

02

SESSION TWO

In God's Image

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will explore the biblical truth that God created humans in His image with the purpose of glorifying Him and enjoying Him forever. By looking at the creation story of our first parents, Adam and Eve, we will learn that some of the ways we reflect God is by ruling wisely over the world, relating rightly to Him and to others, and reflecting His goodness in our work and rest.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:26-2:25

THE POINT

God created humanity in His image.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Prior to the session, attach a large sheet of paper to a focal wall and label it “Relationships.” As students arrive, provide markers and direct them to record (by writing or drawing simple illustrations) various relationships that impact their lives.

After everyone has had a chance to record their responses, review the relationships listed. Call for clarification of any that may be unclear. Follow up by asking the following questions:

- **How would you describe the importance of these relationships in your life? Of the relationships listed, which are the most important to you? Why?**

After students have had time to answer, attach another blank, large sheet of paper over the first, then ask the following question:

- **What impact would it have on your life if these relationships did not exist? Explain.**

Option 2

Prior to the session, make a list of items that come in pairs or often go together. Some examples might include: peanut butter and jelly, burger and fries, bread and butter, Batman and Robin, (a pair of) scissors, (a pair of) pants, and so forth.

Lead students in a game of charades using the list, instructing students go up two at a time (e.g., two students must act out burger and fries). Following the game, challenge students to guess the charade theme. Announce that the theme was pairs; they all related! Today’s lesson, too, will be about things that relate to one another.

You can use this activity to explain to students that many great things come in relationships.

- **How hard it would be for one hand to clap or one lip to whistle? or to have a sandwich with only one piece of bread (not folded in half)?**

Emphasize that we need relationships with God, with one another, and with the world!

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God created humanity in His image.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Adam and Eve:** the first humans created

PLOT

In the previous session, we saw how God begins the story of the world by looking at the creation event. We saw that in the first three days of creation, God dealt with the formlessness by giving boundaries, separating, and organizing in order to make the heavens, the seas, and the earth. Then, in the second set of three days, God dealt with the emptiness of the world by filling the spheres that He created in the first three days. He filled the expanse with the sun, moon, and stars, He filled the earth with vegetation, and He filled the seas and the dry land with living creatures.

Our story picks up where we left off, moving toward the climactic scene where God creates something in a new and unique way—the creation of humanity. Mankind was created in God’s image, a unique characteristic from all other parts of creation.

- **What does it mean to be created in God’s image?**
- **What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “created in God’s image”?**
- **Do you think we still bear God’s image today, even in our sinful state?**

(Allow students a moment to respond. These questions can be found on p. 16 in the PSG.)

Let’s find the answers to our questions by digging into the creation account of humanity in Genesis 1-2.

TIMELINE

BEARING GOD'S IMAGE

God creates humanity in His image to reflect His likeness.

THE FALL

Sin enters the story and distorts God's good creation.

CAIN AND ABEL

The depth of humanity's fall is revealed in the heinous murder between two brothers.

TO REFLECT GOD MEANS TO RULE WISELY

When we talk about being created in God's image, most people assume this means God must look like us in a physical sense—He must have two arms, two legs, and be slightly taller than average. However, the Bible teaches that God is Spirit, and so it must mean something beyond human physical features.

As the story of the creation of man and woman unfolds, we begin to see what being created in God's image entails. For starters, God calls Adam and Eve to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth. His command for humans to fill and subdue the earth is an invitation to bear His image—to reflect Him by doing what He has just done in creating the heavens and the earth. Just as He filled the world with stars, vegetation, and living creatures, we are called to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with life. And just as He brought order from chaos in separating the land from the seas, we are called to subdue the world in such a way that brings harmony and accord.

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 that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gen. 1:26-31)

In this passage, we see that God is the ruler, and bearing His image means that we too must rule. But to reflect Him properly, we must rule wisely. Unfortunately, because of our sinfulness we tend to either worship creation or abuse it, to hold it up as if it were a god or to trample it as if it has no value. God's call to care for creation, however, should lead us to worship Him for the good things He has given us, not to worship the good things themselves.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

When we take a piece of land and garden/farm it, or preserve it so it can produce its peculiar life-splendors, when we take fabric and make a piece of clothing, when we push a broom to clean up a place, when we use technology to harness the forces of electricity, when we take an unformed, naïve human mind and teach it a subject, when we take unprocessed material and turn it into a poignant work of art, when we take undifferentiated tones and pitches (noise) and separate them out and arrange them to create music, (even when we pass a comb through our hair)—whenever we bring order out of chaos, whenever we draw out creative potential, whenever we elaborate and ‘unfold’ creation further than where it was when we found it—we are continuing God’s work of creative, cultural development.¹

TO REFLECT GOD MEANS TO RELATE

Not only do we reflect God through the wise ruling of His world, but we also reflect God through our relationships—both with Him and with others.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:4-9)

To bear God’s image means to have a relationship with Him. Our image-bearing started when God created us. The account in Genesis 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 directly in front of the object, we reflect God’s image best when we are in close relationship with Him.

To bear God’s image doesn’t point only to the relationship we have with God; we also have a relationship with one another. 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. Genesis 2 continues:

And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2:22-24)

After multiple statements of God seeing that His work was “good” and then “very good,” comes the first moment when something is described as “not good.” We were not created to bear God’s image on our own or to have an isolated relationship with God. We reflect God best when we are in community with one another—relating to others in love and grace. Thus, reflecting God’s image means we are to relate rightly to Him and to others.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

The human alone, of all of the creatures, knows and is consciously related to God. The portrayals of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden suggest that God and they customarily communed together. Humans were not created merely to be a work of art, statues displaying God’s creativity and wisdom, but to fulfill God’s special intention for them. It is significant that both in the Old Testament law (the Ten Commandments in Ex. 20) and in Jesus’ statement of the two great commandments (Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:26-27), the thrust of God’s will for humans concerns relationship to God and to other humans.²

TO REFLECT GOD MEANS TO WORK AND REST

Reflecting God also goes beyond our relationships and is seen in the rhythms of our everyday activities and rest. First, we see the creation of “work” in Genesis 2:15:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Gen. 2:15)

A lot of people have wrongly assumed that the command to work was a result of man’s sinning and rebelling against God. But the creation narrative shows us that God created work for man as part of His good world. Work is just as beautiful as the sunset, and just as purposeful as the rain.

Work isn’t something that God gave man 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 provide us an environment to reflect God.

Work didn’t come as a result of the fall, and work isn’t just something we do in order to make money. When viewed rightly, our work can reflect God. But not only does our work reflect God, our resting does as well. In fact, God commands us to rest.

TIMELINE

NOAH

Judgment and graciousness are found in the flood.

TOWER OF BABEL

Humanity’s pride is relentless in seeking praise for itself; but God’s glory will never be dethroned.

THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM

God establishes a covenant with Abraham.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2:1-3)

God did not rest because He needed it, as if He were tired or worn out. He gave us an example of rest to show that even though we are unlike any other creature in that we are the most “like” God, 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.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Image of God in Humanity

Some theologians believe “the image of God” refers to our mirroring of God’s attributes: our nature models God’s nature. Others believe we see the “image of God” in what human beings do. Still others believe the “image of God” concerns our relationships with God and with others. In Jesus we see the true image of God. He perfectly mirrors God’s attributes, fulfills God’s will, and enjoys a perfect relationship with the Father.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Bearing God’s image—it is a daunting task. How are you doing at reflecting God’s image? At wisely ruling the world? At relating with Him and others? At reflecting Him properly through the rhythms of your everyday activities and rest? What would the world conclude about God by looking at His image that you’re reflecting?

Here’s the bad news: It’s no small sin for you to fail at properly reflecting God to the world. An assault on God’s image is an assault on God Himself. When you fail to properly reflect His image to the world, you are telling the world lies about God and what He’s like.

But here’s the glorious good news: Jesus came to be the perfect image of the invisible God. He is the only One who rules wisely over the world. He upholds all things by His power, and all of creation awaits in eager anticipation for His return. He is the only One who perfectly relates to God and others and can restore our broken relationships with God and others. He not only has a face-to-face relationship with God, but His face is the very face of God. And because of Jesus’ good work on our behalf—His perfect life, death in our place, and glorious resurrection—we are invited into His rest. No longer striving for salvation but resting in His finished work.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What comes to mind when you think of humanity being made “in the image of God”?** Responses to this question will vary. Point students to their responses to the earlier question about being created in God's image (p. 16, PSG), and how they would answer that question differently now having gone through this session.
- **When was the last time you thought of fish, birds, or even worms as living creatures that God has entrusted to you to care for?** More than likely, most students haven't seen the different parts of creation in this way. Instead of seeing themselves as stewards of God's creation, they see themselves as merely consumers. As you discuss this question with students, direct the conversation toward helping them see their responsibility among creation.
- **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?** Because there are several different types of responses to these questions, allow students the time and freedom to think about their responses in light of the session. Answers may vary from how one responds to sin within his or her life to living out God's Word in one's life.
- **In what ways does our culture diminish the value of work? How have you diminished the idea of work in your own life? How can you correct this?** Explain to students that work is used here in a broad sense, referring to anything from everyday school work and household chores to a summer part-time job. The goal is to get students thinking biblically about work, helping them see that work is sacred, valuable, and should be done unto the Lord.

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The fact that God created humanity in His image means that each individual person on planet earth, no matter how big, how small, or the color of their skin, possesses inherent worth, value, and dignity.

- **How should the doctrine of humans being created in God's image influence the way we think about others?** *Regardless of ethnicity, gender, cultural differences, or even sinful actions, the image of God in humanity causes us to see others as possessing something unique that gives each person dignity and value.*
- **Why is it important to note that humanity has a special place among creation because we were created in God's image? What are the dangers of not affirming this?** *This gets to the heart of many debates within our culture regarding human life, such as abortion, euthanasia, and so forth. Since humanity was created in God's image and is unique among the rest of creation, this truth should significantly influence the way we approach those topics.*



HEART

The reality of God creating humanity in His image not only means that we see other people in a different light, but it also influences the way we feel toward others who bear the same image, both Christians and non-Christians.

- **How should the doctrine of humans being created in God's image influence the way we feel about others, both Christians and non-Christians?** *At the very least, it should cause us to feel a certain respect and compassion for them given that they, too, are image bearers of God.*
- **Why should we be grieved when we see image bearers of God living in a way that is contrary to the way God intended?** *Primarily, it should grieve us because that is not the way humanity was intended to live.*



HANDS

As we learned throughout this session, bearing God's image is a tangible reality that shows up in our day-to-day lives. Not only does it show up in our relationships, but it also shows up in the way we steward the earth God has given us, as well as in the way we work and rest. No matter how old they are, everyone works (home, school, sports, etc.), everyone rests, and everyone contributes, for good or bad, to the little corner of this planet God where has placed them.

- **How will you begin to treat friends, family members, and even strangers differently based upon the truth that they are created in God's image?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can begin to reflect God by being a better steward of the world He has given us?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, point out item #1 to students, which displays all of the essential doctrines that will be covered over the course of the Fall 2015 study,

SOURCES

1. Timothy J. Keller, *What were we put in the world to do?* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2006), 25-26.
2. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 467-68.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- Leader Training Videos
- One Conversations
- Midweek Studies
- Circular Timeline Poster
- App (for both leader and student)



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject