



3 | GENESIS 1:26-27

JESUS AND IMAGE

Following God's design in creation is the greatest way to give glory to God by reflecting his image, and also promote human flourishing. God's design is for man's good and God's glory.

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Call to Worship

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! ⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. ⁹ He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. ¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, ¹¹ but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.
—Psalm 147:7-11

Songs

Bow the Knee
Creation Sings (Gettys)
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
He Will Hold Me Fast

Introduction

Sin always has unintended consequences.

SIPHONING SEWAGE

Take the **young man in Seattle, for example, who tried to steal gasoline** from a **motor home**. Attaching a siphoning hose to the vehicle, he started to work; but police found him shortly afterward writhing in agony in the street, holding his stomach. He hadn't inhaled gas, but sewage! It seems he had attached the hose, **not to the gasoline tank**, but to the motor home's **sewage tank**. The owner declined to press charges; he was too busy laughing.¹ That may make us chuckle, but facing the consequences of our sins, however, is **no laughing matter**.

We read in the headlines many things we could never have imagined growing up. Gender blender clinics, where the solution for gender dysphoria is as one **psychologist says, is to “carve up the children.”**² Today people are so confused, on **what is a man, and what is a woman. As believers, we have the answer.**

1 Peter 3:15 | Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and respect.

We have the answer in the all sufficient, God-breathed word of God. The same word that breathed out life at the beginning breathes out truth to us in his Scripture.

We as believers speak a lot about being “conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom 8:29). Where does Paul get that language from? It's from the first chapter of the Bible, where we are told that humanity is made in the image of God. We all know that Jesus is the one who takes the image of God in us that we have twisted and distorted and brings it back to a representation that is better than the original. **Jesus is the author of gender, and he tells us how we are to image him.** Modern culture is in radical rebellion against God, and our countries schools, politicians, librarians, the vast majority of our media, and even our medical institutions have jumped ship into junk science when it comes to what God says about male and female.

As Christians, we are called to shine the light into the world and point poor, lost sinners, dead in their trespasses and sin, dead to God and in rebellion against Jesus Christ to the mercy of the cross. God will have mercy and transform and redeem those who are completely without hope. **God gives hope to the hopeless.**

Key thought: Following God's design in creation is the greatest way to give glory to God by reflecting his image, and also promote human flourishing. God's design is for man's good and God's glory.

In these few verses (1:26-31), God gives four foundations of human flourishing: man's image, man's gender, man's procreation, and man's dominion. Any attack on any one of these things is an attack on God's glory and an attack on human happiness. We can only be happy as human beings as we reflect God in these four foundations. Here is the first foundation of human flourishing. Let's look at God's image in Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:26-27 | 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

¹ “Boy Tries to Siphon Gas, Gets Mouthful of Sewage,” *AP News* (Associated Press, August 7, 1991), <https://apnews.com/article/d0407fac588f7bd14ce44770deaf435f>.

² Jordan B. Peterson, “Irreversible Damage,” *Interview with Abigail Shrier, Episode 159* (Youtube.com, January 1, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSKQfATa-1I>

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.

As we consider the image of God in man, we have to ask, “Who is God?” **The God of the Bible is Trinitarian, and any other God is a false God.** Those who reject the Trinity must diminish the deity of Jesus Christ as well as the Personhood of the Holy Spirit. We reject that kind of false doctrine, and we say that whoever rejects the doctrine of the Trinity rejects God himself, for this is God’s nature. We serve one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, The Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. They are three in one, co-equal in power and glory.

1. THE MODEL OF GOD’S IMAGE IS THE TRINITY (1:26)

On the sixth day, as God creates man, we hear God speaking in plurality. On the **sixth day God fills the earth with the crown of his creation: man.**”

Genesis 1:26a | Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

THE PLURALITY OF OFFICE IN THE TRINITY

In truth it is the plural pronouns here that not only designate majesty but give the hint of God’s nature as a Trinity.

Here we see the **inner counsels of the Trinity.** One theologian explains: “God addresses himself, but this he can do only because he has a Spirit who is both with him and distinct from him at the same time. Here are the first glimmerings of a Trinitarian revelation.”³ In this statement, the **Father plans our salvation** when making man. The **Son** in these eternal counsels offers himself to **pay for our salvation.** And the **Spirit applies and provides that salvation to man.** God makes man knowing he will be like that broken house.

We see the eternal Trinitarian counsel so clearly for example in Ephesians. We read about God the Father and God the Son in the opening verses.

Ephesians 1:3-5 | God the Father... chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ.

Then we see the counsel and role of the Holy Spirit, the one who brooded over creation submitted in the counsel of the Trinity to follow God’s plan and lift up God the Son in the hearts of man. We can know Christ only because of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit who broods over us to make us a new creation.

Ephesians 1:13-14 | In him [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Before the foundation of the world, before anything was formed or made, **God knew you and loved you** and created you in his image. It wasn’t just any god’s image. It was the one and only true and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Man, in his nature, person, and personality, in his moral and spiritual capacities, in his emotions, intellect,**

³ Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 84.

conscience, and will, man stands apart from the likeness of animals in creation.⁴ He's not made in the image of animals, but in the image of God. And he created us to know him.

2. THE MIRROR OF GOD'S IMAGE IS MAN (1:26A)

Genesis 1:26a | Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Reflection. Image (צֶלֶם, *šēlēm*) is all about **reflection**. It means predominantly a **replica** or reflection.⁵ God makes mankind in his own image. Humans are created as images of God.⁶ Why? Humankind was made to spread God's glory to the ends of the earth. **Man exists to reflect and display the glory of God.**

WAX MUSEUM

If you visit **a wax museum**, you will see wax statues that look incredibly realistic so that if you took a picture with wax likeness, your friends might think you are with the real person. In that way man. Man is to reflect God in holiness of character.

Representation. Image is all about **representation**. The word *image* can also be used of something that **represents something else**.⁷ In the ancient world, **kings would mark their territory** with images of themselves. The king's statue was the equivalent to the proclamation of **his dominion over the sphere** in which the statue was erected.⁸

Accordingly, man is set in the midst of creation as God's statue and image. He is evidence that God is the Lord of creation; but as God's steward he also exerts his rule, fulfilling his task not as an arbitrary dictator but as a responsible agent and representative of the living God.

CHRISTOCENTRIC FOCUS

There is a **Christocentric focus** here as well revealed in the New Testament.

Paul affirms that Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:3) and that believers are to be "conformed to the image" of Christ.⁹

This means that though the though God's glorious image in man was vandalized in the fall, in Christ, it can be restored!

3. THE MEANING OF GOD'S IMAGE (1:26)

What does it mean that we are made in the image of God? The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God in the following ways: **intellectual ability, moral purity,**

⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ge 1:26–31.

⁵ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 1063.

⁶ Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry* (New Studies in Biblical Theology) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 21.

⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 442.

⁸ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 160. For example, when in the thirteenth century BC the Pharaoh Ramesses II had his image hewn out of rock at the mouth of the Nahr el-kelb, on the Mediterranean north of Beirut, the image meant that he was the ruler of this area.

⁹ Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 61.

spiritual nature, dominion over the earth, creativity, ability to make ethical choices, and immortality. Let's consider these qualities.

MENTAL LIKENESS

Ephesians 4:23-24 | Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:10 | Put on the new self, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

We carry God's mental likeness. To get back to God's image in man there must be **mind renewal**. **Man has an intellect. Of course, it doesn't mean we're as intelligent as God.** But it does mean that God has given a **rational thought process** that far supersedes the animals and mirrors his way of reason.

The Bible in Colossians speaks of a Christian who is born again to "put on the **new self**, which is **renewed in knowledge after the image** of him that created him" (Col 3:10). Our knowledge is after the image of God.

MORAL LIKENESS

Roman's 3:23 | for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We were created to reflect the moral likeness of God but we have fallen from it. Yet we still carry God's moral likeness. Man was made righteous and upright. Man knows that he's in the image of God. He has this longing, this desire to walk upright according to his conscience.

As believers we are called to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). This likeness speaks of the moral character that makes us made after the image of God.

SPIRITUAL LIKENESS

1 Thessalonians 1:9 | You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

Ecclesiastes 3:11a | He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.

We carry God's spiritual likeness. In other words, human beings intrinsically are hardwired to worship. We were created to give praise to God. If we are not worshipping God, we are worshipping idols. We will all live forever somewhere, either under God's pleasure or under his wrath. **All people know who God is through conscience and creation** (Rom 1:19-21). Man can only achieve ultimate contentment by knowing God intimately. An animal never has this desire to know God. An animal never prays. An animal never seeks after God. Animals don't worship because animals are not in the image of God. They have no craving for deity. Every human being has the spiritual likeness of God in his conscience and knows God in his heart, but he runs from him.

4. THE MAULING OF GOD'S IMAGE

Ecclesiastes 7:29 | God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

What is it that distorts God’s image in man? The more mankind rebels, the less he reflects God’s image which is given to him in his conscience.

SIN DISTORTS GOD’S IMAGE

Ecclesiastes 7:20 | There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Today the image of God is distorted in humanity because of sin. Children love to look into **carnival mirrors**. Sin has bent us inward. In an internal, spiritual way that is what has taken place. Sin has caused us to live in a world of carnival mirrors where. We are bent inward, toward our sin and selfishness. **Our sin has distorted the image of God within us**, and we now live in the midst of others who bear this distorted image. As the story of the Bible unfolds, we see that humanity chose rebellion over living under God’s loving rule. Nevertheless, humanity bears the image of God, no matter how distorted.

The **more a person gives into the rebellion against God’s order**, the more we contribute to **human misery**. **Sin causes misery and human suffering**.

IDOLATRY DISTORTS GOD’S IMAGE

We are **all hard-wired to worship**. We can’t help but to worship. If you are not worshipping God, you are worshipping self, or things that you think will contribute to your own happiness.

Romans 1:21 | Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Today’s idols look like cars and bank accounts, idols of **power and position, pleasure, pride and ego**, but man can’t help but worship. We are **hardwired to worship**.

The one made in the image of God “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images” and idolatrous ideologies (Rom 1:23). This “exchange” highlights the stark contrast between imaging God and imaging the idols.¹⁰ We reflect what we worship.

We **cannot find satisfaction through idols**. Even psychology recognizes this. When you look for fulfillment in things like they were God, the world **calls this “addiction” or “co-dependence”**. The truth is we were created to be addicted to God, dependent on God.

God lovingly created us in his image to display his glory through our enjoyment of him. Here are some implications to this truth: we are accountable to him; we can trust him; each person has great value; we have a God-centered purpose; and he intends for us to find our greatest satisfaction in him.

IMAGING GOD GIVES US MEANING & DIGNITY

The Apostle James also understood that broken sinners still bear the image of God.¹¹ **When we treat people like image bearers** and not our personal tools or like objects, then each person is honored with the **dignity** they should have.

James 3:9 | With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 37.

As image bearers, we are to protect the dignity of every human being from the womb to the tomb. God's prohibition of murder was based on the fact that man is in the image of God (*cf* Gen 9:6). This has implications as to how we speak to each other since hatred is the seed of murder. It also demands we protect children in the womb from the murder of abortion.

The opening chapters of Genesis want us to ask questions such as the following: Where do we find meaning for our lives? What gives our actions significance? What is important about other people? It is the mission of **Jesus Christ to answer those questions. He comes to return us to the full and glorious image of God**, as we are called for the purpose of being conformed to God's Son (8:28-29).¹² **He alone can restore us to the dignity** that God wants for us.

People are precious to God. Each one has dignity and is a unique image bearer of the Almighty. Let us do all we can to call ourselves and those around us to reflect the dignity of our creator.

Conclusion

Have you ever been to a carnival and seen yourself in a funny mirror? It quite hilarious when I'm in there with my kids and you make funny faces and see yourself all warbled and wonky.

It's not so funny when we realize the image of God has been distorted in us. The only way for God's image to be fully restored is by knowing Christ and being renewed in the spirit of your mind. For us who know Christ, we have been "predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ" (Rom 8:29). Dear saints, there is hope in Jesus. We need to give hope to the world. Jesus is not going to appear in human form to your friends and neighbors. They are so confused. They need you to give an answer of the hope that is in you. The only way they are going to see Jesus is through you.

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.—*2 Corinthians 13:14*

¹² Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry* (New Studies in Biblical Theology) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 23.