

# IMAGO DEI

Gen. 1:26-28

Turn to Genesis 1. Dime: Franklin Roosevelt, Quarter: Washington, 10 Dollar: Alexander Hamilton, 50 Dollar: Ulysses S. Grant. This is in the image and likeness of Ulysses S. Grant. It's a representation of him. The image that is on humanity is much more important. The image of God. imago Dei. Read. Gen. 1:26ff. This is so important but so few people understand it. **Pray!**

- All humans are made in the image of God.

Biologically to be human means you have certain kind of DNA and chromosomes. But theologically to be human is to be made in the image of God. And this is for all people without exception. Vs 27 **"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."** Males and females are both equal participants in the imago dei. This is true for all males and females—black white, rich poor, good bad. We don't say that nice people who do good are made in God's image. As much as we may not like, Adolf Hitler and Osama Bin Laden were made in the image of God. All humans without exception are made in God's image.

- Bc of that, humans are distinct from every other creature on earth.

Dogs aren't made in the image of God. Trees aren't made in the image of God. Birds aren't made in the image of God. Only humans. In fact, you can see the uniqueness of humanity just in the language that's used...for 7 paragraphs we here "Let there be" There is a special designation for humans, "Let us make". And God goes to work forming the crown of his creation—humanity—in his own image. And because of this humans have an inherent worth—not a worth that's based on our achievements or looks or careers, but a worth that's based on the fact that we're human that we're in the imago Dei. Now it's natural at this point to ask, does that mean to be made in God's image? And it's a good question—particularly in light of the fact there's not an inspired dictionary in the Bible to define these terms and there's not a verses that says, "This is what it means to be in the image of God."

Two components: the first has to do with who we are and the second has to do with what we do.

- Two Components of Being Made In God's Image:
  - We have unique capacities

Look at Gen. 5:1-3. What do we learn? two things here about being made in the image and likeness of another and that is the idea of relationship. You and I were made from the beginning to be in personal intimate relationship with God. We were created to be his children. Unlike dogs and cats and fish and birds—who relate to God as their Creator, humans were designed to relate to God as Father. Because of the imago, have the capacity to know—personally know—and enjoy the God of the universe.

But that's not all...not only were designed to be children, as children, we were designed to resemble our Father by sharing some of his attributes. Every time someone has a child people comment on who they look like. In the same way, we share some of his attributes in ways that no other creatures do. For example, unlike animals, God made us moral creatures. Like God, We capable of good and evil. Bird pooping on windshield. Like God, we have Emotions: Compassion, show mercy and grace. Language. God paints humanity in his colors. Because we are made in the image of God, we have unique capacities. That's the who we are portion of the imago but it doesn't stop their. Being in the imago of God means we have unique capacities but...

- We have a unique assignment.

In ancient times, the image of God was a title reserved for the king. People thought that king was God's representative on earth. So for a king to be in the image of god he ruled on god's behalf. And often times when a king conquered a land, he would erect an image of himself in that land. It wasn't artwork. It was a statement that though the king might not physically be present, this image represents an extension of his authority. And the idea of image carried the idea of representative authority.

God looked on his Creation—all the animals—and while it was good, God didn't have a representative on earth. He wanted to creating something that, served as a reflection of himself. And so God created images of himself to represent him and advance his reign on earth...**Read Gen. 1:27-28**...So don't miss this, from the beginning, God has not designed to rule his creation directly. He has designed to rule his creation through and exercise his dominion through human agency. We have authorized to take dominion. What does it mean to take dominion? Two things:

Taking dominion means multiplying worshippers. God's purpose was not for Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth with warm bodies but with worshippers. People who uniquely reflect god's glory and advance God's reign. And today that looks like disciple-making. When Jesus says go and make disciples of all nations, this is in a sense, a fulfillment of the Genesis command—reproduce worshippers of every nation language tribe and tongue all over the earth. So that's one sense in which we're called to take dominion over creation but there's at least one more. Look with me in Gen. 2:15.

Some of your translations say to cultivate and keep or tend and watch over. Here's the punchline: from the very beginning you and I were made to cultivate and improve and develop the environments that god places us in. We were designed to take the creativity and passion and intelligence we have because we're made in God's image and apply that to the world around us. We're supposed to take the environment he places us in to the next level. It's just in our nature. When you see a little boy look at a mess of legos and try to turn in into a fort or a spaceship that's simply a natural expression of the desire to cultivate that's hardwired in us. Maybe you want to clean or organize or build or decorate but it's hard wired in us to take our environment and make it better because that's part of what we where made to do from the beginning. Took dominion over a spider this week.

And so to recap briefly, all people are made in the image of God and are thus unique from all other creatures in the world. How are we unique? Well because we're made in the imago Dei, we've been created with unique capacities that no other creatures have has and we've been given a unique task that no other creature shares. The imago Dei is simultaneously a gift and a job. And so from the very beginning God's plan was to fill the world with images of himself, who reflected his glory and extend his reign and who would take that garden and cultivate it and expand its borders until the whole world was a paradise filled with worshippers.

And yet we get to Genesis 3 and there's a character introduced into the story who causes Adam to question whether reflecting God's glory and advancing God's reign is actually best for him. Makes him think that perhaps he advanced his own agenda and exercise his own authority, things would be better. And as this conversation is unfolding, we're left asking will Adam rule for God or choose to rule instead of God. But he falls into sin. And he's kicked out of the Garden...

- And now, because of sin, the image of God in is \_\_\_fractured\_\_\_.

It hasn't been lost (Jn. 3:9), but it's broken. It's like if you look at yourself in a shattered mirror you see a distorted version of yourself. Now, because of sin, we reflect a distorted image of God. There are times when I am patient and loving and serve God and in those times the world sees faithful representation of God. But there are other times when I'm not patient and loving and don't serve God and the world sees a distorted image of God. And it's because God's image in me is broken. Our world is broken. Everyone will admit there's something broken about people.

And the story of the Bible and the story of our culture today is broken people trying to find ways to fix their brokenness. Trying and failing to put the pieces of that broken image back together again. And we're supposed to get the message: you don't have the power to fix your brokenness. The writer of Humpty Dumpty new this... we can't put ourselves back together again either. Broken people can't fix broken people. We need someone who is unbroken, to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. Someone in whom the image is completely intact to repair the image of God in us.

- Christ is the perfect \_\_\_\_\_ image \_\_\_\_\_ of God. (Heb. 1:3)

Col. 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Heb. 1:3) "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature!" Perfect expression of love. Kindness. Patience. Subdues the earth. Conquers disease. Because for that he is uniquely qualified to save you and do for you what you can't do for yourself. And he does it in the most amazing way... And I want you to see the symmetry here between the image of God and what happens to Christ on the cross:

Relationship with God	Separated From God	Mt 27:46, "My God, My God..."
Reflect God's character	Becomes sin	2 Cor. 5:21 "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"
Rule over Creation	Ruled over by creation Acts	Acts 2:23 "crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."

- The *imago Dei* in Christ is being shattered so that the image of God in us can be restored. The unbroken one was broken so that we could be put back together. That's why come to Christ. Not so we can have all the nice things in the world or a comfortable easy life. No we come to Christ so that the image of God in us can be restored; so we can experience the relationship with God we were designed for and reflect the glory of God we were created for, and participate in God's work to save the world. This is salvation. That's what we're being saved too. A restored image. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29)

And when we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit goes to work renovating us so that the image of God in us is more and more conformed to Christ. And while it's a lifelong process, the more we gaze at the beauty of perfect savior the more the image of God in us is developed. That's exactly what Paul says in 2 Cor. 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."

As I behold his glory the image of God in us is incrementally restored so that I relate to God and reflect his glory like I was designed to. Some people when they sin, they say, "I'm only human" but friends, if being human—being in the *imago*—means we're made to reflect God's glory and extend God's reign then when we sin, the problem isn't that we're human. The problem is that we're not human enough!!! And thankfully the Holy Spirit works in us to cause us to act like humans were designed to be, hate our sin and love righteousness and multiply worshippers and extend God's reign to every nation language tribe and

tongue until one day when God makes all things new, and the whole earth is filled with his glory and populated with image bearers perfectly reflecting his character and participating in his reign, as it was always meant to be. 4 Implications...

### **The imago Dei changes the way we work.**

From the beginning, God designed us to work—to create and to cultivate. This is not a result of the fall. Just like God is a creator and cultivator he has made us creators and cultivators. And when we work and create, and make things beautiful and better we're expressing the imago Dei. Our work reflects the Master worker. Which means that our work needs to be good—are we cultivating and improving the environments he places us in? It's not ok to stink at your job. Does the quality of your work reflect the quality of your God?

### **The imago Dei changes the way we care for Creation.**

Caring for the creation is not a liberal idea—it's a biblical one. Now we're not talking about hugging trees here. We're saying that rather than caring for creation directly, he has created images of himself—representatives—through whom he will cultivate and keep His creation. And while I'm not trying to get into the specifics of what that looks like, if we are doing things that are intentionally destroying the creation we've called to cultivate we're failing to live up to what God has called us to. Lake Martin trash. Just as Adam and Eve were custodians of the Garden we are custodians on the Creation.

### **The imago Dei elevates the value and sanctity of human life.**

And this is particularly relevant for our culture today. And I'm not just talking about the unborn, but all human life has inherent worth and dignity. This is the foundation for human rights. The idea that everyone—regardless of race, gender, intelligence level, appearance—has an inherent worth and dignity is grounded in the Judeo-Christian worldview. To the unbeliever in the room who cares about human rights, there is no way to give an account of human rights and equality based on natural selection and unguided evolution. It's simply not tenable to say that after billions of years of the strong eating the weak and the survival of the fittest, now suddenly everyone has equal rights. Or that a paralyzed quadriplegic has inherent worth. If you believe that, you are borrowing from the Judeo-Christian worldview. And so I would simply say that it is incumbent upon us as Christians to advocate for the sanctity of human life beginning in the womb and extending to all forms of injustice or racism or abuse or anything that assaults the dignity of humanity made in God's image.

### **The imago Dei provides us with our ultimate identity.**

Everyone is asking "Who am I?" So many people trying to find a sense of worth and value and discover who they are. But I want to suggest that the answer to that question is not found in knowing who am I, but "Whose am I?" By far the most valuable thing about you is to whom you belong. "What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that He knows me. I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him because He first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters." (Packer, *Knowing God*) This relationship was intact in Gen. 1-2, but not it's not—we need a rescuer. You need someone to do for you what you can't do for yourself. Closing.