

MY OWN SPECIAL BLEND



You write you. Writing in ways natural to you sounds simple. But if we're also to write well, there are vital steps we can't ignore. The first step in learning to write you, is knowing who *you* are. Without this understanding, none of us can hope to achieve better writing through techniques that complement our natural tendencies.

My coffee-loving children enjoy what they've termed, "blueberry muffin coffee." It's not on any coffee shop menus that I'm aware of, but according to them, if you love coffee, this one is not to be missed. Their special brew is an iced coffee with a splash of hazelnut, a swirl of blueberry, and almond milk. I don't drink coffee, but even I think it sounds like comfort in a cup.

One day, when getting this delightful blend for my child, I had to visit a different coffee shop. I placed my order only to be told they didn't have hazelnut syrup, but they did have a different nutty flavor. My son drank his coffee, but it wasn't the same. One ingredient changed the taste.

The imitation was close. He even admitted it was good. But it wasn't the blueberry muffin coffee he loves.

Even with this blend topping their coffee flavor charts, my kids don't always want it. Sometimes they want something hot or stronger. Sometimes they want plain coffee without the frills.

Whatever they want, one thing remains true: Each drink starts with the same coffee base. The result, however, depends on the added sweeteners, flavorings, creamers, and whether or not ice is added.

I don't enjoy coffee, but there is a sip of truth in this idea, which I appreciate and can employ in my writing as well as many other areas of life. No matter what else is added, we all start with our own personal base.

"I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are your works, And my soul knows it very well."
Psalm 139:14, NASB

It's a verse as familiar and comforting as the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. Those who grew up in church have heard it countless times. Sanctity of life month each year? Check. Kids' club and teen youth group meetings? Check. Women's seminars? Check.

Any time people seek encouragement in their God-given worth, Psalm 139:14 is typed onto the slide and added to the presentation. We hear it, claim it, and preach it. But do we stop and think about its ramifications? Do we pay any attention to the last phrase of the verse? Do our souls know very well and live the truths of this verse?

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I'm not perfect. Far from it. But the Creator of the universe planned and formed me just the way I am.

Science argues that genetics are the cause. There is some truth in the idea. But God created the genetics and orchestrated which DNA from my mother and father would shape my being. He did the same in you.

As a writer, being an introvert is fine. Writing is a solitary endeavor in many ways. Yet, when I am faced with the need to

leave the safe haven of my shell for marketing or meeting with editors and agents, I may find this trait less than desirable. Still, it wasn't luck of the draw that wired introversion into my DNA. I can't even blame my father, who is as introverted as I am. None of us can.

We are God's special creation. He mixed our ingredients, not from a prefabricated formula, but individually in the exact amounts He needed present in us. Like my son's blueberry muffin coffee really wasn't the drink he loves without the hazelnut, any of us without even one of our genetic traits would no longer be the individual God created us to be.

God's design only begins with our eye colors and allergies. We're made up of more than our appearances and predispositions to different health issues. Who we are goes deeper than the ailments we struggle with and our natural abilities or lack thereof.

God gifted each of us with personality. Many of our personality traits are hardwired by God into our DNA. The recipe for them is there long before we take our first breath. And God gifted us each trait perfectly for carrying out His plans for us in the way He desires for us to carry them out. Our writing is part of that.

In creating us as the unique individuals we are, God also took into account the events in our lives that would shape us. He knows in advance how each success and failure, hurt and joy, are going to work together with the personality He designed for us. He knows how to use each circumstance and tendency to mold us into the image of Christ and help us live out the dream He's given us in the way we are individually called to do it.

As a Certified LINKED® Personality System Coach, I've always found the unique blend of personality traits individuals possess remarkable. Even two people, sharing the same basic personality types, are still distinct in their ways and wants. Life events, the environment they grew up in, and their relationship with God all play their part. Blended with the biological characteristics, they create a life uniquely theirs and specifically chosen for God's purpose

and glory. And they bring the freedom for variation in our writing journeys.

“ *You have been thoughtfully crafted to carry out God’s purpose for His glory.*

Despite what some believe, knowing your personality doesn’t close you into a box of preset actions and reactions. Instead, it gives insight into who and how you are. Inside each personality type and blend, there is a multitude of trait combinations. Just because perfectionism is added to the list of general traits for your personality, you don’t have to exhibit that trait. Perhaps you never exhibited that tendency. Or maybe, you recognized it in yourself a long time ago and learned how to let God mold it into the more positive qualities of attention to detail and quality without the overpowering drive for your work or that of others to be perfect.

Even if a trait is seen as positive, it’s not guaranteed your unique blend will include that specific one. You are not a generic cup of coffee. You’re a specialty drink, mixed with precision by God. Learning about your personality type isn’t meant to shape you into the likeness of every other person with the same personality type. It’s meant to provide understanding; to provide freedom to be the “fearfully and wonderfully made” individual and writer God means for you to be.

When we discover more about who we are at our core, we don’t tout our strengths with pride to anyone who will listen or lord our strengths over others. We also don’t excuse negative behaviors as “natural” and “unavoidable.”

Personality knowledge is not an excuse for sin. Instead of giving in to a sinful negative trait or even the sin of pride we could have due to a positive trait, we allow God to help us remain humble and dependent on Him. We ask for His guidance in molding our weakness into a God-honoring strength.

In our writing, as in our spiritual lives, this knowledge isn’t an

excuse for poor choices and habits. Awareness of my traits, both positive and negative, offers me opportunity and caution. Any positive trait, taken to the extreme, becomes a negative. Knowing this, I can be proactive in keeping my actions and attitudes in line with godly ones and those that will help me succeed in my writing goals.

Any negative trait has the potential to be a powerful positive one. Sometimes this is hard to see, but it is true. God can use any trait we have to bless others and to glorify Him.

One of my children has a natural tendency to speak up. As a child, it resulted in talking back and needing the last word. These behaviors often landed him in time out. One day, he wailed that he wished God hadn't given him a mouth.

I encouraged him that if given control, God would use that mouth to speak truth, even in the hard times. The key to turning any negative into a positive is allowing God to control when, where, and how we use it.

As writers, we may not be speaking the truth audibly, but we are speaking truth through our words. And, as with my son, we need to curb our natural tendency to let everything fly and allow God to guide when, where, and how we speak through our keyboards.

Learning who we are does not confine us; it gives us great freedom. This knowledge enables us to appreciate God's design in our lives and see how He might choose to use us. It also gives us the ability to pinpoint weaknesses that our loving Father wants to sweeten into beautiful traits He can use for His glory.

Maybe you've already taken steps to learn about your personality. That's great. I don't care if you found out you're an ABCD, blue with red tendencies, or a buffalo. Many, but not all, personality assessment tools work off the same principles, and once you learn them, it's easy to adjust and find yourself in each one.

As a side note, I do realize there are some systems out there with less than godly origins. Do your research and find one you're comfortable using. I personally know the creators of the LINKED®

Personality System, and I have studied extensively from the system theirs was inspired by. This is a quick and easy way to find out more about God's wonderfully created you. Here's a link to a free online assessment, <https://bit.ly/3zTCN7N>. While the Quick Guide to Personalities book gives more detail, this link is a great place to start finding out about the characteristics that make you a one-of-a-kind specialty blend.

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ACTION STEP

Take the personality quiz above or a different one. Write down some of the things you learn about yourself and your approach to tasks, successes, and difficulties.

Can you see some of the weaknesses you may struggle to overcome? What about the strengths? How do these characteristics affect your writing life?