
Face to Face

Victory Life Church

Sunday, September 08, 2019 — Part 2, “Love One Another”

Introduction

Exodus 25:20-22 (ESV) The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, **their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.** And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and **in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you,** and from above the mercy seat, **from between the two cherubim** that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

In relationships that remain face to face, a sacred space is created for God to reveal Himself to us, and through us, in unique ways.

God designed humans to require relationship in order for His image to be seen.



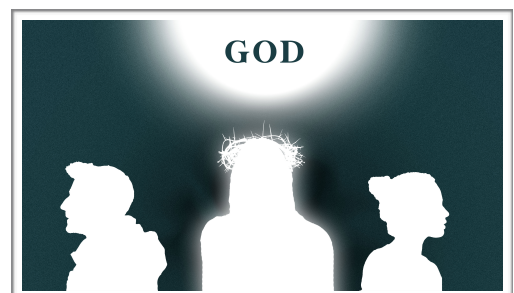
Humans fail at fulfilling their vocation and identity of



being image-bearers. This failure is referred to as “sin” (to “miss the mark” or “moral failure”). Because of their failure, they *fracture the relationship* and *break the partnership*, which in turn, damages their capacity to image God. Humans were made to reflect the image of God through relationship with Him and each other and immediately after they sin, these relationships are fractured. They cover themselves from each other in **shame** and then **blame** their mistake on each other; and they hide themselves from God in **fear**.

The Dilemma: (God wants to bless and rule the world through humans.) How does a holy, good God resolve sin and destroy evil without destroying the sinful and evil humans he loves?

The solution is that God binds Himself to humanity by becoming a man Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, who New Testament writes proclaim to be THE image of God, the image of God perfectly revealed as a human, the way God intended humans to be.





Not only did God become part of humanity, revealing humanity the way He intended, He also took upon Himself the weight of our sin, our turning away, and our corrupting His world by dying on a cross for us.



Now, in a restored relationship with God, we are “in Christ,” our identity as image bearing creatures is restored in Him and we live out of that relationship with Him.

So, what does it mean to live in this new relationship, with our identity in Christ, and fulfill our vocation as image bearing creatures?

Love God, Love People

We all live within a network of relationships in life. Much of our lives and ways we identify ourselves is within those relationships: friends, co-workers, neighbors, family, marriage, etc. Being in relationship is unavoidable. How do we maintain health in those relationships and how do we glorify God in those relationships?

We keep face to face in your relationships. You do that by something very simple to understand, but incredibly difficult to do: love God and love people.



Jesus was asked an important question about which commandment in the Scriptures was the most important one. This was a teachers way of summarizing what God wants from His people. In the Torah (the first five books of Scripture, referred to often as “the Law” or “the Law of Moses”), the story of Israel unfolds with God giving them direction and instruction on how to live in the land He is giving them. It begins with 10 commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), but Israel within a few chapters of the story prove unable to follow those. So more are added. Israel

rebels and proves unfaithful again, and so more commandments are added. If you summarized all of the laws within the Torah, you would total 613. By Jesus’ day, the rabbi’s and Pharisees added thousands of “fence laws” that acted as “fences” around the 613 laws so that you wouldn’t come close to breaking one of them. So it was a common question to ask and debate about. Here is Jesus’ answer to the question:

Matthew 22:36-40 (NLT) “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus



replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

2 commandments, 1 greatest commandment; which one is the greatest? Both. 2, but 1: love God and love people is 1 commandment. Fulfilling this one commandment, love God and people, is how we image God and how we go about fulfilling our vocation. It’s what the whole of scripture was all about.



To treat another human as anything other than an image-bearing creature is a sin against them. To objectify a human (treat them as an object, an “it,” not a “thou”) is to pollute, corrupt the environment with a form of evil.

In extreme forms, this looks like slavery, sex trafficking, governmental tyranny. Things like abuse, murder, blackmailing, slander are also pretty extreme ways we dehumanize people.

However, if you continue the line of thought, there are less extreme, and yet just as sinful, ways we dehumanize other people. All sexual immorality, all sexual activity outside of the covenantal relationship between a man and a woman, (including pornography, adultery, etc.) is to treat another person as an object, who’s value is based on them fulfilling your pleasures. It’s to make your identity based on your sexual desire and your relationship based on pleasure. It’s objectification in many forms, and it is sin and will pollute the environment.

Along those same lines, less extreme yet just as sinful ways we dehumanize each other is employers treating their employees as objects who’s sole purpose is to make the business money. It’s not that the business shouldn’t make money (it should), nor is it that employees shouldn’t do their job and get a paycheck for doing nothing (they should work). Work is an incredible way we image God and fulfill our vocation as image-bearing creatures. Therefore the relationship between employer and employee should be based on more than just making money for the owner. That would be to treat the employee as an object.

Another way we dehumanize others could be how we treat our friends. We can easily use our friends as objects. When we befriend someone simply because it makes us seem more important, that is sin. When we build friendships solely based on our own benefit, socially, financially, emotionally, we are objectifying them. We can do this with our friends or our spouses. We can use our spouses as objects who fulfill our desires.

You can even look at more subtle ways we dehumanize and objectify each other. In our social media world, our “friends” are only a number, fans, followers, and comments, not people. We project ourselves as important and we use the attention as fuel for our ego. We idolize (make idols of) the rich and famous and popular, and we crave



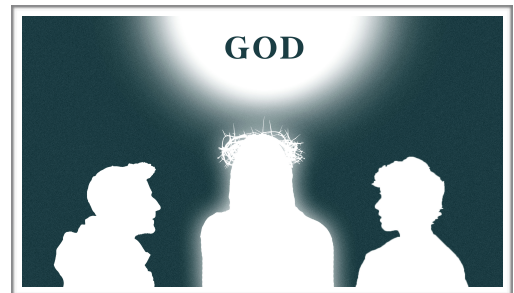
their lives and status.

In our politics, people are just votes, and real issues and tragedies are simply mechanisms of power plays. People are no longer people, they are stats, they are surveys, they are likes and followers, they are consumers. It is corrupting the environment we live and work and raise our families in.



There is a better way to be human. And Jesus said the way to become the image-bearing creatures God created us to be is love; loving God and loving people. But not the watered down, emotionally-whimsical way culture defines love. Under the false pretense of tolerance and acceptance, we have neutered what real love is. We defined good and bad, once again, on our own terms and called it "love."

Colossians 3:5-14 (ESV) Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the **old self** with its practices and have put on the **new self**, which is **being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator**. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **bearing with one another** and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving** each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these **put on love**, which **binds everything together** in perfect harmony.



We exercise face to face relationships by seeing the other person through the lens of Christ ("in Christ," the new *man*) and not for their flawed human self ("in Adam," the old *man*). You can deal with sin, not ignore it, if the environment is "in Christ." We can deal with hard issues, challenge one another, work with one another, when we are both committed to the love of Christ.

There must be a place for us to exercise these face to face, Christ-centered relationships: life groups.