

Let's Fall in Love with God
Chapter 11: Made in the Image of God
(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)
{ Slowly!, Absorb! } { 174 }

When God said, "Let us make man in our own image," He put an enormous gulf between men and every other creature. Only mankind was created with the capacities necessary to be in personal relationships, with each other or between themselves and God. He later introduced Himself, in the person of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, into the drama of human experience. The diagrams below show the similitude between man and God and as spiritual beings, we can be united to God in relationship as no other living being.

The four aspects of God's image in which we are made are CHOICE, COMPASSION, RATIONALE and EXPRESSION. Our 'free will,' 'desire,' 'sense of Justice' and 'purpose for communicating' correspond to God's image. With the HEART we choose beliefs, with our SOUL we feel, with our MIND we think about what course of action or words we will use and with our BODY/STRENGTH we do or say.

Knowing Ourselves { 175 }

In order to know and understand each other., we must come to an intimate knowledge of God. An old German theologian once said, "There is nothing in the universe so much like God as the human soul." We are unlike any other created being. Once joined with the Spirit

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of God, every decision invokes an action in the sequence shown in the diagram below. If my spirit makes the choice, it is my reaction that affects those present. If God's Spirit is allowed to make the choice, it is His response which they experience! Better His than mine.

[What my spirit chooses to believe causes my soul to feel emotion when that belief is challenged or affirmed. Once my feelings kick in, my mind begins to formulate what expressions are needed. Then my body expresses those thoughts. -or- I can let God's Spirit within me do the willing, feeling, thinking and expressing. It is best to "Let God!"]

The primary hindrance to intimate relationships is selfish ambition which in order to be achieved must 'use' or 'abuse' others to gain advantage over their pursuit of the same goals. Although selflessness is the key to wholesome relationships, our nature is to be selfish instead.

Personality { 176 }

In the next diagram, we see that our personality is comprised of heart, soul and mind. The essence of personality is the choices we make, the feelings we experience, our thoughts and our expressions.. We need a body to house our personality and enable it to express itself.

A God in Our Image

It is curious that Christians experience so little

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affection for God. It is understandable for an atheist. Tozer queries, “Why is it that the one creation of God who was created in His image, and has become a Christian, has such a shallow relationship with his creator?” It is because we do not see God to be Himself, perfect in every relationship way. We cast on God’s character our own character flaws! We treat Him more like our equal than our superior. If we could only see that God is the most passionately loving personality in the universe, we could become passionate toward Him.

Basic Desires of God (and those in His image) { 177 }

“Jesus was ... tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15. Thus part of the image of God in which we are cast, includes three basic tendencies. The three temptations of Christ in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting and preparation, will be consistently encountered from birth until death of every human being. The following discussion of these temptations may help you see yourself more clearly and determine more accurately what motive is behind each expression you make. Knowing how the personality works and how temptation affects us, gives us a better chance of living authentically and according to God’s design. It may appear that we mostly do the opposite of what God’s unconditional love would do.

3 common temptations prevent surrender to the Holy Spirit.

There are three ways that we have succumbed to temptation which keep us from releasing control of our personality to the Holy Spirit.

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1 **INDULGENCE** = expecting *prosperity*, comfort and pleasure in the journey; expressed in simpler terms: "**give me**"

God Is Not into Your Whims

It amazes me just how many priests, rabbis and preachers sermonize about the blessing of God. We have listened to countless sermons that imply, if not outright proclaim, that God wants to bless His people with health, wealth and trouble-free lives. Actually it is the father of all lies who likely gives us these things. He uses these things to distract us from God and to eliminate our need for God. People flock to churches which have "blessing services" where the sermon promotes the idea that God wants to prosper them. There are prayer leaders after these services to pray for the prosperity, popularity and power which these seekers come to find. But this only appeals to the self-indulgence and self-promotion of the participants. Wasn't this the very first temptation of Jesus, "make bread of these stones"?

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Intimacy Through Adversity

The surrendered life actually brings upon us tragedy, travesty, carnage and ruin. This even makes sense. It is only through adversity that we learn the very things that will ultimately produce both intimacy and endurance. This was very evident in the life of Paul, many first century Christians and the martyrs through the ages. But, by enduring adversity, for the love of God and with insatiable desire to please Him, we actually find our selves rich in relationship, not only to God but also to others. In the state of absolute abandon to intimacy with God, we are most satisfied and contented. We actually find the most joyous, loving and peaceful spirit in the midst of all adversities. And we know that we have made progress when we can love our enemies like Jesus did in asking God to *forgive them because they do not know what they are doing*, from the Cross!

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2 **APPLAUSE** = seeking *popularity*: our own interests under the guise of seeking God's interests; in other words: **"see me"**

Ulterior Motives

We have a devious way of serving our own interests while claiming that we are doing this for God or the benefit of others. We have become very clever in this endeavor, and very good at believing our own lies in this regard. For example. A pastor may talk about building the church and going around doing kingdom work for the

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glory of God. He may be quite eloquent about this. But what he may actually be doing is shamelessly promoting himself, while saying I'm doing this for Jesus' sake. When it comes right down to it, it is really his work, his influence and his ambition. That is why he's really doing it.

Church musicians can have a music ministry under the guise of serving the Lord, while at the same time hoping to promote their own talents and possibly furthering their musical careers. There's a fine line between promotion of self and exaltation of Christ. That line is motive. And it sometimes becomes so faint that people do not really know which side of the line they're on. While saying that they seek the interest of God, they fall prey to promoting themselves. We want God to have the glory, but at the same time, we would like a little commission paid to us for all the work *we* do. After all, God is using *us* for His glory. And we do have to make a living and appear to be successful.

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3 **CONTROL** - Wanting *power* to be in control (worshipped) yet asking the Holy Spirit to fill us "**serve me**"

We Cannot Do It Together

We want the Holy Spirit to fill us (or so we say), but also want to do things our way. We frequently talk about surrender to the Holy Spirit but never actually give up control. The Holy Spirit cannot take control of us until we get out of the way in full surrender. Nothing is easier to

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talk about than surrendering ourselves to God. But nothing is harder than actually doing it. I find some Christians who ask God to fill them with the Holy Spirit. The only problem is that when God begins to move upon them, they reject that move. They say they want God to take full control of their lives, but actually, they want to keep everything within their own control. The Holy Spirit will never fill a man or a woman who refuses to give up and give over to Him all control of their entire life. Keep only one part of your life back from the Holy spirit and it grieves Him that he cannot go any further. I long ago concluded that the Holy Spirit works alone in my heart and needs no help from me.

King of the Road

But, it is no wonder that control is so important to us. We remember that "God created man in His Own Image." The most significant part of that image is *free will* or *personal sovereignty*. God made each of us and granted us sovereignty over our own kingdom. [Sovereignty is having final authority over everything, like a king or queen.] This was, by the way, the third temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. When Satan offered Jesus a hoard of worshippers if Jesus would simply bow down and worship Satan, the temptation was great. This method of gaining worshippers would certainly have been far less painful than the way of the Cross, which Jesus knew was His destiny. Every one wants to be in leadership or in charge of the lives of others. It is part of our DNA and explains why there is so much evil in the world. Everyone

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is competing against all those around them to be the supreme leader, respected, admired and emulated.

How Do We Best Approach God { 181 }

It is worth mentioning here, a little known paradigm. Many claim to love God very much. Many, when asked, “Do you have an intimate relationship with God?” will say emphatically, “Yes.” But is their life as unconditionally loving and accepting as God, Who let His Own Son be crucified for us? Do their expressions always encourage and embrace others, even their enemies? Do their lifestyles cause any to ask them how they can be so merciful and forgiving when most would strike back? Mostly this is not the case for Christians around the world. And it can be traced to a general misunderstanding as to what they mean by their claim to love God. Most may have never been challenged to consider what I am about to say. There are three ways we each approach God once we have become a *born again, born of the Spirit* Christian. There is a significant difference between them.

INTENSITY - ECSTASY - INTIMACY { 182 }

The **first** approach to God is with *intensity*. Many avidly pursue compliance to the law and service to God. Great *intensity* may produce a life that appears to be good, but it has no basis in love. It is based on personal strength. *Intensity* can be either loving or hateful. We see in Judas Iscariot great *intensity*, but it was misguided, and he eventually betrayed Jesus and subsequently hanged himself for it.

The **second** approach to God is by way of

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ecstasy. Christians go to church to be ecstatically charged by the songs, sermons and demonstration of the gifts of the Spirit. They are satisfied with this “one night stand”, sorry “one hour stand” with God wherein they have the tingles with God and feel better for a while. Unfortunately for most of them, those euphoric feelings of *ecstasy* dissipate within hours, if not minutes. They may even pick up the violent argument with their families, which was suspended when they entered the church, as soon as they leave the meeting. They usually find themselves craving this *ecstasy* within a day or two. When they don’t have a church meeting to give them this *ecstasy*, they indulge themselves in some secret sordid activity to find it. They are up and down like yo-yos.

The **third** way to experience God is by way of *intimacy*. When one is *intimate* with any other, their thoughts are almost constantly inclusive of the object of their love. *Intimate* lovers care more about the needs and desires of their partner than their own. *Intimacy* brings with it the highest pleasures known to man. But *intimacy* never ceases to produce pleasure, even when the lovers are miles apart. The best news is that there is “no distance between the hearts of two genuine lovers.” So with *intimacy*, we can be so aware of the ever presence of God that we don’t need to seek ecstasies which leave us wanting more.

Consider these three people and their feelings toward God:

Judas Iscariot == *Intensity*

Simon Peter == *Ecstasy*

Mary == *Intimacy*

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Highest Affection { 183 }

To be sure, intimate lovers experience ecstasies and intensity. But all of their ecstasies and intensity simply fulfill their pleasure with God. It is because of their intimacy that their intensity and ecstasies are always loving. On the other hand, ecstasies and intensity can be extremely selfish and produce awful results. But **intimacy with God transforms a life into an expression of God Himself**. This is similar to the appearance of God, in Jesus. God wants Christians to be “like Christ” in order to continue the work of Jesus here and now.

Perfect Example

In the diagram below, we see how John the Baptizer’s words about Jesus are the key to what Paul refers to as “walking in the Spirit.” By nature we are compelled to take charge of each circumstance we encounter. Walking in the Spirit is never accomplished by straining not to do what comes naturally. Walking in the Spirit is the autonomic (automatic) response to a deep affection for and trust in the Holy Spirit of God within us to take charge.

In a Nutshell { 184 }

So, in summary, the image of God is associated with the spiritual aspects of similarity rather than the physical. What we do in body is simply the expression of the inner personality. When we begin to see all of life’s experiences as affecting our emotions, we can trace our

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good and bad behaviors to our spirit. That is where motive comes into play. Most, if not all, criminal activity is induced by feelings. There are crimes of passion (a feeling) and crimes of desperation (again a feeling). There are crimes of greed (a form of desperation) and crimes committed to get attention (again feelings-based).

There are crimes committed in the name of fairness. When our sense of fairness is violated, we often become angry and defensive either for our own unfair treatment or for the unfair treatment of another. Unfortunately with our limited vision and information, we may truly become the villain by making wrong assumptions in these regards.

Nonetheless, we are emotional beings. Yet we are also rational beings. This brings the necessary balance to enable us to live civilized lives in community with others. In the end, however, it is our free will, that is, our personal sovereignty, that determines our responses to everything and the resulting harmony or discord we experience. The one additional, and maybe the most important aspect, of our likeness to the image of God, is that our spirit can be in union with His. This union, and only this union, will provide the capacity to love like God does and demonstrate grace instead of retaliation.

Our body has nothing to do with personality except to assist it to take advantage of the body's resources to gain advantage in every situation.

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