



fledge: to grow the plummage necessary for flight



## What Does God Look Like?

Tonight I went to my first Christmas Service without extended family. It was just Dale and me in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. We missed the family around us, singing with us, the way my dad rocks from heels to toes when he wants to bellow out a triumphant note in the hymn, the way my brother and sister nudge each other at funny moments in the service.

Tonight's candlelight service had some great moments. Pastor Troy gave us a new way of thinking about the whole "Jesus is the reason for the season." He said, "If it weren't for our need for a savior, Jesus wouldn't have come. So you and I are the reason for the season." We liked that different perspective.

Besides the good parts, there was this goofy video in

*"If it weren't for our need for a savior, Jesus wouldn't have come. So you and I are the reason for the season."*

the service where Jesus meets Santa Claus. It was pretty funny, but what bothered me a bit was that the Jesus character was wearing a very stringy, long, brown wig. He spoke in a monotone voice and looked anything but relevant or genuine. I was surprised Pastor Troy didn't comment on how this isn't really the Jesus who spun the stars into orbit, or came as a baby or died on the cross.

The real Jesus is not like most of our pictures of him.

*We need to push the refresh button on "spiritual."*

It made me want to share how real I think Jesus is. Perhaps you've struggled like I have to see Jesus, to want to get beyond the guy with the stringy, brown wig and find out if this Christ guy is really worth all the fuss. He is so spiritual, which often just means ghostly, irrelevant, unhelpful and boring. We need to push the refresh button on "spiritual." We need new pictures of God.

Have you read Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* about Ebenezer Scrooge? If not, don't just rent the Muppet version, but go read it, you can finish it in one afternoon. Dickens gives us refreshing pictures of how REAL the spiritual world is.



Scrooge is visited by three spirits. Not transparent, white or flimsy beings either, they are quite real, powerful, but not material (they are not made of matter). These ghosts are SPIRITual. The Spirit of Christmas Present is so realistic that I want you to read what he's like. Perhaps this Ghost might give us a better picture of how real God is.

*There sat a jolly Ghost, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn<sup>1</sup>, and held it up.*

*"Come in!" exclaimed the Giant Ghost, "Come in! And know me better, man!"*

*The Spirit's eyes were clear and kind. He was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle<sup>2</sup>, bordered with white fur. His feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on his head he wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. His dark brown curls were long and free; free as his genial face, his sparkling eye, his open hand, his cheery voice, his unconstrained<sup>3</sup> demeanor<sup>4</sup>, and his joyful air.*

<sup>1</sup> Think of those Thanksgiving cornucopias full of apples, pumpkins, corn, nuts and candy, think of lots and lots of yummy food, think of inexhaustible plenty like Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 28:12, "The LORD will open for you His good **storehouse**, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand."

<sup>2</sup> A big thick cape.

<sup>3</sup> Nothing held back.



"What Does God Look Like?"

A publication of Soulation | [www.soulation.org](http://www.soulation.org)

© 2006 Dale & Jonalyn Fincher. All Rights Reserved.

I know the Spirit of Christmas Present is not God, but God is as interesting, unconstrained, mighty and genuinely interested in inviting you in as this Spirit. There's no pasty, filtered churchy light coming from him, no silly little halo, no cheesy smile, no frumpy clothes or humiliating demands, "Have you confessed all your sins? No? Okay well confess them all before you come in!" God is not like that. He is as welcoming, real and abundant as this huge Ghost with bare feet. The Spirit bellows out,

*"You have never seen the like of me before!"*

*"Never," Scrooge said.*

We would probably say the same thing, never have we

*His dark brown curls were long and free; free as his genial face...*

seen the spiritual world. Let me ask you something. If you see someone's math homework and it's neat and clean and accurate, then you know something about that person: they are neat and clean and concerned with right answers. It's the same way with God's work. When we look at the natural world

<sup>4</sup> Personality, bearing, facial expressions, posture and overall appearance.



"What Does God Look Like?"

A publication of Soulation | [www.soulation.org](http://www.soulation.org)

© 2006 Dale & Jonalyn Fincher. All Rights Reserved.

we're getting a peak at God, we get to look at the material world and deduce what God is like.

We know God loves beauty because of the sunsets. We know God has a sense of humor because of ducks, ostriches and people like Napoleon Dynamite. We know God loves intimacy because of sex. We know God thinks we're worth re-producing because sex produces children who look like us. We know God loves order and variety because of the day, night, day, night cycles, and the winter, spring, summer, fall cycles. Regular rhythms, regular changes. God is full of interesting characteristics.

We look at the Earth because we want to see the Spirit behind it all. We long to see God like we long to see the musician we love or a superstar in a movie. We long to see God. And that is what we long for at Christmastime especially.

Aren't we trying to experience love, joy, peace and acceptance? We may try to find it in a new LG Chocolate phone, or a new car, or a new DVD we wanted, or a leather jacket or a \$50 gift cards to iTunes. But we don't find love from our cell phone, nor acceptance from our new clothes.



"What Does God Look Like?"

A publication of Soulation | [www.soulation.org](http://www.soulation.org)

© 2006 Dale & Jonalyn Fincher. All Rights Reserved.

Isn't the real, everlasting stuff, the spiritual stuff the most difficult to find? I often shake my head as I walk past Victoria Secret's windows, because though they can sell sexy clothing, they cannot sell acceptance, faithful love or long-lasting romance.

These sorts of things are not found in malls. They come from the spiritual world.

*ChristMas is about enjoying Jesus, the Uber-Spirit, the ultimate Being, the most real and welcoming of all the Spirits.*

Have you ever heard of the "fruits of the Spirit"? These are the spiritual gifts our God gives us. Like what? Well, things like

*affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity, a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. (Galatians 5:22, The Message).*

Have you experienced any of these this year? They are the gifts of God.

Jesus said it like this, "I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of." (John 10:10, *The Message*)



"What Does God Look Like?"

A publication of Soulation | [www.soulation.org](http://www.soulation.org)

© 2006 Dale & Jonalyn Fincher. All Rights Reserved.

And guess what? This real, better-than-you-ever-dreamed-of life starts today. It's what Christ-Mass is all about. Mass was the Catholic Churches' celebration of Christ's real and eternal life. ChristMas is about enjoying Jesus, the Uber-Spirit, the ultimate Being, the most real and welcoming of all the Spirits. ChristMas is about remembering that thing called the Incarnation, when Jesus who was spirit took on matter (we call it flesh) and entered planet earth in an unwed teenagers womb (Phil 2:6-7).

Christ is a real as your pile of gifts, but much more aware of what you really need. As the dust settles and you wind down this evening, may you find him more real, more relevant, and more life-giving. He's calling you, "Come in! and know me better!"

**Got questions/comments?**

**Feel free to email us.**

**or**

**Join us for Ask! LIVE Wednesdays 6-9PM**

**Bring any question or puzzling life situation**



"What Does God Look Like?"

A publication of Soulation | [www.soulation.org](http://www.soulation.org)

© 2006 Dale & Jonalyn Fincher. All Rights Reserved.