

Your Image of God – June 2015

A good friend stopped by the church office for a visit this week. He is retired from the military and spend a good bit of time stationed or deployed overseas. Prior to one such assignment he met his newborn niece. While he was overseas for a couple of years the girl's parents would show her a picture of her uncle hanging on the wall. After two years or so he came back to the states and visited with this family and the niece who was now a toddler. Her family said, "Do you want to give Uncle Kirk a hug?" She went straight to his picture! That was the only Uncle Kirk she knew.

What's your image of God? In the play *Inherit the Wind*, based on the Scopes Monkey Trial of the 1920's a character is quoted as saying, "God created man in His own image and man, being a gentleman, returned the favor." We create many images of God in our minds which range from a strict, stern judge to a Santa Claus kind of figure who laughs with us. We often believe in a God of convenience, one that we can interact with sometimes (usually the rough times), but feel free to ignore when that makes sense to us.

Kirk's niece knew the image of Kirk but didn't recognize the real thing when standing in his presence. How often do we go to the image we've created and feel comfortable with and ignore the real God who is an active presence in our lives? If you are a believer, God is in your life – God the Spirit lives in you. You are ALWAYS in God's presence. Yet we don't always live as if we're continuously walking in the presence of God. The Psalmist writes, "*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.*" (Psalm 139:7-12)

If the only God you know is the one you've created, then you don't know God. A picture is two-dimensional and can't really capture the depth and reality of a subject. Our images of God are the same: flat and not capturing the fullness of who He is. While our minds are not capable of grasping the full depth and substance of God, we can know him much better once we move beyond our constructs and open ourselves to the Creator.

There are many words available to describe God and his attributes. These words include holy, righteous, merciful, all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present, never-changing, faithful, truth, and many others. All of these adjectives and attributes are wrapped up in the love of God. As Paul writes, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 8:35, 38-39) And as John tells us, "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*" (1 John 4:7-8)

That little niece grew to love her Uncle Kirk once she got to know him. He was much more than a picture to her. Move beyond the limited image of God you've created and get to know the true Creator. I promise – you'll love Him!