

God: The Image Maker

Introduction

1. God promises that I can be “filled to the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19) and that his church is to “come to the full measure of the stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). What does that mean?
2. A central theme of this calling is this: *we are to participate in the fullness of Christ*. This is much more than a metaphor; it is a metaphysical reality. We are designed to live as integrated beings—inspired flesh.

Ephesians 4:13 (NASU) ...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*.

Ephesians 3:16-19 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, *that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God*.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and *it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...*

Romans 8:29 (NIV) For those God foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed to the likeness of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NASU) *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

3. Matching our desires to God’s intentions and promises is crucial to developing this fullness. Our “matter,” our flesh can be elevated to its highest and deepest level of existence as it coincides with divine consciousness.
4. What we must realize is that *Christ-likeness* is the only suitable container for such authority and power. We must move through a transformation process that moves from a **personal** relationship with God, to an **intimate** relationship, and ultimately to an **organic** relationship.

John 15:5 (MSG) *I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.*

5. Christ is calling us back to our original purpose—being God's image-bearers. Christ is the pattern for humanity and our lives, like his, are to serve as God's thoroughfares into this world.

God and the Ten Commandments

1. We must come to share the desires and purposes that exist in the heart of God. In the Ten Commandments God tells us not to make any graven images. Visible symbols for God are forbidden.

Exodus 20:4 (KJV) *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth....*

2. While God is certainly warning us about the use of idols. God tells us not to make any images of God. But the Bible tells us that there is a visible symbol for God. The visible symbol of God, on the earth, is mankind.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV) *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

3. God warns us not to make any more images because he already has plenty of them! Every face is an epiphany.
4. Every created thing exists because God desires it so.

Revelation 4:11 (NLT) *You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.*

5. There would not be a rabbit, unless it pleased God. Everything in all creation is expressing something of God.

Romans 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.... NIV*

6. The same is true, especially true, for every human being, for we were created "in the image of God." You are a unique expression of God. *Your*

*humanity is the medium of divine self-expression. **Our family lineage is divine!***

2 Peter 1:4 (NLT) *And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises **that enable you to share his divine nature...***

Mutuality

1. The Scripture reveals that God is preparing:

- **A bride for partnership**

Ephesians 5:31-33 *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.... RSV*

- **A body for enfleshing his Spirit**

Ephesians 1:22-23 *and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. RSV*

- **And a temple made of living stones for his habitation**

Ephesians 2:21-22 *In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. NIV*

2. God is looking for a dwelling place in you and me. It is almost unthinkable, yet the Bible is unmistakable concerning God's intention.

John 17:21 *that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. **May they also be in us** so that the world may believe that you have sent me...26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and **that I myself may be in them.**" NIV*

3. This is a great mystery, but God lives in the fibers of our humanity. Our relationships in the *body of Christ*, the church, also house the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 6:17,19 *But he who unites himself with the Lord **is one with him in spirit....19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of***

the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.... NIV

4. Certainly, balance is needed but fullness must not be avoided. It is the aspect of God's immanence and our organic union with him that must be discovered for Christ's fullness to be formed in us. Our lives are meant to be permeated with God.

What is God after?

1. God is looking for a place of habitation. As we "connect the dots" concerning this theme in the Scripture, we find it has three different, yet interconnected dimensions.

- The **personal dimension** of God's habitation is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.

Isaiah 66:1-2 *This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? 2 Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."* NIV

Acts 17:24 *The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.* NIV

- The **ecclesial dimension** of God's indwelling has to do with the church, the community of faith. Paul often uses the language of embodiment by calling us the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 2:21-22 *In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.* NIV

- The **eschatological dimension** of God's habitation unfolds at the end of the biblical revelation.

Revelation 21:3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."* NIV

1 Corinthians 15:28 (ESV) *When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.*

1 Corinthians 15:28 (AMPC) *However, when everything is subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also subject Himself to [the Father] Who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all [be everything to everyone, supreme, the indwelling and controlling factor of life].*

2. God ultimately desires to conform us to the image of Christ, thereby making us suitable for his indwelling habitation.

John 3:34 *For he [Jesus] is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God's Spirit is upon him without measure or limit. NLT*

In fact, Jesus is so bold as to proclaim,

John 10:30 *I and the Father are one. NIV*

John 14:9 *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. NIV*

3. Our immediate reaction is, "That's fine for Jesus. But what has that got to do with me?"

Colossians 2:9-10 (NIV) *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ...*

4. And don't forget that our call is to the "full measure of the stature of Christ" (**Ephesians 4:13**). It is in our coming to the fullness of Christ that God will find his habitation among men.

The Incarnation

1. Isn't it interesting that if we want to know what God is like, the Bible encourages us to turn to a man, the man Christ Jesus. Christianity is not merely humanity's quest for God; it is supremely God's seeking after people, people who will bear his image and become his dwelling place.
2. More than being man's theology, it seems to me that the Bible is God's anthropology. Over and over the Bible reveals to us what it means for us to be human.
3. Christ is the "Word made flesh," God's own consciousness in visibility. Human nature was the primal image that God had in his mind as a medium of his own self-expression.
4. Most often we think of the flesh as something evil. But the Bible reveals to us that flesh is also good. King David speaks of his flesh yearning for God (**Psalms 63:1**) and Paul tells us that in his flesh, Christ lives in him

(Galatians 2:20). The flesh is basically our human nature. It may be used for selfish, evil purposes. Or it may fulfill its intended purpose—becoming dynamically integrated with and indwelt by the Spirit of God. We were made *by* God and *for* God (**Colossians 1:16**).

5. One of the basic desires in the heart of God is the creation of a world and a race of beings that are the manifestation of his own glory and goodness. It is that creation and those beings that will ultimately become the dwelling place of God. This is our calling.