

## Battles Christians Face: series introduction

We all struggle... temptation isn't sin... sin is sin... we can't say everything... we need the Bible... and we need one another... so resolve to be REAL with each other... (Ephesians 4:15).

### **Week 1: IMAGE**

#### The symptoms

Image, in a number of areas:

- I am how I look/eat/wear
- I am what I do (work/church)
- I am who my friends/relationships are
- I am what I buy/own

Not an issue

Definitely an issue



**Personal Reflection:** which one(s) of these is/are most relevant to you? Score yourself on each

Use these prompter statements:

- Deep down, I wish I had...
- It's unfair that other guys/girls have xzy, but I don't.
- I'd be horrified if people thought/realised that actually I'm...
- I want people to see me as...
- I can't leave the house looking like this...
- Oh my kids, they are...

What do you think is at the very core of this "image" issue?

#### The diagnosis:

First off: a brand new phenomenon? No (though probably more severe now)

- Examples of this image/insecurity in the Bible:  
Saul (1 Sam. 18, 6-9), Herod (Mark 6:21-29), Scribes (Mark 12:38), Martha (Lk. 10:38)

Image = Identity.

A focus on image leads to a view of

- **Ourselves:** insecurity in your identity, constantly seeking to "top-up" – making up for what we want to portray (exhausting, never completed)
- **Others:** primarily viewed in terms of how they enhance/tarnish my image
- **God:** primarily there to boost my image and self-worth. Difficult to reconcile with message of Jesus ("despised and rejected by men" Isaiah 53:3)

## How it all happened

1. Perfect image & identity in Eden (Genesis 2)
2. Ruined by the Fall (Genesis 3)
  - *"we lost our true identity and security the moment we turned away from God. Ever since, we have tried to fill the gap by our own efforts"*  
*(Battles Christians Face)*
3. Identity & security can be restored in Jesus

## The cure

### OVER TO YOU: Read Col 3:1-4

For people who were being made to feel inadequate, what's Paul's instruction? (v2)

What's the reason/motivation? How does that help? (v. 1 and 3, also v12)

I struggle with image/identity, I really need a new:

### OK I get it – but day to day I'm still really struggling...

- it's because we don't **truly** believe God's word (same with all Christian battles). Progress, not perfection  
*"As I grow in understanding of the reality and security of my new identity in Christ I will increasingly be set free from the world's obsession with image."*  
*(Battles Christians Face)*
- let's help each other and pray that His Spirit would work in us to convict us of what is true.  
*You have changed family. You have a new identity and are deeply loved.*
- let's re-direct our efforts. Be obsessed with image: The right image.  
*You have changed family. You have a new identity and are deeply loved.  
Now display the family traits.*

**OVER TO YOU:** Read Col 3:5-17

What is the "image" that God wants us to obsess about?

Does Paul expect this to all happen automatically in a Christian?

PERSONAL: Which of these do you find hardest to work on?

**Making this super practical:**

- What are you filling your mind with?
- Is being on Facebook (or anything else) helpful for you, and in what doses? What do you post on Facebook?
- What do you fill your weekends with?
- Why do you wear what you wear? How long does it take you to leave the house?
- Do you think you spend more time in the office than you need to promote your career?
- What do you spend your money on?
- What you admire/praise in others (e.g. others at church, your kids, a future spouse)
- Day-to-day, what do you find your immediate priorities for your kids are?
- When's the last time you let down the "appearance" barrier and actually honest with a Christian brother/sister about what you're like, what you struggle with etc?

**Reflect, Discuss, Pray**