One of the most beautiful sights in the world is a baby, especially to their parents. They are a perfect miracle.

Babies have about 300 bones when they are born. As they grow, some of these bones fuse together so that they have between 206 and 210 bones by the time they are adults. The process of us being knit together then continues as we grow.

We have about 600 muscles. This includes skeletal muscles that allow for movement – those we generally think of when working out – biceps, triceps, hamstrings, etc. It also includes smooth muscles located in various internal structures such as our digestive tract and blood vessels. And it includes the cardiac muscle.

We also are made up of 25 elements – the most prevalent are hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen. We are also made up of trillions of cells, each containing our genetic code – DNA – which makes us unique physically – and our soul -- which makes us unique mentally and spiritually.

God created us. He knows each and every part of us. God knows how strong each muscle is or isn’t. He knows which bones have been broken. He knows how our genetic code is assembled. And, even more importantly, he knows the essence of us – he knows our souls. To God, we are beautiful and perfect, just as to us our babies are perfect, although even more so because God’s ability to love and appreciate us is more generous than ours.

Many of us spend a great deal of time worrying about what we think of as imperfections in ourselves. We have wrinkles, or a big nose, or bad knees. Or we cry too easily, laugh funny, or have a disease or condition. We process events too slowly or too quickly, or not at all. But God sees us as beautiful -- perfectly made. Our bodies are beautiful. Our minds are beautiful. Our souls are beautiful.

Let’s pause to really grasp this. God made us. Everything God creates is good. God knows us better than we know ourselves. God loves us.

Sometimes we let the world beat us down, and we think we aren’t as valuable and as precious as we really are. In God’s eyes, however, we are incredibly lovely.

We are all unique. No one’s DNA is the same. No one’s personality is the same. No one is gifted precisely the same. God knows how we are each called to minister in the world and how we will respond to that call, just as he knew Nathanial when he saw him under the fig tree or knew what the boy Samuel would become even when Samuel was still small. Whatever gifts we have, we are perfect. We don’t need to have the same gifts as another person. Their gifts aren’t any better than ours nor ours better than anyone else’s. God gave us just what we need.

When we fail to realize how perfectly made we are and how much God loves us, we sometimes get into trouble. Low self-esteem is a big issue; some experts say that 85 percent of us have some sort of self-esteem issue. Sometimes individuals are abused, and this leads to feelings of low self-worth. Sometimes we compare ourselves to others and think we are found lacking. In particular, teenage girls seem to never be happy with their bodies, perhaps because the media put forth an unrealistic view of what women should look like. Sometimes we’ve been criticized, and we hold onto that criticism. Low self-esteem can lead to mental illnesses, addictions, eating disorders, and poor choices. It often leads to us not being willing to step out and do what God calls us to do. It’s not what God wants for us.

Instead, God wants us to understand that we are loved. God wants us to realize that God knows us so well because God wants to be in conversation with us; God enjoys spending time with us. We are always worthy because God has made us, and God is present with us.

We are marvelously made, knit together by a God who loves us. God knows all about our big nose or our funny laugh because God made us that way. When we are down on ourselves, I invite us to see ourselves as God sees us -- not as culture sees us, not as we sometimes see ourselves. I invite us to see ourselves as a unique combination of bones, muscles, chemicals, DNA, and soul that has much to offer the world. I invite us to spend some time feeling good about being loved so deeply by a God who knows everything about us. I invite us to spend some time with God, in that circle of God’s love.

God made us. We are wonderfully and marvelously made. And we are loved.