



## **Part 5: The Uniqueness of Humanity** **Genesis 1:26-22; 2 Corinthians 3:26-18**

What is the problem: We talk about human dignity and in church contexts—the “image of God”—but what defines it? **Can we have more of it or less of it? We spend our lives trying to answer the question “who am I?”** This will shape the way you view yourself, others, and God.

Our understanding of the “image of God” expands when we look at the narrative arc of scripture (creation, fall, redemption, recreation)

### **I. Creation: The image of God was a gift given to humans.**

*“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* Genesis 1:26-27 NIV

#### A. Historical context:

- i. Kings were thought of as the “image of god” and they made statues of themselves to represent their power
- ii. Humans are ALL the royal representatives of the King of kings.

#### B. Literary context:

- i. Original reader of Genesis read for PURPOSE, not function.
- ii. Conclusions from this text: God's image was given to us and our purpose flows out of it.

#### C. BUT this is not the world we live in.

The royal status and representative function result from—rather than define—the image of God. The primary question of what it means that humanity is created in God’s image remains unanswered.

## II. Fall: We see that despite sin, we did not lose our gift from God.

*“When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.”* Genesis 5:3 NIV

*“Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”* Genesis 9:6 NIV

- We still have it! Yet it is attacked and distorted

## III. Redemption: Jesus rescues the broken images and invites us to confidently reclaim our identity.

*“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”* Colossians 1:15 NIV

*“So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, **that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.**”* Galatians 4:3-7 NIV

- A. Through the redemption in Jesus Christ we get to fully embrace our position as royal heirs and children of God.
- B. The image of God is first and foremost a RELATIONSHIP from which function then flows out of.
- C. YET, we often want “the check list” on how to be good and succeed, but it is harder for our American culture to first SIT, acknowledge, embrace, claim who you truly are—God’s CHILD.

## IV. Recreation: The image of God invites us to embrace that we were born to be loved.

*“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces **contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**”* 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 NIV

- A. We hide behind our “masks” of work, appearance, religion because we are often afraid to take it off— uncertain of what we will find beneath it. Who are we without any of our stuff that makes us “us”?

- B. We are invited to come as we are: marred, wounded, and scared. And sit assured before God and embrace that he created you to love you. When we bask in that glory, we grow in glory because we are walking in the light of truth and not the darkness of our masks.

**Application:** God's image swaps our image driven culture with wholeness and delight.

- **Big idea: the image of God invites us to embrace that we were born to be loved.**
- We are invited to simply "be" with God. Slow down, listen, and rest in His love.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What was/is your understanding of the image of God in Genesis 1?
2. Knowing that Christ is the fullest image of God, how could that shape our daily lives?
3. How has our high achieving culture affected your identity and understanding of "being made more like Christ?"
4. When have you experienced the glory of God? How did that shape you?