

WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?



I heard the story of a five-year-old boy found in his small, rental home far out in the country, with his mother and baby sister, both dead. Just as he opened the last can of soup, a man appeared at the door. The landlord's son found him skinny, dirty, and hungry, when he checked to see why the rent hadn't been paid.

"Mom said to wait for God," the boy replied. "He will take care of me."

The man tried to hide his shock as he surveyed the bodies and the mess around him.

"Looks like he did not come."

"Well, you don't look like God," the boy admitted.

The landlord's son took the orphan to his home where he and his infertile wife raised him.

"You don't look like God," the boy said.

What did he expect to see when God appeared?

When a kid asks, "What does God look like?", you may be stumped. You assess what you know, what you've been taught, what you've experienced yourself. You must humble yourself. . .to a child's level. . .to give any reasonable, satisfying reply. Parents need help to explain God in physical terms that kids can relate to.

If you don't believe God exists, you must determine if you'll dampen this child's budding faith by saying so. If you do know that God exists, but have never actually seen him, what do you say?

The Imagining Gift

How wonderful, how beautiful

The sight of Thee must be.

Wm Frederick Faber

Here's what I've heard or read about descriptions of God. . . .

"He shines with fuzzy edges like the flannel board image at my childhood Sunday School"

"He's something like a male version of Pollyanna"

"When I think of God, I think of Douglas MacArthur, God the General"

"I think he looks like a bearded, eye twinkling Santa Claus."

"All I can imagine is a hand that reaches out, like in the Michelangelo fresco."

"I envision a glowing giant with a voice like thunder claps."

"He's delicate, like a butterfly."

"He's got the majesty of a Mt. Kilimanjaro."

"He's definitely a blond with blue eyes."

"No, he's black and appears as a woman sometimes."

The English writer Emily Dickinson once spoke of God as the "hazy oblong blur which my parents worship"

All this diverse speculation makes you wonder, if he appeared before you right now, would you even recognize him? Especially if he looked nothing like your pre-conceived notions.

How you describe God reveals much about your life influences, your biblical knowledge, as well as your relationships. Your family beliefs. Your race. Doctrine you've learned. Sermons heard. Books read. Movies viewed. These bits and pieces form your impressions of how you envision the Almighty.

I don't possess a vivid mental picture of God. However, I expect to be overwhelmed by his person. . .for all eternity. I presume much about him. . .a presence that glistens or dazzles. A radiant Person. A vibrant personality. From all I know of daily living with this invisible God for more than four decades, I know he will never bore me.

Novelist Kristen Billerbeck says, "He's more beautiful than you can possibly imagine. We're made in His image, so to me He's probably the ultimate human who's so perfect we cannot even look upon His glory."

Movie moguls stab at the subject of God in sometimes comedic forms. . .such as Morgan Freeman in *Bruce Almighty* or George Burns in *Oh, God!*. There's also the representations done by Alanis Morissette of *Dogma* or the several different actors who portrayed him on the TV show *Joan of Arcadia*.

But not everyone talks of God in specifics.

"I just can't conjure up an 'image' of God. To me the answer seems to be 'God FEELS like a comforting hug, and a warm blanket on a cold night, and a smile from a child.' If I HAVE to put an image with God, it's the grandeur of mountains or the beauty of a sunset, etc. But those seem pale by comparison" (Deborah Raney, author of *Beneath a Southern Sky*).

But that longing. . .or demand. . .to see a divine being before you believe persists.



How you describe God reveals much about your life influences, your biblical knowledge, as well as your relationships. Your family beliefs. Your race. Doctrine you've learned. Sermons heard. Books read. Movies viewed.

He's Indescribable. . .So, Why Try?

To whom, then, will you compare God?

What image will you compare him to?

Isaiah 40:18

Explaining God is like trying to describe the Grand Canyon to someone who's never seen any canyon. I overheard my son once tell a playmate: "It's a huge hole. It's very deep and wide."

I tried to relay a better description to a friend: "You get tipsy looking down. It's a steep-walled gorge with lots of peaks and canyons and ravines. And it's mostly rusty red."

To actually stand at the Grand Canyon's edge, to allow the immense expanse to invade your senses, leaves you feeling most inadequate to transfer the experience to another human. But visitors do attempt it. . .and take panoramic video shots. . .and buy postcards.

No one can adequately describe the Lord of the Universe.

You stutter like an illiterate beggar. You stumble like a blind pauper. You sputter inferior effigies or fanciful idioms. Some folks whip themselves into ecstasies, then blubber about mystic visions. Every native tongue attempts to fill in the gaps, the breaches of language, to ransack the largest thesaurus for superlatives. No praise is too extravagant. Yet even then help is needed.



The search for who God is, what He looks like, rouses you from spiritual lethargy.

No one can sketch God's form in true detail. No one can fully fathom his greatness. But you can study him and communicate with him.

To study God's beauty is to fill a spiritual longing.

You improve your mind.

You'll know God better.

The search for who God is, what He looks like, rouses you from spiritual lethargy. Like travelers to foreign places or pilgrims to sacred sites. An industrious seeker avoids sound bites that demand little or nothing--like show up at church once in a while. You actually read each forwarded, inspirational e-mail. You plunk a CD of spiritual sounds in your auto deck. You take

every opportunity to study holy writ. You sit under studious teachers. You communicate daily with the deity. You listen to proven, wise friends.

An attentive pupil asks, in everything that happens, "What am I learning about God?"

Seekers stir up adventures. You meet up with other pilgrims with stories, and you put yours together with theirs, to fit more puzzle pieces. You invade God's space and risk great change. You do the serious repent thing, that is, turn around and go the opposite way: "I'm not going to do that anymore!"

"The very quest for God, our determined pursuit," Philip Yancey says, "changes us in the ways that matter most."

Change happens when you scout around in spiritual territory. You're liable to become familiar with the terrain, make peace with the formerly foreign elements.

You change as you bask in his beauty.

Moses is a great example. He "persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27 NIV).

Who can remain a mediocre person and pursue knowing God?

You struggle with many issues. You face terror. You endure sorrows. You blunder into bedlam and want to bail out. No matter what's happening in your life, the circumstance clears

in perspective, becomes enriched, when you probe God's being. When you examine the ideal Parent, inspect the perfect Father, seek the great Physician, and scrutinize the Lord of glory.

Meditation on worthy subjects invigorates the brain, improves perception. Raising your emphasis on better topics, steps up the level of contemplation, stretches the soul.

"There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity," said Charles Spurgeon. "It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity."

Being filled with God gives you tenacity to endure, persistence to plod one more day, one more moment. . . because of trust that something. . . Someone. . . exquisite in beauty awaits you at the end of it all.

You can't dwell on God too much. He's your best, your highest thought. Ask him to enlarge your mind, to see as much of him as possible.

Best of all, you yourself become more appealing, more beautiful, as you behold God's glory (Exodus 34:35 NIV).

Anyone who walks more than a mile with this unseen God experiences a myriad of interventions and signs that confirm he hovers nearby, that he's busy doing things. But lots of questions remain. Such as, what does He look like?

The Need For Visuals

We're all a little like children.

It's easier for us to understand something we can visualize.

Cindy Bryan

A man in northern Idaho attempted to auction off a rock formation in his back yard he called the "Hand of God." Measuring 9'x4', Paul Grayhek of Coeur d'Alene discovered the image after a landslide. "A message from God," he determined of the huge, hand-shaped rock.

Others have claimed an imprint of Jesus on a tree trunk. Or his likeness from a Hubble Space Telescope photo. Even the Virgin Mary's been seen in screen doors and on a grilled cheese sandwich. The issue is what it means to the person who finds these things.

Does the question of what God looks like only intrigue the curious who dabble in spiritual 'how many angels can dance on a pin' debates?

Or do sincere seekers want to know, such as true believers who desire a closer look at their heavenly Father?

Which are you? If you're the latter, when you need him near, you scour the landscape for some glimpse. You want an assurance that he's close, with his eye on you or a sense of his outstretched arm or a wisp of movement that reveals he's passing by.

"We run to you, God," writes Sister Mary Francis Gangloff, "as the prize of our lives."

To know what he looks like gives impetus to love him deeper. You're more convinced he is worthy to follow and obey, at all costs. For how can you love anyone with no notion of what they look like? "I love you," sounds awkward, even brazen, and too familiar for someone whose picture we wouldn't recognize.

On the other hand, skeptics demand proof of God's existence. They're like the surfer on the beach who said to my husband and me when we handed him an invitation to a Christian concert: "Show me God right now and I'll know he exists."

"How do I know this God you speak of is a good God," a co-worker remarks. "I can tell a lot about a person by studying their eyes."

"If only I could see Him, I would believe," a friend says.

A doubting Thomas proclaims, "I must see the nail marks in his hands."

Sometimes it's a control issue—"If we can see it and name it, we somehow own it" (Rev. Timothy E. Schenck).

But consider this--if no one can describe him, does that prove he doesn't exist?

Just because you can't see a thing, that doesn't eliminate its reality. Galaxies and phenomenon within galaxies have yet to be discovered. But scientists believe, by faith in their research, that they're out there. . . somewhere.

It's even difficult sometimes to describe something you can see, but can't touch, such as a rainbow, especially if you know that pure white is the aggregate of its seven streaks of color. Yet, a rainbow inspires and delights all the same.

Humans tend to depend on optic proofs for signs from heaven.

Yet, how can you attest to or describe an 'under wraps' divine being? How helpful it would be to possess a photo or video or YouTube clip, to whip out a positive ID.

Communication excels when you can look at someone as you talk to him or her. Or at least know what they look like. If you've never met them, a photo helps. The visuals play a part of the mosaic. You combine the bits and pieces to build a composite picture that's as true as possible.

You wait in wonder to see what the newborn looks like. In adult relationships, you're mostly drawn to the eyes, the face.

But there's this thought too. . . in the quietest depths of your being, does a doubt creep in: will you be disappointed when you see him? Is it crucial to you that he's an attractive being? Handsome? Even beautiful?

Underlying those queries is a deeper concern. . . will it be worth it, all this trauma and trouble in your faith walk? Will he meet every expectation? Or will it be like most dreams and fantasies here on earth. . . when you get there, it's like "ho hum, is that all there is?"

It may help to study the physical attributes ascribed to God in the Bible, while also assessing the spiritual applications.

At best He is pictured to us
in symbol and simile and vision.

J. Sidlow Baxter, Majesty

What Do Witnesses Say?

Once you see the face of God,
the world is forever transformed into his features.

Peter Kreeft

In one way, no human has ever really seen God. God is invisible to the human eye, most of the time (1 Timothy 1:17). You might glimpse a distant, distorted part of him, but never the whole (2 Corinthians 3:18).

But there's been claims of a God sighting, though no cameras recorded the event. Here are some of the stories. . .

- Isaiah witnessed him robed and seated on a throne (Isaiah 6:1) and warned that he would come in judgment as thunder, earthquake, windstorm, tempest, and fierce flames (Isaiah 29:6).
- The Israelis viewed thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and smoke, and a loud trumpet blast on Mount Sinai (Isaiah 19:16-19).
- Elijah heard his voice as a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-13).
- Elisha ogled a whirlwind fire of flying chariots and horses (2 Kings 2:11).
- Ezekiel said, "I saw what appeared to be glowing metal from his waist up, as if full of fire. He looked like fire. A brilliant light surrounded him, like a radiant rainbow" (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

- Simeon beheld Jesus, the Messiah (Luke 2:25-32).
- Luke relates his shimmery glory in a manger (Luke 2:11).
- John the Baptist watched as his Spirit like a dove descended on Jesus (Matthew 3:16, John 1:32).
- Peter and John got to be with Jesus when he morphed into this Super Being (Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2).
- Stephen, while being stoned, captured a scene in heaven of God's glory and Jesus at his side (Acts 7:54-56).
- John saw the Son as a slain, but honored Lamb who stood up on a throne in heaven (Revelation 5:6ff).

Moses got the closest.

At eighty, He tiptoed barefoot near a blazing, non-burning bush, where he received God's call. Then, after a long siege of miracle baiting with Egypt's Pharaoh, Moses gaped as torrents of sea water split open like a roadway. Manna poured out of the skies to feed millions. Dry rocks gushed drinking water. God's voice thundered out of luminous clouds.

Moses marveled at astounding divine light shows. He cradled sacred words under his arms. He basked in Yahweh's love. "Face to face" designated their conversations (Numbers 12:8, Deuteronomy 34:10).

But Moses wanted more. He longed for a clearer visual.

So, Moses hunkered behind a rock to glimpse God's afterglow. He was allowed a peek at God's "backsides," as a hallowed hand raised up to block the full view (Exodus 33:18-23). After that encounter, His countenance beamed for days.

Those who've been privileged to gaze on God's glory transfix into some shade of brilliance.

"Beautiful beyond description," so the song goes.

Some witnesses who think they've seen God describe an awesome kind of beauty, a fierce dazzle of dread, someone from whom to flee. He can appear harsh to the haughty, gory to the guilty. Satan and his cohorts hate his company.

Any visible appearance of God is called a "theophany."

Other recorded God sightings include those by Abraham (Genesis 12:7,18:1), Isaac (Genesis 26:2,24), Jacob (Genesis 35:1,9,48:3), Aaron (Leviticus 9:4,16:2), Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:15), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:21), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5,9:2,11:9,2 Chronicles 1,2, Chronicles 7:12).

The biblical scribes describe him as

Crowned in dazzling majesty.

Fiery glowing metal.

A rainbow. . .or the shimmer after the rain.

A whirlwind.

Clouds, the dust of his feet.

A consuming fire on top a mountain.

A sunrise on a cloudless morning.

Radiance.

A vision of smoke, fire, and burning coals.

A cloudburst. A thunderstorm. Heavy like huge hail.

Heavenly lights that don't change like shifting shadows.

A fiery maze of colors, like the aurora borealis.

A mass of fierceness, like a million man army.

One who holies any ground.

I've heard testimonies from folks facing crises who strive to tell how God appeared to them--

"My bedroom filled with light."

"I felt warm all over."

"Love washed over my body."

"Color and light exploded everywhere."

"I smelled a fragrance like the aroma of a thousand beautiful perfumes mingled together. It made me homesick for someplace I've never been."

"It was like an ethereal glow."

A mystic relates her God encounter. . . "I saw a stately lord, seated in his regal chambers," writes Julian of Norwich. She further explains, "I did not envision God in a certain 'form' but in my understanding . . . ", that is, with the eyes of her soul.

And the poet, H. Kirke White, expounds: "He yokes the whirlwind to his car, and sweeps the howling skies."

Novelist Charles Kingsley murmured as he was dying, "How beautiful God is! How beautiful God is!" Aren't you more than a bit curious to pull back the drapes on his viewing stage?

GOD'S ANATOMY

On his robe and on his thigh
he has this name written:
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Revelation 19:16

What's God's height? Weight? Length of hair?

How big are His hands? Does He wear clothes? What size are his shoes?

The idea of God being everywhere causes some people to obsess about his dimensions.

Here's a few factors to consider. . . .



Many have experienced his touch, even a divine embrace. Or a hug from an angel that seemed straight out of heaven.

His Arms Around You, His Hand on You

He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 40:11 ESV

Bestselling author Jerry B. Jenkins (*The Left Behind Series, Riven*) tells of an experience with a mystery hand that saved his life as a child. He shot outside a church door in pitch blackness and sprinted toward the parking lot. Alone.

"Suddenly I was stopped in my tracks by what felt like a huge arm at my waist. . . My hands and feet flew out ahead of me. I stopped with a jolt."

After a while, he realized he stood at the edge of a ten-foot hole. Still alone. He forgot the parking lot had been excavated for a new sanctuary building. "Too shaken to play, I just stood there deep in thought."

He wondered about that event for many years.

Many have experienced his touch, even a divine embrace. Or a hug from an angel that seemed straight out of heaven.

We know from the Bible record that. . . .

-- God created with his hands. For instance, he shaped and made you (Job 10:8, Psalm 119:73).

-- He formed the moon and stars (Psalm 8:3).

-- He holds the earth's caverns and mountain peaks, to activate his works of art (Psalm 95:3-5, Isaiah 45:11,12).

-- He laid the earth's foundations and his right hand spread out the heavens (Isaiah 48:13).

-- He engraved you on his palms (Isaiah 49:16).

-- He lifts his hand to swear to promises he makes to people (Ezekiel 47:14).

-- His hands work to fulfill his promises (2 Chronicles 6:4,15).

-- His hand on you will empower you to speak and do mighty deeds (Ezekiel 33:22, 37:1).

-- His hand on you empowers for service, nudges and guides you, points out capable partners, and gives you courage (1 Chronicles 28:19, Ezra 7:28, 8:18).

-- He steadies those who stumble (Psalm 37:24).

-- His hand can work for you or against you (Ruth 1:13, 1 Chronicles 4:10). However, it's better to fall into his hands, than leave your destiny to another faulty human (1 Chronicles 21:13).

-- All blessings, the good things of life, come from his hand. His hands can hide you, even from him (Isaiah 49:2, Exodus 33:22).

-- His strong hand on you brings caution, warning, guidance. It is a grave thing to ignore God's outstretched hand toward you (Proverbs 1:24,25, Isaiah 65:2).

-- It's a dreadful thing to fall into his hands of judgement (Hebrews 10:31).

-- He holds your life in his hand (Daniel 5:23).

-- His hand of love lifts you up when you're down (1 Peter 5:6).

-- His hand stretches far enough to cover all the nations, to accomplish his purpose in them and through them (Isaiah 14:26,27).

-- The arm of the Lord is a symbol of God's power—Psalm 98:1, Isaiah 52:9-10, 63:12—to stop an army or save a life (Exodus 16:3, Judges 2:15).

-- Through his hands, he delivers, he protects. His arms reach out to redeem souls, to perform wonders, to deliver out of trouble, to send plagues, to defeat enemies (Exodus 6:6, 13:9,14, 15:6).

-- Faith is proved by how long and strong you believe God's arm to be (Numbers 11:23).

-- Some day he will wipe away your tears (Revelation 21:4).

In addition, before he was stoned to death, Stephen viewed Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:2). : Ezra succeeded because God's hand was upon him (Ezra 7:6,0,28; 8:18,22,31). And artists like Michelangelo paint God with his arm stretched out to touch a human hand.

Which of the above gives you concern? Or comfort?

Have you ever considered what would it be like to walk with God hand in hand?

Have you ever recognized the hand of God in your life?

Or do you long for God to give you a huge hug, make you feel like you belong, so you know that you're loved?

His Eyes Upon You

Does he who formed the eye not see?

Psalm 94:9 NIV

A Hubble telescope picture taken in space is simply called, "the eye of God." It depicts the so-called [Helix Nebula](#), described by astronomers as "a trillion-mile-long tunnel of glowing gases."

It's difficult to imagine a relationship with any being that had no eyes. Even a blind person has the potential for sight. So, what are God's eyes like? His eyes would epitomize his mood, his thoughts toward you, his essence, his personality.

What color are they? Do they glitter? Does he wink? Does he ever squint?

What do you look like, from his viewpoint? We have some clue of that. . . "Men judge by outward appearance, but I look at a man's thoughts and intentions." (1 Samuel 16:7 TLB).

The goal of a true believer is to have the Father's eyes. To see other people and events as he sees. Or to see as he wants you to see, from the vantage point of who he created you to be.

His eyes search everywhere, all the time. He watches you. It is by his eyes, that is, how he perceives things, that establishes right and wrong (Exodus 15:26, Deuteronomy 12:25,28, 17:2).

You know what is important to God when you understand where he focuses his attention and who is the 'apple of his eye' (Deuteronomy 11:12, 32:9,10).

God sees your troubles, notices your actions, pays attention to your pains.

His Feet Pave the Way

Your path led through the sea,
your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.

Psalm 77:19

He may not walk with you, like he did with Adam and Eve in Eden. But, as the old hymn says, In the rustling grass you may hear him pass. You might perchance see his shadow as he moves about.

His feet are definitely here. . . somewhere. . . everywhere. Watch for his prints today.

Heaven is my throne room;
I rest my feet on earth.

Acts 7:49 MSG

His Open Mouth

The law from Your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver

Psalm 119:72 AMP

Big things happen when God speaks (Genesis 1:3,6,9; Lamentations 3:38).

The words that I speak unto you,
they are spirit,
and they are life.

John 6:53,63

It's impossible for me to picture hearing a voice that doesn't come from a mouth somewhere.

Some claim to hear the voice of God. When you hear a voice, you surmise what that person looks like. Often, you're wrong. What do you envision from a voice that's a gentle whisper? Or thunders so loud the earth quakes?

Who hears God speak? Those who belong to him, but also the spiritually dead. Those who listen to the preachers (Romans 10:17). He can speak to you anywhere. Anytime.

He whispers. He also shouts.

When God smiles, surely it radiates pleasure to his people. To the whole planet.

His Attentive Ears

He who planted the ear, shall He not hear?

Psalm 94:9 NKJV

When you cry "help!" you want to know God hears you (2 Samuel 22:7).

Knowing God has ears gives hope when you're in distress, when you need mercy, when you grieve. There are times when you desperately need him to listen.

But many know for a fact that God hears . . .

Samuel got in terrible trouble and God paid attention (2 Samuel 22:7).

The angel Gabriel assured Daniel that God heard his prayer the moment it was uttered (Daniel 9:20-23).

Hagar, Sarah's servant, wept bitter tears before God several times and he helped her (Genesis 16 & 21).

Hannah got the baby she had wanted for so long (1 Samuel 1:1-20).

Jesus received an audible answer to his request (John 12:26-28).

His Life-Giving Breath

God breathed life into the man
and the man started breathing.

Genesis 2:7

Slight breezes as well as hurricanes can remind you of God's breath. The Hebrew word for wind is *ruach*, also translated as 'spirit' and 'breath.' The Red Sea was parted by a blast from the nostrils of God (Exodus 15:8).

Daniel Tomberlin, writing in *Christianity Today*: "The Spirit (*ruach*) of God moves in the lives of believers in a variety of ways. He draws us into God's presence so we may receive the blessings of salvation. He continues to move in our lives, sometimes in a gentle and restful breeze, and at other times like the winds of a great storm that disrupts our lives."

The disciples received power to speak, to heal, to teach, by Jesus' breath (John 20:22).

He breathes out fire. . . or ice that freezes lakes and oceans (Job 37:10).

His breath swooshes windstorms across earth, parts seas, sends waves crashing (Exodus 15:8,10).

He snorts a rebuke and strips valleys (2 Samuel 22:16).

His heavy breathing can produce life or bring death to flora and fauna through streams of burning sulfur (Isaiah 30:33, 40:7).

He created stars by his words and his breath (Psalm 33:6 NIV).

You're given breath so you might choose to praise the Lord (Psalm 150:6).

God breathed into Adam and he became a living soul. Every creature has his breath of life. Your life is but a breath—quickly gone and blown away. Without the gift of God's breath in you, you could not exist: God is as close to you as your breath.

His Blessed Face

He (Moses) sees me face to face,
and everything I say to him is perfectly clear.

Numbers 12:8 CEV

God's face will reveal his glory and his favor. God's servants will see his face (Rev. 22:4) — the loftiest of all aspirations for a person of faith.

His face shines blessing and peace. You can ask God to turn his gracious face toward people you love (Numbers 6:24-26).

Kissing God's cheek—Mary is one of the few who got to do that.

This beach, so soft, firm and vast,
was like the cheek of God. . . .

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*

Big Shoulders to Lean On

The government shall be upon his shoulder...

Isaiah 9:6 KJV

Ever get weary and tired of your chores, duties, responsibilities and then you sense a divine nudge to take on a special task? You can serve him shoulder to shoulder (Zephaniah 3:9).

If the Lord loves you, which he does, you can rest between his shoulders (Deuteronomy 33:12).

YOU'RE MADE IN HIS IMAGE

When we gaze into the eyes
of another person
we see God.

Timothy E. Schenck

Is that literal or metaphorical?

It's hard to know exactly.

Perhaps it's a synecdoche, a figure of speech, a part that in some way stands for the whole.

For instance, what is God's gender? Though you may call him Father, he made us in his image, both male and female (Genesis 1:27). When pressed to explain himself, God replied: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

Your flesh frame is the work of his hands. He's the image maker.

The DNA choices of shapes and colors of human images range in the quadrillions. God looks like you, but he also looks like me. . . in some fashion. But at what age or stage? Looks change from baby to teen to middle age to elder.

We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

Isaiah 64:8B

But you're more than flesh. You're soul and spirit, plus an idiosyncrasy of personality and emotions. Whenever God chooses, despite your faults, you can become the face of God to anybody around you. He places the exquisite treasure of his being within fallible earthen clay.

Yet, he's not a magnified man. No wood, metal, or stone does him justice, in fact, can become worthless idols.

He's both male and female, yet he has no shape or form or body constraints, unless he chooses, like when he wants to communicate to someone *mano a mano*. So, does that mean he might appear with flowing hair and eyeballs? Or does that indicate more like a brain bond, that is, he reasons like you do?

You have personality. You make choices. You've got an I.Q. You possess conscience. You can distinguish between right and wrong. You're capable of love and compassion. You're designed to worship. . . something or someone.

Francis Schaeffer considered that those aspects of humanness that set us apart from animals and machines might be parts of the image of God in us, "such as significance, love, relationship, rationality and the fear of nonbeing."

"I am called to be God's metaphor," says writer Ethel Herr. "Every part of my being—my mind, my body, yes, even my senses—becomes a showplace for the spiritual reality of God's eternal character. The same carries over into my work on the page—the stories and devotional pieces and poems and essays I write."

John Eldredge (*Waking the Dead*) states that you're "fearfully and wonderfully made, fashioned as living icons of the bravest, wisest, most stunning Person who ever lived."

You're also in a process, that is, being 'transformed into his likeness' (2 Corinthians 3:18).

In some way, you are like God and can represent him to your world.

"To see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably," Jacob said (Genesis 33:10 NIV). Jacob was so relieved that his brother no longer wanted to kill him that he considered him as a heavenly apparition. Jacob recognized God's grace and forgiveness in his brother's face. In the same way, you capture bits of the sparkle of God's personality through the people around you.

However, some day there will be no doubt. You will morph into something quite glorious. "Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him, become like him" (1 John 3:2 MSG).

SEE JESUS, SEE GOD

Anyone who has seen me
has seen the Father.

John 14:9 NIV

What did Jesus look like?

"He looks like the paintings," some say.

The variety of images of Jesus through different times and cultures staggers the mind. Each people group defines him according to their customs and point of view. For instance, in the Church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy, twenty six mosaics depict the oldest pictures of Jesus' life. Half of them portray him with light hair, fair complexion. The others render him in dark skin and a beard.

What did Jesus really look like?

Wouldn't it be a great privilege to possess a *bona fide* picture of Jesus, as he appeared on earth?

God took on a human face. And the whole human journey of life. In Jesus, you find a form, a physical body, in which to see God. How frustrating that no effort was made to preserve his likeness for future generations.

God in a cradle. Jesus, a baby. God in flesh, weak and vulnerable. God growing as a powerless child, dependent and needy. God as an adult, a homeless carpenter. God dying on a cross. So he could feel your pain. So he knew what your temptation's like. So he realized the dynamics of trials down here with all the human happenings. Look at the cradle and the cross to see what God looks like.

God's Son has all the brightness of God's own glory
And is like him in every way.

Hebrews 1:3 CEV

There are conflicting biblical reports . . . Isaiah 53:2,3 intimates that the messiah "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." Psalm 45, on the other hand, implies that God is the "most handsome of men."

After the resurrection, at first the men on the Road to Emmaus didn't recognize Jesus. "Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they are walking in the country" (Mark 16:12). And then, later at the supper table, "as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed" (Luke 9:29). That's when it dawned on them. For some reason, Jesus somehow disguised his true identity for a time.



Jacob recognized God's grace and forgiveness in his brother's face. In the same way, you capture bits of the sparkle of God's personality through the people around you.

There's belief that Jesus was seen before he came to earth as a baby. He's claimed to be the fourth figure walking around in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25).

Lewis Smedes wrote, "All that God is comes to us in the face of Christ. . . The 'face of Christ' means the whole Christ as he walks on the human scene. . . All that he was, and all that he gave, down to every tear, and every word, and every miracle, and every pain."

Augustine wrote: "The physical face of the Lord is pictured with infinite variety by countless imaginations, though whatever it was like he certainly had only one. . .What does matter is that we think of him as a man."

Jesus is Man. Jesus is God. Two distinct faces. Two natures in one. Son of Man. Son of God. The historical record of Jesus' life, his death in your place for your sins, and miraculous resurrection proves that God wants to be with you, God will be for you, and that God can be in you.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2

How do you do that, without a physical image? Some depend on images such as the highly touted Shroud of Turin, a burial cloth with the imprint of a body. But any likeness like that could become an idol, worshiped in place of God.

The Bible gives no specifics such as color of eyes, length of hair, height or weight. But he's still marked by wounds. . .in his hands and his side (Luke 24:37).

Jesus does not claim to be beautiful. He claims to be the Way, the Truth, the Life.

But he's also the "exact representation" of God's being (Hebrews 1:3). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15).

Jesus the Son is the photo image—the twin likeness—the very essence and substance of God the Father. He's more than the engraved cut. He's the same (See John 10:30).

Jesus is God.

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STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) When you envision God, what comes to your mind? If he appeared before you right now, what would you expect to see?
- 2.) Think about your first in-person meeting with the Almighty--what He will be like? What will he say or do? What will be your reaction? Any ideas at all?
- 3.) What is your mental picture of Jesus? How did you get it?
- 4.) Do you believe your body comes from genetics. . .or the direct work of God's hands? Explain.
- 5.) How would you react to an offer to purchase a software program that enabled you to download an actual image of God?
- 6.) Why do you think God frowns on our making images of him?
- 7.) Read Exodus 24:9-11. What do you think these men were experiencing? What did they see? What did they feel? Would you like to have been there? Why or why not?
- 8.) What difference does it make to you what God looks like?
- 9.) What would you advise someone who wanted to paint a picture of God?

How would you guide them in this project?
- 10.) Do you have a place you can go to where you can depend upon hearing God's voice?
- 11.) What has caused you to recognize new dimensions of who God is?
- 12.) Have you ever seen God's glory or splendor? When and where?
- 13.) When do you most need to feel God's arms around you?
- 14.) God placed Moses on a rock and covered him with His hand. Can you imagine what the hand of God looks like?
- 15.) Read Revelation 4:2-6. How does this confirm or change your view of what God looks like?
- 16.) Who is the 'apple of his eye' (Deuteronomy 11:12)? What do you think about that?
- 17.) Read Matthew 17:2 & Daniel 10:5,6. Do you think these verses describe the same person? Which sighting would you prefer to be part of and why?
- 18.) Read 1 Corinthians 13:27. The face that God wants to show to your world is your own face, just as it is, to reveal himself. What does that mean to you?