

Animate Talk 1 - Introduction

Hello Woodland Hills Podrisoners. Last week I told you a little bit about this temporary online community site that we're launching. And it is now launched. I want to invite you to log in and be a part of this. It will give you a chance to discuss how the Animate series is impacting you, to discuss issues that surround that. It will give you the chance to network with other people who are pod casting from Woodland Hills Church. Maybe even meet other people in your area that are part of the Woodland Hills pod congregation. So we really encourage you to be a part of this. We're trying to find out how much interest is out there to begin to develop a sort of virtual community and we're also trying to determine whether this is something that will be sustainable on our part. So we really would appreciate your input on this and participation in this and we think it will be a blessing to you as well. So look forward to chatting with you online. God bless.

Animate Talk 1 – What a Surprise!

Hi folks. My name's Greg Boyd. I'm the senior pastor here at Woodland Hills Church and as that intro advertised we're starting a new series here this morning, a six week series called Animate. It's called Animate because the word means to bring to life, to animate something and we'll be looking at aspects of our walk with God and spirituality that can bring life to our life, and the life of God coming in to us. We'll see that it's all about the incarnation. God is the God of the whole universe but He incarnated Himself, made Himself into a human being, a particular human being, at a particular point in time. He was enfleshed and by that means he breathes life into us, our salvation is a result of that. And what we'll see in this series is that everything that has to do with God takes on life when it becomes enfleshed, when it becomes embodied, when it becomes concrete. As that advertisement just said it's about learning how to relate to God in a way that you use all of your senses. We've for too long bought into what I would call a platonic spirituality where God is sort of up in this ethereal ozone layer sort of thing, this zone that is just unimaginable and it has nothing really to do with our physical life. But what we're going to see in this series is that, yes, God is up there... Did I say ozone layer? I didn't mean ozone... ethereal realm (laughter). "Oh great he's going to start talking about global warming now". No (laughter). But the things of God are concrete. It's about our imagination, because what we'll see is that it's through the gift of imagination that the abstract truths of God become concrete. You might have noticed, did some of you notice when you came in here something different about the gathering area? Yeh there are some paintings up there. Those are the works of Dale Johnson, he's a professor at Bethel. Thank you Dale for letting us use those and we want to be incorporating more of the arts into our building, into our services because that's one of the means by which (applause) .. some folks are going 'yes' to that... because that's one of the ways that spiritual truths become concrete and they impact us more that way. We have in this series a number of things that are going to be of some assistance in this. We have this workbook, this incredible workbook that includes individual and group exercises to apply the teaching on the weekend and to go a little deeper with that. And we encourage you to pick up those books and we have these Animate groups, we encourage you to be involved in these Animate groups. If you can't afford the book; its \$3 you can download it for free off the internet, and if you don't have access to the internet and you can't afford it stop by and talk to Dave at the Hub and we'll give you a copy because we want everybody to be a part of this and we don't want finances to be an obstacle. We're also trying something different during this series, that we've never done before - we've got thousands of podrisoners. Everybody say hi to the podrisoners. "Hi podrisoners". We love you guys, you're part of us. And we're looking at ways of incorporating them into our body life and so during this series we're having on our web site a community room where folks can talk to one another and get connected and go a little deeper on this. Folks over there in China or Tanzania or Mozambique or wherever, we've got folks tuning in all over the place, and so they can be part of us that way. So podrisoners we encourage you to do that, get online and be a part of this but it's about using the imagination.

I want to start with just a word of prayer here. Father I thank You for every person in this auditorium and everyone listening through podcasts or other means. And I pray God that You would set us free, that You would God just help us to receive Your word deeply and be transformed by it. And Lord for some folks I just know this is going to rock their world. It is going to turn their spiritual life upside down for this is what's been missing and I pray Lord that You just help them to receive this deeply. Collapse buzzers that we might have that make us fearful of new things but discern everything according to Your word Lord. Holy Spirit You're the one who gives freedom, set Your people free we pray in Jesus' name. And all God's people said. Amen

Let's start with the problem. The main problem we're sort of focussing on during this series. Have any of you had this issue where you read something in the Bible about how we're transformed by the power of God working in our life and you ask the question 'what's wrong with me?' 'Why don't I experience that transforming power?' I'm thinking that a lot of us have been there, or are there. You read in the Bible about how when you surrender your life to Christ there's this Holy Spirit that comes and dwells within you; out of your innermost being will come rivers of living water and you're a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things have passed away, behold all things are new, right? And you're conformed to the image of Jesus Christ... and all of that. You're sitting there reading this saying 'where's the power? Where's the transformation? Why is it that I've been a follower of Jesus for a year, or 10 years or maybe 30 years and I've still got that old self baggage hanging around? I've still got the bondage and the thoughts, and the bondage and the baggage and the addictions and the behaviours. How come I'm not experiencing that transforming power? Where's the reality to this?' Or you read in the Bible things that are supposed to be true but they don't feel, they don't seem real, has that every happened to you? And those two things are actually closely connected because what we'll see in this whole series is that it's not what you know in your head that changes you and transforms you, it's what you experience as real. In fact we're neurologically wired that way. God made us that way.

So to ask the question why don't we experience something as real is already to be on the way to answering the question 'why don't we experience more transformation?' You read about how we're children of God, friends of God, made holy and blameless but that doesn't feel real. You believe in God but you don't really experience God on a regular basis. Maybe in a service like this you sense some of the presence of God, because God is so thick here this morning, but ordinarily God just doesn't seem real. And you're seated with Christ in heavenly places and you're forgiven, but that doesn't seem real. Maybe what seems real to you 99% of the time is just the here and the now, the physical realm; the bills you've got to pay, you know, the people who are trying to foreclose on your home, the problems you've got in your marriage and with your kids, those things are real, but the redemption of God and all the great stuff the Bible talks about just doesn't seem real. Why? And that's what we're going to be looking at here in this series. Why aren't we more transformed? Why don't we experience things of God as being more real than we do?

Now it's not like there's a lack of proposed solutions to these problems, and I want to go over a couple of them. In some contexts you might go to the preacher and say 'gosh, I don't experience the Bible's transformation' and the preacher might say to you 'well you know... what's wrong with you? You know... are you tithing? Are you going to church on a regular basis? When was the last time you won someone to Jesus? Is there secret sin in your life? We might call this the 'Try Harder' solution; because the idea here is that anything that's wrong with you is probably because you're not trying hard enough. You say 'gosh preacher, I don't feel enough love in my life' and the preacher will say 'Well come on man, if you're a real Christian you ought to be loving, you gotta be loving, you better be loving, and so come on just crank it out' And you leave the preacher and you go and try to crank it out but folks it doesn't work like that, does it? By sheer will power you might be able to crank out some loving behaviour and some loving words but that doesn't make you a more loving person. Now there's a lot of truth in this Try Harder solution. There is will involved, there is will power involved in this, but if you think that by sheer will power you're going to become a different kind of a person, I'm here to tell you, that it's not going to work. Something else has to be going on. Will power can adjust behaviour but it can't fundamentally change who you are. You try hard to be more loving, you try hard to be joyful. 'Come on, what wrong with you; being so depressed? Don't you know we're supposed to rejoice always, and again I say rejoice? Come on chipper up there, if you're a real Christian you'll have the joy of the Lord... I got the joy of the Lord what's wrong with you?' So you go out and you try really hard to be joyful and we call that the fruit of the Spirit. (laughter). So much of what goes by the name of the 'fruit of the Spirit' is simply the fruit of our self-effort, concealing our lack of the fruit of the Spirit. No, no you see something else is.... The will is involved for sure, the will is involved but that is not the most fundamental thing, something else is missing.

Now you have other folks who go to the other extreme and they say 'you know what, our will power can't change us' and they got that right and then they conclude 'you just have to let go and let God. God has to transform you, it's a sovereign move of God in your life that will remove those bondages and will remove that sin and so you just got pray that God will take it from you'. And once in a while you find people who, just like that, get stuff taken from them. There's bondage in your life and you surrender your life to Christ and bam it was gone. You used to be an alcoholic this person says and then I gave my life to Jesus and I haven't been thirsty for that stuff again. I used to have these compulsive thoughts about sex and whatever and I gave my life to Christ and they're all gone, gone, gone, gone. And they go around giving their testimony on that and that's beautiful but the implication can be that that's the way its always supposed to happen. So the rest of us losers are listening to this and saying (laughter) 'what's wrong with us?' And the preacher says 'well you just

got to let go and let God, and wait on God and God will take it from you and now you're wondering 'how come God took it from them right away and I'm sitting here twenty years later and I still got it on me. No, it's absolutely true, there's a lot of truth in this, that we can't change ourselves by our will power, God has to be working in us. If it's not for the Holy Spirit working in our inner being transformation just isn't going to take place. It says in Philippians Chapter 2, that we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Not work at your salvation, notice that, but you work it out, you've got this identity and now you work it out. We work it out because its God who's in us working for His good pleasure, to will and do His good pleasure. Note that cooperation there, God is working in you, yes, that's necessary but there's a role that we play and so, and the Bible encourages us about a number of things and we'll be seeing that through this series that we're to be about doing. So just waiting around for God to do it is, with rare exceptions, not going to bring about the transformation and the reality that you're looking for.

And then there is this solution; it's a more recent one. Back in the good old days, you know, we were just American pragmatists who just believed in self effort and power, so the 'Try Harder' solution was the more dominant solution, but now we're in the information age, and what I'm finding is people more and more are trusting in information to solve all our problems, as though our problems are all the result of our ignorance. And so people have this kind of framework, they say stuff like this; you go to the preacher and you say 'I'm not experiencing transformation and I'm not experiencing the reality of God and the preacher might say 'well here's four good books on that topic, three seminars you can go to, eight Bible passages you can listen to and forty two more of Greg's sermons, you know and, if you just get enough information well then you'll be transformed. And I'm all for information, I love information, I love books; I write books.. buy more of my books (laughter) but they alone are not going to transform you. (laughter) Sorry. Sorry. Sales just went down; 'Aw that's why I bought your stuff, for crying out loud!'. Look if information could in itself lead to transformation, we'll say more about this in the weeks to come, but if information alone could do it then, wouldn't you think the people who know the most would be transformed the most. Those who have PhDs in theology for example would just be the most spiritual people that you've ever met, and undoubtedly that's true once in a while (laughter) but its not always true, Lord knows its not usually true. In fact what I find is that people who are most invested in information, because there are just the cerebral, intellectual types, they tend to have the most problems connecting the elevator from the head to the heart. They know a whole lot but there's just no experiential reality there and if you think that just reading a couple more books or listening to a few more sermons or going to a seminar is going to change all that, in and of itself it won't, something else has got to happen. Now what are we missing? That's what we're going to be talking about in this series. What are we missing? And I am not one to... I am always averse to giving formulas or panacea, cure all sort of a thing – like, this is the secret that changes everything. But on the other hand I firmly believe, to the core of my being that there is a biblical principle that we in modern western culture have missed and it explains a great deal of why we don't experience the things of God as real and aren't transformed by them more than we actually are and it has to do with our imagination and the role that God designed it to have in our walk with God.

Now some folks here are automatically thinking 'oh, this sounds kind of 'new agey', this is a modern self-help kind of a thing', you know or something like that. So I want to right away go to the Bible and look at a passage that I think is absolutely crucial because its dealing with the principle of transformation, and I want to explore this. This is the passage I think that is ... fleshes out the role of imagination in the most powerful way in the whole Bible. It comes out of 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. Here Paul is drawing an analogy with the people of the Old Testament, when Moses was up on Mount Sinai he was in the Lord's presence and when he came down from the Lord's presence he had a glow about him, an aura about him, a physical shininess to him that was so bright, the people couldn't take looking at him so they put a veil over his face. And Paul is now going to talk about that veil and apply it in a unique way and so he says this in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3 starting with verse 14. "But their minds" note the topic – minds, "their minds were made dull for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read". He is talking about contemporary non-believers when they read the old covenant, there's a veil, drawing an analogy to the veil in the Old Testament but now he's applying the veil to their minds. Their minds are dull, and Paul goes on to say " it has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away, even to this day when Moses is read a veil covers their hearts". Now what you need to know about the Bible's view of the human self is this; the mind and the heart are not two separate things. The ancient Greeks thought the mind and the heart were radically different; your mind is your rational self, your heart is your emotions and they liked the rationality but they looked down on emotions and so they thought there was two separate things – our thinking and our feelings. But from a biblical perspective we are holistic selves and our thinking and feeling are wrapped up with one another. Mind and heart are two aspects of the same thing, the mind is the thinking part of the heart, heart is the feeling side of the mind and by the way neuroscience has shown in the last 30 years especially, that that view is absolutely right. The old Greek view is absolutely wrong we are whole creatures and all of our emotions are associated with our thought

processes. We'll be saying more about that later on the series as well. So when Paul talks about the veil over the heart it's not different from the veil over their mind – it's one veil, and one self, with a thought side and an emotion side. And he's saying that when these non-believing Jews read Moses that veil is over their mind, it's over their hearts, but. I love the Bible's 'buts'. BUT when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil – that's over the mind, over the heart, is taken away. Praise God. Now he says "now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom" what kind of freedom? Freedom to have that veil removed. The Lord removes the veil and now we are free. We're free to see and experience stuff in our mind and heart that we weren't free to see and experience before. Just to remove any doubt about that he goes on to say "and all of us" because we are free by the Spirit, "all of us who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory". Now the word 'contemplate' there is 'katotripzo' and it means literally to behold or reflect an image. To behold or reflect an image. And you do that in your mind, so it's translated in the TNIV as contemplate. Other translations say that we behold the Lord as through a glass darkly or something of the sort, but it means to behold and reflect the Lord's glory in the mind. "As we all who with unveiled faces", because the Spirit has set us free to do this, "as we behold the Lord's glory we are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit". How are we transformed? Is it by just trying hard? No. Is it by just waiting for God to take something from us? No. Is it by just acquiring more information? No. Paul here says that the way we're transformed from one degree of glory to another, with ever increasing glory is by beholding the Lord's glory, which now we are able to do because the veil has been removed. And the place where the veil's been removed and the place where we behold the Lord's glory is in the mind, in the heart – what we would today call our imagination.

A few verses later in chapter 4 and remember in the original there is no chapter division and no verse division. So this is the same discussion here, Paul says "but even if, and even if our gospel is veiled" even if it continues to be veiled to some "it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age" who is Satan "has blinded the minds of unbelievers" the minds of unbelievers. The veil is over their mind and that is Satan's doing "so that they cannot see" – he's not talking about physical sight, he's talking about seeing in the mind. "they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ who is the image of God." Chew on that passage. Lord help us to internalise that passage. What Paul is saying is that before you surrendered to Jesus you've got a veil over your heart, over your mind, over your imagination. And that keeps you from seeing who God really is, it's influenced by the god of this age, Satan, and it keeps you blind, it keeps you from seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But when you turn to the Lord that veil is removed and now you have a capacity inside of you that you didn't have before. It's the capacity to behold the Lord's glory. To do what we sang about earlier, to see the Lord high and lifted up and experiencing the train of His glory filling the temple. And you have a capacity to see the truth of who God is and begin to experience the truth of who God is and as you do that, as you behold His glory, you're transformed into that glory. All that the Lord is by nature becomes yours by grace as you simply look at Him. The process of transformation really comes down to be that simple. You become what you see, what you experience in your mind, in your heart, and as you behold His glory, you take on that glory. As you behold His beauty, you take on that beauty. I can know that God loves me, and that's a profound truth and I'm glad for that but that information doesn't transform me. It's when I begin to behold the Lord loving me that's part of His glory, the shininess of His love, the radiance of His love. As I experience in my mind and heart God loving me, now I become a more loving person, I'm being transformed from one degree of glory to another. When I see the Lord rejoicing over me it's good to know the fact that He rejoices over you but that's just information. It won't do a thing to change the way you look at Him or the way you see each other or see yourself or other people, but when you, in a concrete way, when that becomes enfleshed and you begin to experience it in your inner being in the flesh mind, now you become more joyful. What is God's by nature becomes yours by grace. When you begin to... it's great to know the fact that you're reconciled, that God has peace with you because of Jesus Christ but that's just information, that's not going to change you, but when you can experience in a real way, because the veil has been removed, praise God, and the Spirit has set you free, now you can see something that you didn't see before and part of what you see is God's peace over you, the reconciliation that is there. And as you experience that, behold that, sense that, now you become a more peaceful person and that is the fruit of the Spirit. Why? Because the fruit of the Spirit is God taking what is His by nature, giving it to us by grace, and the Spirit is the one who sets you free to see the Lord in all His glory, so the Spirit is the one who imparts on you all the fruit of that, and that folks is the fruit of the Spirit. And all that is what we call imagination today. Imagination simply refers to the mind's ability to experience images – image...ation – imagination. Now the trouble that we have is this, we are all, or all of us who are in western culture, who have been raised in western culture, we are heirs of what is called the scientific revolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. We are heirs of the enlightenment, we're heirs of what is called a naturalistic way of looking at the world, where everything just kind of operates by natural cause and effect and because of that we're conditioned to some degree to assume that what is real is this stuff, matter, the physical world. What's really

real is matter, the physical world, what you can physically touch, physically taste, physically see, that is what is really real. So imagination from that world view and the perspective of that world view is make believe. Imagination, we tend to dismiss it as something that's about fantasy, child's play; 'oh that's just your imagination' – and so we dismiss it. And in dismissing imagination as just make believe, we've just undermined the beauty and the power and the truth of the passage we just read; 2 Corinthians chapters 3 & 4. We think that imagination is just child's play and we dismiss it and so when there are things in our mind that are concrete and vivid we don't pay them much due. It's why we in the west in the last couple of hundred years have largely lost the capacity to experience as real the things of God. It has to do with our imagination. What I want us to see is that imagination, yes, it can be used for fantasy, it can be used to take us away from reality and there's even a useful function for that. All the creative works of the world are the result of the creativity of that function of imagination, and it's a good thing. But imagination isn't only used for that, not by any means.

Imagination as almost every culture has understood up until our own the last several hundred years, imagination while it can be just child's play, it also can be the means by which we don't get away from reality rather we are brought closer to certain aspects of reality. For example, Dave Drass on our video earlier asked you to remember when you first came to Woodland Hills Church. I'm going to ask you to do that right now, go back to the time when you first came here, and remember what it was like when you came here; who you saw, what you heard, maybe what you smelt or what you sensed, what emotions were going on. Try to remember that as concretely as possible. Now I want to ask you the question. How do you know that is the way it actually happened? And you'll probably want to respond by saying something like 'well because I'm remembering it right now, dude...(laughter) that's what memory's for'. Yes true. But how are you remembering it? Are you seeing a kind of ticker tape going across the screen of your mind saying 'here's the information about what it was like when you first came to Woodland Hills Church, you met a nice person in a pink dress and she welcomed you and you felt really at home.. or maybe it was less pleasant than that'? Are you seeing a bunch of information like that? I doubt it. What's going on is for you to remember how it happened you are in some sense re-experiencing it, you're back there again. Your mind is recalling experientially what you saw, what you heard, what you felt, what you sensed, maybe what you smelt – maybe that lady in the pink dress that welcomed you had really bad breath and that's what stands out right now; 'oh I remember – I was almost slain in the Spirit when I met her' (laughter) ... whatever it was. And see folks - that is your imagination, your image-ation. You are representing what happened in your imagination and by that means you are getting access to reality, to the reality of what happened. Imagination can be used for fantasy, for child's play or whatever, and that's useful, but it can also be a means of bringing us closer to reality. Same thing is I ask you, 'what are you going to be doing after this service or the rest of today?' You think about that. What will I be doing an hour from now, or five hours from now. Now how are you doing that? How are you planning your day? Do you have a ticker tape of information going across the screen of your brain saying 'oh I will have a wonderful day with my spouse, going to a park', although today it's kind of rainy, so maybe not. Are you getting a ticker tape of information saying we're going to go out to a movie tonight or watch these TV shows or we've got to clean the basement or something like that? No, that's not how you're anticipating what you're going to do later on today. The way you anticipate and plan what you're going to do later on today is you experience it ahead of time. You are, if you can really attend to how your brain is functioning, you are getting images, whether they are visual, or a sense or some other way; you are pre-experiencing the future of this day. All of our forward planning is similar to our remembering; it all involves imagination. In fact the way you're imagining what you're going to do the rest of today will largely determine how you feel about the rest of today. If what you're imagining for the rest of today is something that's really kind of negative and painful, you're going to be full of anxiety right now, because anxiety is just experiencing the pain of a future case scenario ahead of time, whereas if you're anticipating something very pleasant, you're going to be very happy with that right now. In fact this folks we'll see later on in the series, is what the Bible calls faith. Faith is entertaining a picture of the future that is not yet seen but that you hope for and drives you towards it. In fact folks we'll find out that everything in our life, all the actions we do, all the things that we strive for are an outgrowth of the imaginative world that we have going on in our brain. Imagination is not just there to take us away from reality, it brings us to reality and it is the decisive variable that determines the quality and direction of our life. It brings us to truth to reality, if we use it right. They even have found this in science. Used to be the case that people thought that science was this cold, hard rationality where we just use our reason and investigate physical things and that's all there was to it. And it certainly does involve reason and mathematics and all the rest. But what we learned in the twentieth century was that science completely depends on the use of imagination. Theoreticians have to imagine something new as a way of kind of conceiving of the world and then they work towards that with their investigation and with their experiments and with their mathematical formulas. Imagination plays a huge role in getting us closer to the truth even on a physical level. For example, Einstein first began to devise his theory of relativity as a teenager riding his bike home from school

and this is kind of how strange Einstein's brain was but he started to imagine 'what would it be like if I was racing a photon right now? If I was racing a light particle? If I could go at the speed of light – 186,000 miles per second? How would I experience the world?' And then this brilliant teenager began to think 'well wait a minute, since all the information about the outside world comes to me at the speed of light, if I was going the speed of light everything would freeze'. And that's what eventually gave birth to the rise of relativity theory. You see imagination played a key role there, yes it has a function on taking us away from reality but it also has an important function of taking us closer to reality and so it is in things of the Spirit. And that's what we saw in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. The imagination throughout church history has been understood to be the main place where we meet God in concrete, experiential, real transforming ways. It is what some have called the 'Inner Sanctum', the inner sanctuary and it is by the means of allowing God to work in our imaginations that the things of God, the abstract truths of God's word become real to us and become experiential to us and we begin to be transformed by them. What I have found in my life is this; if you take two groups of people, one group really gets into prayer, they love prayer, they're the prayer warriors that we're looking for here, you know they can pray for an hour and not be tired of it, and on the other hand you've got a bunch of people who after five minutes are bored stiff and they hardly pray at all and when they do pray they don't get anything out of it – those two groups of people. What I've found over the years of my ministry is that its not necessarily the case that the first group, the prayer warriors is more spiritual than the second group of bored people, it's not that they're more committed, rather the most fundamental difference between those two groups of people has to do with what's going on in their head when they pray. The first group when they pray, they enter the world of the Spirit, they experience things in the Spirit, in the imagination, in the heart and mind, under the influence of the Holy Spirit that makes their prayer life come alive. When they're talking to Jesus they are in some way representing Jesus, when they're prayer for people they are in some way representing the people they're praying for. When I pray for folks I often see this light beam coming on them and its just a way of communicating to me that my prayer is having an effect there. Now the truth is my prayer is having an effect there and this is a way for me to begin experiencing it in a real way and that encourages me to keep on doing it. People who tend to get into prayer and are passionate about it have a world of imagination that they're in as they're praying and you find that occurring throughout the Bible, the visions and the dreams that the prophets had its all stuff that we would today call the imagination. Whereas the second group well for whatever reasons they just never learned the art of surrendering their imagination to the Lord in prayer, so when they pray what's real to them is the wall in front of them and what's real to them is the shopping list and the faucet that needs sinking and the kid that's rebelling and since we are wired, we are wired to gravitate towards things that are real, that's what the brain wants to think about. So when you're praying, have you ever noticed this? ...boom all of a sudden you're thinking about the faucet, or the child or the bills that have gotta be paid or the shopping list. The brain gravitates towards that, and five minutes talking to the wall is hard, it's boring (laughter). Sometimes I think the people who have trouble praying even for five minutes are actually more disciplined in those five minutes than folks who pray an hour who have got things going on in their mind. Because if you're praying and it feels real you can do that for a long time, no problem, but if it's talking to a wall, well that's excruciating torture. Same thing is true in worship. Take two groups of people, one group, man when they get worship, they get into it, you know, they just love to worship, they can worship all day long and they get blessed by it, second group when they have worship, well, they're bored stiff. The best case scenario is they happen to like the song and will sing along with it, but otherwise it's like.... These are the folk who ask questions like 'why do we have to keep on singing the same verse over and over again? I got the point the first time' (laughter). They are assessing it through information, you see that's what's real to them. And these are the folks who say 'Gosh why don't they play more songs that I like, and how come these songs have bad grammar in them?' You know 'get the grammar right' and things of that sort. Because that's what's real to them, for whatever reasons they've never learned the art of using their imagination in worship, of finding that inner sanctum, where the Lord comes in and makes the things of God alive and so that's what's real to them. So it's not that they're less spiritual than the other people it's just that they don't have the inner reality as the folks who are really getting into worship. Because the folks who get into worship, when they sing as we sang earlier 'I see the Lord high and lifted up' they're envisioning the Lord there; however they represent that, whether its visual or sensing it, they have some way of having that be real to them. And when they sing to the Lord, they envision the Lord and the things they're singing about, they envision and there's a reality that goes on there and therefore the worship impacts them, they're motivated to do it and they're changed by it. These are the folks that sometimes cry during services, or laugh during services but their whole self is invested in it. What you see, what you experience, what you sense in the inner sanctum, in the heart and mind will determine what you get out of the prayer and out of the worship. It also determines the direction of your life. My experience has been that those who are most transformed and the process of that transformation are those who, maybe they never were taught it, some folks for whatever reasons just naturally do this, but they do 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, that we read earlier here in The Message. They see the Lord, they experience the Lord's glory and therefore they're transformed from one degree of glory to another.

These are the folks who have lived out the song that Norm sang earlier; 'Imagine Me'. They imagine themselves being free. They read something in the word of God it activated something and they got a picture of themselves, a scenario that they're running and they can see themselves being free from their bondages, they can see themselves being free from their insecurities, they see themselves being free to dance before the Lord and things of the sort and they grow in that because the principle is 'what you see is what you become' and they're transformed by that. It's not by trying hard, it's not by waiting for God to take something away from us, it's not by getting more information, it's rather the case – you become what you see. Behold the glory of the Lord, you take that on from one degree to another.

Now some folks I know you hear this and you hear buzzers about this and I understand that and you're thinking this sounds new age to me, this sounds like pop psychology to me, watch he's going to have us visualising world peace and going out and hugging trees; I'm just waiting for it (laughter). And see, I'm tempted to go into this right now, I'll say more about this next week, and I hope you can come to all the messages in this series, because they all hang together. But see here's the thing, you read the passage with me this morning, there are other passages that are like that; this is a biblical principle and you find it practiced throughout all church history, I'll share some of that next week as well. What drives me crazy is when the enemy comes along and steals something from the people of God and the people say 'oh run away from it, because the enemy's got it'. Not a good strategy; we throw the baby out with the bathwater. You know we had it first and I want it back you know? (cheering and clapping). You know everything that is true will have a counterfeit. That's a given. You have a true bible, you'll have a false bible, but don't go throwing out the true bible, because you're afraid of the false bible. You see this is a gift from God that is given to us to use when the veil has been lifted and the Spirit has set us free. And part of the enemy's strategy is that he wants us to be so worried about the false version of it that we collapse the right use of the true version of it and so I encourage you to embrace this and as long as it is rooted in scripture and the truths that you're experiencing in the inner sanctum are biblical truths then go with it, because folks this is how God wired us to moved and be transformed in the things of God.

I want to end this way. One of the best authors of this practice, this kind of spirituality – I write about this by the way in a book called 'Seeing is Believing' and I talk about St Ignatius of Loyola =, who was a sixteenth century monk and who did just some wonderful things around what was then called cataphatic spirituality, which is this praying with images, we today call it imaginative prayer or imaginative spirituality. He used to have a month long seminar that people would commit to – all day long for thirty days and it was all about practicing this kind of truth that we get in 2 Corinthians 3. And it was just powerfully transforming. He always says at the beginning of every exercise 'find the place'...'find the place'. He is referring to the inner sanctum, the meeting place with God and so I want us here just to start this to find the place. And it can be a place in your memory that represents something calm or peaceful, it should be a place which you can envision very easily, concrete – you can enter that very experientially, that will be very helpful. Just right now I ask the Holy Spirit to help you find the place – scenes from childhood, maybe scenes from the recent past. It can be something in the city, it can be something out in nature, it can be something in your room growing up, it doesn't matter but it's a place that's just a sanctuary for you. When I first started this practice, maybe twenty five years ago, thirty years ago, I always went to this place in the forest, the place I used to run away to almost every day when I was a kid to get away from my stepmother and we had these woods by us and they were always kind of dark and scary but there was this opening in the middle of these woods, or someplace in these woods where the light would come through and form an oval on the ground because there was a break in the trees and I used to go there and that place was just my secret hiding place. I had some toys and treasures buried out there, and when I'd run away from home I'd play with them until I got hungry and had to go back home. So very frequently when I was first beginning this, and I still go there now, I envision that place I can so easily enter into that, I can smell the pine trees, I can hear them whistling in the wind as it's blowing. I can see it, sense it, I can just enter it, experientially. And then I'm there and I just invite, ask Jesus to be there, ask the Holy Spirit to show me Jesus; to behold His glory. And you can experience Jesus in a lot of different ways, for some people you can see Jesus; you can envision His face. Others have trouble with that but they can hear Jesus speaking to them or they just sense Jesus is there. It doesn't matter, we're all wired differently but what is important is that we're open to the Holy Spirit – saying we want to know the real Jesus.

So what I want to do here is spend three minutes – I'm going to put on a little bit of music – music by John Padden who made this CD just for us. He's part of our church and he made this CD just to do prayer and meditation with. I encourage you to pick it up out of 'The Hub'. We're going to play a little bit of this and just envision the place and ask Jesus to be there. Just be present with Jesus. Don't try to do anything, don't try to force anything, don't try to make it happen, this isn't a contest, this is just about being present with God. God is present here right? So this is a way of us getting closer to the reality of that by asking God to just make that

real to us in this place. So can we dim the lights, close your eyes and spend a few minutes just being in the presence of God.

MUSIC

As you're in this place. Hear the Lord whisper truths to you that He's already said in His word. Now hear them applied to you.

'I call you friend because you are my friend. Do you know?' The Lord says. 'I'm always looking at you, fondly. Do you know that I sing over you sometimes? You delight my heart. You ravish my heart. Sometimes I even dance.

I died for you and it gave me joy to do that, because you are worth that much to me. Because of what I've done on Calvary, there's no real conflict between us there's just peace.

I will never leave you or forsake you.

Some of the things that Mum and Dad and others have said to you aren't true. Will you trust me? Because I know you the best.

I love meeting with you in this place. I really miss you when we don't get together regularly. Can we grow closer?'

I want to ask the prayer team to come up here and the music will just continue. If you want to sit for a while and just be in that place, can we keep on playing the music? And if you would like to come forward for prayer for any reason the prayer team will be up here. I encourage you to stop by at 'The Hub' and get that book and get into an Animate group and put this stuff into practice. Please take the conversations out into the gathering area for those who maybe want to sit a little longer – turn up the music a little bit and just wait on the Lord. Spend some time with the Lord in the place, in the sanctuary – behold His glory, because the truth is He is a beautiful, radiant, magnificent, lovely Saviour who loves you. God bless you.