

IMAGES OF JESUS EXERCISE¹

One of the most important ways we have of relating to Jesus is through the complex set of images that we have of him. The images we have give context and contour to the presence of Jesus for us. They also help us select certain themes from the wealth of the Bible and subsequent tradition to give some coherence to how we understand and relate to Jesus.

The purpose of this exercise is to discover which images of Jesus are operative for each of us. These images affect not only our ongoing relationship with Jesus; they also give focus to our ministries. The set of images we have are a combination of those handed down through the tradition, issues in the cultures in which we live and work, and personal histories.

Instructions

Answer the questions as best you can. Please answer them in the order given. Write out (type, to hand in) your answers to the questions and the short essay called for in question #10. The entire exercise should amount to about four pages.

Your exercises will be read from the point of view of coherence and completeness. The exercise is not a psychological projection test or profile. The evaluation is aimed at helping you locate the images of Jesus that are operative for you and how these interrelate to form your composite image of Jesus.

Part One: Inventory

1. List five images of Jesus in the NT that you find yourself returning to again and again in prayer and reflection.
2. List five incidents or events in the life of Jesus presented in the NT that you find yourself returning to again and again in prayer and reflection.
3. List five sayings of Jesus in the NT that you find yourself returning to again and again.
4. List five parables of Jesus in the NT which you would consider as your "favorites."
5. List at least five images of Jesus not necessarily connected with the NT that you find make sense to you, or speak in a special way to your understanding of who Jesus is.
6. List any visual images from art you find yourself using often. Do the same for any pieces of music or songs. List any literature that speaks to you of Jesus.

Part Two: Analysis

7. In questions 1, 5, and 6, how many of your images would you characterize as divine images of Jesus and how many as human? List the images accordingly. Are there more of one than the other?
8. Do you see any connections between your listings for questions 1-4? Are there consistent images or themes recurring there?
9. Are there connections between the images you list in questions 1-4 and questions 5-6? How would you describe them? How do they relate to the images in questions 1-4? Enhance them? Dominate or change them? Have nothing to do with them?
10. On the basis of your analysis, write a 1-2 page essay on your composite image of Jesus.

Personal Evaluation

Did you find this exercise useful? Helpful? Of no consequence? Explain in a few sentences.

¹ I am indebted to Prof. Robert Schreiter of Catholic Theological Union for this exercise.