



Study Guide Full
February 23, 2020

Welcoming author Philip Yancey to the pulpit, we are excited to hear his reminder of how we are to “Bear God’s Image in Today’s World,” as Yancey preaches on Genesis 1:25-27.

And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 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.”

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

Mr. Yancey is visiting us as part of his book tour for *Fearfully and Wonderfully: The Marvel of Bearing God’s Image*, which he co-wrote with his mentor, orthopedic surgeon Dr. Paul Brand: To introduce our church to this thoughtful book, we have in this Study Guide here taken just a few of the questions from the book’s discussion guide. Even if you have not yet been able to read the book, the questions will certainly prove meaningful for small-group discussion. That said, *the insights in the book that link the medical with the spiritual are simply delightful; do not miss out!*



PART 1: IMAGE BEARERS

Read Psalm 139:13-16: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Do you ever struggle to believe that you matter? Think back to the 1946 Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life* in which an angel is sent from heaven to show a desperate man how his community would have suffered had he never existed. As Dr. Brand reminds us, we matter most in relation to the whole. How do you know that your participation in the Body of Christ makes any difference?

PART 2: ONE AND MANY

Read John 17:20-21: "My prayer is not for [believers] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Dr. Brand contends that unity begins not with our similarity but with our diversity.

You are an intention of God, who designed and knew you before you entered the world. Talk about your experience of being known; describe what this looks like in a few specific settings or relationships, such as your family or church, or perhaps a sports team. How does this compare with times when you feel unnoticed or insignificant? Thinking of your own experience, how can you make a difference in the lives of others, offering a greater sense of value and significance?

Have you ever seen evidence of your effect on the community? It may be uncomfortable, but try to share one of your most valuable traits. How might it inspire or empower someone else to improve their relationship with God? Within your group, take turns noting the faithful qualities you observe and respect in each other. Also, make a specific plan to affirm someone you know beyond the group.

Where have you seen a situation where differences are affirmed, rather than allowed to obstruct unity in the church? Think of examples from church history, stories of public figures, accounts retold in this (or any) book, or your own church experience. What positive impact have you seen from embracing diversity?

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PART 3: OUTSIDE AND INSIDE

Dr. Brand identifies touch as his most precious diagnostic tool, a skill perfected after a great deal of practice: "Of all the senses, touch is the most trustworthy. Give a baby an object to play with and she will finger it, then bring it to her mouth and tongue it. To her, touch is primary, and auditory and visual senses are secondary. Later, she may touch a magician's props to see if they are real; she cannot trust her eyes."

Have you ever endured, or are you currently facing, an episode of doubt? Do you know someone whose faith has been shaken? Dr. Brand reminds us that it is helpful to identify the most basic skeleton of your belief.

PART 4: PROOF OF LIFE

Just as breath sustains the life of our bodies, our Christian faith is sustained by the power of the Spirit. Dr. Brand writes, "The Holy Spirit, then, allows the reality of God's own self to establish a presence inside each one of us. God is timeless, but the Spirit becomes for us the present-tense application of God's nature. Correspondence with the Spirit keeps us spiritually alive."

Like a digital circuit, muscles respond to a single on-off command to contract. Motion

Have you been able to get "in touch with" the needs of someone close to you? Did you (or can you) develop an improved awareness of how to help? How? Genuine concern generates greater trust. Identify a relationship in which you would like to offer assistance, but first need to earn trust. List any specific steps you might be able to take.

What can you trust to be true? How can these core beliefs help you or others in times of doubt? Recount times when you have found God to be faithful, and list these incidences. Rely on this knowledge to assure you in wobbly times.

Do you notice a difference in your life when you actively invite the Spirit to lead you? What about when you pause to become aware of God's will, inspired in you? Take time to reflect on how you can improve this practice. Share with others any insights you have found to be helpful.

Use similarities you recognize in your own spiritual life to draw comparisons within the

involves an intricate system of levers (bones) and counterbalancing muscles. In addition, muscles must be used; if an injury or illness prevents motion, the muscles atrophy.

PART 5: THE LANGUAGE OF PAIN

Although it may seem paradoxical, pain serves a vital role in uniting the cells of the body. Our cells cooperate to send and react to the alarm of pain, urgently demanding attention and rerouting resources as needed. When this pain message fades, certain areas can become detached, and we can disregard the neediest members.

Within the Body of Christ, just as in all groups of associated people, conflict and irritation are bound to happen. Dr. Brand suggests that we observe the remarkable way our joints are designed and use this as a source of inspiration for avoiding friction.

PART 6: THE BODY'S CEO

As members of a spiritual Body, we each participate in the marvel of direct contact with the Head. Spiritual disciplines are one way to enhance this active relationship with God. Dr. Brand mentions a few ancient and current spiritual disciplines: meditation, fasting, prayer, simple living, worship, celebration, and methodically repeating certain prayers.

Body of Christ. Give examples of growing stronger spiritually with use, or weaker with neglect.

How does this apply to our connection with members of Christ's Body, locally and across the globe? Give specific examples. What does this imply regarding our response to those who are suffering? How could pain and suffering serve to unify the church?

How would you extend the metaphor? Think of the roles of various components such as cartilage, canaliculi (channels), synovial fluid; consider the process of lubrication, as well as the amount and distribution of contact. Where does grace become critical, and how would you apply it?

Are you currently practicing any of these or other spiritual disciplines? Please share your experience, including what benefit you may have discovered. Have you adopted any other routines that assist you to hear God's voice and center yourself in God's will? Share something of your personal experience with this intimate relationship.

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