

How Big is Your God?

One of the things we did with our kids as they were growing up was to get them to measure their height against a wall. Do you ever do this in your family? You know the way it works. You line up the kids against a wall and make a pencil mark. Then a few months later you bring them back again and measure how much they have grown. I don't do that anymore with my kids because I can't reach the top of their heads!

Why did we do that with our kids? We wanted them to see how much they had grown. We wanted them to think of themselves as becoming increasingly independent and strong, growing up with a very healthy view of themselves. We know that the way they think about themselves matters. The way they think about themselves is going to be reflected over and over in the way they live.

How big is your God?

Today I'm going to address one of the most important questions in the world. "How big is your God?" How big is Christ in your life? The way you answer that question will determine how you live as a Christian. The way you live will be a direct consequence of the size of your God. The problem with most of us is that our God is too small. We are not absolutely confident that our lives are in the hands of a perfectly competent and capable God.

If you wake up tomorrow morning with a view of a shrunken God, you're going to live in a constant state of fear and anxiety. Everything is going to depend on you. You going to be governed by your fear and your circumstance. If you get a chance to share your faith with someone else you're going to be always thinking about what they think of you. It's all going to depend on you. You're not going to be generous in your giving. Your financial security will depend on you. When you are going to need to give somebody a strong word of confrontation or challenge, you're going to want to pull your punches. If you don't live in the security of what a big God thinks of you, you're going to become a slave to everyone else's opinion of you. If someone gets mad at you, you're going to get all twisted because you don't have the security of knowing that it's what God thinks of you that is more important than what others think you.

When human beings shrink God, they offer prayers without faith, worship without awe, service without joy and experience suffering without hope. It results in fear, retreat, loss of vision and a failure to persevere. The little God syndrome is misery and tragedy. If you live a Christian life with a small God, you live a small life. If you have a big God, you live a life of risky faith, fearless obedience, awestruck worship, and passionate evangelism.

Is your God as big as the God of the Bible? Listen to this description of Jesus that Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant."
(Colossians 1:15-23 NIV)

Paul writes against a backdrop of a colossal God. He has a cosmic vision of how vast Christ is.

1. He is the image of the invisible God.

Did you ever go into one of those amusement parks where they have a hall of mirrors? Do you know what I mean. The mirrors distort the image so that it appears your legs are long, or your face is fat, or you are fat around the middle. By the way, those of you that are looking for a business opportunity, there are millions of dollars to be made by inventing a mirror that makes people thin around the middle. Lots of men and women will pay big dollars for a mirror like that.

Imagine if every mirror on earth was distorted. We would begin to believe that distorted was normal. The problem is that in the spiritual realm, that's what people are doing. They are looking into distorted mirrors, and saying to themselves "I'm OK". What we need is an unblemished mirror, that will give us an accurate representation of what God is like, and what we are like.

Paul says that when you look in Jesus, you see God. Paul uses a Greek word for the word "image" which means "icon". The Greeks used that word to describe a portrait of someone. They didn't have photographs in those days, so the nearest representation you could get was a portrait. Jesus is the portrait of God. Up until Jesus, nobody knew what God looked like. God was invisible. The great saints of the Old Testament had to turn their backs when God appeared, because they couldn't look upon his glory. But with Jesus, God became visible. Not just visible, but all the attributes of God were to be seen in Jesus. All of them. You don't miss anything of the nature of God when you see Jesus. In Chapter 2, verse 9 Paul says that the whole fullness of God dwells bodily in Jesus.

Do you realize what this means? Ever since Jesus walked on this earth, we have known what God is like. You can be absolutely confident of God's loving heart. How come? Because we see God's love in Jesus. You don't have to be afraid of God. If you wonder what God thinks of little children, just look and see how Jesus treated little children. If you wonder what God thinks of sinners like you and me, then just listen to Jesus, who said that he came to seek and save those who were lost. If you wonder how Jesus feels about suffering, just see him weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. If you want to be an expert on the nature of God, just immerse yourself in the life of Jesus. He is an accurate reflection of God.

2. He is the first born of all creation.

When Paul says "first born" he doesn't mean that Jesus was created himself. He is the Lord of all creation. He has the most honoured place in all creation. Paul says ***"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him"***. Jesus is the agent of creation. He is the one who brought it into being. He produced creation. He was the first greenie, long before caring for the environment became fashionable.

Do you realize what this means? It means Jesus has authority over the whole created order. He has authority over sickness and disease. How is it that Jesus could speak to the wind and the waves on a stormy lake, and tell them to sit down? Because He is the creator. He has that authority.

You and I don't have to be afraid of anything in the created order. Not sickness or disease or anything that might affect our bodies. We don't have to worry about what we will eat or drink. Jesus told us not to worry about life. Our God is big enough to take care of these things.

3. He is the Lord over every power.

Paul says he is the Lord over thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. Now that's not a detailed and exhaustive list. The Colossians were into speculating about spiritual beings. They were particularly interested in angels. They were obsessed with the spirit world. Paul is saying here that every human power, every government, every corporation, every supernatural force, whatever they may be, every demon, is just child's play in the hands of Jesus. Jesus is big enough to overpower any force that might hinder me in following him. They are all under his Lordship, even if they don't know it yet. We don't have to live in fear of any of these things.

4. He is the sustainer of all things.

"In him all things hold together". The original language means that in Jesus all things are continually being held together. He is the reference point, the survey peg. This whole universe originated in him, and he is the one we go back to, to get our bearings. He didn't us create us and leave us on our own, but he is sustaining us right now. Jesus is the one who is keeping it all running. Right now Jesus is causing the sun to shine and gravity to hold us up. If you have ever heard yourself saying "I don't think I can hold it all together", then tell yourself that it's not your job to hold it all together - that's his job. All it takes from Jesus to hold all this together is a word. That's how big he is.

5. He is the firstborn from among the dead.

What does this mean? Through his death on the cross Jesus is the beginning of a whole new race, a whole new creation. He is the prototype of the race to be. He is the prototype of what all life will be like beyond the grave. If you what I know what you are going to be like after you rise from the dead, look at the resurrection body of Jesus. He is the conqueror of death. We don't have to be afraid of death, because Jesus has already shown us what life is like on the other side.

6. He is the agent of reconciliation.

When Jesus came to earth his purpose was to take everything in this world that was scarred and distorted by sin, everything beautiful that had been polluted, and present it back to God in perfect condition. His desire is that our lives would be made ready to be presented before a pure and holy God, cleansed from all sin, faultless, without any blemishes, absolutely blameless. He came to reconcile us to a holy God. Isn't that cool?

Now as you listened to me say that, were you doubting that he could do that with you? Do you think it is possible for Jesus to change you to that extent that he could present you absolutely faultless before a holy God? How big is the God that you believe in?

When I was a teacher there were times when I was on duty at lunchtime, and I would come across two boys fighting in the playground. Usually it wasn't hard to figure out where the fights were, because there would be a ring of kids surrounding the fight looking on. In that situation I would step into the middle, hold the two apart, send all the spectators away, and attempt to get them reconciled to each other. As a teacher I had the authority and power to do what the children couldn't do, to step into the middle and bring reconciliation.

That's what Jesus has done. He is the go between God, who is on a mission to present not only corrupted people like you and me, but the whole of this broken down polluted world, back to God in pristine condition. When Jesus died on the cross, his blood was the means by which all things on earth and all things in heaven would be reconciled back to God. This is big stuff people. This is a big God.

Be a big God person.

Will you be a big God person? If you going to be a big God person, you going to need to act in trust. You will have to live as if there is a big God right next to you. We access the power of this great God by acting in trust. Here three areas in life where you can practice living with a big God.

- **Live with a big God in your relational life.**

Some of you have a person in your life that you are estranged from and you know you need to seek reconciliation and forgiveness. With your big God beside you, you can take one step toward reconciliation and forgiveness. Pick up the phone. Write a letter. Arrange a meeting. But you need to take the first step.

Some of you have a person in your life, maybe in your family, that you need to love. You know God is calling you to love that person. Perhaps you don't feel love towards that person or maybe you even have hostility towards them. If you are saying to yourself right now "I don't have it in me to love that person", then you are right. What's the first step? Begin to serve that person. Wash their dishes if it's someone in your house. If they are a teenager, tidy their room. If it's a neighbour, bake a cake, or mow their lawn. Begin to act as if you have a big God right next to you, and see what happens. Live with a big God in your relational life and it will change your life.

- **Live with a big God in your service to the body of Christ.**

God is calling some of you to work in the body of Christ in places where you don't think you could manage. Maybe it's opening your home to some young people. Maybe someone asked you to lead worship, or teach kids, or visit the sick in hospital and you don't think you're capable of that. Whatever it is that you find scary in service in the body of Christ, is the place where you need to trust in a big God.

- **Live with a big God in your witnessing life.**

Take one step. Ask someone the question about where they are in their spiritual journey. Invite someone to a Church service or to an Alpha Course. Ask someone if they would like you to pray with them. Believe that God has already begun to prepare the hearts of the people around you, and trust him as you open up conversations about Jesus. The more you do this, the more you will find how big God is.

If you know Jesus, then you know how big God is. Trust this big God, and see what happens.