



Series: Animate	Reference: 2 Cor. 3:18 & Various Passages	Title: Holding Up Your Body	Date: 10.22 .17
Website Writeup:			
We continue our discussion of spiritual formation through the contemplation of Jesus in His Word. Using our imagination to engage with the Spirit of God tethering ourselves well to Scripture. Today we talk specifically of how important it is to contemplate the true image of God as found in Jesus instead of a twisted image coming from pop-culture opinion, or lies.			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

-SLIDE PERSON: PLEASE RECORD THE SERMON-

UPG Prayer of the Day...

(Thanks to Greg Boyd & Woodland Hills Church, we've used many of his words, ideas, and the Animate booklet from their series by the same name - in all the Animate series there are just too many of Greg's words to footnote - thank you Greg! Imitation is flattery brother!)

Before we get started today, I wanted to look at some of the images of Jesus which people have painted over time. Let's consider as we look at them, which ones represent a truer image of the real Christ (slides 2-12).

We've been talking about encountering the Lord in the Inner Sanctum, in our quiet times, in contemplation, or what we would call today our imagination. We've talked about engaging in imaginative prayer, or cataphatic spirituality, as St Ignatius referred to it. And all this in order that we're transformed, changed into the likeness of Christ; that Jesus becomes a concrete reality for & in us. As it says in 2 Cor. 3:18, *18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* ¹

And all this so that we can find freedom & life as it says in verses 16-17 of the same chapter, *16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* Our minds & hearts, which are one & the same, are free now to experience Jesus & be changed into his likeness; finding freedom from sin & past bondage so that we can engage in the kingdom of God.

Neuroscience confirms, we replicate our experiences with five senses; we think, imagine & feel with our brains, the seat of our heart/emotions, and our mind/reason. When I think of my wife an image comes to mind in full orb of how she looks, makes me feel, how she smells, the taste of her lips - not a dead ticker tape of informational data.

We want to apply all that to what is the heart of the kingdom of God; *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and*

¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (2 Co 3:14-18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" What does it mean to apply our imaginative cataphatic spirituality to God, ourselves & others? This message is called *Holding Up Your Body*. Because our relationship to God is to be centered on his incarnation in Jesus. In Jesus we encounter the living, true, exact, concrete representation of God.

Let's go back to the beginning; Genesis 3:1-5, *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"* ² *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'*" ⁴ *"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* ²

Notice, the enemy starts with a lie about God. Satan implants a lie in Eve's heart-mind, making it look like God was threatened by this tree. That God was afraid of Adam & Eve knowing what he knew - a lie. But I think we will see that this tree was there as a warning sign, "Don't go there, for your own good." Once the lie was implanted it's followed with a temptation - suddenly the tree is desirable, and that's followed with sin. Disobedience. Or better said, putting ourselves in the place of God, being in charge of ourselves.

This is the root of our sinful nature. Notice it all hangs on our image of God. How God is represented in my heart-mind. Satan distorted the image of God for Adam & Eve; no longer was he loving & good, to be relied on in open trusting relationship, now he was weak, scared, controlling, even deceitful. The question for us...is the picture of God in your mind accurate or not? To the degree that it is, or isn't, will reveal whether the kingdom of God is reigning in your heart or not, which is foundational. If your mental picture of God is truthful & accurate, God will reign in your life bringing freedom, direction, peace & so forth. If that image is askew, misinformed, twisted, or incomplete then you won't experience God's reign in your heart-mind. You will feel spiritually dry, distant, discordant, etc...

God's original plan was he wants to overflow in us. That he's the source of life, worth, security, etc. As a result, we overflow in life back to him & outwardly to others - life becomes worshipful. We experience freedom. Like our body needs food, we need worth, life, significance, love & security from God - those are natural good needs which mean we're human. But in the design of creation, only God can fulfill those needs in us & wants to, to the point of overflowing in us. And to the degree this is happening, God's reigning in me - this is the kingdom of God, the reign of God - pressed down, shaken together & overflowing.

² *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ge 3:1–5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



The enemy lies. Satan diverts Gods reign in my life by distorting my image of God. It means we don't trust God to be our source of life. Rather we replace him with idols; something else we put our trust in other than God - something which we seek to fill us. We still crave significance, security, love, worth, life, etc., but we don't go to God for it. We try to get it from other sources (idols). Maybe from other people, my wife, achievement, money, power, position, what people think of me, my looks....etc. Religion can even become that idol for us; how right we are in our theology, how good we are compared to someone else, or in judgment of others.

Instead of life becoming a celebration from the inside out, it becomes a desperation from the outside in. It's what Paul refers to as life in the flesh, or living by the sinful nature. And that life is inevitable if we aren't getting life from God. You may hate the bondage, you may feel the desperation of it, but you won't be able to stop it if Jesus is not your source of life. You may trade your idol out for another, and it may feel good briefly, but you'll always come back to desperation. This is extremely foundational, everything hangs on our picture of who God is. He's either the source of life, worth & security, or he isn't - you'll be as healthy as your picture of God is accurate, or unhealthy as your picture of God is inaccurate. Everything hangs on who God is, and how he meets our needs.

The enemy has blinded us of this image; remember 2 Cor 3, our minds have been made dull, there's a veil over our hearts (*¹⁴But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*) But in turning our gaze upon Jesus we can once again reestablish a right & healthy image of God. One of the foundational reasons Jesus came into our history, the incarnation, was to reveal to us the truth about who God is; the exact representation of God. Jesus breaks through the darkness & reveals to us who God is, because only when we can see him & know him - can we be reconciled to true relationship, and be changed by this image of who God is. I was speaking to someone this week who explained that they're changing. They're softening, becoming less distrustful & harsh. And they explained that this was a result of their having come to know Jesus & to contemplate him in this past year. As we see God as love, we become more loving.

Jesus' claim is to be the Truth (Aleithia). John 14:6 *⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."³* That term for Truth is translated from Aleithia which means 'not covered' - so Jesus is the not-covered god. In Jesus, God is uncovered; God's unveiled! Jesus discloses who God is - He's the way because he's the Truth. He's the life because he's the Truth. He's not one of many paths to God, he is the path & the only path.

³ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 14:6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



John 8:32 ³² *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*⁴ Which means you will know the unveiled truth; you will see God for who God is in Jesus. You will contemplate that & that Truth, the unveiled God, will set you free. When you see who God is, you're able to trust him as Source. The more you get from him, the more you're set free. All the fear & desperation dissipates as you get life from God. You become secure, you have worth & are loved - set free from the idolatry of religion, power, people, money, looks, what others think of you, etc.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*⁵ Jesus is the 'logos'/the Word, the exact expression of God. When God speaks, it looks like Jesus.

Colossians 1:15 ¹⁵ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*⁶ He's the image or literally the icon of God; the representation of God - if God painted a self-portrait of his character, it would look like Jesus.

John 1:18 ¹⁸ *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.* ⁷ No one has seen God. God is spirit, invisible. Apart from Jesus, God is veiled, but in Jesus the Word is flesh, God has become unveiled in human form.

John 14:9 ⁹ *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* ⁸ Don't look around for something else, fix your eyes on me. I'm it, I'm the real deal. I & the Father are one!

Matthew 11:27 he goes so far as to say this...²⁷ *"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son..."*⁹ Jesus didn't regard himself as just another wise teacher, guru or shaman. Neither should we. Because, no one would say this about themselves unless they were lying, crazy, or it was true! You'd say I was crazy if I did! Its arrogant unless its true - no one, except me knows God, except me, because he's God. You may see glimpses of God in this or that; in teaching, actions of people, nature, but the truth of God unambiguously is revealed & unveiled in Jesus.

⁴ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 8:31–32). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁵ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 1:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁶ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Col 1:15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁷ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 1:18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁸ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 14:9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 11:27). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Hebrews 1:1-3 *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.¹⁰*

God has revealed himself in various ways & times through people. All good, but partial. But now God speaks to us in his Son, which is complete & fully resembles God. Nature, people, etc., are twisted & mixed up - they're not the absolute representational picture of God. Hebrews says the Son alone is the radiance & exact representation (hupostasis - the essence of the fathers heart). He's the only place we find the essence of who God is totally & purely - the accurate self-portrait of God himself is found in Jesus. God restores His image & the pipeline to himself in Jesus! And we can trust him at the core of our identity - what we do in life expresses what we have in Jesus - rather than trying desperately to get what we don't have, to fill the void, becoming the emotional black hole, we overflow with life to God & others.

But just listening to these words, the information, won't get you there. The information is important, but just information doesn't lead to transformation. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to make it real to us. It's 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 from the last two weeks - we encounter, behold & experience the glory of God in the face of Jesus - when we behold this true picture of God in Jesus, then we're transformed. It has to be embodied & become concrete in me. And the place we do that is the Inner Sanctum. When we wrap our imagination around this & allow the Holy Spirit to form a true picture of Jesus to us.

I'm a pretty excitable preacher. I get wound up. Never been blamed for a lack of passion. Someone may think I'm a showman. Is being excited when I preach a part of my schtick? Am I faking it...someone may think so, because we always ascribe to others our own motivations. In other words, you may feel dry & unexcited about your faith, or the Word of God, so you see someone excited & you think their faking it. I'm not. Likewise, I can't fathom someone really believing this stuff & not getting excited. All of our emotions are a representation of what's going on in our mind - the images & pictures in our brain. If we're feeling dry, uninterested, or passionless, then maybe we still have a picture of God which is off, boring, or unreal. And if so, we would not go to God as the source for life, but to other things because God's boring, uninterested, or powerless for you. You'd run to your idols; your looks, working out, money, work, alcohol, religion, etc. first.

Many of us are able to spout off some information about God; he's omnipresent, omniscient, loving, full of grace, etc. What you say you believe isn't the issue, its the image in your heart-mind which is important (world view). Remember, we don't think with information, we think with images. Greg Boyd tells the story of a spiritually dry

¹⁰ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Heb 1:1-3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



woman who finally captured her image of Jesus. He asked her, never mind the information, “When you think of Jesus, what picture comes to mind?”

It was of her standing on one side of a large chasm, with Jesus on the other, very far away. And to add, he had his back turned towards her. This woman was very knowledgeable in the word & theology, but she didn't feel excited about her faith. She felt unloved, uninteresting, lonely, as if she's a nobody. And rightly so, with that sort of image of Jesus. To compensate, her idol had become her looks; to attract attention from others. Greg helped her to reform a true picture in her head. When we submit our imaginations to the Holy Spirit we will be transformed. *It will take time, your image of God will not feel true for a while because we're not used to it - we're used to our false image. For that woman, Jesus turned around first & looked at her as Greg spoke truth about who God was to her. Then the gap began to close as her image became more in line with the truth of who God was in Jesus. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹¹*

This happened to me even before I made a profession of faith. A person led me in an imaginative exercise where they asked if there was anyone in the world whom I thought might help me, who would it be - I said Jesus for lack of knowing anything else. They asked me to imagine myself someplace I'd like to be. I imagined a sunlit beach. They then led me in this imaginative prayer where I saw Jesus walking down the beach towards me, coming closer into focus, and finally sitting down next to me & telling me he loved me, forgave me, and enjoyed sitting on the beach with me - it was powerful!

Being transformed by the renewing of your mind takes time - old patterns are strong, the old man doesn't want to let go of control. Change doesn't come overnight. The more time we spend with Jesus, the more life we get from him, other things just fall away - we don't have to tinker with ourselves, we don't work harder - we're transformed by his glory. The way to freedom is to get our value & worth from God - to fix our eyes on Jesus.

We're going to encounter the Lord today in the context of a Scriptural story - a story based on the Garden of Gethsemane. This is a story where Jesus invites us into an intimate moment of his humanity. A story which reveals he can identify with our fear & suffering. But this story also shows us we too often fall asleep on God. We're often not there when God needs us - ever think God needs you? It's reflective of the character of God, to desire to be in relationship with us - to share life with us. Terri Churchill, who wrote our poem last week wrote this as well, and will be reading for us.

Let's meet with the Lord (explain)

¹¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Eph 2:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



Community Group Questions

MAKE SURE PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO A BIBLE FOR THIS MEETING! They will need it for the imaginative prayer exercise at the end. Also ask them to bring the second document which is being emailed to you as well - WHO AM I IN CHRIST?

Ice Breaker: Would you prefer to visit Earth in 2100, or travel back to 1900?

Discussion: As a reminder, the sermon centered on the right (orthodox) image of Jesus in the Scriptures. We looked at various Scriptures which speak of Jesus as the exact representation of God including but not limited to...

Hebrews 1:1-3 *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

Colossians 1:15 ¹⁵ *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

John 14:9 ⁹ *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

Questions:

1. What struck you the most from the sermon? Did you take notes? And if so, was there anything in particular you wrote down?
2. Take 2 minutes to close your eyes & in silence imagine Jesus in relation to yourself just as the woman did in the sermon, what would that image look like to you?
 1. What would Jesus be doing & how would his demeanor be towards you?
 2. Jot down a few thoughts to share with others remembering you can share all, a part or nothing at all - it's up to you. Remember also, we ALL will have a somewhat skewed or interesting view.
3. Discuss these images in relation to what you know to be true of Jesus from the Scriptures. You can use the verses from the *Who Am I in Christ?* see of verses which will also be emailed to you in PDF format.

Imaginative Prayer Exercise:

Everyone open their Animate Booklet to this weeks lesson. Each person choose one different passage from p13-14 which they haven't done yet at home. Take 10 minutes to practice the imaginative prayer exercise on that passage individually (alone) from the booklet making sure you explain the process from the directions. Come back together & have whomever is willing share their thoughts from their time in the Word.