

# Unit 5



## Knowing Your Place in God's World

*Seeing Yourself Through The Designer's Eyes*

### TRUTH

#### by memory – Romans 5:6-8 (ESV)

*"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – <sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

#### in Bible –

The first four units of this section of *The Journey* have laid the foundation of a biblical worldview of our place in God's world. First, you learned that the debate about origins between science and the Bible is actually a debate of philosophical assumptions – whether the origin of the universe must have a natural or supernatural explanation. But Christians contend that scientific investigation actually supports the Bible's description of a universe that is supernaturally, intelligently and purposefully designed.

Last week you saw that God designed humanity with a special purpose. He made us in His image and likeness, a design that makes us capable of enjoying His fellowship and exercising dominion over His world. Our design places us at the height of the glory of creation in His eyes, and so you, along with all people, are marvelously significant to Him.

Let's now build on this foundation by beginning to look at the implications of being intrinsically valuable to God. This week, you will deal with the issue of self-image: If we are sinful people, but still bear His image, how should we think of ourselves? Remember to concentrate on applying the **in Bible** passages to your life in specific ways and to use the **5 Targets of Prayer**.

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**Psalm 8** – Once again, read David’s meditation on God’s majesty. Try to think David’s thoughts along with him as he ponders his place in the universe.

Spend a few moments meditating on verse 4. Read it aloud to yourself several times and try to imagine the power of the question in David’s heart. Think of how small he felt when he looked at the heavens. Then think about the answer that comes in verse 5 and following. How did David see his place in the grand scheme of God’s world? What was his own self-image?

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Based on this passage, how should you think of yourself? Explain your answer.

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Compare what you wrote above with what you actually think of your self. Is there a difference? Explain why that is.

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**Romans 5:5-11; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31** – The passage in Romans shows Christians the extent of the love God bestows specially on them. Both passages also show that God does not judge a person’s worth according to the same standards that people do.

Consider both of these passages and ask yourself these two questions: What does God think of me, and how does He judge my worth? Write your answer below.

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## to summarize –

A universal truth about human nature is that the thoughts we dwell on will inevitably influence our emotions and behavior. Of course, God understands this better than ourselves. That is why He commands us to meditate, that is, to focus our thoughts on those things that will train our emotions and life habits in a way that enhances our communion with Him. By meditating on His law we awaken the desire for obedience and learn to live for His pleasure. By meditating on His promises we arouse hope in His salvation and learn to live in light of our destiny. By meditating on all He reveals about Himself and His universe we stir up awe and wonder, and we learn to live with confidence in our place in His world. Therefore, it is vital for your spiritual growth that you train your mind to think rightly about God, His creation and His purpose for your life. As Paul said, "*...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*"

All of what was just said applies to what you think about yourself, your our self-image. Scripture tells us that we should not think too highly of ourselves, but that we should "*...think with sober judgment...*" (Romans 12:3). This means we should take care to appraise our significance and value as God does. You see, when we think wrongly about our significance – either too high or too low – our emotions and behavior will follow these thoughts at the cost of our communion with God and usefulness to His kingdom. In short, when your self-image doesn't conform to what God thinks of you, your spiritual growth and satisfaction in Christ seriously suffers.

Now, let's have a reality check. Everyone struggles to have a proper self-image, some more frequently and severely than others. Why do we struggle? The root cause is our sinful nature which leaves us susceptible to the emotional pain of living in a broken world. Because of sin, we all wrestle with different degrees of harmful thoughts - secret fears, anxiety, worry, jealousy, resentment, unfulfilled desires and despair. Again, the root cause is sin, but the immediate cause of a wrong self-image is the improper assessment of your worth that is communicated to you by those who are most important to you. It has been said that, "I'm not who *I think* I am, and I'm not who *you think* I am. I am who *I think you think* I am." Like it or not, those who mean the most to you will most significantly shape your assessment of your own worth. The children's rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," is a weak defense, especially against hurtful words that come from the most influential people in our lives – parents, peers and our spouses. And to the degree that these people buy into the world's system of assessing your worth, to that degree you will struggle with a low assessment of your personal value and self-image.

The world's standard for assessing a person's worth is based on a few key attributes – beauty, brains, abilities and buying power. This assessment is not necessarily malicious. Often it is unconscious, and

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people may even try to “outgrow” it. Nevertheless, it’s a pattern of thought for assessing worth that we all learn at a young age and find difficulty in throwing off. How attractive is that person? How smart is that person? How skilled is that person (athletics, music, academics, business, etc)? How wealthy is that person? This system is based on externals and performance. When internalized (How attractive, smart, skilled or wealthy am I?), it creates insecurity that can drive over-achievers and under-achievers alike. It can cause us to become obsessed with promoting our external “image”, while our internal self-image shrivels. Worst of all, our sense of God’s unconditional acceptance and our joy in Him wastes away like autumn leaves.

Is there a solution? How can we develop a proper self-image if our thinking is subject to such a system of assessment? Ironically, the answer the world commonly offers is, “Look inside yourself. Discover your own inner beauty and value.” But this is only half an answer. True, there is intrinsic worth in every person, but we must look *outside* ourselves, to God, to discover it. In truth, to the degree that you understand and accept God’s assessment of your worth, and to the degree that God’s acceptance is more important to you than any others’, to that degree you will be able to overcome an improper self-image. How is that to be done? – by meditating on Scriptures that reveal how God assesses your worth.

Recall David’s meditations in Psalm 8? He is struck by how grand the heavens are. They are mysterious, bright and lofty (v 3). It’s enough to make him question his own significance. Why would God bother with such a small creature as himself (v 4)? But he is reminded that God designed humanity in His own image and likeness (including himself, including you!) as the climactic, crowning achievement of creation. He remembers that God crowned humanity with glory and honor (v 5), and commissioned them to rule over the works of His hands (v 6-8). God does not crown and commission those who are least qualified. He chooses those whom He created to be best qualified. Such is God’s assessment of your worth. As this realization washes over David’s soul, he is drawn again to worship with awe, *"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"*(v 9).

God does not assess your worth based on worldly standards of beauty, achievement or status. Paul reminds the Corinthians of this very fact, *"...not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth."*(1 Corinthians 1:26). These things have nothing to do with your value to God, because He assesses your worth based on the simple fact that you are wonderfully designed in His image to reflect His glory. Even in a completely sinful state – weak, ungodly, with no righteousness to commend you – God chose to love you and to redeem you with the ultimate price because your design makes you of such worth to Him. *"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*(Romans 5:6-8).

Is this good enough for you? Can you accept His assessment of your worth as the basis of your self-image? Is His unconditional acceptance more important to you than the acceptance of others? If so, then developing a healthy self-image becomes a matter of slowly conforming your thinking to Scripture, rather than to the world's standard. It takes time, but you can learn to think of yourself as God thinks of you. Use Psalm 8, Psalm 139, Romans 5 or other passages to meditate on God's assessment of your worth and His unconditional acceptance. This will help you to think and feel and behave like a worthwhile, significant and beloved child of God who understands his/her place in God's world. Memorizing key passages may help you to meditate during emotionally challenging times. Remember that developing a healthy self-image is an important element of your spiritual journey. It puts you in a position to more fully enjoy your walk with God and helps you become a more useful agent of His kingdom.

**online –**

Remember to visit [www.perimeter.org/discipleshipcurriculum](http://www.perimeter.org/discipleshipcurriculum) for this week's downloadable audio, video, or print resources.

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## EQUIPPING

Memorize the 12 Old Testament Minor Prophets. In the past few weeks, you've seen how a far-fetched story can be used as a memory aide. Perhaps you may like to come up with one of your own to help you memorize the Minor Prophets. After this week you should be able to recite all 66 books of the Bible in your group meeting.

Do you think about people using the world's system of assessment? Do you struggle not to evaluate others this way? Explain why or why not.

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Do you think of yourself according to others' assessment of you? Who's assessment of you is most difficult for you to deal with?

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At any given moment, what do you think God thinks about you? Do you tend to rest in His acceptance, or do you tend to work to earn it? Explain.

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