has made us.

The Bible teaches that your loving Heavenly Father prescribed all your physical features before you were born.

Psalm 139:13-16 *"For Thou hast possessed my reins (internal organs): Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb... Thine Eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect (an embryo); and in Thy Book all my members (physical features) were written, which in continuance (over a period of days) were fashioned (molded, formed, as a potter shapes clay), when as yet there was none of them."*

Since God is your Designer, it is important for you to accept each of your physical features as a gift from Him, and thank Him for them.

Some Physical Features Which God Designed (check as you thank God for each of the following):

- | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My height | <input type="checkbox"/> My bone size | <input type="checkbox"/> My eyes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My nose | <input type="checkbox"/> My complexion | <input type="checkbox"/> My ears |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My teeth | <input type="checkbox"/> My hair | <input type="checkbox"/> My feet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My hands | <input type="checkbox"/> My voice | <input type="checkbox"/> My chin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My body build | <input type="checkbox"/> My metabolism | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

9. Your Mental Abilities

Not only did God intentionally create you with your specific physical features, He also designed your mental capacities. It is comforting to realize that God created each of us with the specific mental aptitudes and abilities which are best suited to His purposes for our lives. Any "lack" of mental ability is intended by the Creator to be an opportunity for greater dependence on Him. When you do so, He can accomplish great tasks through you, glorifying His holy Name.

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen...But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness...He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."*

10. Your Aging and Death

Because of sin, God has numbered us seventy to eighty years (Psalm 90:10). Signs of aging are God's reminders to number our days to apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalm 90:12). Aging gracefully is accepting God's will and living to His glory as long as we live (Psalm 150:6).