

Daddy's *Delight*



Embracing
Your
DIVINE
DESIGN

KARIA BUNTING

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Chapter

1

Your Divine Design



GOD'S PICASSO

*H*ave you ever seen something so beautiful that it almost takes your breath away? Last year my family went to Africa. After deboarding the plane, we rode in Jeeps to the compound where we would be staying. The heart of the people reached out to greet us as we drove down the narrow pathway toward the inland. I had never before seen greener trees, denser forests, redder dirt, or clearer streams. The countryside exuded exquisite beauty. If you had been sitting next to me on that bumpy, safari-like ride, every few minutes you could have heard me quietly exhale, “Oh, my goodness,” as I observed the untouched beauty of God’s creative finger. In fashioning the continent of Africa, God has truly created a masterpiece.

As I continued to contemplate God’s creative genius, I turned my attention to His greatest creation—human beings. I couldn’t help but wonder at the marvelous design with which He made us. You and I reflect the beautiful labor of God’s love. When I look at my life, I see

the hand of God's intricate blueprint at work. He has gifted every one of us in an exceptional way that enables us to excel in our own creativity.

By now you have probably discovered a certain talent that sets you apart from the rest; others recognize your God-given gift as well. If you enjoy cooking, perhaps your kitchen embodies the cradle of creativity. Nobody can beat your fried apples, chicken salad, crab cakes, homemade rolls, greens, or sweet potato pie. The sensual scent of your delightful delicacies mesmerizes anyone blessed to drop by for a visit. When you place that much-anticipated final touch on your special meal, you whisper, "Ah . . . that's good." Your table has become a culinary masterpiece.

Yes, every one of us has been graciously blessed by our Creator. Knowing this should give us pause to reflect on God's excellent design and marvel at His goodness. Scripture proclaims to us who we are, "*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10). The Greek word "workmanship" has the same root as the English word "poem." It refers to a creation of some sort, a work of art; a masterstroke of brilliance.

In the mind of God, you are a creation far greater than Leonardo da Vinci's striking portrait *Mona Lisa* or Maya Angelou's insightful poem *Phenomenal Woman*. You are a masterwork more lovely than the Eiffel Tower of Paris and Rotterdam's Swan Bridge. You are more stunning than the Alps of Switzerland and stronger than the glaciers of the Antarctic. When the wind adorns your hair, the majestic plains of Africa pale in comparison to your beauty. The Grand Canyon lacks the depth to search your soul. You are a crowning creation; you are God's Picasso. When God made you, He created a masterpiece and declared, "Ah, that's good."

YOUR NAME IS VICTORY

For a number of reasons, maybe you don't feel like a work of art on this particular day. In your opinion you're either too skinny or too

fat. You may have PMS symptoms that are causing you to be bloated and grouchy. At this moment you might just feel like pulling off every piece of clothing you're wearing because you are having the biggest hot flash this side of heaven! Maybe you are in your ninth month of pregnancy, feeling like an overinflated balloon with nowhere to turn for comfort. Nevertheless, in whatever way you describe yourself, in God's eyes you still reflect His greatest creation.

As a single person, did you ever have to endure the experience of someone else's wedding celebration at a time when you were longing for a mate? You probably sat there with a smile on your face while silently your heart was aching. In situations like that, it's easy to feel like you are nothing special. But you are. Maybe your husband or boyfriend cheated on you and now you are wondering why you weren't good enough. You were. Maybe that costly mistake you made makes you feel worthless. You are still a masterpiece. Maybe you were abused and nobody else knows about it. You think, *If I am such a masterpiece, how could that have happened? I might be a torn work of art, but never the real thing.* Know that you are precious to God. He delights in you. You are His work of genius.

Whatever your state of mind may be, God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. He wants to bless you, redeem you, and heal you. In fact, your heavenly Father has planned a lifetime of good things for you to do. To make sure that you accomplish them, He will orchestrate the events of your life so that you will use everything you have experienced for His glory. For this reason, it is important that you recognize how valuable you are to God. He wants you to listen to what He is saying to you through your daily trials. Reach out to Him for answers that will transform and improve your life. He is reaching out to you.

But you say, "What about how I feel?" You must understand that your feelings are not reliable and they don't always reflect the truth. Only the Word of God is truth—it is dependable and trustworthy—and it never changes. Have you ever felt one way about something and, after you got more information, you reacted in a completely different

way? A shift in circumstances can cause a change in your perception about a given situation. Even though you can't always depend on them, the Lord understands that your emotions can sometimes get the best of you. Scripture even tells us that Jesus is touched by our feelings: *"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus knows how you feel because He shared those same feelings. But, as the Son of God, He has the power to help you defeat everything that hinders you from moving forward. He wants you to move past your emotions and rely on Him so that you can see your circumstances in a different light—the light of His loving concern. It's not about the way that you feel about a problem; it's your faith in Jesus' power that will conquer every challenge. Faith will allow you to depend on His strength to overcome those stubborn feelings that would keep you stuck in the past. Jesus wants you to live a victorious life. Always have these words on your lips and remember to say of our Lord, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13).

The truth of the matter is, even when you feel like God doesn't love you, He does. His love is a fact. His love for you is true—regardless of what you are going through. Love Him back. He'll show you who He is and how much He really does care. Even during the times when you might want to quit because you feel like you are too far behind, finish the race. You will win.

You will be able to echo the words to Jonathan Nelson's song "My Name is Victory":³

I've got evidence
I've got confidence
I'm a conqueror
I know that I win
I know who I am
God wrote it in His plan for me
MY NAME IS VICTORY!

As a believer in Christ, victory belongs to you. The good works you are going to perform are already ordained for you. Breathe in and step out. Do what God tells you to do and He will do the rest. Remember, your name is "Victory."

GOD'S SPITTING IMAGE

My youngest daughter, Kimberly, looks just like her father. She has his eyes and, definitely, his nose. She also has a big smile and a petite face. If you were to look at her and then at him, you would know that she is his daughter. Here in Texas they would say, "He spit 'er out, didn't he?" She is the spitting image of her daddy.

In a comparable way, God created His children to look like Him. When the conversation ensued in the boardroom of heaven, God the Father was talking to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He said, "*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth*" (Genesis 1:26). This Scripture gives us insight into how we resemble our Creator. Similar to the way in which He rules heaven, God gave His offspring the ability to rule the earth.

When God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit agreed to the plan, God created Adam from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). This is an important distinction to understand. Human flesh is different from the flesh of animals. Scripture reveals this truth in 1 Corinthians 15:39, as it describes the makeup of God's creatures, "*All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.*" From this verse we are assured that neither you nor I evolved from an ape. We are not human animals. We are different from all other living beings. We are created by God, for God. In urban street jargon, every one of us is God's "Mini-Me."

Listen to how I envision God creating woman. Eve waited silently in Adam's side. Suddenly, God caused her covering to slumber. When

His firm tug removed her from her waiting place, God had a magnificent design in mind. He carefully built her, lovingly forming her gentle shape.

The wedding was beautiful. Officiated and witnessed by the Trinity of God, the question was put forth, "Who gives this woman to be lawfully wedded to this man?" The response, "I do." Then God presented Eve to her husband. Adam's vows echoed throughout the Garden: "*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*" (Genesis 2:23). God stepped back. She was Adam's woman.

In all of its magnificent array, the Garden was perfect. It was time for the Father's toast. What would God's blessing be? God proudly smiled at His newlyweds and commanded them to, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it*" (Genesis 1:28).

Just like Eve, at some point in time we all find ourselves in our waiting place. The message from heaven to every woman is: wait on. At the proper time, when your environment is ready and you have completed your development, you will feel God's firm tug move you to a different place. You will find yourself established in your appointed purpose.

A GROUND FLOOR OPPORTUNITY

New organizations often offer ground floor opportunities. This means when individuals join a company at its beginning, their work helps to set the stage for what the company eventually becomes. Every employee has an integral part to play because the outcome of the business is relying on the contributions of the workers. If they are successful, the company is successful. However, if they fail to contribute positively, the company fails.

Adam and Eve had a ground floor opportunity. In His powerful words of blessing, God gave them the authority to conquer the world. They were groomed for success. They could reproduce God's image and expand their control through numbers. As such, the future of humanity was in their hands.

You might say, “That was Adam and Eve, but what about me?” Well, I have good news for you. God has not rescinded His decree. The power and authority God gave to Adam and Eve is passed on to you and me. With the power you have been delegated, you have the authority to be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth with as many children as God gives you (either biologically or spiritually) and subdue your world. In essence, you have a ground floor opportunity to make of your life whatever God planned for you.

Your good works are waiting for you. You can dominate what you see within your sphere of influence. And when you doubt yourself, remember these reassuring words: if God is for you, no one can effectively be against you. You are equipped to be victorious. You have been blessed to succeed. God has made Himself available to you so that you can ultimately reign triumphant.

So the question then becomes: what more do you need? You may say, “I need more money.” But when God blessed Adam and Eve, they had no money. They had the covering of God’s Word—and His Word is faithful and true. That’s all they needed. God’s Word in your life is all that you need. It is alive, and it will accomplish what God sent it to do. If God says do something, do it. You don’t have to fear or feel inadequate. He will make it happen. He will even straighten out your mess. He is sufficient for you.

You might also say, “I need more time.” You have the same amount of time in a day that Adam and Eve had. If you say, “I can’t,” God says you can. When you say, “I’m tired,” God has energy for you. If you happen to say, “I’m weary. Life has been hard,” God would say, “Yes, but it is not over.” That means there is something left for you to do. Instead of relying on your abilities, the more productive thing to do is develop an exclusive dependence on God’s powerful Word to sustain you. He will renew and direct you. You can do it because God wants you to do it. No more excuses. It’s time to subdue your world.

A BABE IN THE WOODS

One day when I needed to make a call, my cell phone wasn't handy. So I picked up my husband's phone instead. When I looked at the screen, it had recorded a missed call from someone named "A Babe." My brow furrowed. "Who is this, George?" I asked. He smiled wickedly. "A Babe," he responded. "What Babe?" I asked. He proceeded to make up this wild story about some woman who insisted that he put her number in his phone.

By now, the children had gathered to listen. You have to understand, I am the ultimate believer. If he says something, I believe it. So I was standing there, looking at him with a perplexed expression on my face, as if to say, "What???" Finally, he couldn't hold it in any longer. He bent over laughing, and the kids did too. Apparently, I was the only one who didn't get the joke. "What are you laughing about?" I asked. "Karia, that's your number. You are "A Babe," he explained. "Oh," I responded. "Okay." They couldn't stop laughing. Evidently the kids knew already. The joke was on me! I'm glad he still thinks of me as "a babe" after twenty-six years!

Eve was "a babe" in the woods. She was in a pleasant environment and couldn't have asked for anything more. God set her up. She had a beautiful home—the Garden of Eden—no less. She had a wonderful husband who loved her. She had a bright future. But she also had a dark side; she didn't really trust God. She questioned His heart and His Word. Her trust issue soon turned into disobedience. Unfortunately, that disobedience would become the demise of her world as she knew it.

Throughout the Garden, there were animals everywhere. One of them talked to her. It was Satan preying on her in the form of a serpent, but Eve didn't recognize him as a threat. I wonder how he sounded. Was his voice gentle and smooth, or rough and harsh? Was it sweet like ice cream, or deep and sinister? Did he imitate God's voice when he spoke? More than likely, he sounded like whatever would be most enticing to Eve.

Some of us have Eve's problem; we don't fully trust what God is

saying to us. We know that He has clearly spoken to us about something that will greatly affect our lives, but the choice is ours to make between God's provision and protection and Satan's deadly trap. If we choose to follow the wrong voice, we immediately become susceptible to harm. Please heed this word of caution. Having a lack of trust in God can put you in a dangerous situation, because it means that you are vulnerable to temptation from the enemy. He is ever ready to entice you away from the place of God's shelter and blessings. And when we don't obey God's voice, we put ourselves in a position to get seriously hurt.

How does Satan sound when he whispers in your ear? Does he sound like your boyfriend? Like a father figure? Like a trusted leader? You can avoid Eve's mistake by spending time with God and reading His Word. This is the process by which you build up your faith and trust in Him. You will learn to recognize when Satan is speaking and discern the difference between his deceptive prompts and God's voice of inspiration.

Jesus boldly proclaimed in John 10:27, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*" His words assure us that we have the ability to recognize His voice. Follow it with confidence. When you keep His Word deep in your heart, you won't have to doubt when God is speaking.

YOUR WONDERFUL PRESENT

Christmas is an amazing time in the Bunting household. Our family delights in such exciting time-honored traditions as our ceremonial tree topping. On Christmas Eve, amidst great fanfare, clapping, and hooting, one of our gleeful children gingerly climbs the shaky ladder. That fortunate child finally arrives at the crown of the tallest evergreen that could be found at the last minute under the cold outdoor tree sales tent.

After firmly placing the lighted star atop the single stalk pointing heavenward, he or she slowly descends to the accolades of relatives

cheering and calling out his or her name. Finally reaching the bottom rung, the happy sibling slowly surrenders the coveted spot to another as the debate arises about whose turn it will be next year.

Early the next morning of that glorious day, baked red apples stuffed with cinnamon are passed around on cherished Christmas plates—one per person. The family then gathers to enjoy a passionate Bible study led by my husband. Next comes the singing of nativity songs while bacon sizzles in the oven and bread rises on the countertop.

Soon leaves will be added to the dining room table where the family and friends who drop by for dinner will enjoy a nicely browned turkey, cornbread dressing, glazed ham, and the celebrated broccoli and cheese casserole that is served only on Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. A cornucopia of vegetables, salads, pies, and cakes also contribute their sumptuous delights.

Once devotions and Bible study are complete, the feature of the much-anticipated day is the interminable opening of gifts. On a rotating basis, each person opens one gift at a time. “Who’s that from? That’s from me!” Comments such as these can be heard as members of the family delightedly tear through the bright wrapping paper to see what gift offering from the heart awaits them.

Truly it is a blessed day from beginning to end. However, it doesn’t compare to the fun and festivities God has planned for our future. He has given us all the most precious present He has to offer—His heart. If you respond from your heart by loving Him, seeking Him, and worshipping Him, He slowly unwraps Himself for you. Your hearts connect. Suddenly, you find yourself in meadows of peace, tiptoeing through flowers of joy. As you savor the pleasure of His divine company, all will be well with your soul. You can rest assured that no matter what is going on around you, you are protected by your heavenly Daddy.

My sentiments reflect the abundance of God’s best for you. Every morning, His loving-kindness wakes you up. He whispers, “I love you” and you quickly respond, “I love you, too, Daddy.” The Spirit of God then reminds you, “I’m going to take care of you today. Don’t worry

about anything.” You smile and say, “Okay, Dad. I won’t.” Then He says, “Now, go get ’em, girl!”

Before you arise from your bed, God has already equipped you with grace and mercy. You have a new day and a new chance to be all He has called you to be. He holds nothing against you once you admit your wrongs. If you need anything, He’s right there. If you are hurt, He becomes your Healer. Your heavenly Father thinks about you day and night. He loves you so much.

King David recognized the significance of God’s love. He recalls, *“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty”* (Psalm 8:3–5). Right now, my sister, God is thinking about you. He gives you Himself. In Him you have all you need. Each and every day you can walk in the truth and knowledge that you are God’s delight.