

THE PERFECT YOU

A BLUEPRINT FOR IDENTITY

DR. CAROLINE LEAF



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This book is dedicated
to those Perfect You moments with . . .

My precious husband, Mac
My precious children,
Jessica, Dominique, Jeffrey, and Alexandria

You have shown me how to experience life and God
in a totally new way.
In fact, you have helped me see and understand life and God
from a whole new perspective.
You inspired this book.
You are . . . Perfect You.
You are mine.
I love you.

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Foreword

by Dr. Robert P. Turner

It is with the utmost gratitude and excitement that I endorse this new, remarkable work by Dr. Caroline Leaf. Over the course of my thirty-year career in clinical, academic, and research neurosciences I have longed for a tool to hold in my hand and incorporate into my life and the lives of my patients that thoroughly, accurately, and passionately brings cutting-edge, evidence-based neuroscientific research to practical, life-saving use and also melds together the spiritual, psychological, and physiological realms to help us choose love-based thinking—and keep it at the forefront of everything we do.

As we in allopathic healthcare finally transition out of a pharmacology-only era—where we’ve been stuck for nearly eighty years—Dr. Leaf has provided such a tool for everyday application to effect positive, love-motivated, life-giving changes in our minds *and* brains. Every statement and principle explained in this text is supported by current, sound, evidence-based neuroscience, and each chapter builds skillfully on the foundation of the previous one and is valuable for reading, reflection, and diligent application.

Dr. Leaf’s “Perfect You” philosophy builds on the wisdom of past generations of sound, experienced thinkers and boasts the utmost spiritual, scriptural, and scientific validation. Following

her philosophy leads directly to discover our own unique styles of thinking, speaking, and acting that our father God designed for our Perfect You. Dr. Leaf captures this perfectly in chapter 4: “We are his masterpieces, designed to reflect his glory into the world. We were created to bring heaven to earth.”

As a neuroscientist, I love chapter 5! Writing from thirty-plus years of study, research, and experience, Dr. Leaf helps us understand the anatomical and physiological underpinnings of our particular ways of thinking, feeling, and choosing. I appreciate how she weaves together three interrelated disciplines: neurospirituality, neuropsychology, and neurophysiology. The living and loving application of these disciplines truly allows us to begin to walk in the true freedom that God has lovingly in store for us.

The Unique Qualitative (UQ) Assessment Tool outlined in chapter 6 was an amazing exercise for me personally, and it has been skillfully designed to clearly characterize our uniqueness within the seven metacognitive modules. This is not a personality inventory or neuropsychological analysis; rather it is a noncondemning, non-judgmental tool to help each of us understand who we are—good and bad—and how our Father God wants us to experience the daily joys of his love as we learn how to become our Perfect You.

In chapter 8 Dr. Leaf clearly and carefully explains the “discomfort zones,” bringing to light an experience that perhaps all of us, as human beings, experience, and some of us struggle with more than others. God has designed us with warning systems or prompts, and when we are not flowing in his perfect will for our lives, discomfort results. If we do not recognize or if we choose to ignore the “discomfort” prompting, the result will be the progressive manifestation of dysfunction in us spiritually, psychologically, and physically. One begins to realize that at least 80 percent of current medical and psychiatric disorders are rooted in the spiritual realm. Understanding the discomfort zones and opening up to the loving promptings of the Holy Spirit will result in becoming the

Perfect You—experiencing “life on life’s terms” with the grace and peace God lovingly and freely gives us every moment.

The Perfect You will be a daily recommendation in my integrative neuroscience practice. Its revelatory principles—the culmination of Dr. Leaf’s thirty-plus years in the neurosciences—offer more hope for change and more help for true healthcare (not just disease management) than any other tool I’ve seen.

When *The Perfect You* program and its life-changing principles are faithfully applied on a daily basis, changes will take effect in our minds and our brains (our “mind-brain continuum”). Naturally resulting from these changes, our wholly interconnected body systems will gradually manifest healthy improvements—in our gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, immune, and other systems. Personally I have begun to experience these changes in my own life, and I am awed and privileged to begin to see these transformations in patients who implement these principles. As a neurologist and neuroscientist, I can easily demonstrate quantitative changes via analysis of patient EEGs. These analyses bear witness to the glorious changes God is effecting inside us!

I invite you to the reading and diligent application of *The Perfect You*. It promises to help you see the changes that so many of us long for on a daily basis.

Thank you, Dr. Leaf, for your painstaking and comprehensive research and study. You are helping us witness transformation throughout the *microcosm* of our brains and nervous systems as well as the *macrocosm* of the earth and all of her inhabitants, whom we are called to love and to serve.

Robert P. Turner, MD, MSCR
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Prologue

Who am I? Does anyone out there understand me? Am I merely the product of blind evolutionary forces or what Richard Dawkins calls a “stroke of dumb luck” in a material world?¹ Or do I have purpose and meaning, a unique part in a divine plan? Does anyone understand who I am, or who I am meant to be? Do I even understand me? Can I accept the way God has allowed me to be? Do I really accept the blueprint for identity that God has given me?

God does understand *you*. He has placed significance in you—your “Perfect You”—your unique way of thinking. The blueprint of your identity is a brilliant design that unlocks something you alone can do. As neuroscience shows us, every thought you think matters because it changes your brain! You create your unique reality and shape your brain with your thoughts. In this book you will discover the science behind your Perfect You by learning what it is, filling in a profile called the Unique Qualitative (UQ) Profile to understand the structure of your thinking, and practice applying it to your life with a series of fun and enlightening exercises that will take you to a whole new level.

Understanding how the Perfect You is structured is just the beginning, but once you start the process, you launch out into a

lifetime of lasting change! Development and growth is organic and ongoing. Your purpose is to live beyond yourself, but you can't share your Perfect You or shape your life according to someone else's Perfect You—because it's *your* blueprint for identity. Nor can you be your Perfect You if it's locked up. You can't find your value or your meaning or live in your purpose if you don't identify your blueprint and operate in your Perfect You.

God knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb (see Jer. 1:5). You are wired for love, because God is love (1 John 4:8). You are addicted to love because you are made in his image (Gen. 1:27). When he calls you, he calls you by name to a life of love (Matt. 4:18–22). Philosopher Keith Ward puts it this way:

The real world is a world of finite spirits, beings of value-saturated experience and creative purpose, existing within one supreme spirit of unrestricted consciousness and value. Human life is not a pointless flicker of awareness in an indifferent and finally decaying machine. It is a developing awareness by finite spirits (but unfortunately not always developing) of the wider consciousness and purpose of the supreme spirit within which they exist, and with which it is their inherent goal to unite in that blissful state of completed desire that is termed love.²

Many people long for and seek this blissful state in earthly things, yet it cannot exist apart from God, who is love. We have to see his image reflected in us if we truly want to understand our unique blueprint for identity. Science and Scripture both show you are uniquely designed to reflect his love into creation. But how can you reflect his glory if you cannot see it in you? Abraham and Daniel resolved to be the people God made them—both of these men operated in their Perfect You (Gen. 12–15; Daniel 6). Can you make the same resolution? Can you grow into your God-ordained self by unblocking your Perfect You?

Although you may not think you do, you actually know who you are! Your identity flows out of how you think, speak, and act,

no matter how much you try to suppress it. Research shows that as you think, you influence your genetic expression and build your distinctive interpretation into physical thoughts—thoughts that are different from everyone else's. You have been designed with a beautiful way of thinking, evident from infancy, that fits your remarkable and unequalled Perfect You. You have been given a divine piece of eternity (Eccles. 3:11). When you do try to suppress your identity, which happens when you react negatively to the circumstances of life, you step out of your Perfect You and create a toxic environment.

Yet you are not defined by where you are or where you have been but rather where *you will be*. Finding out who you are at your very core is a journey, and it can be an awe-inspiring one—depending on the attitude you adopt! The more you step into your Perfect You, the more wisdom you will develop, which will increase your capacity for accessing and living in God's love and reflecting that love to a world filled with pain and suffering. Stepping into your Perfect You makes you humble and not proud! As *New York Times* columnist David Brooks notes, humility is low self-preoccupation, not low self-esteem.³ Whatever you think about the most will grow! If you, your talents, and your problems are all you think about, you become your own idol—this is not only toxic to your health but also a form of pride. The universe does not revolve around any one person. You are designed to serve and love others, like the Messiah. Indeed, one of the best ways of overcoming a problem is to go out and give to others!

The choice to unlock your Perfect You and live out your blueprint for identity is yours. The more you unlock your Perfect You:

The more miracles you will activate in your life and the lives of the people around you.

The more intelligent you will become, since your Perfect You is tied to your intellect.

Prologue

The more your gifts, skills, and abilities will develop.

The more your relationships will improve.

The more your mental health will improve.

The more your physical health will improve.

The more you will find joy in life.

The more you will see others through the eyes of God.

The more humble you will become, because you will see God's
magnificence in you.

The more you will understand yourself and others.

The more you will desire to understand and help your neighbor.

The more you will celebrate others instead of envying them.

When people pursue an identity apart from God, it leads to confusion. The more you step into your Perfect You, the more you will understand the blueprint of your identity, your purpose, and your part in his kingdom. Socrates once said that the unexamined life is not worth living. This book will give you the tools to examine your thoughts and unlock your brilliant Perfect You. It will enable you to answer when Jesus calls you, *by name*, to participate in the great task of kingdom building. It will allow you to use and multiply the talents he has given you (Matt. 25:14–30), reflecting his glory, bearing his image, and bringing *heaven to earth*.

This, truly, is a life worth living!

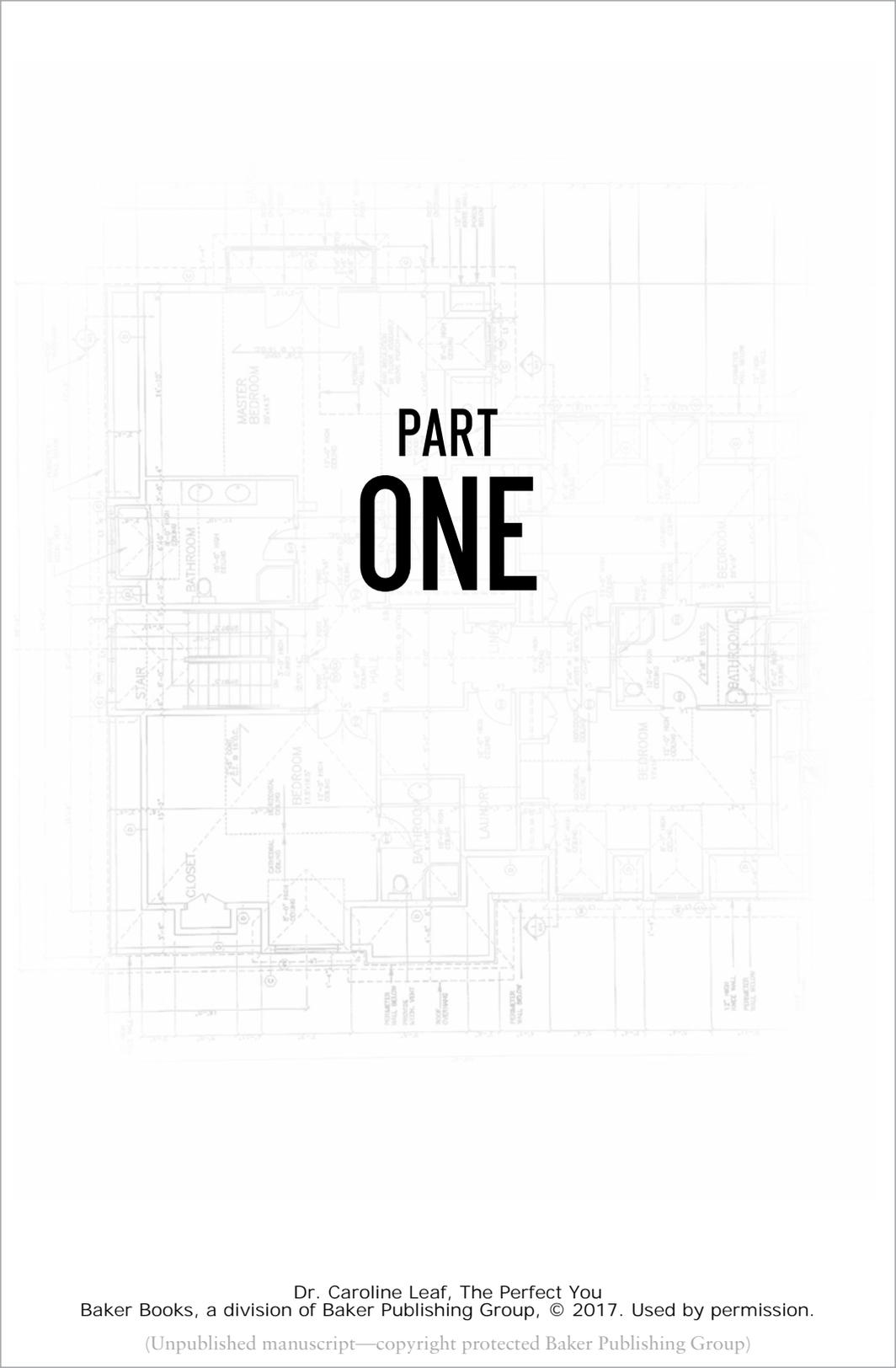
Acknowledgments

All my years of being in this field have given me the privilege of connecting directly and indirectly with so many people, and I acknowledge all of you, because you have shown me what the material of this book needed to express: the importance of your unique experiences and the importance of you. You have helped me understand the need for helping people find their Perfect You.

Jessica, my research assistant and daughter, you truly are a magnificent support and I acknowledge both our hours of discussions about this book as you listened to me working the concepts out aloud and your outstanding and honest editing. It is a privilege and pleasure working with you.

My precious family—Mac, Jessica, Dominique, Jeffrey, and Alexy—I acknowledge your endless love and support . . . there is nothing like it!

The Baker team: once again, I have been thrilled and blessed by your professional and loving support. You have become like family to me and play such a huge role in making my work accessible to so many in such an excellent way. Thank you, Chad, Mark, Lindsey, Patti, Erin, Dave, Karen, Colette, Eileen, and the rest of the team at Baker: you are truly amazing! I acknowledge you and thank you.

A detailed architectural floor plan of a house, oriented vertically. The plan includes a Master Bedroom (12'4" x 14'8"), a Bathroom (5'6" x 7'0"), a Stair, a Bedroom (12'0" x 14'8"), a Closet, a Bathroom (5'6" x 7'0"), a Bedroom (11'0" x 12'0"), a Bathroom (5'6" x 7'0"), a Laundry, a Bedroom (11'0" x 12'0"), a Bathroom (5'6" x 7'0"), and another Bedroom (11'0" x 12'0"). The plan also shows a central Hall, a Linen closet, and a Utility room. Dimensions and room labels are clearly marked throughout the drawing. The text 'PART ONE' is superimposed in the center in a large, bold, black font.

PART ONE

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1

The Big Picture

The inescapable nature of true man is that authenticity thrives independently of externality.

Jeffrey Leaf, writer

In a discussion one windy morning with my son about how literature inspires him and how he observes life, he said, “Mom, when I feel the wind beating against my face it makes me feel emotion I would not otherwise feel, and words start pouring through my mind; I literally move into another world. I am reminded of the inescapable passage of time.” However, he went on to say, quite correctly, “Mom, when you feel the wind, you think of the quantum action in the brain, of probabilities collapsing and metacognition and the physical impact of toxic choices like leaves falling off a tree. We are both wired so differently.”

This short conversation provides a good summation of thirty years of my research and the question that has baffled philosophers for years. Indeed, it underscores a question that is considered to

be one of the hardest problems of science: What is subjective, conscious experience? Why do we, as individual human beings, perceive reality in such different ways? How do we all have the same “colors” of life, to use an artist’s analogy, but paint such different pictures? My son and I each had what is known as a *qualé* during that conversation—or a conscious subjective and personal experience in reaction to a sensory incoming stimulation (the wind).¹ Our individual, unique responses were inspired and driven by our individual, unique designer blueprint: our Perfect You.

What Experience Feels Like

Experience—what “it” feels like—is anything but abstract. What we mean when we say that feeling the wind elicits an “experience” is that it does something to *us* in particular. It is an experience exclusive to us. We might feel one or several emotions intertwined within our memories as we perceive something as simple and as beautiful as the wind—for my son, specifically, watching the rustling leaves made him feel calm and peaceful, and it was a transcendent experience. For me, however, it was an analogy of the scientific process of detoxing the mind and hence the brain.

If healthy conscious experience is what it feels like to be in the Perfect You, then “what it feels like” for you means the specific set of associations you have previously made through the filter of your Perfect You. These associations—the thoughts, feelings, and emotions you have built into your mind—have been automatized into long-term memories by your thinking about them repeatedly over time, and the current stimulus interacting with these long-term memories brings them to your conscious awareness. This is what it means when we say “This is how *I* think, how *I* feel, how *I* choose—this is *my* thinking—this is how *I* am wired.” The memories activated by stimuli coming from life or your internal

thoughts, or both, and the set of emotional states associated with each of these memories is completely original and exclusive to you—your blueprint for identity.

So your Perfect You is like a filter, and when the filter is locked up by low self-esteem or toxic thinking, you are not free to be you. We have all been there: when we feel like there is a battle inside of us, like who we have become is fighting who we know, deep down, we really are. When we step out of our Perfect You, we will be in conflict and this will make us frustrated and unhappy, and even temporarily reduce our intelligence and potentially lead to mental ill health.

Our Perfect You operates—that is, it is unlocked—in environments of love. Love changes the physical nature around all 75–100 trillion cells of our bodies and gives us the courage to face and deal with blocks and locks of our Perfect You. When we learn to focus on our God, who is love, and what he says about us, we learn how to embrace our unique identity and discover who we truly are in him (1 John 4:8). We have, after all, his love, power, and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7)!

A Model of How We Think, Feel, and Choose

I have spent the past thirty years researching, developing, and expanding my theoretical and conceptual model to explain our “sound minds,” which I call the Geodesic Information Processing Model.² This model conceptualizes how we uniquely think, feel, and choose, through the filter of our Perfect You, and the causal effect this has on our brains and thus our behavior. More specifically, it traces the information-processing pathway from the input stage—which can be external through the five senses, or internal from memories, or both—to the output stage, a pathway that uses deliberate, *mindful* thinking. My theory underlies this book,

so I have included in it my updated version of the model (see pp. 84–85), using the quantum physics theories expanded by Henry Stapp to account for the mind-brain connection.³

Geodesic means a global and comprehensive approach to thinking and learning, which has an all-encompassing quantum nature that still accounts for individuality. This model contrasts with traditional behavioristic and cognitive approaches that are more classical in nature and limited and cannot account for the uniqueness of the Perfect You and the pivotal role of the individual's thinking, feeling, and choosing. Hence I have proposed a structure for a metaphysical conception of the mind-brain connection, including the uniqueness of the Perfect You.

In this geodesic model, the mind is divided into the nonconscious and conscious levels. The structure of the Perfect You resides within the nonconscious level and is described through the UQ profile in chapter 6 of this book. The model as a whole reflects the processing of information through the mindful, intentional thinking of the individual, which causally affects the structure of the brain. So each individual, with their unique interpretation of life, plays a pivotal role in effecting behavioral and emotional change in their own life as well as leaving a footprint of this change in the brain. This way of approaching cognitive neuroscience is in accordance with quantum physics. Not only do we direct our behavioral, emotional, and intellectual changes but we also create structural change in our brains and bodies as a result of our individualistic and complex thinking processes.

I describe the role of the nonconscious and conscious levels of the mind using quantum physics to explain the mind-brain interaction, as opposed to merely correlating cognitive activity with brain behavior. As scientists Henry Stapp and Jeffrey Schwartz note, quantum physics provides a way of analyzing the complex higher cortical functioning that is occurring between the mind and the brain. It is an effective way to highlight the impact of the Perfect You (our

individual thinking, feeling, and choosing) on physical and behavioral functioning, or what Stapp calls “psycho-physical functioning.”⁴

Mind Controls Brain

It is important to remember that our thinking changes the structure of our brains because our minds are separate from our brains. Your mind controls your brain. Your brain does not control your mind. You change your brain; your brain cannot just change itself. When you think, feel, and choose you are updating your experience, and this is reflected in structural and functional changes in your brain: you are both literally and figuratively building memories. Your brain responds to what you do, so if there is communication and behavioral and intellectual change, then the brain has been changed by the mind and this change is expressed through words and actions.

This way of thinking about the brain is relatively new in science. In the mid-eighties, when I was embarking on my postgraduate work, I often asked myself if the mind could change the brain. I observed the incredible progress of both the brain-injured patients in my practice and the disadvantaged and learning disabled children in schools I worked in who, despite their physical disabilities, achieved extraordinary results through their positive determination and hard work.

I have worked with patients with all manner of voice, language, speech, and learning disabilities; traumatic brain injury (TBI); cognitive and aphasia symptoms, post stroke and heart attack; cerebral palsy; autism; emotional issues; and trauma.⁵ My patients suffering from TBI significantly improved their cognitive, behavioral, academic, and intellectual performance after being exposed to the intentional mind techniques I had developed. Through using their minds, they were able to change the physical structure of their brains as evidenced in their behavioral changes. A consistent pattern of positive change began to arise among the patients and

clients I was working with, even the most challenging cases. Statistically, this improvement ranged from 35 to 75 percent as they practiced mindful self-regulatory awareness and deep, intentional thinking, repeatedly, over long periods of time. In fact, I spent twenty-five years working hands-on in very impoverished areas of South Africa in addition to my practice, which allowed me to work with both ends of the economic spectrum. I consistently saw cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes with those students and adults who *chose* to intentionally and deliberately use their minds in a very disciplined, consistent, and mindful way.

I will never forget the remarkable story of one of my patients, a sixteen-year-old girl who had a TBI as a result of a severe car accident. She had recently come out of a two-week coma and was operating around a fourth-grade level at school instead of a twelfth-grade level like her peers. Using the self-regulatory, mind-driven five-step learning process I had developed, I worked with this young lady on a one-on-one basis. She was determined to catch up with her peer group, and I believed she could achieve her previous levels of academic performance again. Within eight months the “miracle” happened: this young woman was able to graduate high school with her own class and went on to university. In fact, compared to before the accident, her IQ increased twenty points and her overall academic performance improved. (I have documented this case in my master’s thesis.⁶) This was highly unusual, as research showed the opposite was normally the case in TBI; a negative trend was turned into a positive trend through intentional mind work. Yet that is not the end of the story. The young woman’s emotional, self-evaluative, and self-monitoring skills also improved, even though they were indirectly treated during her clinical sessions, indicating that mind change includes intellectual and emotional changes. Indeed, as a Christian, I knew that she had control over her mind and could change the way she thought (see Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Phil. 4:6–8). Even the Greek meaning of *repentance* means “to change one’s *mind*”!

Your Brain Really Can Change

At that time back in the '80s, however, many scientists believed that a damaged brain could not change. Healthcare and therapy professionals like myself were taught to help their patients compensate for brain disabilities and mental ill health; total recovery was, for the most part, out of the question. Yet new brain imaging techniques such as PET and later MRI and fMRI scans started transforming the way we understood memory and cognition. These technological advances, which can observe a basic level of the brain live in action, have taught us—and are still teaching us—how different areas of the brain become metabolically active during various tasks and have enabled us to improve diagnosis and surgery and to prevent unnecessary surgery in the area of brain and body health. Some of my closest friends are neurosurgeons, and watching them in action is both humbling and inspiring.

In fact, one of the key breakthroughs to come from the development of brain imaging technology has been the discovery of *neuroplasticity*, which is the brain's ability to regrow in response to mind stimulation. Neuroplasticity, alongside *neurogenesis* (the birth of new neurons) and quantum physics, has given us a way to explain how the brain can change in response to mind-action, helping me to understand the results of my own research more deeply and certainly providing a great gift to science!

The Problem with Overemphasizing Scans

There is a danger, however, in seeing these scans as a reliable and detailed road map to human consciousness. As Schwartz points out,

Not even the most detailed fMRI gives us more than the physical basis of perception or awareness; it doesn't come close to explaining what it feels like *from the inside*. It doesn't explain the first person

feeling of red. How do we know that it is the same for different people? And why would studying brain mechanisms, even down to the molecular level, ever provide an answer to those questions? It is when you think about it a little peculiar to believe that when you have traced a clear causal chain between molecular events inside our skull and mental events, that you have explained them sufficiently, let alone explained the mind in its entirety. If nothing else, there is serious danger of falling into category error here ascribing to clusters of neurons properties that they do not possess—in this case, consciousness.⁷

We are not merely the “firing of our neurons on a colorful scan.” As in the discussion of the wind I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we each perceive reality in a way that is wonderfully unique to us. We may have the same kinds of neural structures and cells, the same set of brushes and colors, but we each have our own painting to create.

We need to be wary of what the Dana Foundation calls *neuro-reductionism*. Neuroreductionism is a symptom of the pervasive materialism that dominates our society today, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter 4. Essentially, materialists reduce explanations to physical material, like atoms of the firing neurons on a brain scan. In a recent research paper the Dana Foundation noted how many scientists succumb to this materialist reasoning and have

rushed to adopt new technologies for examining the physiological or anatomical correlates of behavior and thought. The most important contributions of MRI will be studies of the structure of the brain, not today’s conceptually flawed attempts to localize cognitive functions and consciousness. The key conceptual problem faced by those who would correlate cognitive processes with brain activity is their implicit assumption that the mind comprises separate modular parts that can be isolated and examined independently of each other. This premise assumes that the hypothetical cognitive processes produced by the brain interact linearly (one can simply

add or subtract one from another, as opposed to their being complex multiplicative functions of each other) and that they maintain their same properties when used in different tasks. For example, it assumes that a component of a reaction-time process (such as the time it takes to select a response) remains the same regardless of how many stimuli are simultaneously presented. This latter criterion is one of the most fragile of the assumptions underlying the current stampede of work seeking the locations in the brain of what I believe are more likely to be the result of highly interconnected neural mechanisms, none of which operate in complete isolation from other cerebral regions.⁸

These kinds of scientific explanations operate in isolation, while the universe is inherently interconnected—from the macro level to the subatomic level to the level of quantum waves of energy; this is evident throughout the natural world. Indeed, we see this interconnectedness in Scripture. In Ephesians 4:16, for instance, Paul notes how God “makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love” (NLT). We need each other!

Although functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has become an increasingly popular form of research in neuroscience, psychiatry, and psychology over the past twenty-five years, an eye-opening report from Johns Hopkins University calls the entire field into question. According to researchers:

More than 40,000 studies have been published using fMRI but the methods used in fMRI research can create the illusion of brain activity where there is none up to 70% of the time. Eklund, along with his colleagues in Sweden and the UK, Thomas Nichols, and Hans Knutsson, investigated the software programs commonly used to analyze fMRI data, and they found that the assumptions made by these programs lead to a high degree of false positives, up to 70% compared to the expected 5%. False positives are significant as

they can make it seem that a particular area of the brain is “lighting up” in response to stimuli, when in fact, nothing of the sort is occurring.⁹

These “false positives” can and have led to a number of erroneous claims that actually detract from the uniqueness of human thinking and responsibility. It essentially becomes a sad and confusing tale of “my brain made me do it.” The individual and unique experience is reduced to the firing of neurons or, to use the painting analogy, the painting is reduced to its individual colors and their chemical makeup.

There is no question that mental activity will have associated complex neural activity in the brain. The brain is, after all, the substrate through which the mind works. And the brain should be complex—we are made in the image of a complex God! However, there are limits on what can be learned, even with these wonderful new imaging devices, especially if experiments are based on the simplistic and reductionist hypothesis that cognitive modules can be isolated to specific regions of the brain with the assumption that those regions are producing that specific thinking behavior.

In fact, the Hopkins study was not the first to warn against uninhibited use of fMRIs in neuroscience. In 2009, researchers at Dartmouth University warned of the dangers of the false-positive effect. During an experiment they placed a dead Atlantic salmon into the fMRI and “showed it a series of photographs depicting human individuals in social situations.” The data produced by the imaging technology made it appear as though “a dead salmon perceiving humans can tell their emotional state.”¹⁰ If an fMRI can show a dead salmon as able to read human emotions, we most certainly need to question this technology as the “proof” that free will and consciousness are nice but sad illusions. It is more likely that mind activity represents an indivisible, entangled entity that cannot be broken up into its physical parts.

Consequently, I have chosen to move away from neuroreductionism to a more integrated cognitive and metacognitive behavioral approach. I evaluate the language, intellectual, behavioral, academic, and emotional changes before and after deliberate and mindful thought intervention using techniques I developed during my thirty years of research and practice.

The Power of Choice

The most important facet of all my research and practice, however, is individual *choice*. The moment people recognize the power of their minds—the individuality of their thinking and how they have control over their lives—they are truly able to transform their world. When people see themselves the way God sees them, as his wonderful works and particular reflections of his image, then they see what is inside of them and perceive the universe in a different way (Ps. 139:14). Each of us is meant to bear his glory in our own unique way—we all have a beautiful way of stewarding eternity (Eccles. 3:11; Gen. 1–2). True self-awareness comes from recognizing the Perfect You—*the true you*. It changes you from the inside out. You are unlocked. This is so much more than “finding your purpose.” It is about finding yourself.

We all want to know who God is. We reflect his image. The world will lose out if you do not operate in your Perfect You: you are a specific part of his reflection, the missing piece that brings a unique perspective and hope to the world. There is no one like you, which means there is something you can do that no one else can do. Because of your Perfect You, your experience of life will enhance mine. When you are not you, we all miss out on knowing God better, because you reflect his image in a unique and beautiful way!

Only you can be you with your special type of “youness.” You are an observer with your own unique Perfect You making your

own unique choices. I, in turn, have my unique Perfect You and make my own choices. We enrich each other's experience; that is, we enrich each other's Perfect You by walking alongside each other and *celebrating* our differences.

And operating in your Perfect You is also a way for you to celebrate who *you are*. In a world where we are often told that we are not worthy or do not live up to a particular standard, this celebration is critical. We cannot truly live for God or transform our societies if we hate what we see in the mirror. Your Perfect You is so deeply and intrinsically wired into the fabric of who you are that when you recognize it, you develop an intimate awareness of and desire for the need to be yourself. You recognize that who you are is fundamentally good (Gen. 1:31).

Furthermore, your own Perfect You is *more* than enough. Once you begin to understand your Perfect You and its structure—because truly getting to fully understand your Perfect You is a lifelong journey—you can walk in anticipation and freedom through life, rejoicing *despite* the circumstances. Your Perfect You sets you free to be who you are and to do what you love. Operating in your Perfect You brings satisfaction and contentment. It reveals your innermost qualities, which are bound in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). It is hopeful—it never gives up, enduring through every circumstance.

Your Perfect You is dynamic and ever-changing. It is the key to understanding life experiences and the lessons you've learned, updating your mindset and giving you the opportunity to walk into the future with unlimited potential to grow into your own success. You, as the observer, keep updating your experiences as new data comes to light, shaping the way you approach the world.

Operating in your Perfect You is the way you choose to see your world filled with love instead of fear. It is what we all crave, so that impatience and unkindness, irritability, pride and boastfulness, bitterness, unforgiveness, wrong choices, and trauma—all of

which disrupt this fulfillment—cause us to seek to recapture this Perfect You “feeling” in an attempt to restore order in our minds and bodies. The Perfect You also removes you from the mindsets of shame and guilt, the “did-I, should-have, could-have, would-have.” You can enter into a mindset of hope, of the endless possibilities and attitudes you can choose as new opportunities come to light.

The Perfect You will take you from missing the mark of being made in God’s image to stepping into who you truly are. In this way, you will move from trauma to freedom, from pain to peace, from indecision to action, from confusion to clarity, from envy to celebration, from frustration to anticipation, from being overwhelmed to being set free, from fear to courage, from suppressing issues to having the courage to face them, from numbing thoughts to capturing them, from passivity to passion, and from hopelessness to hope. It will help you understand what you are stewarding and how to remain a good steward of your life no matter what comes your way. If you understand your Perfect You, you will understand how you think, feel, and choose and therefore how to renew your mind, enabling you to face life’s challenges (Rom. 12:2).

Of course we all think, feel, and choose, but your Perfect You will help you understand how *you specifically* think, feel, and choose. It is our identity, our way of being authentic to ourselves. Identity is intrinsic to our nature, so we are always seeking after the Perfect You. It is the core of who we are, and it will need to be satisfied in some way or another.

Finding a Stable Identity

In our current postmodern society, it can become very confusing to find any stable identity, so it is critical that we begin to understand what it means to be made in God’s image. Each of us needs to find our image, because if we don’t the world will brand us. We will

become whatever we focus on the most. The Israelites exchanged their glories (their Perfect You as image bearers of God) for the image of the golden calf, and we too can lose ourselves trying to be what we are not called to be (Exod. 32:4; Rom. 1:18–25). We become what we love, so we must learn to love our God by seeing his incredible piece of eternity inside of us. Focusing on God will increase the authenticity of our Perfect You; nothing else will satisfy us.

When you read about someone’s accomplishments and adopt their road map, their blueprint for identity, as your own, you will limit where your Perfect You can take you. You can only be *you*. Who you are at the core will leak out, no matter how much you try to suppress it or change it. The Perfect You enables you to love, to reach beyond yourself, but you cannot grow into the fullest expression of God’s design and plan if you live in doubt or unrest, or if you constantly undermine your gift by trying to copy other people’s Perfect You.

In order to sustain a consistent outlook and pattern in your life, your spirit, thoughts, feelings, choices, words, and actions must line up. So when you say something that your brain doesn’t “believe,” if your statement isn’t part of your Perfect You, it is unsustainable and can become toxic. You can try as hard as you can to be something or someone other than how God has designed you, but this will create conflict in your mind and body, because at your core you will always try to return to your natural inclination—your Perfect You.

The Perfect You Defined

But what exactly is your Perfect You? It is **how you uniquely and specifically think, how you uniquely and specifically feel, and how you uniquely and specifically choose**. These are functions of the *mind in action*: the intellect, emotions, and will. The *mind in action* builds thoughts. Thoughts are the roots of your unique words and

behaviors, which, in turn, are the visible manifestations of your Perfect You. It is the manifestation of your particular worldview.

Why is it so important to understand your Perfect You? It is the reflection of God—out of it springs your identity and your purpose as a steward of his creation and glory.¹¹ The Perfect You empowers you to communicate and act according to how you uniquely think, feel, and choose, enabling you to reflect this image like a light on a hill (Matt. 5:14–16).

If we operate in accordance with our godly wired-for-love design, we will act and speak the Word in season, and peace and productivity will reign in our relationships and lives (Isa. 50:4). And as we strive to selflessly understand other people’s “images,” we will understand God better because we each reflect an aspect of our multifaceted God. In our Perfect You we have everything we need to achieve our unique and marvelous purpose: God has planted eternity in us, a divine sense of purpose (Eccles. 3:11).

Maybe you have been told over and over that you are “special” but have not really been able to believe it. Maybe you have discovered your particular Perfect You but haven’t been living or growing in it. Maybe you have never truly been operating in your Perfect You, chasing success by imitating the lives of others. It is time for you to recognize and activate your divinely pre-wired Perfect You!

You can discover what your Perfect You is by learning its structure and how to begin living in it: this is what this book is all about. Once you start this process of discovery, you launch out into a lifetime of lasting change. Your purpose is to live beyond yourself through reflecting God’s glory to a broken world order, but you can’t share your Perfect You, your identity, if it is hidden. “No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket” (Matt. 5:15 NLT). You cannot grow into your God-ordained self if your Perfect You is blocked.



The structure of this book is as follows. In part 1, you will begin the process of understanding what the Perfect You is in terms of your unique thinking, feeling, and choosing, and how important it is to stay in the Perfect You. In part 2 you will learn about the philosophy and science undergirding the Perfect You. In part 3, you will begin to unlock your Perfect You by filling in the Unique Qualitative (UQ) Assessment Tool through a three-hundred-plus question journey that will help you gain a better understanding of how you uniquely think, feel, and choose. And this is not a one-time thing, either—you can periodically, over your lifespan, fill this profile in as many times as you want as you grow as a person. You will also learn about the Perfect You checklist, a simple, easy-to-use way in which you can monitor whether you are functioning in your Perfect You. In part 4, you will learn about the discomfort zones and how to use these to recognize and regulate when you are in and out of your Perfect You, freeing you from comparison, envy, and jealousy, which affect both your mental and physical health. You will learn to be mindfully aware of what is going on in your body and mind, and to lean in to your own experience rather than trying to forcefully change it. You will also find a summary chart that ties all the concepts of the Perfect You together in an easily accessible format. Lastly, part 4 will also give you a series of great, simple exercises to help you develop and grow your Perfect You.

You will learn throughout this book how to redefine what success means to you. Released from the suffocating box of expectations, you will embrace your true blueprint for identity and develop a clear sense of divine purpose in your life.

True Success

We must remember that success, in terms of shalom or biblical prosperity, is not defined by a collection of assets, an accumulation

of power, or cash in the bank. If that were the formula, there would be no cares for those in the highest tax brackets. Rather, success is living out God's purpose for our lives, using the Perfect You he has given us, to transform our community, and in doing so, bringing heaven to earth (Matt. 6:9–13). Every single one of us will express shalom differently, because every single one of us can do something that someone else cannot.

I challenge you to dig deeply into the truths of this book as an opportunity to find the blueprint of your identity, your Perfect You. Find it in yourself. Find it in your children. Find it in your spouse. Find it in your colleagues at work. Find it, because in your Perfect You, you will also find the truth of God's living promises. You were not built to struggle. You were built to learn how to flourish in the midst of life's challenges. You really are a conqueror of your world (Rom. 8:37). There are a lot of personality tests out there that are designed to label you and put you in a particular box. But there is so much more to you than a personality profile can capture. You embody a blueprint that cannot be categorized: you have an infinite, irreducible truth-value. You are *enough!*