

## **How to Bare God's Image** by Pastor Kurt Hoover

### Litany based on Psalm 33

Leader: Let all the earth fear the Lord;

**All: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**

Leader: For He spoke, and it came to be;

**All: he commanded, and it stood firm.**

Leader: The counsel of the Lord stands forever,

**All: the plans of His heart to all generations.**

Leader: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,

**All: the people whom He has chosen as His heritage!**

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and The Holy Spirit.

**Genesis 1:26-2:3** 26 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." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

**Matthew 28:16-20** 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. – Matthew 28:18*

All authority! This means that every aspect of your life is completely in God’s hands. Your life is unfolding just as God intends, because He has complete control over all of the spiritual aspects of your life.

I want to paint a picture for you. Tell me if you can relate to this image.

You are sitting on your back porch, maybe the front stoop. It’s early in the morning or turning into evening. Low light. The shade of the trees stretching across your yard. The air is cool and refreshing. The birds are chirping and flitting from one branch to another. There may be a squirrel or entertaining you with its antics across your lawn, balancing itself along the top of your fence. Maybe there is a duck!

You can smell the lilacs, maybe the neighbors grill. There is the laughter from the neighbor kids playing in their gumdrop pool. You are absorbing the warmth of the sun on your skin. A cool drink in your hand. The early or dwindling sunlight is dancing in between the leaves.

Have you been here?

Maybe it is just you and your spouse. Maybe the porch is full of your kids and their friends. Maybe you’re on the front lawn talking with neighbors.

In this moment, as in all moments, Christ has all authority. The conversations that are happening here are as God planned. Idle chit chat or dreaming about the future. This... is why God put you on the earth. This is your ministry. These conversations matter.

***All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me... I am with you always. – Matthew 28:18 & 19***

**Discipleship often is not intentional. There is a reason that the first word of the great commission is ‘Go.’ The strict interpretation of the Greek is, ‘as you are going.’ As you live your life to the fullest, I am in each conversation, each moment, I am with you always providing the ministry I have intended for that moment. You have all that you need, your daily bread to have these conversations that matter.**

**What do those conversations look like? What does your ministry look like? How has God used you in the past to bare his image to those you love, in a casual conversation with the neighbor, or the unexpected new acquaintance?**

**Often it is unintentional. There are some conversations that you may have already worked out in your mind. A question or truth that may take you some courage to reveal. But, more often than not, your preparation, your contribution only revolves around how to get the conversation started. You may have an end goal in mind. The other person will see your point or change a course of action, but even that you have very little control over. Once the conversation begins, the ministry has begun! ...and God has full authority over where the conversation will go. And we ought not be surprised when it doesn't go in the direction we had imagined.**

**Often your ministry is unintentional. You might be able to guess what the needs of your spouse, or child or neighbor might be. But how God will use your words to provide what they need is not under your authority, it is under God's. And I don't know about you but that is a comforting thought.**

**When Jesus says all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. That is not a suggestion, that is not an option that He is presenting to his disciples or to us today. It is a proclamation. I am with you always, I govern the thoughts and words in every conversation. I will use you to provide what the child of God across from you needs to hear.**

**We might guess what those words might be. Our neighbor has just lost a parent. Our child is deeply embarrassed about failure. Our spouse may need a gentle rebuke. More often than not, what the people in our lives need to hear is this same faith giving, life giving truth that Jesus gives to his disciples. More often than not the ministry God has given you is to point to Him. And there are so many different ways beyond our rehearsing and imagination for God to use our words, to instill a belief that God is with them, for them... to the end of the age.**

**And if you find yourself searching in the midst of one of these God ordained conversations for what topic to introduce into the conversation Jesus makes it very clear.**

**Baptism. As you go discipling with all these different people (nations) I am going to lay across your path, on your porch or front lawn... In these conversations you will be offering Baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to hear my voice. Proclaiming**

**the good news that I am in all things, with them and for them in this life. That is your ministry.**

**Baptism. Jesus makes it clear. This is the center of His authority. He could have just said teach them to hear my voice, obey my command to believe. He could have just said remind them I am with them always, but He centers our ministry as the church in the word Baptism.**

**If you were wondering what is the most helpful topic that you might introduce into a conversation it is the word Baptism.**

**That may be the most intentional thing we can do in our day-to-day conversations. But then again, once you speak that word, do not be surprised at where God may take the conversation. It is His authority and His conversation.**

**Baptism.**

**What might that look like in any given conversation?**

**With your neighbor or a stranger it may seem like an awkward conversation, but you would be surprised at how many people would long to have that conversation. What is it, why does it matter to you. It is much more inviting than some of the memes of Christian evangelism out there. It is an honest question. Do you have a church home, are your kids Baptized?**

**Unlike so other faith conversations, asking about Baptism doesn't place another burden on the back of young families already trying to be perfect parents. It is an invitation. There are no hops to jump through. Baptism is not conditional. They and their children don't have to achieve anything or pay anything to receive Baptism. It is a gift. A gift from our Heavenly Father who so desperately want connection with His**

**children. There is no clearer a connecting point with God then at the baptismal font.**

**It is perfectly acceptable to ask a young family in your life if the kids are Baptized. It shows your concern and care for them. Even if that young family didn't grow up in the church it is a compliment to show your concern for them and their children. And imagine the conversation that couple will have later that day.**

**Think about how affirming the topic of Baptism might be for a parent who may have fallen out of the habit of Sunday worship, but the kids are Baptized. It is those bold conversations that God uses to get families connected to a church family.**

**Baptism.**

**What might that look like in any given conversation?**

**With your children it is a blessed reminder, and assurance. God has claimed you by name, you are His. He is never going back on the claim He made on you. I was there when it happened.**

**Some families mark the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads as a part of their bedtime routine. When your child or grandchild get out of the bathtub and you wrap them in that warm comfy towel or even when they wash their hands... you can remind them about the waters of Baptism. God has claimed you and taken away all of your sins and regrets. God has something to say about our guilt and worries and doubts. God is with you, always.**

**With your kids it maybe also be the conversation about their own children. And yes, that conversation can happen without making someone feel guilty. The simple reminder that Baptism is the reason the church exists. To Baptize all peoples in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Talk with your pastor, talk with Pastor Kurt or Dave. God has provided a church family so that the grandkids may know they are His. Joining with all of the family that are connected to God in the same way.**

**When God uses you to minister to others, not all of those conversations will be about Baptism. But the conversations you have had with you family, and the conversations you create in other families about Baptism Christ claims as His own, the center of His authority.**

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. – Matthew 28:18*

**All authority! This means that every aspect of your life is completely in God’s hands. Your life is unfolding just as God intends, because He has complete control over all of the spiritual aspects of your life.**

**Join me on that back porch or talking across the fence with the neighbor. The laughter of children, the chirping of the birds. You don’t have to talk to your spouse or your kids, or your neighbor in need about your faith or Baptism. You get to. This is your ministry. Each of those conversations matter and they unfold exactly as God has planned, because He is with us and all things happen according to His authority.**



\*James Tissot