

THE NATURE OF **GOD**

UPGRADING YOUR
IMAGE OF GOD AND WHO HE WANTS
TO BE FOR YOU

GRAHAM COOKE

AN INTERACTIVE JOURNAL

BOOK 3
BEING WITH GOD SERIES



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DEDICATION

There is only one Person I can dedicate this book to — the Holy Spirit. I am constantly amazed at His wisdom, revelation, and power in my life. I love His dedication to, and His passion for, the Lord Jesus Christ. The way He reveals the Son to me has changed my life. His physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual representation of the Father to me has continuously made me more excited and in awe of the great love of God for me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Families are the bedrock of life. They supply the love, belief, laughter, determination and focus to enable each member to grow in confidence and take on seemingly impossible things. Wives, sons, daughters and grandchildren become the world that we look through along with our friends.

We work, persevere, build, persist and develop with them in mind. Their love, acceptance and support acts as a catalyst for all that we attempt. They lift us beyond measure into a place in Christ that contains more than we imagine.

Heather, Ben, Seth, Sophie and partners. Theresa, Alexis and Alyssa. Our wonderful grandchildren. All have contributed to the fullness of my ongoing life experience.

The brilliant friends that I have walked with for several decades. The amazing leaders and ministries that have graced my life. The Radiance Community in Santa Barbara, a grand company with whom to explore life and fullness in Jesus!

Finally, to the one in the coffee house who started this journey and the God who sustains it.

INTRODUCTION

I strongly believe that a major shift is coming in the Western Church. We are embarking on a time when the church will stop explaining who God is and begin proclaiming His nature, His acts, and His glory.

God doesn't need to be explained, He needs to be lauded. He needs to be proclaimed and worshipped. He needs people who are going to shout out who He really is, and what He's really like. His Good News is the best news of all. In a world consumed by heartache, sin, pain, and bad news, Christians can offer the Good News of who God really is.

Many people—Christian and pre-Christian—have a wrong view of God. They see Him in a number of ways, none of which properly reflect the majesty of His presence. It's important that we capture the image that God wants to sow into our heart. What we think about God is the single most important thing in our spiritual journey. Our image of God will drive every single part of our life and declare how we show up in the world. Do we live a life of faith, boldness and conviction? If we don't, we need to examine our perception of God.

People who are doubtful about what God wants to do need to strongly upgrade their image of Him. God wants us to be confident in Him, and in His love for us.

I wonder how many of us have lost—or maybe never had—that intimate knowledge of God as our Father. He must be the most important thing in our world. We're shaped emotionally

and spiritually, by the image of God we carry in our hearts and minds. He loves us. He enjoys us. He is deeply personal with us, as well as being the Almighty God of the entire universe.

God is paradoxical—He is faithful to me even when I am not faithful to Him. His love and faithfulness must win our hearts to a deeper level in Him.

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Whenever we move into a new spiritual dimension of our calling and our ministry, we must take the time to upgrade our relationship with God. Our calling comes at different levels at different times; it is a progressive journey of discovery. When God takes us into the next phase of our calling, our relationship with Him must also change.

Throughout our lives, we will enter into many different phases and experiences. It might be a marriage or the birth of a child, a significant work promotion, a new responsibility, a new ministry, or any other type of change. In seasons like that, we must take the time to upgrade our peace and rest in the Lord. If we enter a new situation without fully immersing ourselves in the stillness of God, we will live on our adrenaline and not out of our spirit. This power boost may seem sufficient at the moment, but for every adrenaline high, there is also an adrenaline low. We cannot sustain that needed adrenaline rush over the long term. Eventually, our energy will wither away and the new season will overwhelm us. We must learn to live in a place of rest in the spirit.

Every experience of God, even resting in Him, should enable us to see Him in a different light. Therefore, we need to constantly re-evaluate our relationship with Him and take a deeper look at our walk with Him. We must critically examine our current picture of God and determine whether it is

strong enough for the next stage of our life and call. If it's not, the stress that we will experience will put pressure on us to quit or scale down our involvement in the new seasons of our lives. That same battle fatigue causes us to shrink back from the challenges facing us. Exhausted, we will talk ourselves out of taking the risks necessary to advance the Kingdom of God. God has given us the ability to live under His wing—we must recognize that we exist within the safety of His love and grace, and not on our own.

“THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT.
CONVERTING THE SOUL.”
PSALM 19:7

I cannot emphasize this enough—every time we are led into a new phase of our journey, we must take time to upgrade our image of God. We can travel confidently into any new experience, no matter how challenging or difficult, in our relationship with Him. God wants to build up your confidence right now, taking it to a whole new dimension.

When we enter a new season it is important to ask ourselves relevant questions regarding its likely impact on all of our relationships and current responsibilities. Present levels of stress will need to be adjusted in the light of a deeper peace and rest that will be required on the next leg of the journey.

Change is much better if it is gradual over time rather than a large overwhelming transformation requiring immediate extensive attention. The two questions required of us on a consistent basis are found in Acts 2, verses 12 and 37:

◆ WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

◆ WHAT MUST WE DO?

How will these adjustments affect our relationship with God and one another? How will this new season deepen my love, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit?

We need to gain a fresh and more powerful image of the nature of God. We need to practice our peace and our patience so that we can break through, in harmony with others, into a new dimension of the Spirit.

MOSES GETS UPGRADED

Moses' relationship with God is a strong example of how a person's view of the Lord can be upgraded during specific seasons of life. In Exodus 3, the man is toiling in the wilderness, far from the glory of God and completely removed from his former life as a prince in Egypt. He wasn't even tending his own flock of sheep—he was working for his father-in-law. Still, God had a plan for Moses' life, and a desire to see the lonely shepherd upgrade his image of who God wanted to be for him. This desire brought Moses to the burning bush, where God could speak to Moses about his future, Israel's deliverance, and His own nature. "*I AM Who I AM*," God said in Exodus 3:14, completely shifting Moses' view of God. This perception changed Moses' life, turning the stuttering murderer into Israel's deliverer. It

was a powerful calling on his life which had to be accompanied by an upgrade in his relationship with God.

After fulfilling that call and leading Israel out of Egypt, Moses' friendship with God was again upgraded as his calling further increased:

“YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES; YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP RUNS OVER.”
PSALM 23:5

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “To your descendants I will give it.” And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.’

“And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, ‘Say to the children of Israel, “You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.”’ So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.”
(Exodus 33:1-6)

Moses' call had changed. In Exodus 3, it was primarily about bringing Israel out of bondage and oppression—Moses was a deliverer. Now, in Exodus 33, it wasn't about bringing people out; it was about taking people in. His call was now to bring Israel into its land of promise. He had to be consumed with inheritance, not deliverance. And whenever a

“FEAR NOT, FOR I AM WITH YOU; BE NOT DISMAYED, FOR I AM YOUR GOD. I WILL STRENGTHEN YOU, YES, I WILL HELP YOU. I WILL UPHOLD YOU WITH MY RIGHTEOUS RIGHT HAND.”
ISAIAH 41:10

call changes, your relationship with God must change first.

If there was one man who could have been content with where his relationship with God sat, it was Moses. In Exodus 33:7-11, we are given a taste of how strong that bond was:

“Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp. So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, that all the people rose, and each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshipped, each man in his tent door. So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he

would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.”

“Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.” I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t either! All of Israel would watch as their leader went to the meeting place and the cloud came down upon the tent. It was an awesome sight, and a strong testimony to Moses’ relationship with God: “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” Despite all of this favor Moses had, it was time for another upgrade in his relationship with God. He needed an even deeper relationship because the call on his life had been changed so dramatically—the burning bush and tent of meeting were no longer enough. In preparation for the stress and pressure of the next big thing, Moses had to have his relationship with the Lord upgraded. And Moses wanted that upgrade badly.

God took Moses and put him in a specific place of longing and desire for the one thing God really wanted to give him. In Heaven, there was a conversation over Moses’ life amongst the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “Look at Moses,” the Trinity said. “He’s at a new place in his life. What is it I want to do for him? Well, I want to show him who I really am. I want to upgrade his picture of Me. What I’ll do is get him to ask Me a question, so he can get a picture of Me that will sustain him through everything he is going to have to go through. I want to show him My glory, My supremacy, and My sovereignty.”

That day in the Tent of Meeting, God maneuvered Moses into a corner where the prophet realized he had favor from

the Lord to ask anything. God wasn't saying no to Moses at this point, so he decided to push everything as far as he could. Eventually, Moses asked the question God had been waiting for—"Please, show me Your glory," Moses asked in Exodus 33:18. Those five words were exactly what God wanted to hear. It's as if He said, "What a great idea! Let's do that!" We can read the rest of the account in Exodus 33:20-23:

"But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.' And the Lord said, 'Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'"

I want you to be with Me," the Lord basically told Moses, "but My glory would incinerate you. Instead, I'll protect you

“THEREFORE THE LORD WILL WAIT, THAT HE MAY BE GRACIOUS TO YOU; AND THEREFORE HE WILL BE EXALTED, THAT HE MAY HAVE MERCY ON YOU. FOR THE LORD IS A GOD OF JUSTICE; BLESSED ARE ALL THOSE WHO WAIT FOR HIM.”
ISAIAH 30:18

in the cleft of this rock and you will be able to see My back.” God arranged the entire scenario to put Moses right where He wanted him, all because God hungered to show him something he had never seen before. And then God

walked past him. I can't even imagine this; it's beyond our ability to fathom. Moses not only got to see the back of Almighty God, he got to hear Him proclaim truth about Himself, as we read in Exodus 34:6:

“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

Whenever the Lord talks about Himself, take serious note of what He is saying.