

In His Image • Genesis 1:26-31

Ryan Perz • September 17, 2023

When you hear the word *people*, what first comes to mind?

Maybe words like: rude, annoying, draining, bullies, harsh, evil, problematic, needy...

Or,

Kind, helpful, generous, happy, good, energizing, or strong.

Maybe the thought of other people makes you anxious, or energizes you.

What we think about people often totally depends on context: someone holds the door for you, you think they are good and kind; another makes a rude comment on your social media.

- *Gen. 1 gives us a foundation for how we should see people, all people; our opinions are nothing compared to God's revealed truth, and what he thinks.*

This is day 6 of creation (started in vs 24)—the Creation of Man in the Image of God (Latin - *imago Dei*).

- This topic is so vital for our times—

The late Francis Schaffer, who was a remarkable evangelist and apologist to a lost and confused generation, said that if he was sitting next to a non-Christian on an airplane on a one hour flight...he would spend 55 minis sharing with them about Creation, and 5 minutes sharing Christ.

In other words, make sure this foundation is solid.

- In our world where individual choice and self-expression rules the day, many have no foundation on what a human being is.
- › From the beginning, people do have unique identity based on what Scripture says about being Created uniquely in the Image of God.

Views of the Image of God:

—Rational view: What sets man apart is the ability to reason.

(Calvin: “Adam was created with a right judgment and had affections in harmony with that reason.)

E.G. One example is language - there are deep structures in the human mind to learn language that no animal has.

—Relational view: God is relational, and the ability to have and carry it into eternity.

—Representative view: God places Adam in this earth with a function to exercise rule and dominion (Chrysostom—Adam was to act as God’s vicegerent in governing the world.)

As we look at the text, all 3 come out:

- We will look thru the lenses of What God says, and what God sees.

What God says (v26, 28, 29)

- 3 times, our attention is drawn to what God says. Each shows us a different aspect, a different angle of what it means to be human.

1) Relationship (v26)

- v26 may sound like a grammar mistake.
- For us who confess God is Father, Son, Spirit, it makes most sense to hear this as God’s deliberation within the Godhead.

(Many biblical scholars think this is God talking to the angels. That was the majority Jewish interpretation.)

- This foundation: for eternity, the Triune God has enjoyed a loving, unified, relationship—*The foundation of every relationship is built on that.*

The reason why people want friends who don't reject you; to marry a life-long spouse; to have a mom or dad who hugs and has compassion...it comes down to this!

—Being made in God's image means at least this much:

We all have a capacity to be in, and enjoy a relationship with God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

What if this was the starting point of how we looked at people, and ourselves?

What if we looked at every person: the rude, the annoying, the weak, the needy, the grumpy, the downtrodden, the superficial...as one who has the built-in capacity to enjoy a relationship with God?

And what if we remind ourselves on our worst days of this staggering truth: I'm created with a built-in capacity for deep relationship with God.

2) Responsibility (v26b)

Sometimes Christians have said the Bible is like a love letter. I likely have said something like that before.

But that's not exactly how Gen. 1 sounds.

- It has the sound of a King and his treaty of how he will rule his Kingdom on earth.

Rule and Dominion are Kingdom Words...they don't sound good in love letters.

It was common for Kings to be thought of as made in the divine image.

But just the King.

Not every person. Especially not if you were a lowly slave, like the Israelites coming out of Egypt.

One example: statement to King Esarhaddon of Assyria asserts, 'A (free) man is as a shadow of the god, the slave is as the shadow of a (free) man, but the king, he is like unto the (very) image of God.'

Richard P. Belcher Jr., *Genesis: The Beginning of God's Plan of Salvation*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 57.

- This foundation says: *Every human* made in God's image, *every life*, carries intrinsic value.

This is both a humbling and yet exhilarating truth!

Psalm 8:6 ESV

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

- What we have here is God appointing Adam as his Royal Representative on the Earth.

In other words—image and likeness describe the *functional role*.

What God says—He put man on earth to rule, have dominion.

Psalm 115:16 ESV

The heavens are the LORD's heavens,
but the earth he has given to the children of man.

Often kings would have a statue placed at the borders of their vassal nations to represent their rule.

Instead of a lifeless statue, God creates living Image Bearers.

- Ruling the animal kingdom was also functional: oxen to help plow fields; donkeys to carry loads; camels to help with travel.
- Vs 27 amplified the truth of v26. It's written poetically.

3 times the Hebrew word *Bara* is used; repeated to remind us that Adam is a special creation.

Acts 17:26 (ESV)

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth,

As I mentioned last week, one of the reasons that any form of evolution is so inconsistent with Gen. 1 is that you lose a historic Adam.

The Bible is very clear that there is a special, direct, creation of One Man—Adam.

—Distinct creation of God

—Distinct gender set by God

I was recently ordering some necessary items for my son's High School graduation online.

Some basic info was needed to complete the order: What School. Our address, email, his height and weight.

These are all things that are fixed.

When it came to a Gender question, I noticed it said *gender choice*.

The suggestion is that the gender is fluid, not fixed.

Just like my son's height was fixed at his birth—he got the tall genes, so was gender.

It's a crucial part of being made in the image of God.

Our current world is trying to throw discord into that first Biblical song.

3) Filling (v28)

- The second thing God says is to *populate—which the male/female binary unit is the only way to accomplish it!*

Male/Female creation is the foundation for filling the earth.

4) Provision (v29)

- Finally, God provides food for his creation to survive:
- The provision of food is yet another example of the personal hand of God.
- He truly loves and cares for his creation. He is life-giving, and loving.

If you take away a personal God creating us in His Image—you take that foundation away and you have empty answers.

—Who do you pray to?

—Who do you thank?

—Why do you love?

—Why have any hope?

A personal God who makes us in his images gives us reason to pray, thank, love, and hope!

What God sees (v31)

- First, it's vital for us to see that God sees *everything*.

After last week's message, someone sent me an old video of a Christian apologist answering an atheist philosopher on the existence of God.

I loved the Christian's response:

"If I could fit the God of the universe into my 3 lb. brain, he would not be a god worth worshipping."

- › *If God could not see everything that he made, he would not be worth worshipping.*

God sees everything—as an artisan with a completed project, he declares it *good*.

Owen Strachan: "In no other system or worldview does humanity have such luster, such promise, such dignity."

- We know that the entrance of sin brings a lot of damage to this foundation.

But sin never destroys the image.

-No one carries less or more of the image.

Yet repair work needs to be done.

For example, my dad has a hobby of buying and restoring old Jeeps.

I remember driving an old CJ Jeep when I lived at home. The Jeep ran, but the gas gauge did not work.

Those all needed repair work, but they always remained Jeeps.

People —all of us are in need of repair work, but we remain Stamped in His Image.

In the NT we see how the repair work looks:

1. Centered on Christ

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)

Christ, who is the image of God.

- Genesis shows us that history is headed somewhere.

God's plan for the human race centered on sending his Son to this world to do image repair work.

› *The work of Christ in the gospel is Image Restoration Work.*

Romans 8:29 ESV

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We see it in other places:

Ephesians 4:24 ESV

and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV

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.

Notice the use of image and likeness.

We are not just in a holding pattern until we reach heaven's shores.

God is repairing, restoring, conforming, transforming you to be what he purposed from the beginning.

We are officially one chapter down.

As we apply the truth of God's creation to our lives:

Enjoy. Exercise. Exalt.

Enjoy God's good creation; it is a good creation.

1 Timothy 4:4–5 ESV

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Exercise dominion—

In Christ, you have the calling to do your work or vocation—sales, engineer, computers, mother, homeschooling, caring for your animals as a way of exercising dominion.

Mindless scrolling & streaming is a shallow substitute.

Exalt the Lord always. Creation in God's image is for exalting His Majesty.

Psalm 8:1 ESV

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.