



Image of God † Rooted in God

During these times of quiet reflection, we're asking two basic questions: What do I want to ask of the Lord, and what does He want to say to me at this time. We then wait, listening for His response. Let these questions guide your reflections and help you identify the things you want to process with the Lord. Take time to quiet your mind. Ask the Lord to help you hear what He is saying, and to give you freedom to pour out whatever is on your heart.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith — that you, being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 15:20-24

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

I - IMAGE OF GOD ~ Our sense of worth—how we see ourselves, can be a filter through which we experience God. If we have learned to define ourselves in negative terms, we can assume that the Lord sees us in the same way. As the prodigal son returned to his father, he was ready to be rejected. He did not know his father's love.

1 Ask the Lord to show you if, in any way, you are like the prodigal. Is there something you feel he can't forgive? Are you living out of any kind of shame or rejection, missing the true character of your heavenly Father?

~ Ask him to show you how he truly *feels* about you as his son or daughter

~ How do you **see** God? What does he want you to see and understand about him? Write anything else that is on your heart, or that you want to ask of the Lord about changing your image of God, and of yourself.

2 Sense of Worth: Is there any other way in which you don't value yourself?

~ Ask him to help you recognize where this is true of you, and why you feel this way. (This is a step toward change—a door you can open for his redeeming work in you.)

~ Ask the Lord for a new path — a new season, where he would help you define your worth based on his love for you. What do you want him to heal or change in this season?

II ~ IMAGE OF GOD ~ Below are some ways in which our image of God is shaped over time

1 Ask him to help you get in touch with the image of God you carry in your mind, from experiences you have had. Try to put into words how you see him, or draw a picture of how you see him.

~ What people in your life have helped you form a positive view of God. What is it about them that influenced you?

~ Is there anything you have taken in about God that isn't true? Ask the Lord to shed light on those places, and show you how he wants to replace those impressions.

2 Wrong image of God? Often there are people in our lives who have given us a wrong definition of God's heart and love for us.

☞ **Diane** shared her story of family values that left her with a wrong image of God's love. Her parents did love her and the Lord. Often it is grace we need to extend toward those who may have misrepresented the Lord, and also realize we need to forgive them.

☞ **Paul shared** about a more damaging representation of the image of God. He has sought to know God's love through a journey of inner healing, finding a growing capacity to truly love and trust the Lord.

Is there anyone you need to forgive for misrepresenting God to you? Ask the Lord to give you grace to forgive, and understanding of what exactly you need to forgive. Where do you also need to extend grace?

- Ask the Lord's help in: naming what you believed about him that is not true.

naming what it is you want to forgive about the person(s) who caused pain/damage

3 We can lose the pure, trusting image of God when we fail to keep him central in our hearts.

~ Have I become like the elder brother who is doing all the "right work" and hangs around the household of faith, trying to prove my worth to God, but have neglected to enjoy my Father and receive his love?

~ Ask the Lord to renew your love, and to help you recognize when you need course correction in your relationship with him.

Revelation 2:2-4 "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love..."

1. Only our Maker can truly cultivate the “soil” of our heart. He knows where we draw nurture—the quality of the soil, and whether the roots are deep and healthy, or in need of his tending. (Ephes. 3:14-21)

~ Ask the Lord to show you something about your “garden” and how you tend it. Draw a picture of what you see. (If you don’t like to draw, ask the Lord to speak to you about your garden and how you tend it.) Is there something that pleases you about this inner place?

Cultivation:

- 1 promotion, support, encouragement, nurture
- 2 Noun: the cultivation of fruits and vegetables
- 3 a- prepare and use land for crops or gardening
b- try to acquire/develop a quality, sentiment or skill

~ We often are incapable of perceiving accurately the transformation God is doing within us over significant time without directly asking the Spirit for discernment about it. Ask the Spirit to show you as well as guide you to those who can help you see what God is doing within you.

~ Ask the Lord to show you how he is cultivating the soil of your heart and spirit, where your roots are meant to go deeper.

2. ASK / SEEK / KNOCK (Luke 11:9-13) ~ The work of the Lord in grounding us in his love is like working in a garden, season after season. This deep work is part of the Holy Spirit’s role in our lives. Our asking, seeking, and knocking is our invitation for this ongoing cultivation of the soil of our hearts. Scriptures he gives us are like fertilizer that amends our soil as we use it continually.

~ Chris shared about a recent experience that involved the comfort of the Lord in a direct and loving way. She realized that her image of God had been changed . . . that there was a new trust in his love—a sense of freedom in coming to him instead of working things out herself.

~ Ask the Lord if there are ways in which he wants you to experience his care for you more tangibly

~ In what areas of your life and your relationship with the Lord would he prompt you to ask, or seek, or knock for something he wants to give you?



Growing Our Capacity for Intimacy with God

Below are brief stories and reflections of three members of our Second Saturday planning group. They illustrate today's topic and the faithfulness of the Lord to work in us the healing we need.

Paul ~ I was unaware for many years that through the wounding I experienced in my birth family I saw my earthly parents' faces, particularly my father's, covering the true face of my Lord and Father. And my self-identity and responses to words like "trust", "love", "security", and to the Word as truth were traumatically affected. But in God's grace and time the destructive behaviors of depending solely upon myself became the opportunity to truly see his loving face. Yet those habits of many decades of self-determination and their deeply worn synaptic paths of subconscious reaction, still require further transformation into true growth—spiritual and mental, emotional and physical, health and maturity. This is the continuing path of long obedience—discipleship—within me where I welcome the work of the Holy Spirit. And He has provided attestation of this through those who truly love me as they see my development over many years. Thanks be to God!



Diane ~ **Gifts!**

One of the best gifts I received this past Christmas was snuggling with our ten-month-old granddaughter, Lydi Bear, as her parents fondly call her. The day after Christmas her parents were both in bed with the flu. By nature, Lydi Bear is very active and getting into everything. However, on that day she was fully relaxed and in the mood to be cuddled and gaze into my face. After many days of busy Christmas preparations, I too was in the mood to rest, rock and talk with her, and just look into her eyes!

As I reflected on this gift, I sensed the Lord saying how He delights in the times I want to rest, gaze into His face, and just be with Him. It's a gift to HIM! I'm always amazed that my spending time with HIM is a such GIFT to HIM. He loves the connection and relationship!

Besides salvation, the gifts of self-acceptance and healing my image of God are the two best gifts I've received from Him. They are like the gifts that just keep on giving. The more I can see and receive who He is and who He tells me I am, then I can receive the truth of His Word. He knows everything about me and yet He pursues me and longs for deep fellowship with me.

I've been meditating on Ephesians 2: 1-9 that goes back and forth saying who I am and who He is... It says I was DEAD in my transgression and sins following the ways of this world... and He is loving, rich in mercy, and He made me ALIVE when I was DEAD in my transgressions. And it goes on and on... that it's by GRACE I have been saved and then I'm raised up to be seated with Him...

Wow- who wouldn't want that? Sometimes not me! It's all a journey of receiving that GRACE because my old thinking patterns are well established and at times it seems I'm DEAD in my transgressions again and I feel I've lost my intimacy with Him.

I praise Him for the gifts that have helped me most in this GRACE journey- having authentic relationships, praying with others, spending time in the WORD and knowing He longs for a deep connection with me!



John ~ Jim Wilder says in The Other half of the Church ---"Joy is what you experience when you can see in another person's face and eyes that they are happy to be with you. God describes this joy in Numbers 6:25: "the LORD make his face shine upon you..." Spend some moments imagining our Lord delighting in you that way. Is there a time when you felt that? Write it down and remember it.