

THE HOLY SPIRIT – OUR IMAGE CONSULTANT?

by Sandra A. Hudson



A few years back, I heard a sermon by Pastor Marvin Winans that I think was titled "Image is Everything." It reminded me of a time, about 25 years ago, when the Lord began dealing with me regarding the concept of image. At the time, I decided I would become an Image Consultant. I completed my research, and based on what I had learned, became quite discouraged. How could I, of all people, become an Image Consultant? In my mind, I was lacking in so many areas. I surmised that God most assuredly could not have meant what I thought because I, definitely, did not fit what the world considers an ideal image. Therefore, I quickly set the image thing aside.

Now, it is years later and the Lord just recently made it clear (or should I say, I have come to better understand) what He meant. God made me to know that I am an Image Consultant, but it's not based on physical appearance. Don't get me wrong, we do want to look our best, but this was not the point He was making. The Lord drove home the message to me that it's not about how I look on the outside; rather, it concerns the work He, by His Holy Spirit, has done on the inside—how He caused me to see myself the way He sees me. It involves understanding how complete His love is for me and standing in the surety of it. So, His assignment is for me to, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, act as an Image Consultant to help others see themselves the way He (God) sees them. The title of one of Charles Capps' books explains it best: *God's Image of You!*

What does it mean to be an Image Consultant or Zoe (Life) Coach? Allow me to help you paint the correct picture based on God's Word. As a matter of understanding, perhaps you are at the sketching stage where the figures are lightly drawn in. Or you may have reached the point where the details have been added, but there is no color. The objective is to help ensure you have the full, complete picture that's in God's heart painted on the canvas of your imagination.



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~ IMAGE ~

An Important Concept Across Various Strata

I have a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, with a concentration in Marketing. One thing I have learned about advertisers and marketers is their main goal is to convince you to view their product (or service) favorably so that, ultimately, you will buy it. The greatest achievement for them is to provoke or entice you to act (purchase their product or service) repeatedly; therefore, they use pictures, words, and music repetitiously to penetrate your mind in order to paint a picture or create an image of you attaining some goal of pleasure, status, acceptance, accomplishment, etc. If they can link their product with some positive desire in your heart and mind and make it seem as though you have attained that goal once you own their product or receive their service, they are confident you will act.



Although I did not pursue a career as an Image Consultant, prior to co-founding Covenant Word Ministries, I spent years consulting with executive and upper level management professionals, to help ensure their relocation, or their employees' relocation, from one country to another was, as much as possible, hassle free. I have worked with attorneys in various countries to obtain the visas, work permits and residence permits necessary for people managing divisions of companies (and their families) to legally reside and work in several foreign countries. It was vitally important the manner in which I managed the process because the timing impacted not only the budget of the business unit, but helped to determine whether project deadlines were met, which, had they not been met, could have adversely affected the overall image of the company. If the company could not keep its word to its customers and clients, then business, potentially, would have been impacted.

Significant Since the Beginning of Time

While image is important in business, the concept did not begin there. Actually it is a biblical concept. The Bible tells us to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him (Colossians 3:10, KJV). The word image (according to the Strong's Concordance New Testament Dictionary) is from the Greek word "eikon," pronounced i-kone – (from eiko - a likeness, i.e.

[literally] statue, profile, or [figuratively] representation, resemblance: - image). The word involves the two ideas of representation and manifestation. Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father." (John 14:9) In another place he said, "I do only what I see my Father do (John 5:19, NKJV)." Further, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3a, NAS). "

We, too, have been made in the image and likeness of Almighty God. How do I know this? The Bible says so. According to Genesis 1:26, 27 (NAS), Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image (tselem -- a representative figure), according to Our likeness (d'muwth, pronounced dem-ooth -- resemblance, manner); let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. He made us speaking spirits with the authority to create just like Him. Therefore, how we see ourselves matters.



The image we have of ourselves impacts every aspect of our being. For us to experience a victorious, overcoming life, the image we see must be accurate according to God's standard. It must match the hope He had in His heart when He made us.

For many, the image they have of themselves has been formed by negative, external influences. A classic biblical example of a distorted view, despite God's Word to the contrary, and its consequences can be found in Numbers 13:33, where the ten spies spoke of themselves as being as grasshoppers in the eyes of the giants in the land, and more importantly, their eyes. They said, "...we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." As a result, they decided it was impossible to do what God had already assured them could be done. As far as God was concerned, it was already done because He told them that He had given them the land (past tense). But the ten spies chose to override what God said; instead, they put more stock in the image they had of themselves. They missed out, not because God didn't want them to have or possess the land; rather, it was because they would not mix faith with or in the Word of God. (Heb 3:14- 4:2) They refused to see God truthfully, as such, they could not see themselves properly.

Accurately Defined by the Word of God ONLY!

But wait! I have given a biblical definition and explanation of image based on the assumption that the Word of God reigns supreme in your life. Conversely, if you do not recognize the Bible (the Word of God) as the final and ultimate authority, what I have just said is a moot subject. If the Word of God is viewed as just another book with little applicable truth, then its definition of image and importance will have little impact on your life or thought process. Let me explain.



During one of a few talk shows that I had an opportunity to watch, I was completely surprised when a well known and respected host asked the question, "Why wouldn't God make Buddha?" I could not believe what I had heard, and quite frankly, at first, I was a bit angry with her.

How could she ask that question on such a large platform? She often talked of Jesus. With her book club, I assumed she read the Bible as well? Didn't she recognize the Bible as true and realize what it says about other gods. Surely she knew the answer to that question? Then I realized she must not have known. It was precisely because she didn't know that she asked the question in the first place. For someone who, perhaps, had an uninformed view of Jesus, it was a legitimate question. Then I wondered, how many other people are asking the same question within themselves. That prompted me to ask, what picture have we painted of Jesus and the Bible? What is the image that people (especially believers in Christ) see? If those who are in Christ have a distorted image of God in that they think He could possibly make and would sanction the worship of a being that some uphold as a god, heaven help those who are outside the household of faith.

~ How to Have the Right Image ~

To Know the Love of God Which Passes Knowledge

To have a right image or view of God, the first step is to get a revelation of how much He loves us and has done for us. I know it sounds cliché, but truly it is the jumping off point. We cannot see anything clearly as it relates to God if we do not first understand His love for us and what it encompasses. The Bible says faith works by love, more than anything, His love. Everything we have in Christ is a direct result of the love of God. Having a misconception of that love could mean the difference between life and death.

To misunderstand His love is equivalent to having a distorted image of God. I remember a conversation we had with a group of people one Sunday afternoon. There were several people asking questions, when one of the young adults shared how she had devoted more time to reading the Word, praying and worshiping the Lord. She felt the Lord had been dealing with her regarding love. She went on to speak more of her efforts to love or, more specifically, express her love to God. When I attempted to share that it is more important to allow Him to reveal His love so that she could reciprocate accurately and appropriately, someone else chimed in and stated that it was not possible to know the love of God. That person said God's love was beyond our understanding. Sadly, the conversation ended there.

Ephesians 3:16-19 (NKJV) states: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Well, according to the scripture above, although God's love is a mystery and it surpasses knowledge, God in His infinite wisdom has made it possible (by His Holy Spirit) for us to comprehend (Greek: katalambano - seize, lay hold of, apprehend, find, perceive, take or attain with the idea of eagerness) His love.

The Lord, by His Spirit, reveals His love in our spirit; therefore, we can attain much more than we can with our natural mind or thinking. It is the same concept as where Jesus shared with his disciples (Matt. 13:11, Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10) that it had been given for them to know the mysteries of the kingdom. The Lord preordained, apportioned, and saw to it that we could know. This is so because the love of God can be known by revelation from God. However, Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) explains, "... without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is (exists), and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Truly, no good thing (especially an understanding of His love) will He withhold from us; however, if our image has been marred by words the credible others in our lives have spoken or what we recall of our past experiences, then we are apt not to be strong in faith (paraphrase from Dr. Ira Hilliard) as it relates to receiving and understanding God's love. Now, the young adult (who is trying to love God enough without first understanding His love) has to choose whom she will believe; the problem is the other person speaking negatively about our ability to know the love of God was considered - by the young adult - to be a very credible person in her life.

Faith: a Vital Component

Based on the aforementioned, faith is a vital component of understanding and receiving the love of God. It is imperative that we guard our minds and protect the image of God because believing wrong information will short-circuit our faith. What do I mean by short-circuit? As it relates to electrical current, in network theory, the short-circuit condition is used to describe a general condition of zero voltage. Thus, the term short-circuit admittance (or impedance) is used to describe "a network condition in which certain terminals have had their voltage reduced to zero." In other words, if the voltage is at zero, no electrical current is flowing. *(Read more about short circuit admittance at: <http://www.answers.com/topic/short-circuit#ixzz1Q7F1EsRk>)*

When we adopt an incorrect view of God or have a lack of understanding of His love, we destroy the very foundation upon which our faith is built. Like the zero voltage or lack of current, we find ourselves operating at a zero faith level, wondering why things are not changing. If our faith is weak (nil, null and void), reduced to zero, then how can we with confidence believe God? We're subject to believe all kinds of misconceptions about God, such as the lie "God makes us sick to teach us a lesson." When we comprehend the love of God, we know there is no sickness in Him, only health and healing.

The truth of the matter is that Jesus came to remove sickness from our lives and make us whole. As the Lord shared with my husband, Dale, He will not put on you that from which He (through Jesus) delivered you. What parent, who loves his child, uses sickness to make his child obey him? In the natural, that is illegal. So why would we think God uses, as a means of teaching and training us, the very thing that he sent His Son to destroy in our lives? If we have that much sense, we should give God far more credit. This is not to say we do not encounter things in life; rather, when things happen, God enters in to help us and to cause the situation to work out for our good (Romans 8:28). Yes, we have a diabolical enemy, and what he means for evil, the Lord turns around for our good.

Jesus, in reply to Peter's astonishment at the withered fig tree to which Jesus spoke the day prior, said in Mark 11:22: "Have faith in God." Greek scholars have written that the correct translation is "Have the faith of God" or the "God kind of faith." Since we were made in the image of God, and we are

living, speaking spirits just like Him, we have received the same kind of faith that He has. If you read further to Mark 11:23, you will see that Jesus informed His disciples that they could speak to a mountain and it would obey them if they believed that what they said would come to pass. Jesus cannot lie; therefore, the statement has to be true. If we have the faith to believe what we say, we can have what we say.

Words Convey a Thought, Create an Image

Equally as important as our faith are the words we speak concerning God, as our words are the most visible means by which we express our view of Him. Our words paint pictures; they are the vehicle by which we transport our thoughts. If we allow ourselves to speak words that are contrary to who God is and who He says we are, then, how can we live a victorious overcoming life?

Recently I had a conversation with a dear friend. I attempted to share with him my concern for the people who “go with the flow” and repeat whatever they feel or whatever is the most commonly used idiom or phrase of the day. Often I hear them saying things like: your trials only come to make you strong; God won't put more on you than you can bear; God is sovereign, so since it happened, He must have allowed it; or everything happens for a reason, so it must have been God's will. Oh yeah, another one that's often said is "God took 'em cause" They proceed to fill in the blank with whatever comes to mind.

Perhaps you're asking, what's wrong with saying that? Well, it may look good, sound ok and seem perfectly normal, but it deviates from the truth of the Word of God. For our faith to remain strong and the proper image to remain intact, we must be consistent with the Word of God. We must see it, think it and speak it accurately. In 1 Tim. 6:20, Paul put it eloquently, “O Timothy, guard and keep the deposit entrusted [to you]! Turn away from the irreverent babble and godless chatter, with the vain and empty and worldly phrases, and the subtleties and the contradictions in what is falsely called knowledge and spiritual illumination. For by making such profession (confession) some have erred (missed the mark) as regards the faith. Grace (divine favor and blessing) be with you all! Amen.” Remember, we were made in God's image as speaking spirits with the authority and responsibility to create with our words. It is true whether we realize it or not.



~ The Goal ~

To be Conformed to the Image of His Son

Ultimately, the goal of our existence is to be conformed to the image of Jesus as God fulfills His great desire to lavishly love on us. I know most believe it is to go to heaven, but that is not the goal. We get to go to heaven, or should I say, be with Jesus where He is (John 14:3); however, the true goal is to be what we have been made, exactly as it states in Romans 8:29, NKJV. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

There are so many who do not understand this. For instance, when it comes to the issue of homosexuality, most ask if a person who practices homosexuality will get to go to heaven, while the true question (as my husband Dale recently pointed out) should relate more to whether the person is being conformed to the image of God's dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Scripture says concerning all who are in Christ, they have been born from above, "...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.... (Colossians 3:10)" If you have died and been raised to life in Christ, how can you live anymore to the contrary, in sin (Romans 6:1-23)? The answer, you have an identity problem. You have exchanged the image of the Father for a lie (Romans 1), and that life destroying deception will hurt you every time.

Transformed to the Image

Let me reiterate, it matters how you view God. You have to see Him to see yourself and once you see yourself accurately, you can be the person God has called you to be. You must see yourself in Him to be yourself; otherwise, you behave as an imposter. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18 NKJV)."

So guard your heart and mind. Give the Word of God first place in your life. By doing so, as your Image Consultant, the Holy Spirit will have the opportunity to actively participate in your life to transform you from the inside out. He will help you to see right, believe right, talk right and choose to do right. The Holy Spirit truly will lead and guide you into all truth. Only then is the Lord free to paint a picture (create an image) which accurately depicts God's love for and view of you, in order for you to live (represent, manifest and respond to Him) accordingly. You must learn always to consult the Holy Spirit, your true, personal, and extremely capable *Image Consultant*.

Shalom!

