



IMAGE OF GOD

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We feel a sense from the Holy Spirit that we need to grow our congregation in its understanding of the image of God. So many of the challenges that we are facing as a church—and many of the things going on in our culture—are rooted in an understanding of what humans are.

Through this study we hope to help you understand what the image of God is and understand its implications for our world today. Our desire is that:

- a. this study moves you into closer relationship with Jesus.
- b. this study nurtures a conviction to draw others into a closer relationship with Him.

In realizing that we are God's image-bearers, we rediscover the ultimate reason we were designed and the ultimate purpose of our existence.

THIS STUDY IS BROKEN UP INTO SIX SESSIONS:

1. The Definition of the Image of God
2. The Manifestations of the Image of God
3. Conclusions 1 & 2
4. Conclusion 3
5. Conclusion 4
6. Conclusion 5

SESSION 1: THE DEFINITION OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

SESSION I VIDEO NOTES:

Genesis 1:26-28

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."

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

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."

Genesis 5:1-3

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

From _____ to _____,
all humans are made in God's image.

The Image of God defined: humankind is like
_____ and _____ God in his
authority and rule. This is who we are in our essence.

Essence = "who we are"

Function = "what we do"

ENGAGE, PRACTICE, PROCESS.

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ENGAGE

1. How has the image of God been taught to you in the past? How has this information enhanced or challenged your understanding of the image of God?

2. When do you tend to have a low view of yourself or others? Why is this okay or not okay? How are we supposed to think of ourselves when we are made in the image of God, but also stuck in sin?

PRACTICE

3. A study in the image of God should always lead us to worship. Spend some time as a group praising Jesus Christ for who He is in His character: simply share some of God's traits that have been particularly meaningful to you so far in your relationship with Him.

PROCESS

4. Is this definition helpful? Humankind is like God and represents God in His authority and rule?

5. What remaining questions from Session One do you still have? What remains unclear and what tensions are still present in your mind?

SESSION 2: MANIFESTATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

SESSION 2 VIDEO NOTES:

Last session was about defining humans according to our essence rather than our function. This session will explore how the image of God functions, or manifests, in humanity. This leads us to talk about sin, how it affects our image-bearing and how Jesus is the solution.

Sixteen manifestations in five categories (taken from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, page 445-449):

Moral

1. Morally accountable to God
2. Inner sense of right and wrong
3. Righteous behavior

Spiritual

4. Immaterial spirit
5. Relates to God
6. Immortality

Mental

7. Abstract reasoning
8. Complex abstract language
9. Sense of distant future and afterlife
10. Creativity
11. Emotions

Relational

12. Depth of interpersonal relationship
13. Marriage
14. Dominion

Physical

15. Physical bodies
16. Child-bearing

Remember: the image of God is not to be defined or determined according to these functions. The image of God is not some element or ability in a person. It is that humans are like God and represent Him.

While humanity is made in God's image, that image has been _____, though not lost.

James 3:8-9

but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

Jesus Christ ultimately _____ us what the image of God looks like. He shows us what God is like, and what humans are like.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:4

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Jesus demonstrated:

1. perfect fellowship with the Father.
2. perfect obedience to the Father's will.
3. selfless love for others.
4. perfect fulfillment of his intended purpose.

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itself and its level of impact on you. This will help evaluate how you are doing as a group and help everyone ultimately identify what the Holy Spirit might be saying.

ENGAGE

1. In what ways do you think you best manifest a representation of God?

2. How do the various differences in people display the complexity of the image of God?

PRACTICE

3. Having a correct understanding of human essence vs. human function changes the way we encourage other people and build them up. Who could you encourage according to their essence of being in the image of God and how they functionally display that image? Share, if possible, how each of you see the functional display of God's image within the members of your group.

PROCESS

4. How is God calling you, and this group, to represent Him more?

5. What are you still unsure about so far? Is there anything that you disagree with?

SESSION 3: CONCLUSIONS 1 & 2

SESSION 3 VIDEO NOTES:

Recap:

From conception to death all humans are made in the image of God. The image of God means that humans are like God and represent Him. It is the essence of our being and not some element or ability within oneself that constitutes the image of God. The image of God is distorted, but not lost, by sin. Jesus demonstrates to us what the image of God looks like.

Over the course of the next four sessions, we will talk about five key conclusions:

1. We belong to God.
2. We experience true humanity when in right relationship with God.
3. Human life is deserving of profound dignity, respect, and protection.
4. The image of God is the foundation for human purpose, meaning and accountability.
5. We should pattern our lives after Jesus.

CONCLUSION #1

We _____ to God.

Mark 12:13-17 “...give to God what is God’s!”

CONCLUSION #2

We experience _____ humanity when in _____ relationship with God.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The more you are walking with God, the more you hear His voice, experience the power of His forgiveness, receive the blessings of abundant life, the more _____ you become!

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ENGAGE

1. How is your relationship with God going? What's the most critical thing to keep your relationship with God close? Seek to remember the answers to this question and hold each other accountable.

2. When people see your life, would they say that you are living out what it means to be truly human?

PRACTICE

3. Who in your life is not experiencing true humanity by being in a right relationship with God?

4. Is there a group or place with who your small group could begin to develop a relationship for the purpose of preaching the gospel?

PROCESS

5. What is the main thing holding you back from getting closer to the Lord?

SESSION 4: CONCLUSION 3

SESSION 4 VIDEO NOTES:

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CONCLUSION #3

Human life is deserving of profound _____, respect, and protection.

Genesis 9:6

*Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.*

James 3:8-10

but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

2 Corinthians 5:16

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

In the Bible, the image of God is the _____ for human purpose, dignity and ethics. When we treat people _____, we are not viewing them as being made in the image of God. There is no better book than the _____ to make a case for universal human dignity.

ENGAGE, PRACTICE, PROCESS.

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ENGAGE

1. What did you find helpful from the teaching this week?

2. How does the image of God impact the relationships you have with people?

PRACTICE

3. What are some ways we as individuals and as a group can give dignity to people in our community? Is there a quick project we could do as a growth group that would target a specific group in our community? (Some further questions to help discern: who tends to be under-appreciated or unnoticed? Are there any centers for people with special needs nearby? Are there any assisted living facilities or rehabilitation facilities that would allow for some of you to come visit? Does someone know of another in prison that could use some encouragement?)

PROCESS

4. Prayer: As a group, engage in a time of prayer for some of the ethical issues we discussed today in the video. How does the Lord want your group in particular to pray? You can discern that by seeing if anyone has any close connection with a particular issue. Remember some of the issues will hit closer to home than others for some of us (maybe someone's had an abortion, maybe someone's been the victim of abuse, addicted to pornography, etc.). So, please be sensitive to those realities. There is much to pray about and pray for when we think about our country, culture, and our homes with all the complexities of these issues.

SESSION 5: CONCLUSION 4

SESSION 5 VIDEO NOTES:

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CONCLUSION #4

The Image of God is the foundation for human _____, meaning, and accountability.

Psalm 139:13-18

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Psalm 8:3-8

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

Humans are central to God's creation and His desire is to partner with humans to _____ creation.

However, humans do not deserve _____ and _____. That is reserved for the one in whose image we are made.

Augustine: "We stand in awe of the ocean, the thunderstorm, the sunset, the mountains, but we pass by a human being without notice even though the person is God's most magnificent creation."

John Stott: "My true self is what I am by creation, which Christ came to redeem. My fallen self is what I am by the Fall, which Christ came to destroy...We must be fearless in affirming all we are by creation, and ruthless in disowning all that we are by the Fall."

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ENGAGE

1. Where does your purpose tend to come from?

2. How can we as Christians speak the truth of the image of God to people in the midst of a culture that struggles mightily with its ethics, purpose, and meaning?

PRACTICE

3. Last week we asked this question and we want to continue to think about it and put some of this teaching into practice. Is there a group or place with whom your growth group could begin to develop a relationship for the purpose of preaching the gospel? Is there a group that your growth group could reach out to and treat in a dignified way? Continue to pray and ask the Lord for guidance.

PROCESS

4. Do you like accountability or struggle with it? To whom are you accountable?

SESSION 6: CONCLUSION 5

SESSION 6 VIDEO NOTES:

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CONCLUSION #5

We should _____ our lives after Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, we are now _____.

The Holy Spirit's main work is _____ people to the image of Christ.

Romans 8:29

1 Corinthians 15:49

2 Corinthians 3:18

Jesus lived a _____ life.

Hebrews 2:18

Hebrews 4:15

Jesus loved God.

He had perfect fellowship with the_____.

Luke 5:16

Mark 1:35

Matthew 14:23

He perfectly _____ the Father's will.

John 5:17-19 (see also John 6:35-40)

Jesus loved others. He did the _____
of reconciling and healing others.

Mark 10:45

He gave people _____.

Mark 5:34 (see also Luke 5:12-13; Mark 10:13-16, 21;
John 5:5-6)

He _____ the kingdom of God.

Luke 4:43 (see also Mark 1:14-15)

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ENGAGE

1. What sticks out to you most about the way Jesus related with people?

2. In what way is the Holy Spirit leading you to be more like Jesus?

PRACTICE

1. How is God leading this group to engage His mission and purpose in this world? What types of things can we start doing as a group and as individuals?

PROCESS

2. How has this study changed your view of yourself and other humans?

3. How have your convictions about how to treat people changed?

4. After going through this lesson, does following Jesus make more sense to you?

