

# IN HIS IMAGE

## Optional directions to take your talk:

- Image in media
  - Our identity in God
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## Optional format to follow:

**Purpose** To recognize how we are led to present an acceptable image to the world, and how this prevents us from seeing our own basic goodness and reduces our freedom to be the full person God wants us to be.

## Outline

- **Who Am I Meant to Be? (3 mins)**
  - God's vision of me
  - “Me” in relationship
- **World's Greatest (5 mins)**
  - Outside influences
  - The ideal man/woman
  - Lack of freedom
- **Self-Image (5 mins)**
  - Basic insecurity
  - Situations that intimidate
  - Reaction to compliments
  - Self-description
- **Images We Project (5 mins)**
  - Images that please
  - Image I project
- **God Does Not Make Junk! (3-5 minutes)**
  - God's image
  - Free to be “me”

### 1. Who Am I Meant to Be (2-3 minutes)

Begin by thanking them for a good beginning last night. Share your personal enthusiasm for all that is to come and encourage them to settle down as we get into the next phase of the weekend.

Refer to the talk last night in which we reflected on the idea that God is calling each one of us personally by name to become the special person He created us to be. In order to begin to respond to this call, we have to look at ourselves and ask, "Who am I?" right now.

The fact is, if I strive for anything less than God's ambition for me, I really cannot be happy because something will always be nagging me -- "there must be more."

Knowing who I am is important because this whole weekend is concerned with relationship with each other and with Jesus. If I do not know who I am or if I cannot or will not reveal the true "me" to another, then what is the relationship built on? To do all this, I have to know more about myself, to go beyond the person others see and come in touch with the real me.

### 2. World's Greatest (3-5 minutes)

The fact is that we are influenced by what others expect of us. It only takes a look at TV, the latest movie, or this week's newspaper or magazine to know what the world expects. Throughout our lives, in school, in the media, in the way society sets its standards and rewards we are learning about the *ideal* man and woman.

Share your own impression of the ideal man and woman. This should be an honest picture that has formed in your own head through the years.

For example, we usually picture the ideal man physically perfect maybe the face of Brad Pitt and the body of the Arnold. He is a big success in business, with prestige, title, money, and power, and a man of action who gets things done. He has a very nice home, belongs to a fancy club, owns a couple of cars, and has all the latest possessions. He lives in a social whirl, travels the world, and manages to remain the club's golf or tennis champion.

Today's ideal woman is a perfect blend of a "10" body and the mind, independence, and success of Martha Stewart. She has her career and does not need anyone else. She has her own interests and hobbies. Maybe she is involved in politics and is a jet setter, traveling in a big social world.

Now we may laugh at these descriptions, and perhaps they are a little exaggerated, but not much. This is what the world is selling as the good life; and when it is all we see and hear, it is difficult to avoid buying into it.

What we do not even realize is that we are being brainwashed; and without even knowing it, we begin to accept this world's plan as good and reasonable. "Everybody is doing it" and it becomes the standard for everyone. The influence is so powerful that we actually lose our freedom to be different. We may not like to admit it, but we are being literally brainwashed and we are losing our freedom of choice.

### 3. Self-Image (5 minutes)

One of the reasons we are so strongly influenced by the expectations of others is our own insecurity. We may not like to consider it, and maybe we are not even aware of it; but all of us have feelings of insecurity at some times more than others but they are there.

Now share a few brief examples of situations that create feelings of insecurity or self-doubt. These might be: a new social situation, going to a party where you do not know anyone well, arriving late for an important date and everything is interrupted, not being elected for school representative or chosen for a team, chorale club, and so forth, getting poor marks at school and bringing them home to your parents, doing something to hurt another or just getting down on yourself. Share any that you can in a personal way with enough of a description to bring out the feelings of insecurity.

Another tip-off to our feelings of insecurity is the way we react to compliments. Very often we find it difficult to accept a compliment; some embarrass us more than others do. The compliment can be about a job that we do or a talent we have, our physical appearance, a personality trait or just *me* as a person.

Now share a typical compliment you receive about each of the following: something you did well, a talent you have, your physical appearance, your outstanding personality

trait, and *you* as a good person. Be specific about the compliments and describe how you honestly felt inside at the time.

Even though we may like the idea of compliments, we usually get embarrassed, sometimes deny it, and often worry about living up to it. Share how you react more negatively as it moves from the activity to the person.

Now share how you honestly see yourself, covering each aspect of accomplishment, talent, physical appearance (for example, your build, face, things you do not like, and so forth), personality (ability to meet and mix), and *you* as a person. This should be honest, not exaggerated and not superficial. Mention what you would like to change. This should be a short, descriptive paragraph.

#### 4. Images We Project (5 minutes)

Because of our basic insecurity, we try to project an image that will be accepted and liked by others. We are not usually conscious of it, but we try to live up to expectations, to please or impress others.

Now, tell them that you would like to share a little bit about the image you think you project.

Select a specific, **positive** image that you can call your own. You may best identify it by reflecting on what people seem to like about you. You may use several, but there needs to be one that is your foundation. Name it; describe it by the way you behave in different situations and with different people. Try to trace it with a couple of instances from childhood to now. Describe how you behaved in the situation and how it won acceptance and approval from others. Point out how this has become natural to you. It has become a part of you that you are comfortable with.

#### 5. God Does Not Make Junk (3-5 minutes)

When you have completed this, mention that these are all good ways of acting and there is nothing wrong with that. The only danger is that we begin to see the image as who we are and we begin to see our value in this image, this way of behavior, rather than our own basic goodness. We just have it backwards. It is not that we are good

because we do good things. Rather, we do these good things because we are good. State clearly, "I am good because God made me and God does not make junk." He made me in His image. Read what is written in the Book of Psalms: Psalm 139:1-6 and 13-14. Share your personal reaction to this reading.

We have to see ourselves through the eyes of God. If we do not believe that we are good, then we cannot believe that we are lovable; we cannot believe in God's love; we cannot accept the love of others; we cannot freely love another because we are distracted by our fears and insecurities. When I am free to feel God's love for me, telling me all I am meant to be, then I can recognize my own goodness and see all that I am meant to be.

End with a short prayer, asking God to help you see your own goodness, to look for Him within yourself. Ask for the grace to discover His ambition for you and the strength to believe in yourself and become all that He intended.