GOD IN THE MIRROR

Discovering Who You Were Created to Be

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Miles McPherson, God in the Mirror

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Are You Ready for This?

I am amazing.
Yes, you read that right.
I’m completely amazing, and I can prove it.
Now that I have your attention, let me say something about you: You are more amazing and wonderful than you know.
This book is about the real you, about the you God created you to be. But who is that person and how is that person supposed to live?

Charles and Khristi Cunningham, a biracial couple from Akron, Ohio, gave birth to a set of twins in 2010. Having twins is not necessarily odd in itself, but having biracial twins is a one-in-a-million occurrence. One of the children, Triniti, is white with blonde hair and blue eyes, and the other, Gabe, came out with African-American brown skin and facial features. Because they look so different from each other, some people question whether they are brother and sister.

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Are You Ready for This?

This leads me to the big question: Since we were created in God’s image for the purpose of living as His children, what does God expect to see when He looks at us?

Our society is in the midst of an image crisis. In our thirst for significance and a unique identity, we chase money, power, success, or fame. We pour ourselves into dead-end relationships hoping to find validation. We work eighty-hour weeks to prove our worth. Some of us emulate celebrities, dress in designer clothes, and drive expensive cars. We chase after dreams and ideas that were never meant for us.

The Bible says we’re made in the image of God, in the very likeness of the Creator Himself. In Genesis 1:26, God says, “Let Us make man in Our image.” When God created humankind, He gave us His own image—imago Dei. He created us in His own likeness, but knowingly or unknowingly, many of us have settled for terrible substitutes. We’ve created our own image by absorbing and reflecting the culture instead of letting God’s image express itself through us.

And while we are doing all this striving, stretching, and straining to be known, to be significant, to be understood and valued, God looks down sadly shaking His head because He doesn’t see children who resemble their Father. He doesn’t see in us what we were designed to be.

But what is that? What does God expect to see?

God designed you in His image so that when He looks at you, it’ll be like He’s looking into a mirror. When He looks at you, He wants to see His glory reflected back to Him.

We’ve all heard the slogan “Image is everything.” By redefining “image” as “our God IMAGE,” that statement changes from a cultural cliché to a catchphrase of truth. This book has five sections, each one focusing on one aspect of our God IMAGE.
The IMAGE Journey

I’ve created an acrostic with the word IMAGE, and it looks like this:

I = Individually Unique
   You’re unique, one of a kind. No one can take your place in God’s universal design.

M = Moral Mirror
   You’re created to reflect God’s moral character, His heart, mind, and holiness.

A = Authority to Rule
   You’ve been empowered with the authority over your physical and spiritual environment, not people.

G = God’s Friend
   You’ve been created to have, as a friend of God, an intimate, loving relationship with Him.

E = Eternal
   You’ve been designed to live forever with God.

Your image is more than an inscription or an imprint like you might see in a work of art or on a coin. Your God image goes much deeper; it goes to the very core of who you are. Your God image is alive and active, representing the invisible attributes of God living in your human design.

We’re designed to actively pursue and reflect the glory of God through our lives. Like diamonds, we can only reflect the light that shines onto us; we have no twinkle of our own. The only light shining onto our image, our spiritual diamond, is the light of God’s glory, which is projected onto us each and every day. So I go back to my original question. Do you know what God expects to see when He looks at you? What is He seeing right now?

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Over 1,200 people were waiting for me to come out and talk to them. As the guards who brought me to this church were putting handcuffs on me, the knots in my stomach were getting worse. (These were the serial-killer, mass-murderer handcuffs that are attached to a chain that goes around your waist.) Less than a year before this particular Sunday, I was doing cocaine on the team plane. I was hanging out in crack houses and nightclubs. And I had turned down just about every speaking engagement that the team had offered me. So what was I doing telling a congregation about my experience in five prisons?

As they introduced me, the crowd got really quiet, and then I walked out. I began telling them how segregated prison is, with blacks, whites, and Hispanics hanging only with each other. I talked about the violence and code of ethics in prison. Then I introduced myself as a current defensive back with the San Diego Chargers.

There was no response. The people thought this inmate had lost his mind, and to be honest, I was just as shocked as they were. But the reason I had agreed to speak was really simple. I was beginning to realize that the direction my life had taken could not have been more opposite from my design. The God reflection that I was created to provide to God and to the world was beyond my wildest imagination, and I wanted to see that become a reality in my life.

I’ve written this book with the prayer that it will be an eye-opening journey to help you find and live the work of art God created you to be.
One of the most powerful reflections of God is seen in your individual uniqueness, the one-of-a-kind qualities with which you were created. There is no one like you in the entire world. God made you to reflect His creative genius.

Unfortunately, we have been deceived into marginalizing our individuality in order to fit into a dying and decaying world.

But thank God that He has provided us with the hope that the artistic genius that defines our individuality can be restored.

Chapters 1–4 will guide us through the process of understanding and restoring the brilliance of the “I” in our God IMAGE: our individuality!
The first was a picture of a girl with her hair blowing everywhere like a GoDaddy commercial. The second was a guy who looked like a beginner bodybuilder wearing WWF speedos and a Mr. T gold chain starter kit. The third picture was of a girl wearing a leopard bikini crawling on the floor and baring her teeth. These were the Facebook profile pictures of friends of one of my employees.

If you read a little further, you would learn their names, schools, jobs, favorite movies, and music. This is how people market themselves to friends, family, and the gazillions of Facebook users, saying, “Check me out, y’all.”

What image do you want to project?

Certainly, your Facebook profile doesn’t begin to capture the totality of the complex qualities that make up the truly amazing you. You’re unique—not because of the music you
like, the way you dress, or the talents you possess. Your race, culture, likes, dislikes, goals, dreams, and accomplishments don’t identify or define the real you. Job applications, IQ and psychological tests, medical records, and bank statements don’t define you either. All of these things may offer clues about your personality or your physical makeup, but they can’t give us the sum total of who you are.

None of these characteristics or similarities will adequately describe the essence of your individuality, or what I refer to as the I AM factor.

Each of us is unique. There’s absolutely no one like you or me in the entire world. God, who created us to be His children, has given us our own version of His I AM status, and it’s the I AM factor. In this chapter you’ll learn about how individually unique you are. You are not only different from other people but also from all other aspects of creation. I’ll also outline how the characteristics of the I AM factor functions to produce a mirror image of God.

Your Individuality and the I AM Factor

As Moses is walking in the desert, he looks and sees a bush that is on fire but not burning. The fire is flowing around the branches of the bush, but the branches stay brown and the leaves remain green. When Moses gets up close to the bush, God speaks to him and tells him to go to Egypt and deliver the Jews from slavery.

Moses seems shocked. “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What’s His name?’ What do I tell them?” Moses asks.

“I AM WHO I AM,” God replies. “This is what you are to say to the Israelites. Tell them, I AM has sent you to them.”
God is the great “I AM.” This title refers to God’s authority and supremacy as the Creator of all things. As the Great I AM, God exists independently. He relies on nothing else for His being. He is the source and the beginning of everything else. We possess a little of God’s I AM-ness because we bear the image of God, which sets us apart from all other living things. No other creature bears God’s image.

Listen to what David tells God in Psalm 139:13–15:

You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother’s womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

You are marvelous. Why? Because there is no one else like you anywhere. Each one of us is unique, and we were created to provide the most complete mirror image of God on earth.

Reflecting the Glory of God

During my son’s first month in the police academy, he brought home the biggest, baddest flashlight I’d ever seen. When I turned it on, a powerful beam of white light shot out of it. Like the light coming out of that flashlight, the invisible attributes of God are projected out of everything He has made and onto us with the expectation that the light or glory of His image will be reflected back to Him and to the world.

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Romans 1:20 says, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that were made.” What we see and experience all around us, in nature, for example, are expressions and evidence of the invisible attributes of God at work, such as wisdom, power, vision, creativity, organization, compassion, love, intelligence, and moral character. His invisible attributes are the basis of everything He does; they are part of everything He’s made. Flowers exhibit God’s artistic creativity. The sun demonstrates God’s power. The stars in the sky declare His glory. The universe displays God’s enormity, and the human cell shows God’s infinite attention to detail.

We too reflect God’s glory.

Our I AM factor—our individual uniqueness—positions us alone above all living things to recognize, appreciate, interpret, and interact with God’s invisible attributes.

Uniquely Designed

Have you ever bit into a stick of celery and ended up with a bunch of strings stuck between your teeth? Those stringy things are called xylem. Like straws, they carry water and nutrients from the ground to each leaf on the celery plant. Just as the xylem plays an integral part in delivering life-sustaining nutrients to the celery, God designed our bodies as conduits for His invisible attributes to be expressed through us. Just as the xylem takes nutrients to the leaves, so our God image is expressed to others and the world through our bodies. God created our physical bodies as conduits for the spiritual nature of our God image.

Your physical makeup is a metaphor for the most powerful aspect of your “I AM factor.” You and I are not people having
Our Created Image

spiritual experiences, but rather spirits in a human experience. God designed us to receive His spiritual input, then to use our physical body to reflect Him into the world. The spiritual aspect of our God image is the foundation of our God likeness and has the greatest potential of reflecting God. Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” We were designed to express the spiritual desires of God.

While walking through a park with my wife and children, I heard my wife and daughters say, “Oooh, look at the pretty flower.” They began talking about how it smelled like a certain perfume and how the leaves felt like silk. They were able to recognize and appreciate the invisible attributes of God’s creative design and sensitive heart in that created flower. God created you to appreciate beautiful, complex, and artistic things in a way unique to only you, and it is important to God that you express that unique perspective whenever you have the opportunity.

God gave you hands with five fingers so you can hold things for Him and provide His gentle touch. He gave you speech so you can mirror His words of compassion, love, and comfort. He gave you eyes to see what He sees. He gave you ears to listen on His behalf to the cries of the brokenhearted. God gave you a complex mind to reason, problem solve, dream, create, plan, engage in critical thinking, and make spiritual decisions, like He does. He gave you a heart to reflect His love to a broken world.

You have the ability to feel and reflect His emotions of compassion, joy, encouragement, and empathy because that is how God created you. As God’s glory is projected onto you, He actively showers you with His invisible attributes, such as love, wisdom, and creativity, so you will reflect all this back to Him and to the world.
Uniquely Creative

While on vacation in the Caribbean, my daughter and I decided to go kayaking in the ocean. Every five minutes or so we’d stop, put on our face masks, and lower our faces into the water to look for fish. After about thirty minutes of paddling, we found ourselves in forty feet of water and decided it was a good time to look for fish. This time my daughter’s mask fell off her face. As soon as I jumped in the water to get it, the undercurrent swept me thirty to forty feet away. It felt like the offensive line of the Raiders was pushing me farther and farther away from her.

I started to panic a bit, and then things got worse. Jellyfish. Plural. Think of 100 needles jabbing your whole body. Now make that 100 red-hot needles. People have died from an allergic reaction to jellyfish stings. Now I’m feeling my body start to seriously burn, and the waves are dunking me. I can see the look of sheer terror on my daughter’s face as she continued to drift away from me. I was praying all the way, “Lord, please, get me back to my baby girl.”

I finally made it to the kayak and began to paddle back to shore. I prayed that I wouldn’t have a terrible allergic reaction to the stings. I paddled for at least half an hour, and the whole time my eyes hurt worse and became more and more watery, my body throbbed and burned as though on fire, and all I could think of was to pray, “God, please get us back to the beach.”

When at last we got to shore, there was a dead jellyfish lying at the water’s edge, and I wanted so bad to do the River Dance on his head because of what his cousins did to me, but instead I had to give it some respect. Jellyfish have been known to kill people, yet they have no brains, no blood, and no bones. They are 90 percent water! How can something made mostly of water almost take me out?

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God’s creativity is off the chart. Did you know there’s a flea that can jump its own height multiplied hundreds of times? It would be like you or me jumping two Empire State buildings! God created an ant that can carry thirty-five times its weight on its own back. God designed fish with lights on top of their heads so they can see in the dark. God created the polar bear to gain nearly four hundred pounds during pregnancy and give birth while sleeping. God designed wasps so they can recognize each other’s faces, giving them the ability to defend their own families against enemy wasps. Other animals recognize and/or communicate with each other by smell or sound or vibration on land or in water.

God created seemingly endless categories of animals that crawl on the ground, fly in the sky, swim in the ocean, and live beneath the earth’s surface. He created species with their own unique patterns, shapes, sizes, and colors. Scientists have named and cataloged 1.3 million species of animals. There are approximately 20,000 classifications of roses and over 10,000 species of birds in the world. There are 2,700 snake species, 7,000 varieties of apples, 12,000 to 20,000 types of butterflies, and 150,000 to 250,000 moth types. Every leaf can be traced back to an individual tree, and every plant is distinguished by its own unique DNA.

What I find interesting is that each year we continue to discover, name, and categorize more animals and plants, just like Adam did in Genesis (see vv. 19–20, 23). The naming and categorizing of the animals and plants is unique to us as humans and another facet of our ability to echo God’s image. God not only designed you with complex and advanced capabilities, He also made you to interact with Him and His unlimited creativity. You were designed to recognize, acknowledge, and glorify God’s creativity.
Uniquely Free

One summer day I was sitting in my house with my windows open when I heard my neighbor’s two dogs howling and barking at the top of their lungs. As I listened, I realized the dogs had escaped. One dog was a beagle, a type of hound, and the other was a mutt.

The beagle had caught scent of something, and his hound instincts took over—he was hunting something down. He ran back and forth from the fence to the street lamp to the bushes, trying to find the animal that had left the scent.

The mutt, on the other hand, had no idea what was going on, so she just barked. I could almost hear her saying something like, “Where are we going? Why are we barking? What are we looking for?” The beagle, however, was on a mission.

Animals seem to have a robotic quality; their patterns are predictable. They have certain times when they mate, other times when they migrate—for the most part, animals spend their lives looking for food, mating, protecting territory, and sleeping. Humans, on the other hand, have the ability to make many more, sometimes unpredictable, choices about these activities.

Animals establish strict territories where they live, but you and I are free to create and explore the sky, the sea, and space, and develop new means of habitation throughout the world.

You are free to be the creative person God made you to be. You are able to study and learn science, medicine, and law; invent new technology; build cities; and develop various music styles and genres of writing. You are free to create wondrous forms of art, to take the colors God has given and make new hues and patterns. You are free to build sand castles, play sports, develop countless games to play; try out new and creative ways of teaching and learning; develop medical advances and cures for disease. You are free to help preserve wildlife and...
Our Created Image

feed hungry people around the world. God has made you in His image in part so you can leave this world a better place. Why is that so marvelous? Because you have been patterned after your Creator. Do you feel that you are using and developing and investing in the creativity God has given you? Our culture places so much pressure on people to fit in and conform that we can lose the freedom God has given us to be uniquely creative. God’s intention is for you to develop your full potential.

Individually You

While you are distinguished from all other living things, you are also unlike any other person. Currently there are seven billion people on earth, and not one of these seven billion looks just like you! And what you look like is only the beginning of your uniqueness.

I recently noticed a black mole just above my lip. I thought I was going crazy, thinking that I didn’t know my own face. Now I call it my Cindy Crawford. Take a minute and look in the mirror. Your facial expressions are all yours, exclusive to you alone. There is no one with your lips, eyes, eyebrows, freckles, goofy ears, and crooked tooth.

You also have your own heartbeat rhythm and your very own fragrance or funky smell. No one has your voice, fingerprints, and footprints. No other person carries your resourcefulness, perspective, and values.

Can you see now how absolutely amazing and marvelous you are?

Individually Purposed and Promised

Whenever I go to the doctor for a physical, I ask questions about every part of the exam. I’m fascinated by all the
instruments they use to perform the physical, and without fail I end up asking the doctor to let me use those instruments on him. Because my doctor is pretty cool, he usually lets me look in his eyes, down his throat, in his ears. He lets me listen to his heart and tap on his knee. He explains to me how each of the instruments works. He explains how they’re designed and how each one is intended to be used and handled. Each one of his instruments was designed for a very specific purpose.

In the same way, God has specific purposes for all of His children. God has a very specific and unique purpose for how He wants you to reflect His attributes to the world. Jeremiah’s words to the Israelites in exile in Babylon are also appropriate for us today. He says in Jeremiah 29:11, “I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (ESV).

If you are true to the uniqueness of how God designed you, it isn’t possible for you to have a life identical to anyone else’s. In order for God to be seen and known on earth, He created billions of unique individuals who can express very specific aspects of who He is.

Your purpose is important, intentional, and God ordained. Consequently, God has made very specific promises and commitments just to you. He’s designed you to fulfill your unique purpose in life. He created you to stand out as one of a kind—unlike anyone on earth—so please stop trying to fit in and be like everyone else. You’re not like everyone else. God is equipping and preparing you to live an individual and unique life, reflecting the aspects of God that you were ordained to reflect.
Our Blurred Image

The I AM Imposter

A creature moves in the darkness with the precision of a cat, picking at bits of scattered garbage on the pavement, pieces of a cheeseburger gone bad, a muddy French fry, a thumb-sized packet of hot sauce. It rips open the packet with its teeth, drinks down the hot sauce like soda. The creature sniffs crumpled paper napkins stained with grease. It grunts and shoves the napkins in its mouth, chews, and swallows.

The creature sleeps in the doorway of an abandoned building. It bends its body not as a beast prepared to pounce but as something whipped and broken. It sleeps sucking on a piece of dirty beard, and in the first light of dawn it lies trembling and sighing in the heat. And you realize this is no animal. This is a man.

You’ve seen him in your city. He’s on the streets and alleys of every civilized city in the world. He’s hovering in cardboard boxes, sweating under flea-infested blankets. He’s
panhandling on freeway entrances. In some countries he is born and dies on the streets.

Is this beat-up and broken-down scavenger on the streets created in the image of God and as full of potential as you are? Is he born to be as amazing as you are? What do you think?

Yes, he is. Absolutely, most definitely yes. He, you, and I all possess the *imago Dei* from God.

But how does a person created in God’s image wind up covered in dirt and curled up asleep in a doorway like a dog? We could blame his family, the neighborhood he grew up in, the economy, or his teachers, but the root of all self-destruction doesn’t *originate* from any of these. This same self-destruction can and does happen to all of us to some degree, so pay attention to see how much of this applies to you. How does the business executive who drives a Mercedes and owns his own house begin thinking it is because of his intelligence and hard work only that he enjoys the nice things of life? How does the soccer mom or schoolteacher or nurse lie in bed each night thinking that she is a good person, so good enough and deserving of the blessing of God that she would look down on the poor? The root is an evil so deceptively powerful and wicked that not one living thing on earth can resist it.

You are amazing, created in God’s image, and your individual uniqueness and creativity possess unlimited potential. Unfortunately, many of us will never experience the full potential of our individuality because we have turned our back on our true selves, the person we were created to be. We have sold ourselves out by trying to be someone we are not. Have you fallen for the oldest trick in the book and tried to become your own god?

In this chapter we’ll focus on how our *I am* factor is converted to an *I am imposter* and how that new identity will lead to self-destruction.
How does someone who’s been created in the eternal, glorious image of God turn into a derelict, a drug addict, or a self-centered, deceitful person? Why do people with the potential to change the world end up failing at everything but destruction? How does a person turn the amazing creation of God into something from the pit of hell? Self-destruction!

Satan’s Number One Weapon

One of my first speaking engagements in youth ministry was in Philadelphia. The day before I spoke, I read about a huge flea market being held in the parking lot outside the Veterans Stadium where the Philadelphia Eagles played at the time. My imagination drew a picture of a different kind of flea market, one where everything was free . . .

Hundreds of booths surround the stadium, and cars have come from all over Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and upstate New York. Traffic is jammed with pickup trucks, semis, and SUVs. People are filling their vehicles as fast as they can grab stuff.

On top of the stadium, the devil sits, laughing at his flea market. He has a panoramic view of it all as the people grab everything. His demons are giving away packages of disease, booklets on suicide, boxes and boxes of porn, murder, and adultery.

As the devil stands on the edge of the stadium, pointing over the parking lot, he sneers and says, “Just look at all these fools, they actually think this stuff is going to make them happy. Little do they know that it’s gonna destroy them. They have seen what this stuff does to people, but they are dumb enough to believe that it won’t happen to them.”

Satan runs flea markets everywhere—in alleys, in crack houses, in your home through your computer. And some of
his “merchandise” is disguised as things we think are good, like making a lot of money, or succeeding in our job, or even fighting for the rights of others.

How does the devil get people to destroy themselves? Satan can’t make anybody destroy their life, he can only deceive them into sin. His biggest weapon comes in two parts. I’ll deal with the first one in this chapter and the second in chapter 6.

Before we get to that, though, let’s talk about the reality of the devil. Some people may claim they don’t believe in the devil, but they sure know evil when they see it. One night my wife and I took our kids to the movies. Just before the movie began, they showed previews of the new exorcist movie. This new movie took Creepy Freaky Scary to another level. The possessed girl’s fingers snapped sideways, she crawled on the ceiling and howled like an animal. Of course, there was blood everywhere. The hair on my arms stood up, and as soon as the preview ended, someone in the front row yelled out, “JESUS!” The entire crowd started laughing, the kind of laughter that acknowledges that something good needed to replace the evil that had filled the theater—an evil that could be felt.

Satan is evil personified. He’s the mastermind of murder and rape. He’s the designer of child molestation and abuse. He’s the one who motivates and inspires the plans of a serial killer. The devil is the instigator of every evil and perverted act. He can’t create anything, but he perverts what God has created for good.

A major deceptive device of Satan’s diabolical plan is to get us to destroy God’s image in us. Satan hates God and everything He stands for. Satan once was one of God’s most beautiful angels until he rebelled against God and was kicked out of heaven. Pride and ambition can’t exist in heaven, where all things are holy and perfect like God, so Satan and his pride fell from God’s presence and a third of the angels fell with...
him. Those fallen angels became demons. Ever since that day, Satan has been working overtime to destroy God’s most beloved creation: people. It makes perfect sense that since he can’t destroy God, he attacks the next best thing: those made in God’s image with the intent to remind the world of the greatness and goodness of God. That’s what you represent. Whether you know it or like it, because you were created for good, you are a target of evil.

Remember, Satan can’t destroy you without your participation. At some point you must work with him in your self-destruction before he can change what God created you to have and be. In order to turn you from your amazing individual and uniquely created self as God intended into a creature eating spiritual garbage, Satan needs your approval. But how does he get it? What is Satan’s number one weapon? It comes in two parts, the second to be covered in chapter 6.

Satan’s Weapon, Part One: Becoming Your Own God

When God created you in His image, He gave you the awareness of your individual uniqueness. He gave you a creative mind and the freedom to be creative and to recognize creativity. He created you to walk in unity with the original intent of His image. He designed you to enjoy His love and majesty, as long as you live consistent with His plan for your life. You are intended to fulfill the uniqueness and creativity of your individual design.

Included in that design is the freedom to choose to obey God, and this is what Satan takes advantage of: your freedom of choice. He wants to rob you of your individual identity. Satan knows you were made with an active spiritual and physical ability to reflect the glory of God, like a mirror. He’s aware of the living nature of God’s image in you. He knows
that if he can get you disconnected from depending on God, he can redirect your mind any way he wants. He can influence your passion and your efforts to glorify *yourself* instead of God. This is all an attempt to redefine who you are.

Satan knows self-glorification is the fastest and most direct path to self-destruction, because it is what destroyed him. The devil wants you to think that you can do what you want and, therefore, you can be like God—in control of your own life and independent of Him.

In Genesis 3, Satan slid over to Eve and said, “Hey girl, what’s your name?”

Flinging her hair back, she said, “Eve.”

“Did God really say you couldn’t eat from every tree in the garden? C’mon, girl, you don’t believe that, do you? You won’t die, but you will be like God, knowing good and evil on your own.”

Convincing you that you can be like God and make decisions on your own without God’s direction and help is part one of Satan’s number one weapon. He wants you to think that you don’t need the Great I AM, that you can be your own I AM, but you’ll just end up an I AM imposter.

**The I Am Imposter**

Satan’s plan is to turn God’s image in you against God Himself by turning you into an I AM imposter. An I AM imposter is someone who has become his or her own god. Once the devil tricks you into changing your identity to be your own god, you’ll start to think you can do fine without God, and that’ll be the beginning of your self-destruction.

The very strengths of your God image will be directed at serving yourself, and you’ll implode. Since you’re now an I AM

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Miles McPherson, *God in the Mirror*

imposter, the devil will entice you to think you can run your life on your own terms and do whatever you feel like doing. You determine right and wrong, not anyone else. Not even God. Satan whispers in your ear, “You don’t need to be bound by the Bible. You don’t need to listen to that preacher. You don’t need to go to church or pray. Who needs all that? Since you are now Mr. Big Stuff, you’re just fine on your own. You’ve got everything under control.”

I used to think that I could use drugs and that it would not negatively affect or destroy me like it did others. Then during a physical with the San Diego Chargers, the doctor looked in my nose and asked me if I had been using cocaine. How could he know that? My heart started pounding in my chest, and I thought I was going to get cut that day. The doc knew I was using because the cocaine had eaten away at the inside of my nose.

Your sin will always find you out. If you think that you can beat the devil at his own game, he’s got you fooled. There is no way you can abuse what God has given you and not pay a price.

**Proving Your Significance**

Once you have adopted Satan’s identity for yourself apart from God, you have to validate that identity by proving your value and importance. You become chained to earning acceptance and approval, always working to be something, to make something of yourself. The devil will be right in your face challenging your identity, like he challenged Jesus by demanding He prove Himself in Matthew 4: “If you’re the Son of God, prove it! Do this, if you are the Son of God, do that.” The devil will confront you in the same way. “If you’re cool, wear this! If you’re a player, sleep with her! If you’ve got
money, buy that! If you’re so smart, brag about your grades! If you’re cute, wiggle the jiggle and show it off!”

You could spend a lot of years manipulating people or fooling yourself into being a little god, an I Am imposter, whatever he has convinced you to be. What a waste of time. Would you agree that Satan has been successful in wearing you out trying to prove yourself, to be someone that God never intended you to be? I know people who spend their entire lives trying to fulfill someone else’s vision or expectations for their lives, when in fact they would have been so much more fulfilled sticking to God’s plan for them.

If you fall for his game, it could land you in jail, a rehab center, divorce court, bankruptcy court, a garbage can, or sleeping in doorways. Satan can drive you crazy and run you through a maze of failure, and then one day you’ll die having missed the biggest opportunity you ever had, which was fulfilling the unlimited potential of reflecting God’s image to the world.

Head Game

There was a lady who shopped at a certain grocery store where the owner had a parrot. Every time the lady passed the parrot in its cage, it squawked, “Stupid lady! Stupid lady!” The first time she heard the parrot, she ignored it. But then later at the exit the parrot squawked at her again, “Stupid lady! Stupid lady!” This happened every week, so after about three trips to the grocery store she approached the manager and told him what the parrot said to her.

“He always calls out, ‘Stupid lady, stupid lady’ when he sees me!” she complained.

Flustered and embarrassed, the manager apologized for the behavior of the parrot and assured her it would not call her stupid again.
A week later the woman went to buy her groceries, thinking, “That parrot better not call me stupid lady, he better not call me stupid lady.” While she shopped, she thought, “He better not call me stupid lady, he better not call me stupid lady.” When she approached the cash register, she kept telling herself, “He better not call me stupid lady. He better not call me stupid lady.” She paid for her groceries, thinking, “He better not call me stupid lady.” She couldn’t get “Stupid lady! Stupid lady!” out of her head. She was a nervous wreck by the time she was ready to leave the store. The parrot sat in its cage casually watching her, and as she got closer and closer, the parrot just stared at her. She got right up to the cage and she looked at the parrot, and the parrot looked at her and said, “You know!”

The devil can get into your head so deep that you’ll be convinced you’re a failure, a loser, stupid, or whatever name or curse he has attached to your new godless identity. How deep has Satan gotten into your head? What lies about yourself have enslaved you and prevented you from becoming the unique and marvelous person God created you to be?

**Lie or Truth**

Here’s a comparison between your I AM factor and the characteristics God intended for your identity, and those associated with an I AM imposter identity. God intended for you to rest in who He made you to be. Satan’s identity will result in nothing but restlessness and unnecessary striving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God’s truth to His image bearers:</th>
<th>The devil’s lies to everyone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You’re My <em>success.</em> (Josh. 1:8)</td>
<td>You’re a failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re My <em>winner.</em> (Phil. 3:13–14)</td>
<td>You’re a loser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re <em>unique</em> in My family. (Ps. 139:12–14)</td>
<td>You’re better than others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Individuality Unique

**God's truth to His image bearers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You're filled with My promises. (Heb. 6:12)</th>
<th>You can do all things through Me. (Phil. 4:13)</th>
<th>I am the Lord who heals you. (Ps. 103:3)</th>
<th>You are born for “such a time as this.” And will long enjoy the work of your hands. (Isa. 65:22)</th>
<th>Everything under heaven is Mine. (Job 41:11)</th>
<th>You’re loved with an everlasting love. (Jer. 31:3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**The devil's lies to everyone:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You're hopeless.</th>
<th>You can't do anything right.</th>
<th>You'll always be weak and sick.</th>
<th>You don’t get the breaks others do.</th>
<th>I can give you the world!</th>
<th>Nobody loves you.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

My prayer is that God opens your eyes and reveals to you who you are and where your life is going so you will not allow it to be destroyed by Satan’s lies.