

REFLECTION OF AN IMAGE

“I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” – Isaiah 43:6-7



Carving is one of the oldest known art forms in the world. From the carvings of Europe to the totem poles of the American Northwest, ancient figure carvings flourished. For thousands of years, these images of gods were an important part of their culture, however, the most enduring style of ancient carvings belonged to the Polynesians. From the ancient heads of Easter Island to Maori pendants to Hawai'i, Polynesians shaped images and carvings that created a lasting style. For Hawaiians, their statues traditionally depicted an image of human form with exaggerated features such as an oversized head, short misshapen legs and unusual facial characteristics. In their mindset, they represented an image of a Polynesian god. For the Maori, it represented an ancestor intricately carved from greenstone and worn about the neck as a talisman. Throughout the Hawaiian Islands, these carved wooden images were once perched on volcanic cliffs and ancient temples, as well as, in rainforests and caves along the coast. They were worshipped through human sacrifices, chants, and prayers. As it was in the past, ancient Hawaiian *tiki gods* can still be found. Today, unlike the reverence of the past, modernized versions can be found on mugs, statues, lamps and jewelry. Through technology, new approaches to carving intricate designs have emerged through computerized sketches. Despite of this, others prefer to advocate traditional tools. For the Hawaiian people, these carved images connected them with the earth, water and sky, as well as, each other.



As a young boy, I remembered how much I enjoyed experimenting with chemicals in our middle school laboratory. One day, we learned about the properties of nitric acid. As we diluted the acid in a beaker, we began testing the acid by dropping an old, tarnished coin inside. I used an old, grimy penny that was so corroded you couldn't see President Lincoln's face. As the penny settled on the bottom of the beaker, we watched the acid cleanse away the grime and in a matter of minutes, the president's face had clearly reappeared both shiny and brand new. In the same way, we were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), but that image has been defaced and tarnished by our sins, yet, when Jesus entered our lives as Savior, He went to work to restore our "original image" and transform us to be like Himself (2 Corinthians 3:18). You see, the problem with most people is that they think they are doing well because they are comparing themselves not to Christ, but, to their friends, the people around them and the world. Compared to the crowd, they believe that they look pretty good, but, compared to a Holy God, we are "tarnished" and fall short of His glory (Romans 3:23). That's why we must be really clear as to what it means to be "image bearers" of God. I'd like to encourage someone today to become a contributor to the program of God in the world. You see, when God created you, He placed His image in you. When He did that, He gave you "value", so, that in all that you do, the world would see His image being reflected. He "carved" you for a divine purpose to reflect what He looks like to the world. You were created to know Him, not to just enjoy His benefits. You weren't created to get married, have children, have a successful career, then grow old and retire. These are benefits, but, it's not a purpose. Jesus called it "bearing fruit". So, how do you get started?



FIRST, RECOGNIZE GOD AS GOD. When we worship, we honor God for who He is. You see, believing in God and knowing there's a God are two different points of view. And simply to say that there is a God doesn't say much about Him either. But, when you enter into a relationship with God so that who He is influences who you are, then, you really know God. Let's look at this way: In the morning when we get up, we go to work and honor our bosses. We jump out of bed, watch our time, get dressed and head off to our jobs. We honor our employers by showing up and doing a day's work. Why? Because your money is in their pocket! You may not necessarily like your boss, but, you honor their position. On the other hand, we fail to recognize God's position as God, when we give Him our "leftover" energy, "leftover" time and "leftover" resources. We stay out late on Saturday nights and show up on Sunday mornings, thinking that we have done God a favor by "showing up". Sadly, we can go to church and be aware of God; go to church and gather information about God, go to church and "feel" God, but, leave church without God rubbing off on us. If God is the all-consuming, all-powerful, all-knowing, loving and infinite Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of this universe, then, nothing else should matter, but, **getting to know Him and know Him well!** God is God, but, until we recognize Him as God, only then can we honor and worship Him for who He is and what He has done!

SECONDLY, IMITATE CHRIST'S LOVE. First and foremost, you should know that Jesus is our model. There is no way that I could describe the magnitude of Jesus' love. It makes no sense to even try. It would take a lot more than this devotional, but, His love takes the first initiative. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because He first loved us." The thing I love about God is that He didn't wait until we got our act together to love us. He didn't wait for us to ask Him to love us----but, He loved us first! That's the problem with some of our relationships. We say, "When you do what you supposed to do, then, I'll do what I supposed to do!" That's crazy (and not biblical)! If this is you, I hope you realize that it doesn't work! But, when we imitate the love of Christ, we say, "Even if you don't do anything, I still love you!" "Even if you never change, I still love you!" You see, the image of God in you will always remind us to be glorious on the "inside", not just on the "outside".

FINALLY, BE A POWERFUL WITNESS. The Bible says that we will have a powerful public witness when we love each other (John 13:35). In the 36 years of marriage I have enjoyed with my wife, I continue to esteem her (by the way, husbands, that's what we are supposed to do. Go to Ephesians 5:25-30). Simple courtesies such as

opening the car door for her and seating her at the table is still a big part of my service for her. You see, in John 13:35, Jesus was giving the world the right to examine our credibility. In other words, our love is supposed to be public and visible, not behind closed doors. This way, Jesus said, the world should be able to tell that we belong to Him. Here's what I'm saying: When you have the image of God, you are marked as His children and our intimate fellowship with Him should produce lasting "fruit" as a witness. That's important because when Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1), He was moving His children from just a relationship to an intimate fellowship that reflects the character of the "vine" of which we are a part of.



Allow me to close with a blessing. I'd like to encourage someone reading this devotional to know that you have the image of God in you through Christ, even though, it may seem that His image may be obscured in your life. You may be tarnished, grimy, corroded, "banged up", even, "bent out of shape", but, I've got some good news for you--
--WHEN JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR, HE GOES TO WORK TO RESTORE THE ORIGINAL IMAGE. It doesn't matter how messed up you may be, you are created in the image of God and when we trust Jesus, we are forgiven. And when that happens----TRUE RESTORATION BEGINS!