

UNCOVER YOUR
**DIVINE
DESIGN**

Who did God create you to be?

ROBIN MELVIN



ST JOSEPH, MISSOURI USA

DIVINE DESIGN: Who did God create you to be?

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For more information on Robin Melvin visit RobinMelvin.com

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*My dear reader, you are a marvelous creation.
Own it, seek it, and live it. I pray you sense God's measureless
grace and peace as you uncover more of who and Whose you are.*

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Introduction

We live in a wonky world, don't we? It's easy to get a bit lost—to forget who and Whose we are. But at our created core, we have an inkling we're made for more. So we ask, “God, who am I and what do You want me to do?” And often, answers allude us.

Because somewhere on this zig-zaggy journey, we let our pain and our people define us. We formed unhealthy mindsets that hide us and hold us back from knowing our power and enjoying the abundant life Jesus gives.

But while our history reshaped us, our Creator restores us to the women He already sees—our divine design. So, perhaps a better question is, “God, who are *You* and who am I created to *be*?”

And thus our healing begins.

“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think” (Romans 12:2a).

True transformation happens by *changing the way we think* about God and ourselves. How many times do we set our hearts on good intentions and then lose the battle in our minds? For me, at least a kajillion.

At about mid-life, I found myself hiding under unhealthy mindsets and protective habits. I realized how seven years of my adolescence—life with a dad who numbed his pain with alcohol—shaped and defined me for decades. Determined to find the real me, to live whole and free, I did the work to transform unhealthy thought patterns. In these

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pages, you'll find raw honesty. Written as I connected dots and untangled thoughts—fleshed out, cried out, and screamed out. I kid you not.

Uncover Your Divine Design: Who did God create you to be? is my transparent story to find and free the woman God designed. There are no villains in it, only perfectly imperfect humans like all of us. As we journey together, I hope you see transformation is truly possible. I pray you believe that, in Christ, you are already a new creation and you have the power to live it.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a study guide to dig deeper into Scripture and answer questions. Since we are designed for God's nature to live in us, we will train ourselves to uncover it.

See. Set. Seek. Speak. Celebrate.

The study guides will help us *See* mindsets that define us. As we consider our thinking, we will learn to discern what's true and what's not. As we *Set* our mind on what is "true...authentic...the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly," we will transform toxic thought patterns (Philippians 4:8b MSG).

When we see and set our trust in what God says, we will find who He created us to be and whom He resurrected when we asked Jesus to save us and to lead us. In Christ, we have all we need to live healed, whole, and free.

Empowered by Scripture and the Holy Spirit, we will *Seek* God and *Speak* what is true about who and Whose we are. We are loved, accepted, redeemed daughters of a good Father. Defined by Him, we will *Celebrate* this relationship that empowers us to live an abundant life in our divine design.

Are you ready to heal the wounds that hide the warrior in you?

As you reflect on your own transparent story to find the woman God designed you to be, you might need a separate notebook. Maybe even grab some crayons or colored pencils. The uninterrupted words, prayers, and/or doodles might surprise you. Process your thoughts however it works for you. This is your space. Your time. Your transformation.

Peace to you on your journey to uncover who God created you to be.

CHAPTER 1

Identity Lost: No Worries, It's Just Hiding

*"It takes courage to grow up and become who
you really are." ~ E.E. Cummings*

So, if you woke up tomorrow and could do the one thing you've always wanted—no limits on time or money or resources—what would you do?"

I sat there, unmoving. *Unthinking* really. If I was in a comic strip instead of a counseling room, this is where you sketch a question mark over my head or pencil in chirping crickets. Beyond growing my faith and helping people, I couldn't articulate one personal goal or dream.

What was the hang up? Life was falling into place. My youngest child had just graduated high school, so my husband and I were almost empty-nesters. I hear this distresses some women. Not me, sister. For the first time in my adult life, my time was *my time*.

For thirty years, I raised kids and grandkids. I was a homemaker, a home-schooler, and a volunteer for Sunday school, PTA, and Vacation Bible School. I led women's ministries, volunteered in youth groups, and counseled girls in pregnancy resource centers. I was the soccer mom who drove a mini-van and the neighbor who cooked casseroles and carpooled kids.

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Alongside this, I was an Army wife. My husband's military and civilian careers included countless separations, two deployments, and thirteen household moves. Wow, I get a little breathless just thinking about it.

I love that season of my life. And for the most part, I rocked it. But after decades of pouring into others, I was so ready to pursue something brand new. To feed and grow me.

In the weeks before I met with the counselor who asked me that baffling question, my brain buzzed with ideas. But I worried about spending money and wasted time fretting about wasting time. I waited for the perfect decision to appear on the wall like a neon sign framed with flashing arrows. The internal pressure to decide *now* and the fear of making a wrong choice paralyzed me.

Twisted up in this cycle, I finally asked for help. That's how I ended up in the counseling room. I don't even remember our conversation before the question:

"So, if you woke up tomorrow and could do the one thing you've always wanted—no limits on time or money or resources—what would you do?"

Why, in those cricket moments, could I not voice one concrete goal or dream waiting for me at the end of my forties?

Because it exposed my lost identity, bare-naked.

And so started the journey to unravel me.

We peeked back into my childhood to uncover why I was wrapped tight in my roles and responsibilities—in what I did and who I did it for. We discovered a little girl shaped by culture, authoritarian parenting, and a depressed, alcoholic father who suffered from PTSD. She had low self-worth, and her fear of conflict often made her timid and voiceless. I was surprised to see how her fears, hurts, and habits still influenced me.

We uncovered messages like "Children will be seen, not heard" that make it difficult to speak up and make decisions. We talked about the tension in my childhood home and its hard-set rules. How I wasn't allowed to disagree, voice an opinion, or even talk about grief.

This common authoritarian approach to parenting produces shame and underscores a message that children are inferior. These formed unhealthy thought patterns that skewed my sense of self and stunted

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my autonomy. I went into adulthood hiding.

I walked out of my counselor's office thinking, *Wow. I'm more messed up than I thought.* But I was excited and determined to dig deeper, to uncover the real me. I wanted to see how I got there so I could get out of there. After twenty-three years of knowing Jesus as Savior and Healer, there was more to see and more to restore. This required a closer look at my childhood, especially my formative adolescent years.

Research shows that when we were little girls, between three and six years old, we adapted to our environments. Without adult resources and reasoning, we created coping skills to feel protected, loved, and valued. Which is brilliant. But if those childish habits don't change, we remain bound by them in adulthood. That scared little girl still lives in us. While she's resourceful and capable, her protective layers no longer serve her. And they don't allow us to grow up all the way.

That's why we get stuck in an emotional loop. Especially when we want to move forward. After my appointment with the counselor, I wanted to see how toxic mindsets dictate our internal dialogue and life choices. Not to whine, point blame, or wallow in self-pity, but to understand our self-defining moments—those turning points in life that formed our sense of self. Harsh words, bad decisions, and difficult experiences hid us, the *real* us.

Ready to transform thoughts and habits to live a freer, more abundant life, we ask God, "How do You see me and define me? Under all this stuff, who did You create me to be?"

Our truest identity is our God-given design. Made in His image, our value is intrinsic and infinite. In seeking this healthy sense of self, we find our voices and our unique personalities. We shamelessly let the world see us—the real and wonderful us.

But since we live in a messed-up world with messy people, our thoughts and opinions of who we are get distorted. Shame and self-protective habits hide our divine design. And traumatic experiences—especially in childhood—wire these deeper.

Even adults get overwhelmed by emotional pain. And we were just kids. We didn't know what to do with our parents' problems or a hush-

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and-stuff, male dominant culture. We weren't supposed to. Our brains weren't wired for that yet, so we formed coping skills.

To keep the peace and please people, I kept quiet. I conformed to their opinions and performed to their expectations. These habits kept me safe. But deep down, the real me was a fighter and a rebel. So eventually, I found a place to belong and be loud. I became the party girl and the family black sheep. It was my escape and pressure release.

Many of us learned to conform and perform early in life. People's applause, or lack thereof, might still determine our worth. But here's our hope—our confident assurance—we aren't created to be copies. We are originals. The finest details of you and me were birthed in God's heart and mind. Our worth is not determined by what we did, what we do, or who we do it for. Our Creator isn't a critic or a controlling parent. He wants to free us, the real us. In Him, we are safe to be seen, heard, and known.

Going into teen marriage and parenting, I see how it was easy to lose myself further. I loved my jobs. Being a wife and mom gave me beautiful purpose. But I didn't dream about what would come next when my kids left the nest and those roles and responsibilities changed. I didn't plan past diapers and dinners, soccer games and school dances.

Maybe, as you read this, something stirs in you. Truth is, life's dramas and traumas usher us into adulthood—and our Christian journey—with common needs and struggles.

We wear hand-me-down habits and think conditioned thoughts. Some good, some not so much. But God gives us a new heredity that's stronger than what our parents passed on to us. He empowers us to shed cultural labels and generational sin. He teaches us to put on His genetics by transforming our minds.

Outside-in thinking, expecting anything or anyone besides God to fill our need and fix our struggle, won't free us to be who we *are*. It defines us by what we *do* and who we do it for. The good news—the God news—is that losing our real selves doesn't change our divine design. It's just hiding. Right there under all those darn protective layers. And like slivers of glass that cut deep and take time to surface, so do subtle unhealthy thoughts and habits. So, we are patient in knowing and

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growing into who God made us to be.

Veiling Our True Self

Alexandra Headrick, in her article “Remembering Original Glory,” writes: “We’ve been taught by life that being ourselves is dangerous, risky, wrong. We’ve been hurt, scarred, disappointed, and wounded... so like a turtle retreating to its shell, we’ve retreated behind our walls. But in the process, we’ve lost something precious, and we know it. It’s embedded into our souls; before original sin there was original glory.”

Our original glory is our divine design. Genesis 1:26–27 confirms we are created in God’s image with His spiritual nature and qualities. So, our God ID has always been there, woven into our souls by our Father’s hands.

As for our unhealthy mindsets, we don’t always know how or when they got there and that’s okay. More important than their origins is that we replace them with what is true.

In Romans 12:2a, Paul tells us, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” Aren’t you glad we can renew our minds from the inside-out?

God transforms us into who He intended us to be before we slipped into this world, new and wrinkly pink. Before we were born into imperfect homes with imperfect parents who struggled with their own pain and self-worth. Before we grew up in a society riddled with less-than messages. Way before we believed the lie, *You will never measure up*.

Let the Unveiling Begin

“For the Lord is Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Cor. 3:17–18).

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My friend, this transforming journey may feel a bit like a seek and destroy mission. But it's always a mission of mercy. When we invite Jesus to save us and teach us, we step into His Spirit and a whole new inner wardrobe. We are pure, set apart, and made right with God. We are empowered to unveil the naked truth of our identity in Christ.

In 2 Peter, we see God's promise, "His divine power has given us *everything we need for a godly life* through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:3–4 NIV, author's emphasis).

We "participate in the divine nature" by putting on God's character.

He wants to free us—heart and soul. He wants to liberate our mind, our will, and our emotions. Empowered by His Spirit, we peel off remnants of our old grave clothes. Believing His promises, we are covered and clothed by God's grace.

In this grave to grace transformation, we look back without shame and see what hides us—the real us. Transparency is raw and risky, but we are done hiding. We have to go there so we can get out of there.

Join the Journey

I didn't know this identity search to become God's woman would be a journey to see myself as God's beloved child. I'm still learning and healing habits and mindsets from the drama and trauma of life experiences. By God's grace, I am growing out of childish responses by learning childlike trust.

Child of God, as I let you in on my deepest hurts, I hope you uncover unhealthy mindsets and see you truly are the Father's beloved child. As you let go of old habits, others' opinions, and society's stereotypes, I pray you see yourself as He does: holy, righteous, redeemed for a purpose. Free from guilt, right with Him, and valuable beyond human measure.

John Eldredge, in his book *Waking the Dead*, encourages us, "Think of it: your original glory was greater than anything that's ever taken

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your breath away in nature.”

Yes, let’s think about that a minute.

You are more beautiful than pink sunsets and emerald oceans and snow-blanketed mountains. You’re more powerful than hurricane-driven winds, raging wildfires, and swirling white rapids. Does that surprise you? Remember, you are created in God’s image. So own it.

When we try to find peace and purpose in things or people, we war against ourselves. Only God can restore our true identity.

On this baring-all journey, we find why it’s hard to dream past empty nests, board meetings, soccer games, and science projects. We trust that God wastes nothing and our past—especially the pain—prepared us for our present. We step into our power and thrive in our own unique story.

The study guides at the end of each chapter will help you reveal unhealthy mindsets and self-defining moments. I pray you’re inspired to *See* your thoughts, *Set* your mind, *Seek* the Father, and *Speak* what’s true. Then, as you uncover your divine design, I hope you *Celebrate* the power and promises of who you are in Christ.

Your story—its uniqueness, even its unique *mess*—has hurts and hang-ups that are common to all of us. So, you are not alone. And remember, our heavenly Father’s definition of you is the only one that matters. You are created in *His* image, to wear *His* identity. It’s time to express it through your unique personality. Quirks and all.

Again, in *Waking the Dead*, I love how Eldredge describes our journey: “We are in the process of being unveiled. We are created to reflect God’s glory, born to bear His image, and He ransomed us to reflect that glory again.”

Our glory, our born identity, is rescued and being restored so we can reflect Jesus’ nature. All things redeemed, to be used for His glory.

Can you hear Him whisper?

You were made for more.

Let’s rephrase the question that stumped me in the counseling room: If you woke up tomorrow and could *be* the person you’re created to be, who would *you* be?

STUDY QUESTIONS

“We desire to possess a beauty that is worth pursuing, worth fighting for, a beauty that is core to who we truly are. We want beauty that can be seen; beauty that can be felt; beauty that affects others; a beauty all our own to unveil.”

~ Stasi Eldredge, Captivating Revised and Updated:
Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman’s Soul

See Your Thoughts

What are the roles and responsibilities you fill each day?

Take a moment to pray. Ask God to clear your mind and help you not to over-think these next questions. And remember, there are no right or wrong answers here. Just enjoy this time of reflection.

Imagine you are alone on a deserted island and your roles and responsibilities do not exist. Who are you? What are your dreams, passions, interests—apart from what you do and who you do it for?

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Maybe you hear crickets. Or maybe you have a whole list of ideas.

Do you sense some of the best parts of you are hidden—waiting to be unveiled and expressed? If so, what hinders you from knowing and experiencing more of who God made you to be?

Our history shapes us, in healthy and not-so-healthy ways. A seven-year span in my adolescence molded and defined me for decades.

Have you ever peeked back into your history to see what people, events, or cultural messages shaped your thought processes?

Ask God to show you: Whose words or actions still define me? What parts of my story still influence me?

The healthy messages:

The not-so-healthy messages:

Set Your Mind

God, I'm determined to find who You say I am. I seek to live in the wholeness and freedom I have in Christ. How do You define me? Help me recognize lies and replace them with truth.

See who you are in Christ and renew your mind. Read and reflect on the following Scripture:

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Inside-out transformation: Romans 12:1–2

Think on these: Philippians 4:8

Old life to new life: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Take off old, put on new: Ephesians 4:22–24

“For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” 2 Cor. 3:17–18

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.” 2 Peter 1:3–4

Seek & Speak What’s True

I am defined by I AM. God is my Redeemer. I am rescued and being restored to who I am in Christ—my divine design.

Because God, _____

_____, I am _____

_____.

Celebrate

Father God, because Your love is unrelenting, we are never truly lost. Thank You for calling us out to more peace, power, and freedom

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in our divine design. Our full potential is beyond what we can even imagine. But You already see us clothed in Christ. Thank you for giving us Jesus as a role model. We are grateful for this lifelong privilege to know and grow more like Him. — Your redeemed Daughter

A Gentle Reminder

If anything in my story brings up something you're not sure you can handle right now, please stop and pray. After a chat with Jesus, maybe consider calling a friend or a counselor. I am not a professional and can only tell you what worked for me. Your beautiful, unfolding story may be similar to mine, but we are uniquely wired and on our own timelines.