

## We are the Restoration of His Image on Earth – In Christ

Chapter 3: (IMAGE / Restoration). Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org / Studies

Resource: In His Image by Dr. Paul Brand & Philip Yancey. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI. (1984). *In his two companion books, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made and In His Image, Dr. Brand with the help of Philip Yancey, places an emphasis on the individual human cells in our body and their varying roles within the body for the sake of the body as a whole. He then points to the Body of Christ (the Church) and makes insightful analogies about the connections and forces that unite and guide our human bodies (and the Body of Christ). The suggested process is to review the questions prior to reviewing the content. If time is limited, each person in a group discussion should read the content prior to spending time in a group discussion to answer the questions.*

### Questions for Personal Applications or Group Discussions:

1. What does God look like? How can I find Him? Where is His image today?
2. Since God is a Spirit with no shape or form, why do men continue to force Him into an image (an idol)?
3. What is the “revolutionary pattern” that Jesus established? What qualities did He possess as the Image of God?
4. Why do we admire human qualities of beauty, strength, power and riches more than the qualities of Christ?
5. Share an example of how you’ve seen restoration of God’s image on earth. What have you seen in your life?
6. What is communicated when we say that as Christians, we are “In Christ”? (I John 2:6; II Cor. 2:15; Eph 1:4)

Personally I found this chapter to be so dynamic that it could require three summaries. I hope I have captured the key points. Thus, I urge you to buy both of Dr. Brand’s books if you wish to dig deeper into his insights.

One key point is that Jesus Christ is our only hope of Restoration as His goal was to restore the broken image in humanity. Dr. Brand tells some powerful stories to illustrate his key proposition that though broken, we can reflect Christ’s Image in us since we are “In Christ”. First, he mentions Willie Long, a smelly uneducated fisherman / small church preacher who showed him the image of God effectively as he spoke of Christ and as the love of God radiated through him in his sermons.

His second example was a fellow surgeon in India – Mary Verghese who became a paraplegic after a terrible car accident. Refusing to do the necessary rehab exercises in hope of a divine healing, she finally perceived the sense of the power of the Spirit revealed best in her weakness. (I too saw a few patients like this in my hospital chaplaincy work in a rehab center.) Mary completed her requirements to become a surgeon and then had a profound impact on the leprosy patients especially because of her handicaps and a large scar across her face. She too did not meet a high standard of physical perfection that most of us value. However, her handicaps was what communicated volumes to her patients dealing with their own unique physical and emotional scars.

The third story was about Paul’s dear mother – Granny Brand. Though a classic beauty as a young woman, she had little of that beauty left after spending 50 years as a medical missionary in the mountains in India. Paul introduced me to a book written by Dorothy Clarke Wilson titled Granny Brand that tells his mother’s story. Granny Brand experienced crippling falls, battles of typhoid, dysentery and malaria which made her into a thin, hunched-over old woman. Her skin was like leather with deep and extensive wrinkles from exposure to the wind and sun. At the age of seventy-five, she fell and broke a hip leaving her partially paralyzed. However, she refused to leave her mission work. She loved to preach the Gospel while healing the sick and pulling decayed teeth. Paul, out of a real concern for her well-being, tried with no success to get her to give up her work and come live with him and Margaret but she refused saying, “What is the use of preserving my old body if it is not going to be used where God needs me?” Eighteen years later at the age of ninety-three, she gave up riding a pony to do her mission work in the mountains since she was falling off too much.

The villagers would gather around their beloved servant to listen to every word she had to say about the work and love of Jesus. Her eyes would shine even though she could barely see the smiling faces of those who had absolute trust and affection for her – even though she had become quite unattractive. Dr. Brand's main point was that "her worn-out physical image did nothing but enhance the image of God beaming through her like a beacon". It was in these three people that Dr. Brand saw the image of God most clearly.

Dr. Brand shared about seeing Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel and having concluded that all artists fail when they paint the figure of God in the image of humanity. Remember – God is a Spirit. Paintings of God are impossible. We cannot see God nor contemplate His image. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment forbids us to make or worship gods made as idols. Living in India, Dr. Brand saw a lot of idols that trivialized God with some of those idols actually provoking fear and bondage. God as we know Him is Spirit and is present everywhere. He can be trusted and He takes away our fears.

Adam and Eve were able to experience perfect communion with their Creator until the sin of disobedience altered that special relationship. Today, we too suffer from this sin of disobedience until we depend on the work of Christ. Dr. Brand wrote, "It is not enough for us to mirror forth the residue of spirit and worth inside each person. We needed something greater, far greater, to know what God is like. We needed a new image, a new demonstration of God's likeness on our planet". We got that need met in the person of Jesus Christ – the second Adam, who became for us the image of God in bodily form. But Christ made it clear he would not remain here in that form but would institute his Body of Christ in a spiritual form – the Kingdom of God. Even though being God in a human body (incarnate), Christ did not measure up to the image expected of a king or a god. He may not have been as handsome as we think. Recall that He identified with the hungry, the sick, the estranged, the naked and those imprisoned. Jesus said, "Whatever you do for one of the least of these people, we do for Him" (Matt. 25:40).

As Christ left earth, He gave us exactly what we needed – the Holy Spirit. Christ traded places with the Holy Spirit. As the Lord's Bride, the Body of Christ, we are a spiritual organism - not an organization. The Church as an organism is alive and vibrant and growing with less structure and with some exciting outcomes.

Like his missionary parents, Dr. Brand spent his life and career working with rejected people – those suffering from leprosy. I will never forget him inviting me to the Leprosarium in Carville, LA (now the National Hansen's Disease Museum). He explained how these patients could not feel pain due to the disease of leprosy, a nerve disorder. Remember his main thesis - Jesus Christ is our only hope of Restoration as His goal was to restore the broken image in humanity. This book, [In His Image](#), centers on a community of people called the Body of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Brand said it is "a supreme mystery" that we can show forth God's image - In Christ. As we all know, our society rewards perfected human qualities such as beauty and athletic skills and more whereas the qualities that Christ showed were quite different (humility, servanthood and love). These are the qualities we must pursue as the Body of Christ – what Paul called a revolutionary pattern given to us by God the Son who expected the Body of Christ to develop in a spiritual nature consisting of people made in His image. In that community, it is the image of God we must find – not our own (I Cor. 12:24-25). It seems that too many of us seek to boost the value of our own image. A restoration of His Image on earth is underway through us. In Glory, like the people mentioned in this chapter, we will be judged not by what we are but for what Christ is – in us (2 Cor. 3:18). As you help others, remember to treat all as people made in the Image of God. You will be a much more affective and effective helper / healer - in Christ. Ron - also in Christ!