

## Message Description

— The Bible says we are made in the image of God. What does that mean and how should we respond? So much of life, relationships and even politics hangs in the balance of this question. In this message we will explore the Bible for the answers.

## Introduction

— How much is a person worth?

— **From a chemical perspective, a person is not worth much...**

— **99% of the mass of the human body is made up of only six chemical elements.**

— **Chemicals**

- Oxygen
- Carbon
- Hydrogen
- Nitrogen
- Calcium
- Phosphorus

— **The cost of those chemicals is estimated to be less than \$5.**

— **And 90% of the mass of the body is just water and carbon.**

— **For the most part we are about three five gallon buckets of water and a bag of charcoal.**

— **From a historical perspective, a person is not worth much...**

— **From a historical perspective, we are such blips on the screen of time that no one will remember any of us.**

— **I can prove this point to you...**

— **We all have eight great grandparents.**

— **How many of us can recall their first and last names?**

— **How many of your sixteen great great grandparents can you remember their names?**

— **They just died sixty years ago, max and for someone my age it was just thirty-five years ago! If you are younger, then it was even more recent.**

— **And if you, their grandchildren, can't remember them, then no one else does either.**

— **From the perspective of strength, intelligence, and survivability, a person is not worth much...**

— **You are dumber than a \$10 calculator.**

— **You are weaker than a cheap \$5,000 tractor.**

— **You breakdown more often than 20 year old Yugo.**

— **You are more fragile than an iPhone.**

— **You aren't waterproof.**

— **You require constant feeding.**

— **You only function well within a very narrow range of environmental temperatures.**

— **We say we are the most advanced species on the earth, but think about this...**

— **The giraffe**

— **When a pregnant giraffe gives birth standing up.**

— **The baby giraffe starts life by falling six feet unto the hard ground.**

— **And with no help the baby giraffe is up and walking within one hour.**

— **The human**

— **It takes a team of professionally trained staff and a state-of-the-art birthing suite to bring our little babies into the world.**

— **And then it takes almost a year before our kids begin to walk.**

— **And when they take their first steps, we celebrate it like our kid is the smartest person who ever lived when in reality the kids progress is 8,260 times slower than a giraffe who was dropped on his head at birth.**

- So, what makes people so special?
  - Let's look to the word of God for the answer.
- Read **Genesis 1:26-27**.
  - God has created everything, but there is something special about his creation of man.
    - Non-human creative acts were introduced with an impersonal (third person) phrase such as "Let there be light" or "Let the earth bring forth the living creature."
      - With the creation of man, the act is introduced with a more personal (first person) "*Let us make...*"
    - While it is assumed that gender was a part of the creation of birds, sea creatures and land animals, it is only with humans that a distinction is made.
    - The key difference however is that while other animals were created "*according to its kind*," man was created in the image and likeness of God.
      - Repeated four times in these two verses (and many more times through Scripture).
      - *In our image*
      - *After our likeness*
      - *In his own image*
      - *In the image of God*
  - First, we must figure out what the Bible is talking about when it says we are created in the image of God. Then we can figure out what we should do in response to this.
  - What does it mean to be created in the image of God?
    - The simplest way to see this is to compare it to the semblance between a father and a son.
      - The Bible does this...
        - **Genesis 5:1-3** | *This is the document containing the family records of Adam. On the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God; he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind. Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.* (CSB)
      - Notice the same word is used to say how we resemble the creator and how our children resemble us.
        - Likeness: *דָמֶת* (dəmût)
      - What do we mean when say a son is LIKE his dad?
        - We could mean many things...
          - Appearance
          - Mannerisms
          - Intelligence/Abilities
          - Tastes/Appetites/Passions
          - Lifestyle/Integrity
          - Work ethic
      - Similarly, we are like the Creator in several ways...
        - Scholars use three categories: Substantive, Relational, Functional

#### A. Authority

- The Scripture says that man is to have dominion over nature.
  - **Man is the real king of the jungle.**
- This was probably more perfect in the garden of Eden...
- Examples...
  - **Matthew 17:27**, when Jesus commanded Peter to get the fish with the coin...
    - **Matthew 17:27** | *"But, so we won't offend them, go to the sea, cast in a fishhook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth you'll find a coin. Take it and give it to them for me and you."* (CSB)
  - Jesus rode a donkey that had never been ridden.

#### B. Morality

- We know there is a right and a wrong.
  - That truth is written on our hearts.
    - **Romans 2:15** | *They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts either accuse or even excuse them* (CSB)
  - With animals, there is no right and wrong.

- Animals may do destructive things, but the reason is instinct, training, or self-preservation.
- People are distinctly different from animals in the sense of morality.
  - **Someone once said that man is the only animal that can blush and the only animal that needs to.**
- There is a standard.
  - **Wal-mart incident where stock clerk was being berated because the display he set up didn't look like the picture...**
  - We have a picture...
    - Jesus.

### C. Intellect

- The intelligence of mankind is different than that of animals.
  - It's not just higher or better, it's different.
- More and more people today are saying animals are just as smart or smarter than humans.
  - I recently read an article in the Huffington Post that quoted researchers asserting this claim.
    - The article listed many of the amazing things animals can do...
      - **Bees building hives...**
      - **The migration of birds...**
      - **Beavers building dams...**
    - But all of the amazing things animals can do, they do by instinct or human training.
      - **Bees build amazing hives, but they can't build anything else.**
      - **Beavers build giant dams, but they are the same giant dams they were building a thousand years ago.**
      - We are told that **dolphins, pigs, border collies** are smarter than humans, but the way you can tell their "intelligence" is just instinct is that they haven't gotten any smarter. They haven't advanced. They haven't really processed information and then improved in some way from generation to generation or even year to year.
  - Another aspect of our intelligence is our communication.
    - It is not just greater than that of animals, it is different!
    - No animal can carry on an abstract conversation about even the simplest of subjects.
    - If an animal has any communication skills at all, they are instinctive or trained through repetition.

### D. Eternality

- God made man eternal.
  - **Ecclesiastes 3:11 | He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end.** (CSB)
- **So far as I know your dog is not eternal.**
- **(However, there will be animals in heaven.)**
  - I know it bothers some to think their beloved pets are not eternal.
  - It is ok to love and cherish our pets.
    - But let's not degrade what it means that we have been created in the image of God by partially assigning that honor to animals.
    - **And if your pet is eternal, what about the cow you ate yesterday or the chicken you ate the day before?**
      - **What about the wasps you sprayed at the end of the summer?**
      - **What about the mosquitos you swatted in July?**
    - Let's stick with biblical categories...
  - **How many of you remember when the gorilla was shot at the Cincinnati Zoo on May 28, 2016, because a three-year-old boy got into the gorilla's enclosure and the gorilla had seized the boy?**
    - Interestingly, the gorilla was born in Brownsville, Texas.
    - I lived near that area at the time, and wow, was that the topic of debate around the state.
    - **So many people said the gorilla should not have been killed because they boy should not have been in the cage or that his parents were negligent, or that the gorilla was a rare breed.**
    - **Well, maybe all of that was true.**

- And maybe the parents should have been held responsible in some way.
- But the boy's life was infinitely more valuable than the gorilla's life.
- As lovable, valuable, popular as the gorilla may have been...
- The little boy was made in the image of God!

#### E. Spirituality

- He has a knowledge of God.
- He has a capacity to worship God.
- He has a desire to be right with God.

#### What should we do?

##### I. Praise the Lord for the image of God in us.

- **Psalm 139:14 | *I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well.*** (CSB)
- Often we get down on ourselves...
  - Negative self-image, no self-worth, we feel the sting of rejection and criticism.
  - We feel inferior, put down, ignored...
- I've got good news!
  - You have been created in the image of God.
- **Story of poverty stricken lady in MS...**
  - She thought she was so poor that she would lose her house.
  - Until we noticed that all of the little ceramic junk she had sitting around her house was stamped: Occupied Japan.
- You have been stamped with the image of God.
  - You may have been marred by sin.
  - You may have been rejected by the world.
  - You may have been forgotten by friends and family.
  - But to God you are valuable...
- Sometimes I wonder why Jesus died for me...
  - I feel so unworthy.
  - And I am unworthy...
  - Except for one thing... I was made in his image.
    - [GOSPEL PRESENTATION]

##### II. Value all life created in the image of God.

- Too often we value life by measuring the wrong things...
  - Beauty // Wealth // Talent // Success // Usefulness // Health
- **Matthew 25:40 | *'And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*** (CSB)
  - Why does Jesus say our love for the least of these is a mark of discipleship?
    - Because when we love those, we are recognizing and honoring the image of God.
    - Because we are valuing His image!
  - Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the *status* of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God's image-bearer.
- What does this mean from a practical standpoint?
  - **Care for the poor**
    - *"But they wouldn't be poor if they were more responsible or would have studied or worked as hard as I did..."*
      - Maybe so (maybe not) ...
      - But maybe if you would have done some things different you wouldn't have the problems you have.
      - This is not about rewarding laziness. This is about honoring the image of God!
  - **Hate racism and discrimination**
    - Any time we judge someone's value based on anything but whether or not they were created in the image of God, we sin.
  - **Love the unborn**
    - The Bible makes it clear that even in the womb, people are created in the image of God.
    - One of the first people who recognized and celebrated the presence of Jesus was a baby in the womb!

— **Luke 1:43–44** | *How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me.* (CSB)

- What basis are we going to use to decide the worth of those babies?
  - Whether they are wanted?
  - Whether they are fully developed?
  - Whether they have a chance at what our culture says is a *good life*?

#### — **Care for distressed children**

- I believe it breaks the heart of God to see so many children bearing his image uncared for.
  - **Matthew 19:13–15** | *Then children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, “Leave the children alone, and don’t try to keep them from coming to me, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” After placing his hands on them, he went on from there.* (CSB)
  - **James 1:27** | *Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.* (CSB)
  - **Psalm 127:3** | *Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD, offspring, a reward.* (CSB)
- How can I care for distressed children?

#### — **Be a blessing to a young mother**

- **Titus 2:3–5** | *In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God’s word will not be slandered.* (CSB)

#### — **Be a foster parent**

#### — **Support adoption**

- Adopt a child
  - Why?
    - Rescue a child.
    - Introduce a kid to Christ...
    - Change a child’s whole family tree...
    - Love like the Father.
      - He adopted me.
      - The Bible said it pleased the Father to adopt me.

— **Ephesians 1:5** | *He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,* (CSB)

- Use the good marriage and solid home the Lord has blessed you with.

#### — Why not?

- I can’t provide a perfect home...
- I don’t have the money...

#### — Help a family adopt a child

- Money
- Partners

### **III. Conform to the image of God in us.**

- Being created in his image causes us to look at things three ways...

#### — Looking back...

- It is a fact that I have been created in the image of God.

#### — Looking forward...

- It is something that will one day be fully realized.

— **Philippians 1:6** | *I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* (CSB)

- I will be glorified...

— **Romans 8:29–30** | *For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.* (CSB)

#### — Looking at the present...

- It is a challenge.

— **Colossians 3:8-10** | *But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator.* (CSB)

- We are to be a banner for Christ.
- We are to be a signpost for his character.
- **Like the moon reflects the light of the sun...**

## Conclusion

- Let him adopt you...
  - Let him mold you...
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## Discussion Guide

### Connect

- Describe a time when you have seen an animal act very human or show human emotion or personality.

### Discover

- Which statement or experience stood out to you from the worship service?
- Read Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-3.
  - If God is spirit, how can people be made in the image of God?
  - What does the “image of God” have to do with the instruction to rule the earth in Genesis 1:26?
  - What are the fundamental differences between the nature of people (in the image of God) and nature of animals?
  - In Genesis 5:3 we learn that Adam’s son was in his image. How does that inform our understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God?
- Read Ecclesiastes 3:11 and Psalm 139:14.
  - What does it mean that we have been created with eternity in our hearts?
  - What did the Psalmist mean when he said we have been remarkably and wondrously made?
  - When we see how the Lord has made us and that we are made in the image of God, what should that motivate us to do?
- Read Matthew 19:13-15, James 1:27, and Psalm 127:3.
  - If all people have value because they were created in the image of God, then how should that change our attitude toward the poor and helpless here and around the world?
  - How does the fact that we are all created in the image of God speak to the subject of racism?
- Read Psalm 139:13 and Matthew 25:40.
  - What does the fact that we are all created in the image of God speak to the subject of abortion?
  - Why is it wrong to discard “unwanted” children?

### Respond

- What are the ways our world measures someone’s worth and value? According to Scripture, what makes us valuable to the Lord? How should this affect how we treat people different than us?
- How would you council someone who is considering an abortion because their child is unwanted or is expected to be born with some physical or mental limitations?

### Bonus for Thinkers

- Is our being made in the image of God more about the authority mankind has been given, the moral code written on our hearts, our intellectual superiority, our awareness of God, or our consciousness? What is the biblical support for your view?
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### Notes

- We might wonder whether man could still be thought to be *like God* after he sinned. This question is answered quite early in Genesis where God gives Noah the authority to establish the death penalty for murder among human beings

just after the flood: God says "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9:6).<sup>1</sup>

- Even though men are sinful, there is still enough likeness to God remaining in them that to murder another person (to "shed blood" is an Old Testament expression for taking a human life) is to attack the part of creation that most resembles God, and it betrays an attempt or desire (if one were able) to attack God himself. Man is still in God's image.<sup>2</sup>
- The New Testament gives confirmation to this when James 3:9 says that men generally, not just believers, "are made in the likeness of God."<sup>3</sup>
- Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the *status* of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God's image-bearer. This has profound implications for our conduct toward others. It means that people of every race deserve equal dignity and rights. It means that elderly people, those seriously ill, the mentally retarded, and children yet unborn, deserve full protection and honor as human beings. If we ever deny our unique status in creation as God's only image-bearers, we will soon begin to depreciate the value of human life, will tend to see humans as merely a higher form of animal, and will begin to treat others as such. We will also lose much of our sense of meaning in life.<sup>4</sup>

#### Scripture References

- **Genesis 9:6** | *Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image.* (CSB)
- **James 3:9** | *With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness.* (CSB)
- **Ecclesiastes 3:11** | *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end.* (CSB)

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 444.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 444.

<sup>3</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 444.

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