

KNOWING THE CHARACTER OF
CHRIST SO WE CAN BE A REFLECTION
OF OUR FATHER'S IMAGE

MADE IN HIS IMAGE



SUSAN COLLMORGEN

KNOWING THE CHARACTER OF
CHRIST SO WE CAN BE A REFLECTION
OF OUR FATHER'S IMAGE

MADE IN HIS IMAGE

SUSAN COLLMORGEN



MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Copyright © 2021 by Susan Collmorgen.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles or reviews.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For information contact :

<https://www.dedicatetochrist.org>

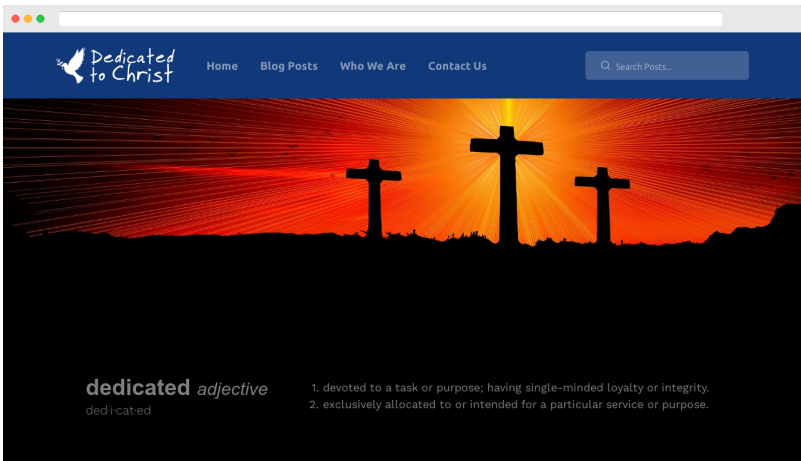
Book and Cover design by Jason Collmorgen

First Edition : January 2021

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Want to grow deeper in your relationship with the Lord?
Visit us online for inspiration and encouragement along the way.

DedicatedtoChrist.org



Featured Posts



SUSAN COLLMORGEN
Thu, Sep 10, 2020

All to Jesus I Surrender; All to Him I Freely Give

The lyrics of the beloved hymn, "I Surrender All" make it sound so simple. If only we could just throw up our hands and say, "Yes



JASON COLLMORGEN
Thu, Oct 22, 2020

Stand Up Straight and Tall, Walk Like a Soldier...

There are too many times we walk around with our heads down unwilling and sometimes even unable to lift them up. We walk



JASON COLLMORGEN
Thu, Sep 24, 2020

It's Not About the Gift... It's About Something Better!

In 2009, a few days after we arrived in Mozambique to attend a mission school, a young Mozambican man introduced

Contents

<i>A WORD TO THE READER</i>	1
INTRODUCTION	2
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	4
UNDERSTANDING HIS CHARACTER.....	10
FORGIVING & MERCIFUL.....	10
PATIENT & LONG-SUFFERING.....	17
SELFLESS & HUMBLE	19
SHOWS NO PARTIALITY	23
TRUTHFUL & TRUSTWORTHY	26
COURAGEOUS	28
LOVING	31
BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS.....	38
STEP 1: PRAY OFTEN	40
STEP 2: SPEND TIME IN THE WORD	42
STEP 3: FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.....	43
CONCLUSION	45
<i>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</i>	47

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like."

James 1:22-24

A Word to the Reader

Over ten years ago, I began a personal study of God's character and what it means to be made in His image, later turning it into a small e-booklet so it could be shared with others.

This past year, with all the drama and craziness 2020 brought with it, my thoughts again turned to what it means to be made in God's image. My husband, Jason, encouraged me to revamp and expand that original study and to make it available as a resource to fellow Christians.

This is a study intended primarily for readers who have already accepted Christ as their Savior and whose goal is to draw nearer to Him. While I will be reviewing the character of Christ, I will not be extensively reviewing the fall of mankind which fractured our relationship with God or the priceless redemptive work of Jesus Christ who reconciled us to God through His substitutionary atonement.

The primary focus of *this* book is to help Christians reflect on how they can become more like Him and better represent Him to a lost and dying world.

Susan Collmorgen

January 2021

Introduction

Have you ever walked into a public building, fully focused on your purpose for being there, and then unexpectedly caught a glimpse of yourself in a mirror, only to be shocked at what you saw? Maybe you discovered that your hair was a mess, or you had a spot of spaghetti sauce on your face or a prominent coffee stain on your clothing?

I know I've experienced moments like these. They are the kind of moments that can embarrass you and motivate you to slow down and double check your appearance in a full-length mirror before you leave home to go out in public again.

But you know, as a Christian, there is something far more important for us to be concerned with than our outward physical appearance. It's something with an eternal significance: how well we are reflecting to others

INTRODUCTION

the image of our savior, Jesus Christ.

Have you ever considered what it means to be made in God's image? It's important for us, as Christians, to understand what it means to be made in His image and how it applies to us personally. Equally important is what we should do with this knowledge once we obtain it.

Please join me now as we examine what it means to be made in His image...

What Does it Mean?

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

– Genesis 1:26

We were made in God's image. Notice the usage of "our" in this passage as opposed to "my." This is the first of many Biblical references to God existing in three persons as (1) God the Father, (2) God the Son who is Jesus, and (3) God the Holy Spirit. For the purposes of this

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

book, however, we will put our focus on the fact that God made us in His image, and we will explore what that means to us as believers.

Let's start by taking a look at the words "image" and "likeness." What comes to mind when you think of these words? A photocopy or a picture of something you can see with your eyes? Maybe a child who looks almost identical to their parent?

Since we can't see God with our eyes, what do you think is really being said here?

If God is spirit, then the image and likeness must be something spiritual as well... something you cannot physically see. When God made us in His image, He was ultimately creating us to be a reflection of His own attributes and character. The God of the universe, the maker of Heaven and Earth, wanted *us* to reflect *Him*, but why? The answer to this question can be found by first taking a moment to answer "how."

Have you ever had a relationship with someone where you felt like you knew them, but then you later realized that you really had just made a lot of assumptions about them based on your own surface-level observations, and in fact you really didn't know them at all? You didn't know their heart, their passions, what motivates them, what they dislike, or what experiences in life they had gone through? In essence, you really only had a shallow relationship with them.

Before we can truly know people, we must spend

quality time with them. We must seek to know them, ask them questions, and show an interest in developing our relationship with them. The same is true with God, and herein also lies the answer to the “why.” God created us in His image and likeness, so that we would know Him; so that we would have a *relationship* with Him.

Jesus is the perfect representation of God the Father. John recounts in his gospel a time when Jesus spoke to the Jews during the Feast of Dedication. The Jews had gathered around him and they said to him,

“How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” -

- John 10:24-30

Throughout Jesus's life on Earth, He demonstrated the very character of God, the attributes of God. How did He do this? He did it through His relationship with His

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Father. Jesus was so close to His Father that He knew His Father's ways and His will. He not only knew His Father, He was God in the flesh.

When asked by the Pharisees which is the greatest commandment, Jesus responded, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:36-38)

He then told them that the second greatest commandment is like the first in that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39)

Now many of us in this day and age, don't know our neighbors very well, and it's sad, really. We were made to fellowship with God and with each other, and we should get to know our neighbors.

So I ask you this question, "Can we really love someone whom we do not know?" Absolutely! How? Because love is a *choice*, not just a feeling.

Us *loving* our neighbor is not dependent on us *knowing* them. We should love all people with a brotherly love, and we should genuinely care about their well-being. There are different levels of love, but without going into a deep word study of the different meanings of love mentioned in the Bible, I think we can all agree that the love we have for our spouse, for example, is different than the love we have for our siblings or the love we have for our friends.

Part of the love Christ wants us to have for others is to love them and to love Him enough to *tell* them about

Him.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

– Matthew 28:16-20

This directive from Christ is known as the Great Commission, and it is directly tied into the Greatest Commandment.

Jesus said that we should love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind. I don't know about you, but it sure sounds to me that this implies a much deeper love, a love where we **know His character**, a love where we **seek His will**, a love where we **obey His commandments**.

We are to reflect the character of Christ, and the more time we spend with Him, the more we will begin to know Him and reflect His image.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

“So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.”

– 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT)

How do we know if we are reflecting Him and representing Him appropriately?

We must first know what He is like. We must know His character. Thankfully, His Word tells us a lot about Him. Psalm 103 is one of several passages that mentions many of His traits. He is righteous and just, merciful and forgiving, patient and long suffering, compassionate, kind and gentle, meek and humble, truthful, faithful, wise, selfless, slow to anger, courageous, and last but not least, Christ is love.

Knowing these characteristics of our Lord, our Savior, our God... we must examine ourselves and see where we stand. If we are to represent Him well to a lost and dying world, we must not only *know* our Savior, but we must also emulate his character.

Let's begin by taking a closer look at some of these characteristics. Let's get to *know* His character...

Forgiving & Merciful

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another;
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave
you.”*

– Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

Like His Father, Christ is forgiving. Forgiveness consists of more than just saying to ourselves or others that we have forgiven someone. We often hear people say, “I forgive that person, but I will never forget what they did.” Such a statement, however, is not true forgiveness. Psalm 103:12 says, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” So far in fact has He removed our sins that He chooses to remember them no more. That’s right! He chooses, just as we must

choose... to forget.

"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more...Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

– Hebrews 8:12 & 10:17 (NIV)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."

– 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NIV)

"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

– Isaiah 43:25 (NIV)

God choosing to forgive AND forget is part of His great mercy. We deserve punishment for our sin because it violates God's holy law. Jesus took upon himself the punishment for our sins so that we could be reconciled in right relationship to the Father. Because of

this great gift, we must forgive others just as we have been forgiven, regardless of whether the person who wronged us has apologized.

We must consciously *choose* to forgive *and then let go* and not bring up past wrongs any longer. Like love, forgiveness is not a feeling. It's a *choice* to not count the wrong against a person anymore.

But what if someone did something absolutely horrible to us or to our loved one? What if someone hurt our child? Sometimes it feels too hard to forgive because we feel we just can't let it go. In some cases, we may have been hurt so badly that we don't *want* to forgive someone, or we don't feel they *deserve* forgiveness. But here again, it's important we remember that we did not deserve God's forgiveness. Forgiveness (including forgiving ourselves) is a mandate. It's a choice we must make. It's not based on emotion or whether we feel like forgiving.

Now I want to add here, that when I'm referring to someone wronging you, I am in no way referencing a situation in which there is ongoing physical, mental, or verbal abuse from someone, nor am I talking about marital or family situations where someone is doing things that are detrimental to themselves, their spouse, or their family (addictions, adultery, etc.). Those are situations in which counseling and or police intervention (if physical abuse) should be sought. While those situations will eventually need healing and forgiveness

also, I am in no way advocating to just allow someone to continue a pattern of abuse towards you while you “forgive” and “let it go.” That is *not* what scripture is referring to.

When we are finding it very difficult to forgive and let go of a past offense, we must ask God to help us. We must ask Him to change our hearts and our minds and help us to forgive and let go. It may take time, but God is faithful, and if we make the decision that we want to forgive someone and let go and ask for His help, He will help us to do so. Jesus gave us a strong incentive to make the choice to forgive:

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

– Matthew 6:14,15

While this may seem unfair, it's important to remember what Christ went through on the cross. His suffering was beyond what any of us can possibly imagine. The weight of all the sin of the world, the sin of every person past, present, and future was placed upon Jesus. This includes the weight of our own sin against God and others as well as the weight of the sin committed against us by the very people we may be having trouble

forgiving.

Jesus was also ridiculed, spat upon, brutally beaten, and tortured. He was nailed to the cross. He poured out His blood and His love there, and He did it for all of us. He was crucified, the propitiation for *OUR* sins. He died *FOR* us and *BECAUSE* of us. Had man not sinned, there would have been no need for His sacrifice.

He *chose* to be that sacrifice for us. He willingly did all that He did and went through all He went through *for* us, and yet we were the ones who deserved to die. All the while as He hung there, forgiveness was in His heart, on His mind, and on His lips:

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

– Luke 23:34

Remembering Jesus's willing sacrifice and willingness to forgive all of us really helps put things in perspective for me. It helps me get back on track if I'm struggling to forgive someone or find myself starting to dwell on, bring up, or re-live past hurts.

Are we forgiving? Are we merciful? Or do we look down our noses at others' mistakes as if we were without sin of our own? I believe that the more we *choose* to forgive and let go, the more easily we will be able to forgive in the future, and the less judgmental we will be of others. The Bible has a lot to say about people who

judge others:

"Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

– James 4:11-12

"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her...they went away one by one...Jesus stood up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; and from now on sin no more.'"

– John 8:7-11

"Do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother,

'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

– Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV)

The decision to not be judgmental, however, does not mean that we should just ignore the sins of our brothers and not correct them in love. In fact, He tells us in John 7:24 to “stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment.”

We are to recognize our own weakness and sin first, and then correct our brother with a spirit of humility, gentleness, and love... not superiority.

“Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also.”

– Galatians 6:1 [Amplified]

Patient & Long-Suffering

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

– 2 Peter 3:9

Jesus is patient and long suffering, but are we? One of the easiest ways to determine our patience level is to reflect on our attitude and behavior when we are in a long line of slow-moving traffic or when we have been waiting 20 minutes in a customer service telephone queue after going through an automated menu of 10 options only to be transferred into another automated menu.

For many years, patience was one of my biggest struggles. It's a struggle for a lot of people. Looking back, I used to have very little patience. Thankfully, I have really improved in this area thanks to the Lord. It took a lot of prayer asking for His help in this area, and He has been faithful. I still have my moments now and then, usually if I am in pain or seriously stressed, but that's where the long-suffering part comes in. My husband, Jason, and I serve as missionaries in the third-world nation of Mozambique, Africa. Our experiences there have certainly been a good training ground for learning to be long-suffering!

As "opportunities" arise to practice patience and long-suffering, try to remember that they are just that, opportunities God gives us to be tested in this area of His character. When we feel it's more than we can bear, we should just take the matter to Him in prayer to ask for His help.

The only way to refine silver and rid it of its impurities is in the fire, and that's what God does with us. He takes us through trials and tribulations... opportunities... to be refined until we reflect His image.

*Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be
constant in prayer.*

– Romans 12:12

Selfless & Humble

Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. – 1 Cor 10:24

Are we self-less or self-ish?

Are we willing to give up something we want or need so that someone else can have what they need? Ladies, are you willing to dress in second-hand clothing, to go without a new purse, manicure, or highlights in your hair to ensure you can buy your child a needed pair of eyeglasses, properly fitting shoes, or a gift for Christmas?

Guys, are you willing to give up the latest cell phone, laptop, or big screen tv, your weekly golf game, or some other sport to have more time to spend with your wife and kids or to save the money to take them on a family

vacation?

Are you willing to give your time and money to help people you don't know? Are you willing to give up your traditional Christmas or Thanksgiving plans to help serve meals to those less fortunate than you?

Selflessness usually goes hand-in-hand with humility. To be humble is to have a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance. If we are selfish, then we probably aren't going to be very humble either, because a selfish person esteems their needs and wants as more important than the needs and wants of others!

While the opposite of selflessness is selfishness, the opposite of humility is pride, the very thing that resulted in the sin of Adam and Eve and the fall of mankind.

Jesus was the most supreme example of selflessness and humility imaginable. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Word of God in the flesh. Despite His supremacy and authority, He humbled Himself to be born as a man to a poor family knowing that He would eventually die an agonizing death on the cross to redeem us. He even humbled Himself to wash the feet of His disciples...

"When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher,

have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

– John 13:12-17

Jason and I went to India and Sri Lanka in 2009 on our first mission trip. God used that experience to stretch us both far beyond our comfort zones. In Sri Lanka, the missionary leading our team advised us that we would be doing a foot washing service for the Sri Lankan pastors. All of these pastors were male, and in their culture, it would not have been appropriate for females to wash their feet alone, so our team leader, who was a female, needed a male to help with this task. My husband was the only male on our entire team, but what she didn't know was that he had an aversion to feet, so much so that he couldn't stand for me, his own wife, to touch him with my feet. To make matters more challenging for him, we and the pastors had very dirty feet as the ground was very dusty and everyone had been walking barefoot in the prayer room.

To wash feet, anyone's feet, was something Jason did not want to do, but he did not want to offend

anyone. He could have been selfish and refused to participate, but he chose to go forward with it, and God blessed him so much in the process. As he washed everyone's feet, God moved in his heart, and it was no longer a burdensome task. It became a joy, a privilege, and an honor. He simply wanted the best for each person, and as he prayed for each one during the process, everyone in the room was brought to tears including him. He wasn't expecting anything in return, but he received so much from the selfless act. It was an amazing lesson for both of us.

Neither one of us are selfless yet though. I still catch myself in selfish moments now and then, but God in all his gentleness always reminds me how to see things differently.

Are you willing to put others needs before your own without expecting anything in return? Do you esteem yourself more important than others?

Shows No Partiality

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." – Acts 34:35

Another characteristic of our Lord is that He shows no partiality; He is not a respecter of persons. This means that He does not esteem certain people to be of greater value than others. He died for the redemption of everyone no matter what nation they were from. It didn't matter whether they were rich or poor, man or woman, child or adult, sick or healthy, Jew or Gentile.

Are you a respecter of persons? When you walk into a store, are you more likely to hold the door open for

someone of the same skin color as you and not for someone of a different skin color? What about someone who is clearly of a different religion (based on their clothing)?

If you esteem your race, culture, or nationality as being more intelligent or superior to people of another, then you have a problem with discrimination/racism. This is very much the opposite of Christ's character. The book of Romans shows us that God is not a respecter of persons.

When you see people in dirty old clothes, with an unkempt appearance in an old dirty beat-up truck, what is your first thought? Do you think, "Gee I'm sure glad that isn't me!" or "I wonder if they're drug dealers?" I know thoughts like that have passed through my mind in the past, but the Holy Spirit convicted me, so that I could repent and break free of that mindset.

When you see a new person come to your church that you've heard something negative about, do you automatically believe what's been told to you and avoid the person instead of welcoming them whole heartedly?

Jesus makes His opinion on these matters clear in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector...

"Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 'Two men went to the Temple to

pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.' But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

– Luke 18:9-14 (NLT)

Truthful & Trustworthy

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? – Numbers 23:19

One of the most wonderful traits of God is the fact that He cannot lie, which means we can completely trust Him. Who He says He is, *He is*. What He says He will do, He will do. Satan, on the other hand, is the father of lies; there is no truth in him.

I have always esteemed myself as a truthful person, but there was a period after I began following Jesus when God had begun revealing to me that I too had told little “white” lies, stretched the truth, or conveniently

left out information as a means of self-preservation. I often didn't even realize I was doing it because in many ways I was lying to myself in those moments.

I think being honest with ourselves is often harder than being honest with other people. Sometimes people convince themselves that something is ok or acceptable even though it is wrong in God's eyes.

Have you ever taken your family to a restaurant buffet and told the waiter that your child is younger to keep from paying a higher rate? Whether we agree with the fees charged for products or services or not does not give us the "right" to lie to save some money.

Did you ever break something and let someone else take the fall for it instead of admitting to the mistake? Then you either let fear, pride, or shame overrule your integrity.

What about taking credit for someone else's work instead of setting the record straight? That's pride and ego snuffing out honesty.

Some of these things may seem harmless, but truth is truth, and a lie is a lie, just as sin is sin. What kind of example are we setting for others when we do this? What kind of example are we setting for our children? We are showing them that it's ok to sin if it preserves our money, our ego, or our misplaced sense of self-worth.

Our integrity (or lack of) is revealed by what we do when we think no one is looking, but God sees everything that we do.

Courageous

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

– Luke 22:42-44

Could there be anyone in history more courageous than Jesus Christ?

In the preceding passage, Jesus was praying on the Mount of Olives, agonizing over what He knew was about to take place, His capture, beating, and crucifixion. Yet, despite knowing the torment that

COURAGEOUS

awaited Him, He prayed for the Father's will to be done.

The Bible is full of accounts of God's people choosing to be courageous in the face of fear: Abraham, Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Isaiah, Joseph & Mary, the Apostle Peter, and the Apostle Paul, just to name a few.

How were they able to be so courageous in the face of uncertainty, ridicule, even death? Because they knew that their God was with them and was for them.

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

– Isaiah 41:10

Courage is not the absence of fear. It's the exercise of faith, boldness, and many times obedience in spite of our fear.

Personally, I used to have a real problem with fear. I was in bondage to it. The Lord used my and my husband's first mission trip experience to take me into a place of courage and deliver me from that fear.

The topic of fear can get quite in depth, but know this, that God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7) and we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who loved us (Romans 8:37).

If you would like to read my testimony of how God delivered me from the spirit of fear, or if you would like to learn more about the different types of fear mentioned in the Bible and how you can overcome your own fear, please read the 3-part series *Fear and Worry, My Untold Story* that can be found on DedicatedtoChrist.org

Loving

Finally, we come to love. Jesus's sacrifice is the ultimate demonstration of God's great love.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

– John 3:16-18 (NLT)

What is love? Most people describe it as a *feeling* of deep affection, devotion, and caring, but over the past ten years, I have come to realize that it is so much more. The Bible tells us a lot about love, and it reveals to us that love is not just a *feeling*, it's a *choice* we make.

John 15:13 says, *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."* In this passage, Jesus is not just referring to a willingness to physically die for someone (like He did for us on the cross), but also a willingness to die to ourselves, to lay down our lives (our wants and desires) for Him and for others. God created love, and in His eyes, love is defined by a willingness to sacrifice; a willingness to put others before ourselves. True love is born from a selfless attitude and a humble heart.

When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment He replied:

"You shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
– *Matthew 22:37-40*

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the same:

"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."

– Galatians 5:13-15

Do you love the unlovely? Do you smile even if you feel you have no reason to? Are you compassionate—having a concern for the sufferings of others? What makes you laugh, cry, or get angry? Do you laugh at the misfortune of your enemies? Do you laugh at yourself? Do you get angry when someone cuts you off in traffic or when someone makes fun of you?

True love for our fellow man (our brothers and sisters) is to be patient and kind, selfless and humble; willing to put others needs and wants before our own. True love is to be honest and respectful, compassionate, and understanding, merciful, and forgiving. True love is to be thankful and appreciative for what others do for us.

Paul says it best in 1 Corinthians 13...

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a

clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

LOVING

God is love because of His character. All His personality traits are the very definition of what true love really is. He exemplifies love in His thoughts, words, emotions, and actions.

The Ten Commandments are all about love! Each commandment's purpose is to teach us respect for God and for others, and to teach us to put others before ourselves; to teach us what love looks like. So, the question is, how do we learn to love like this?

Jesus said:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for

you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

– John 15:1-17

We learn to love by drawing closer to Him and spending time with Him. The more we press into and

L O V I N G

abide in Him and His word, the more natural that godly love for others will come to us. We must allow Him to transform our hearts so that we will think from a higher perspective. It takes commitment. It takes daily in-the-moment choices to act and respond differently.

Becoming More Like Jesus

WHOSE IMAGE DO YOU REFLECT?

Now that we have looked at the character of Christ, it's time to turn our focus and look inwardly at ourselves. But first, let's examine what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

The basic definition of disciple is someone who not only believes in, but also practices the teachings of another. It means to actively seek to grow in your walk with the Lord and then to actively practice what you learn. We must learn more about Him and then reflect Him to the lost and dying world around us.

If we do not repent of any wicked ways within us,

actively pursue Him, and cooperate with the change He wants to do in our lives, then we risk sorely misrepresenting Him to the world around us.

People were attracted to Jesus because He was different, and He carried a presence they could not explain. He demonstrated faith in action. He exhibited peace amid every storm, courage in the midst of persecution, loyalty and devotion to the Father in the midst of temptation. He gave people a better understanding of His Father's heart for them. He put on display for all the world to see, the single greatest act of love that could ever or would ever take place. He is worthy of our devotion!

The Apostle Paul reminds us to *walk by the Spirit so that we will not gratify the desires of the flesh* (Galatians 5:16).

He goes on to say...

"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is

no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”
– Galatians 5:19-24

Are you ready to represent Him well? Are you ready to love Him with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind? Are you ready to be filled with the fruits of His Spirit?

STEP 1: PRAY OFTEN

Let's begin with a prayer straight from the heart of King David...

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting*
– Psalm 139:23-24

As you go about the weeks and months ahead, take the time to ask God to search your heart and to reveal to you the things He wants to change in your life. Whether it's a sin, a wrong attitude, unbelief, or lack of zeal for Him, all of these things can hold you back from fullness of relationship with Him. Keep a journal and write

down the things He brings to mind.

Now, pray for His help in overcoming the issue He brought to you. For example, if He reveals to you that you are carrying resentment toward your spouse, you could pray something like this...

Father, I thank you that in your loving kindness you have revealed to me something that is displeasing to you, resentment toward (name). I am making the conscious choice to forgive him/her for any wrongs I've held against him/her. Help me to toss this offense into the depths of the sea, just as you have with my offenses. Help me to have a new outlook on my relationship with him/her that glorifies you.

When I pray, many times the Lord will point me to a chapter and verse in the Bible that I don't have memorized, and when I turn there, I discover it speaks to the very thing that He has been dealing with me on. Those are incredible, faith building moments! Write them down! There will be times that you want or need to refer to those moments to remind you of the things He has already done and the ways He has already revealed Himself to you. These written moments that you can look back and reflect on are so extremely helpful when you find your faith begin to waiver.

Let Him build up your faith. He's waiting for all of us to seek after Him. He's ready to reveal things to us, listen

to us as we pour our hearts out to Him, and set us free from the unnecessary bondage so many of us are carrying around. Ask Him to reveal to you His plan for your life, and to help you walk in obedience toward it.

STEP 2: SPEND TIME IN THE WORD

God inspired the writing of the Bible for a reason. It's there to provide us historical context, to relay the story of His love for us, to point us to Christ, His Son, our Redeemer, to teach us about His character and His will. It's a guide for us, just like His precious Holy Spirit.

When it comes to your personal study of the Bible, choose a translation that is easy to read. My personal favorite is the English Standard Version (ESV) because it's written in easy-to-read modern English and is a trustworthy word-for-word style of translation.

One of my absolute favorite passages in scripture is Jeremiah 29:11-13,

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

He promises that when we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him, and I have seen this truth played out in my own life over and over and over again!

You should read your Bible regularly, and when you do, first ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and to direct you to anything He wants to bring to your attention. I can read the same passage many times, and then months later look at that same passage again and He reveals to me something new about it that I didn't even notice before. That's why it's often referred to as the Living Word.

Do you find it difficult to read the Bible? I used to have the same problem, friends, so I took the matter to God and asked Him to put a hunger in my heart for His word. I prayed this regularly for some time, and then I couldn't get enough of it! It was nourishment to my soul! I would go to a quiet place on my lunch break at work and read it. I read a few passages in the morning while eating my breakfast, and at night before I went to bed. As a result, I grew more in my relationship with the Lord during that period than I ever would have imagined!

STEP 3: FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

Never underestimate the importance of fellowship with other believers.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

– Hebrews 10:24-25

Meeting with other believers helps us to keep each other accountable to the standards of which we have been called. By fellowshiping with each other we help to encourage each other. We also help to build each other's faith through our testimonies, and fellowship allows us to worship and pray corporately which has powerful implications in the spiritual realm. If you are not plugged in to a group of believers, ask the Lord to lead you to a group of believers that you can be a part of and participate corporately with, a church where you can grow spiritually. My husband and I are members of a church that also has meetings called "home groups." Home groups allow us to become more closely connected with a smaller group of individuals within the church which is extremely helpful if your church is very large. We absolutely love being a part of home groups and have seen our faith and relationship with the Lord grow and blossom from these meetings.

Conclusion

I often ask the Lord to give me a greater understanding of who He is. When I originally undertook this study of Christ's character over a decade ago, He gave me that understanding. It was more of an epiphany, really. I began learning that the more time I put into studying His Word, the more revelation He would give me about His nature, my role here on earth, and my place in His kingdom.

When we spend time in the Word of God and ask Him to reveal the meaning of His Word to us, we learn more and more about Him. Then we have the opportunity to hand ourselves over to Him as fresh clay to be molded and shaped into His image. The more time we spend with Him, the more we will begin to reflect His image and shine with His light.

MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Would you join with me in pledging, from this point forward to spend more time in His Word and to make a conscious effort to apply it in your daily life?

I don't know about you, but I want to be able to love my fellow brethren with the love that Christ has for us. I want to shine His light for the world to see. I want to be able to look in the mirror and see Him staring back at me.

About the Author

Susan Collmorgen was raised in a Christian home, but she struggled until her early thirties to find God's purpose for her life. In 2008, she and her husband, Jason, decided to begin putting God first in their lives. Since that time God has been taking them on an amazing journey of revelation and discovery of who He is; leading them across the world to both Asia and Africa and showing them that nothing can stand in the way of God's plans for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

In 2019, following promptings from the Lord, they founded the Christian nonprofit organization *Hope of a Nation*. They currently direct this ministry, overseeing its programs in Mozambique, Africa. In 2020 they also began a personal ministry, *Dedicated to Christ*, to help spur on others to a fullness of relationship with Christ.

Go here to learn more about Hope of a Nation, the non-profit organization founded by Susan and Jason Collmorgen

HopeofaNation.org

Hope of a Nation
Giving Hope. Being Change

WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO GET INVOLVED NEWS & UPDATES CONTACT GIVE

Hope that Transforms Nations

We are American and Mozambican brothers and sisters in Christ with a heart to see God's love transform our communities and nations.

DONATE NOW GET INVOLVED

What We Do

The heart of our mission is to build relationships, lead others to a knowledge of their identity in Christ, make disciples, and bring hope to the lost and hurting people of the world.

