

Our Image of God and Self

While this topic appears near the end of our study, our image of God is one of the biggest barriers to our healing. As one of the biggest barriers, it probably should be dealt with near the end of a deliverance/inner healing session rather than at the beginning. In most cases, if the seeker has a low opinion of God, they will also have a low opinion of themselves. They are inter-related. It is impossible to have a good opinion of ourselves without knowing God loves us and accepts us just the way we are.

Oftentimes we don't know assuredly, without doubt, that God loves us, and therefore longs to bring blessing and healing into our life. Those that have open gates such as rejection are particularly vulnerable to self hate, feelings of unworthiness, self unforgiveness, and distorted images of God. To acquire a stronger faith in this area, answer the questions below and study the accompanying scriptures.

Do you know that God loves you? Study the following references:

- a. *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: ... And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good”* (Gen. 1:26-31).
- b. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).
- c. *“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. ... God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”* (1 John 4:15-16).
- d. *“... Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20).

Many seekers who have experienced wounds of the heart, abuse –physical, emotional, verbal or sexual-, been rejected or abandoned, or have become spoiled through sin, will have a poor image of themselves. They may even hate themselves, and feel they are “dirt”, that they have no worth, and that no one including God can love them. Some seekers who are overweight will hate their bodies, and remember over and over the critical comments made by others, and/or those from “Channel B” (Satan) that continues to tell them they are disgusting, and unacceptable.

Many times the image a person has of God reflects the image or relationship they have had with their earthly father. In short, they see God as they see their own father. Normally children are introduced to God as Father. If “father” means judgment, punishment, distance and abandonment, then the child accepts God as such. For devout Christians, sometimes a lifetime of spiritual activity can be built on a weak foundation of who God is and how he loves us. It is very difficult to love thy self, and they neighbor without loving God first. (Matt 22:37). Those that experience feelings of rejection, abandonment etc. normally will have a poor image of themselves, and/or feel God is angry with them. They will likewise have a poor image of God, and will know or understand that he loves them no matter what they do.

Rather than thinking of God as the long-suffering, loving, generous, and forgiving Father that He is, some individuals view Him as a strict and stern father, as one who readily keeps track of our sins and is quick to punish us at the first instance of error. We may think of God as a grim-faced old man with white hair and beard, fire in His eyes, sitting on a throne just waiting for us to be bad so He can punish us. Some may have been the recipient of “fire and brimstone” sermons as a child that influenced how they think about God. We may end up confessing our sins over and over out of fear of what could happen if we didn’t get it right.

Perhaps you think God is ever-watching for you to make a mistake and that the Book of Life has within it only two pages (the “good” side and the “bad” side), and that you are being judged by the tallying marks of the two.

Sometimes we don’t think we are worthy of God’s blessings—and act accordingly. Truly our actions, at times, expose the inner view of our thoughts, as revealed within Proverbs 23:7, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.*” And having, for instance, an earthly father who was stern, whose discipline bordered on cruelty, or perhaps who neglected, abandoned, or abused us (physically, verbally, or sexually), makes it very difficult to transition our thought acceptingly toward a heavenly Father whom we are to believe is good, loving, generous, forgiving, etc. One of the ways to help a “seeker” have the “right” image of God is to ask them to think of Jesus. They may be able to understand Jesus loves them much easier at first than that God loves them.

If Jesus were to sit down immediately across from you and look at you right in the eyes, what would your initial feelings be? ...Dread or a shirking away? ...Fear? ...The joy of anticipation? When Jesus looks inside of you, do you think He sees only your junk (your dishonesty, your unclean thoughts, your weaknesses and impurities)? Perhaps you spend time—recalling in anguish—all the things you should have done but haven’t, the things you constantly put off or never seem to get around to doing, or have constant guilt over the wrongs you’ve committed. Sometimes you’ve even repented of these wrongs but thoughts of guilt and unforgiveness seem to constantly re-surface. You end up believing and accepting the thought that Jesus is disappointed in you, which justifies those guilty feelings.

You may, perhaps, always seem to be fighting negative messages and thoughts. All these thoughts are recorded in our minds. They return in very interesting ways. Be reminded that it is the task of the adversary to try to get us to recycle the negative tapes of all our past experiences: “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8). Our response to this negativity should be to “*be sober, be vigilant!*”

The Good News is that once we take these negative, unworthy, and oftentimes untrue thoughts to the cross, God forgives them and forgets them; they are never to be remembered again. The cross has the power to cleanse us so that when we stand before God, we stand pure in the site of God in that moment: clean, forgiven, and brand new. All previous sin is forgiven and forgotten. The good news is that when God looks at us He sees only our spirit, not our body. This has been re-affirmed many times in prayers for those who are overweight.

Know that God does not condemn us (John 3:17, “*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*”). Guilt, shame, and remorse don’t come from God. (Recall God’s response to Adam’s hiding in the Garden of Eden, “*Who told thee that thou wast naked?*”—Gen. 3:11.) God’s heart is heavy

because we ask Him time and time again to forgive us when He has already done so. God's plan for us can never be revealed until we are willing to know and say, "I am God's child."

If you do not know that God loves you, if you do not thoroughly believe and trust that you are made in His image (inside) and likeness (outside; see Gen. 1:26), and if you do not believe that He accepts you just the way you are, then continue with the exercise studies below and pray the prayer which follows at the end. Be honest and upfront with your answers. God knows anyway.

Identify and mark the statements below that are true (T) for you:

- a. I have problems believing God loves me.
- b. I accredit to my heavenly Father those attributes I've experienced from my earthly father, which weren't nurturing or wholesome.
- c. My earthly father abused me emotionally, physically, sexually—circle which one(s).
- d. I think of God as an accountant, adding up rights and wrongs.
- e. I think I have to earn God's love and blessing.
- f. I think I am not worthy of God's blessing because of my sins.
- g. I'm mad at God because He allowed things to happen to me and/or my loved ones.
- h. I'm not sure about whether or not God loves me. He doesn't seem to answer my prayers.
- i. I have a hard time believing that God loves me.
- j. I am angry at God.
- k. I feel guilt, shame, and condemnation, and I think it is coming from God.
- l. I dislike or even hate myself, so I can't see how God can love me.
- m. I have tried to change for the better but have failed. I don't believe God cares.
- n. The elders have prayed for me but nothing has happened.
- o. I have real problems believing Jesus came to heal me or to set (make) me free.

Many individuals believe the lies of the devil and have decided (with a little help from Satan) that God doesn't love them. Most individuals are oblivious to the chains that bind them. In His healing ministry, Jesus treated those who were hurting as victims and set them free.

Jesus came to release the brokenhearted and to set the captives free (Is. 61:1 and Luke 4:18). Jesus' invitation is, "... *Come unto me ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls...*" (Mat. 11:28-30). Most believers don't experience true freedom; perhaps they understand they are to receive salvation but they are not living the abundant (John 10:10) and free life (John 8:31-32) promised and available to them. The Bible says: "*He tends His flock, like a Sheppard: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart: (Isaiah 40:11) The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save, He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing: (Zephaniah 3:17)*"

Healing the Image of Ourselves

It may be very difficult to help seekers heal the image of themselves until their image of God is healed. They may be angry at God, or feel that he has abandoned them because He

did not answer their prayers, or that He let something happen in their lives that they feel He could have prevented.

There are **two** ways for seekers to change how they think God sees them and ultimately how they see themselves.

1. The process of “**behold and be held**” described in the inner healing section works very well here also. We ask the seeker to pray “Jesus, what do you see when you look at me?” Jesus will usually appear in a picture in their mind and remove all their feelings of unworthiness and self hatred. Encourage the seeker to ask God to hold them. The healing effects of spending time in Jesus’ arms are phenomenal. Even if they are angry at God, He scoops them up and loves them.
2. Getting the **truth of the WORD** in our hearts and spirits. Read the following scriptures daily until the Lord convinces you of His love for you.

Scriptures tell us the truth about God; they say God is:

- intimate and involved (Ps. 139:1-18)
- merciful, gracious, and compassionate (Ps. 103:8-14)
- accepting and filled with joy and love (Zeph. 3:17, Rom. 15:7)
- warm and affectionate (Is. 40:11, Hosea 11:3-4)
- always with me; eager to be with me (Jer. 31:20, Heb. 13:5)
- longsuffering, patient, and slow to anger (Ex. 34:6, 2 Pet. 3:9)
- loving, gentle, and protective of me (Ps. 18:2, Jer. 31:3, Is. 42:3)
- trustworthy, wanting to give me a full life (Lam. 3:22-23, John 10:10)
- full of grace and mercy (Luke 15:11-23, Heb. 4:15-16)
- tenderhearted and forgiving; His heart and arms are always open to me (Ps. 130:1-4, Luke 15:17-24)
- committed to my growth and proud of me (Rom. 8:28-30, 2 Cor. 7:4)

The scriptures tell me that in Christ:

- I am accepted and loved (Gen. 1:26-27)
- I am the salt and light of the earth (Mat. 5:13-14)
- I am God's child (John 1:12)
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)
- I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15:1, 5)
- I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)
- I am a personal witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)
- I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
- I have been justified (Rom. 5:1)
- I am united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit (1 Cor. 6:17)
- I have been bought with a price; I belong to God (1 Cor. 6:20)
- I am a member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:27)
- I am a saint (Eph. 1:1)

- I have been adopted as God's child (Eph. 1:5)
- I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18)
- I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Col. 1:14)
- I am complete in Christ (Col. 2:10)
- I am free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2)
- I am assured that all things work together for my good (Rom. 8:28)
- I cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39)
- I am God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16)
- I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God (2 Cor. 1:21-22)
- I am a minister of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-20)
- I am God's coworker (2 Cor. 6:1)
- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Eph. 2:6)
- I am God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10)
- I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph. 3:12)
- I am hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3)
- I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be perfected (Phil. 1:6)
- I am a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20)
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)
- I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7)
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)
- I can find grace and mercy in time of need (Heb. 4:16)

Statements of Truth and Belief: After you have prayed the prayer at the end of this section (out loud and with a friend), read (out loud and daily) the following eleven “Statements of Truth and Belief” until your image of God changes to what is truth—as recommended in Romans 12:2, “... *be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...*”

- a. I recognize that there is only one true and living God who exists as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ex. 20:2-3, Col. 1:16-17).
- b. I recognize that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, and that He came to destroy the works of the devil (John 1:1 and 14, Col. 2:15, 1 John 3:8).
- c. I believe that God demonstrated His own love for me, in that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me (Rom. 5:8). I believe that He has delivered me from the domain of darkness and transferred me to His kingdom, and in Him I have redemption, the forgiveness of sin (Col. 1:13-14).
- d. I believe that I am a child of God and that I am seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). I believe that I was saved by the grace of God through faith and that it was and is a gift and not the result of any works on my part (Eph. 2:8-9, 1 John 3:1-3).
- e. I choose to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. I put no confidence in the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). I put on the

- full armor of God and resolve to stand firm in my faith and resist the evil one (Eph. 6:10-20, Phil. 3:3).
- f. I believe that apart from Christ I can do nothing (John 15:5), so I declare my complete dependence on Him. I choose to abide in Christ in order to bear much fruit (John 15:6-8) and glorify my Father. I announce to Satan that Jesus is my Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). I reject any and all counterfeit gifts or works of Satan in my life.
 - g. I believe that the truth will make me free (John 8:32) and that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). If Jesus sets me free, I will be free indeed (John 8:36). I recognize that walking in the light (1 John 1:3-7) is the only path of true fellowship with God and man. Therefore, I stand against all of Satan's deception by taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). I declare that the Bible is the only authoritative standard for life (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
 - h. I choose to present my body to God as a living and holy sacrifice and to present the members of my body as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). I choose to renew my mind by studying and accepting the living word of God in order that I may prove that the will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom. 12:1-2). I put off the old self with its evil practices and put on the new self (2 Cor. 5:17, Col. 3:9-10) made available to me through Christ Jesus. I declare myself to be a new creation in Christ.
 - i. By faith, I choose to be filled with the Spirit (John 16:13) so that I can be guided unto all truth. I choose to walk by the Spirit so that I will not carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16, Eph. 5:18).
 - j. I renounce all selfish goals and choose the ultimate goal of love. I choose to obey the two greatest commandments: to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself (Mat. 22:37-39, Mark 12:33, 1 Tim. 1:5).
 - k. I believe that the Lord Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mat. 28:18) and He is the head over all rule and authority (Eph. 1:19-23); I am complete in Him (Col. 2:10). I believe that Satan and his demons are subject to me in Christ (Jas. 4:7) since I am a member of Christ's body. Therefore, I obey the command to submit to God and resist the devil, and I command Satan in the name of Jesus Christ to leave my presence.

An excellent resource in helping seekers heal their image of self and God can be found at:
http://home.earthlink.net/~covenantcomputing/sealed/GODS_ESTHEEM.htm

Prayer to Heal My Image of God

Lord, I know you created me in your own image and likeness. I know I cannot receive your full blessings for me until I come to understand that you love me just the way I am and that I do not have to earn your blessings. Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners so I know you love me in spite of myself.

Lord I repent for believing all the lies about who you are and who I am in you. I reject and renounce them. I ask for your forgiveness for any anger and resentment I have held against you. I choose to give you your rightful place in my heart and life.

Lord, I know I cannot be right with you unless I have reconciled with my parents. Help me to forgive them of all the unhealthy and unjust things they have done to me and to love them as you do.

Heal the false image I have had of you Lord, and change it to be an image of your true nature, that of love, compassion, healing, and blessings. Let me **know** without doubting that I am accepted by you, one of your special and precious children. I pray these favors in Jesus' name. Amen.

Resources

1. Neil Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Regal Books, 1990). ISBN 0830713751.
2. Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Harvest House, 2000). ISBN 0-7369-0241-4. (Much of the material for this section was taken from this book.)
3. Brad Jersak, *Can You Hear Me?* Fresh Wind Press, 2003) ISBN 0-9733586-0-2