

Video #4 Transcript

Because I'm a little cold-natured, I have blankets laying all over my living room. Anytime I sit down, I snuggle up. But there's one blanket in particular that's precious to me. It's this one. It lays on the back of my couch in winter. I love to get under that blanket, pull it up to my chin, and just snuggle in with the memories of my Grandma Dohm. See, my grandmother who's gone made this blanket for me. When I lay under it, my imagination goes a little wild. I think about her sitting for hours in the chair knitting this, thinking of me, maybe even praying for me. She definitely put in the hours to make something precious and lasting for me.

This blanket's not the only thing that's precious and lasting. You are precious and lasting, and I particularly love Psalm 139. Such a familiar passage, but so, so beautiful. In verse 13 it says "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."

God spent innumerable immeasurable hours on planning and creating you and knitting you together in your mother's womb. Just like my grandmother spent hours for me, God spent hours on you. I can just imagine Him delighting in you in the purpose that He was wearing into you. God loves you because He made you. I can imagine just the grin that must have stretched from divine ear to divine ear when He dreamed you up.

Is that hard to imagine? Is it really, really hard to believe? You know, I've been teaching a retreat for years that at the very end – at the end of the weekend, I hand women a stack of notecards, and I have them write different things on different notecards, but on one I ask them to write down what they love about themselves. What gifts God has woven into them to share with the world. And I've watched the women struggle. In fact, I've watched lots of women leave that card blank.

There are lots of obstacles in this world to loving ourselves.

One, maybe, that we've never felt good enough. Maybe it's because of past mistakes, or failures. Sins are stumbles for some of us. We've never felt good enough because people have handed us the label of unlovable. The very people who were supposed to nurture us and raise us and love us said that we were bad or that we would never be good enough. For others of us, we've been handed the label of never good enough by our culture, maybe, because of our address or the color of our skin, and so it's hard to love ourselves when we never feel good enough. Others of us have always felt like outsiders, like we never belonged, like we were never good enough to be part of the in-group.

And so in light of our own struggles with loving ourselves, David saying "I'm fearfully and wonderfully made." may sound like a far reach for us. In fact, it may even sound a little like bragging. You know, we live in a culture that's really into this self-love

movement right now, but doesn't that feel hard some days? Does it feel like a stretch or a reach? I think it's because that movement is close, but it's missing something pivotal.

And the pivotal part is the first part of that verse 14 where David says "I praise You."

See, if we start with the praise of God, if we start with the praise of our Creator, then we don't have such a hard time loving ourselves. So what I want us to do is really hyper focus on verse 14. I want us to unpack and think about what each little part of that verse means. I think by the end you'll have an easier time loving who you are.

So now I'm gonna go all girl geek on you, because what I did is I spent a lot of time looking at definitions of the original words here. The original Hebrew words. So let's dig in here and see what this verse really means. There are riches here you're not going to believe. So at the beginning David says "I praise you." The word praised is actually translated several places in Psalms. There are several different words. One is *halal* which is the one used here. There's also *yadah* and *zamar*, but these words are interesting because they're very, very active. Let me read you some of the definitions that I found connected with making a noise: *bodily actions and gestures, which accompany praising, playing and singing of music*. Isn't that amazing?

Now last week for the very first time ever, I had a friend who introduced me and invited me to a revival at her historically African-American church. It was the first time I had ever been to a service in an African-American church, and can I tell you that that *halal*, that *praise*, was happening there. There were people raising their arms, there were people clapping, their hands swaying, their bodies, moving their feet, shouting our voices – yes, I joined in – and shaking a tambourine. They were all the things that were indicated by praise in this Hebrew word. See, God calls us to praise Him with our whole being. With everything that we are. So that's the first thing about this word praise.

The second thing that I want you to know is that it implies an *intimacy with the one who is being praised*. We praise God because we know Him just like I can sit with you and extol the virtues of my blanket. It's beautifully done. There are hardly any mistakes in here. It's white and clean. It's so warm and cozy. But when it's hot outside, it doesn't get too hot. I could tell you all the wonderful things about this blanket, but mostly, I could tell you about the woman who made it. That she was kind. That she was loving. That she prayed for me and for my family. I can praise the virtues of the blanket because I know the one who made it in the same way David says "I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." He was able to say that he was fearfully and wonderfully made not because he's so amazing or so great or because he's been studying self-love out of some self-help books at some local bookstore, but because he knows the One who made him. And then David goes on to say "Because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Let's say that today, you're struggling. That you can't come up with one reason that you love yourself. Well, if for no other reason, you should love yourself because you have

the most incredible body. So I love that the New Living Testament says it this way: “Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex.” My dad is a biochemist. He has studied the body for decades and decades and decades. And my dad says that from studying all the cell structure, and the hormones, and the chemicals in our bodies, and the way everything works together so perfectly and miraculously, he said I don’t understand how any scientist could deny that there is a Creator. That there is a God who made us.”

If you can’t think of anything else that you love about yourself today, would you thank God for the breath that you have? For the voice that you have? For being able to see or hear if you can see or hear? If you can walk, would you praise Him for walking? You are created wonderfully and beautifully. But it’s even more than your incredible body, although it is incredible if you’re living.

You are incredible, but also *fearfully* – when we look at that word, it means *awesome*. *Wonderfully* means *surpassing* or *extraordinary*. Do you know what that says to me? It says that God has never made anyone who is just ordinary or average. When I was young, I used to babysit for the little girl across the street from me. Her mother, when she was a baby, had cross-stitched this little sign and it said “God don’t make no junk.”

Can I say that to you today? God don’t make no junk. You are not junk, because your Creator is incredibly incredible. He’s made you awesome. He’s made you surpassing and extraordinary. You are all those things. If I gave you a card today, I wouldn’t allow you to leave it blank. And in fact, I’ve made that a rule at my speaking event now. I tell the women when I say write down what you love about yourself, write down the gifts that God has given you, I’ve told them that the rule is that they are not allowed to leave that card blank. God don’t make no junk. You are amazing.

But then David shifts his focus right back to God. He started with God. He talked a little bit about himself, and then he goes right back to talking about God. He says “Your works are wonderful.” Now there, that word “works” means “accomplishments” or “achievements.” Think about it this way: you are one of God’s great accomplishments. You are one of His greatest achievements. I started thinking about if people gave God plaques for the good things He did, then he would have a plaque on His wall because of you. Because of making you. You are a masterpiece and one of God’s great achievements.

And then David says “I know that full well.” To know certainly is to understand or grasp or ascertain, but then it also says to be especially familiar or acquainted with a person or thing. There we are back there again. We don’t give all these things intellectual assent. We don’t just think about God being a great Creator, except for us. We know that we know that we know that we are lovable because of the Creator who made us.

You know, as Cheri and I wrote the book, one of the places that we overlapped – and we didn’t cook it up together, we came up with it individually and we left it in multiple chapters so that it could soak in deep for you. We have become huge believers that

loving your Creator is an act of worship but loving *yourself* is an act of worship toward your Creator. If you believe that your Creator is great and that He made you, then you are an accomplishment. You are one of God's great achievements. Loving ourselves is an act of worship toward our Creator.

Can I pause there and then say something very hard? That the opposite then is true, too. It's an affront to our Creator to loathe ourselves instead of loving ourselves. I've come to believe it's actually simple behavior to loathe ourselves instead of loving ourselves. Years ago, I watched one of my friends and mentors as she raised her young children. Her younger daughter was a particularly beautiful little girl named Sarah. When my friend was pushing Sarah around the grocery store in the cart, strangers would stop and approach them and say "What a beautiful child she is!" "Oh, little girl Sarah you are so beautiful!" Well, my friend thought that that was very nice, but she also wanted to teach her daughter something. So she taught her daughter what to say in response. In response when people would come up and say "Oh you're so beautiful." Sarah would then say thank you, which is the appropriate response, but then she would say "God is the one that made my hair so curly."

Don't you love that? Her mother taught Sarah to give credit to God for the creation, and what was beautiful about her. We can do the exact same thing. Not too long ago, Cheri and I were doing an interview and the interviewer stopped me in my tracks at the end of the interview she said "Ok, I'm gonna make you live out what you just said. I need you to tell me: How do you love yourself? What do you love about who you are?" And so I tried to model what Sarah had modeled. I said okay, so let's give praise to the Creator, but what He did in me. So I said "Praise God that He made me with a passion for justice. I thank Him for the compassion and gentleness that He's given me and woven into me. God created me to teach. I love it. And I'm so thankful. And even though I got teased as a little girl about it, I like that my nose turns up at the end a little bit. I thank God for making me with a little pug nose. I praise God because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Just like my blanket, you are one of a kind. You're not a replica. You aren't just one of these mass-produced people hot off the presses and stacked on the shelves just like every other one. You are unique. You are precious. You are deeply loved by God. You're not perfect, but you're a masterpiece and you're stunning.

So here's your question to do with your group.

First, on your own – you knew it was coming, right? – make a list of the things that you love about the way God create you. Pause a moment over that list. Give thanks to God for it.

And then turn to a friend and share it. I know it's painful, but you'll live through it and it will be an active version for God Himself. Have fun girls!

[Outro music]