

IN GOD'S IMAGE...

Theological Theme: God created us in His image to rule wisely over the world, to relate to Him and others, and to follow the rhythm of work and rest.

- **WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF HUMANITY BEING MADE “IN THE IMAGE OF GOD”?**

- **WHAT DOES THIS TRUTH TEACH US ABOUT THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF HUMAN BEINGS IN COMPARISON WITH THE REST OF GOD'S CREATION?**

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY “The most distinctive feature of the biblical understanding of man is the teaching that man has been created in the image of God.” –Anthony Hoekema (1913-1988)

In this session, we will explore the biblical truth that God created humans in His image with

1. WE REFLECT GOD IN HOW WE _____ THE WORLD ([GEN. 1:26-31](#)).

Fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it. “This world is for you!” God said. In this passage, we see that God is the Ruler and that bearing His image means we too must rule. But to reflect Him properly, we must rule wisely.

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VOICES FROM THE CHURCH “Human dominion over the rest of creation is to be an exercise of kingship that reflects God's own kingship. The image of God is not a license for arrogant abuse, but a pattern that commits us to humble reflection of the character of God.” –**Christopher Wright**

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When was the last time you thought of fish, birds, and even worms as living creatures that God has entrusted to your care? God intends for humanity to take care of the creation He has given us.

- **CONSIDER A SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IN WHICH YOU HAVE AUTHORITY. DO YOU STRUGGLE MORE WITH ABUSING AUTHORITY OR WITH ABANDONING AUTHORITY? WHY?**

- **HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED SOMEONE ELSE ABUSING OR ABANDONING THEIR AUTHORITY OVER YOU?**

2. WE REFLECT GOD IN HOW WE _____ AND _____ ([GEN. 2:4-9, 16-25](#)).

To bear God's image means to have a relationship with Him. We are not merely spoken into existence by God's power but are formed by His hands to hold His very breath. We were created not just by power but by intimacy—for the purpose of relationship. The account in [Genesis 2](#) shows how powerful a scene this was, when God's face was toward us, when He breathed into the first man the breath of life. Just as a mirror best reflects an image when the mirror is in perfect "relationship" with, or directly in front of, the object that it's imaging, we reflect God best—we *image* Him best—when we are in close relationship with Him.

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

IMAGE OF GOD IN _____

IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOUR LIFE DEMONSTRATE THE PRIORITY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS THAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS NOT YOUR PRIORITY?

To bear God's image doesn't point only to the relationship we have with God; we also have relationships with each other. God created us "male and female." The God who exists in community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created human beings to live in community as well.

Two things to notice here. **FIRST, OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD HAS AN ELEMENT OF OBEDIENCE THAT COMES WITH IT.** The God who commanded Adam to rule wisely over the earth is the God who warned Adam not to eat

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from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A relationship with God must be built on trust, and God gave Adam the choice of trusting Him or not trusting Him by forbidding one particular tree.

SECOND, WE MUST NOT THINK OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AS SOMETHING PRIVATE AND ISOLATED, AS IF THE BEST WAY TO CULTIVATE THIS RELATIONSHIP IS “JUST BETWEEN ME AND GOD.” Sometimes we think that gathering with God’s people for worship is good but being alone with God is always better. But that wasn’t the case for Adam.

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH “What brings a person value, significance, and hope is not what he *does*, but *with whom* he does it. The call to live in continual communion with God means that every person’s life, no matter how mundane, is elevated to sacred heights.” –**Skye Jethani**

- **DO YOU THINK IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IF YOU ARE NOT PURSUING A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

3. WE REFLECT GOD IN OUR RHYTHM OF _____ AND _____ ([GEN. 2:1-3, 15](#)).

Work isn’t something that God gave humanity as a curse after the fall into sin; the toil of work is what came with sin, but work itself is designed to give us fulfillment and to provide us an environment to reflect and image God.

- **IN WHAT WAYS DOES OUR CULTURE Demean AND DIMINISH THE VALUE OF WORK?**

- **IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE CHURCH SOMETIMES DIMINISH THE VALUE OF WORK THAT IS SEEN AS SECULAR, OR “NON-RELIGIOUS”?**

God did not rest because He needed it, as if He were tired or worn out. Rather, He gave us an example of rest to show us that even though we are unlike any other creature in that we are the most “like” God, nevertheless, we are not God. There is an unbridgeable difference between God and us. And one of the most critical ways that we can reflect Him to the world is by showing that we are not God.

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- **WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MANY PEOPLE TO LAY DOWN THEIR WORK?**

- **WHAT MAKES REST DIFFICULT FOR YOU?**

CONCLUSION

Bearing God's image is a daunting task. What would the world conclude about God by looking at the image you're reflecting? Here's the bad news—It's no small sin for you and I to fail at properly reflecting God to the world. An assault on God's image is an assault on God Himself. In all the ways that you and I fail at properly reflecting His image to the world, we are telling the world lies about God and what He's like.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God—the only One who rules wisely over the world, relates perfectly to God and others, and through His work earns our everlasting rest.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY "For you have made us for yourself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in you." —**Augustine (354-430)**

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to actively cultivate our relationships with Him and with others in order to fulfill our role as stewards over the earth.

1. What are some ways we can take seriously the command of [Genesis 1:28](#) to rule wisely over the world God has given us?
2. How will you change the way you relate to others (family, friends, enemies, outcasts, the lost) in light of the image of God that we share?
3. How can our rhythm of work and rest support our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ?