

Made in the Image of God

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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 (Gen. 1:26-27).

The Creation account is amazing. The opening book of the Bible describes how a Creator of unknown origin powerfully spoke the universe into existence. After forming the earth and its contents, the Creator purposed to make a type of creature to serve as the steward of His new world. To accomplish this, God made humans; one male and one female.

Humans were not just another part of God's creation. They were not another type of plant or animal. Humans were different from the rest of God's creation. The distinguishing trait of humans was not found in their skin color, their ability to walk upright, or their language skills. The unique feature of humans was their image. Humans were made in the image of God.

Bearing the image of God endowed humans with the right to exercise stewardship of God's creation. By responsible stewardship of God's good earth, Adam and Eve would reflect the glory of the Creator into the earth and up to God. By properly reflecting God's glory, knowledge of God would help shape the hearts and minds of the next generation of God's image bearers: Adam and Eve's posterity.

God making us in His image is every bit amazing as the totality of creation itself. Reflecting God's glory can be challenging at times. But, have you ever wondered what being made in God's image means? In Genesis, there is little explanation as to what this means. We are told that we are made in God's "likeness" and that by Him giving us the breath of life we are "living souls." But, how would we describe what this means?

In order to attempt to answer this perplexing question it would seem we would need to have an image of God. What does God look like? Of course, the Bible tells us that no one has ever seen the image of God (1 Tim. 1:13-16). From a pagan perspective, the nation of Israel was strange in that they worshipped a god who had no image.

When Jesus was on earth, He declared that anyone who saw Him, witnessed the Father (John 14:9). But, of course, we have not seen Jesus. When His arrival was prophesied, Isaiah wrote that His appearance would be common or ordinary (Isa. 53:2). Whatever Jesus looked like, I'm quite sure He did not resemble the white, European that has been romanticized in paintings over the centuries.

Our imaginations can run wild conjuring the image of God. However, being made in the image and likeness of God may have less to do with physical appearance than we realize. Perhaps

the clearest description of God is offered by John. In a single chapter of a short letter, three times John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:7-8, 16).

Love is the image we are given about God. Love describes God's substance, character, and nature. His love is revealed in Creation. By love, God made Adam and gave him creation. By love, God made Eve to be a helper to Adam. Also, God punishing Adam and Eve is an example of His love. In a state of sin, God feared Adam and Eve would eat from the tree of life and be eternally exiled from ever being reunited with Him (Gen. 3:22-24). Therefore, God expelled them from Eden.

But, if God's image and likeness is love, what does this convey about us being made in this image? Being made in the image of God means that we have been given the ability to receive and give love. Love originated with God. God loved us first (1 John 4:10). His love has produced an environment in which we can experience His goodness and flourish as the pinnacle of His craftsmanship. We have been made by love, for love.

By experiencing God's love in the natural world and through His Son, we are compelled to respond to Him by love. There are two basic ways we respond to God by love. First, we respond to God's love through obedience. Recognizing everything that God has done for us is for our good, we are to submit to His rule in our lives.

Secondly, we respond to God's love in how we treat our fellow man. This is the main point of John's letter. God is love; therefore, as the people of God, we must love one another.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:7-8).

Sharing in God's loving image is overwhelmingly positive. Therefore, we might assume that extending love to others would come easily for us. Sadly, this is often not the case. Since the Garden of Eden, humans has responded to God's love by rebellion and selfishness. This results in our image being ruined. With a tarnished image, we cannot reflect God's glory.

Thankfully, by God's love, our image can be renewed. God's love compelled Him to send us a Savior, but not just any savior. God's sent us His own Son to restore our image. We can have God's image restored in us through obedience to Jesus.

Jesus came to earth to show and teach us how to be human by properly bearing God's image. Whatever questions we may have about the meaning of us having been made in God's image, we need to look no further than Jesus for the answers. Jesus represents the perfect human. He is the faithful manifestation of God's love in flesh and blood form.

Conclusion

Are we faithfully bearing God's image? Are we properly reflecting His glory? Is it time to respond to the urgings of renewed people like the apostle Paul? He pled for us to put on the new

self which is renewed through the knowledge of our Creator's image (Col. 3:10). To help us determine if we need to be renewed by the image of God in Jesus, we would be wise to ask the following questions:

1. Have we obeyed the Gospel?
2. Do we treat our fellow man with dignity and respect?
3. If we have hurt someone, have we pursued reconciliation?
4. Do we show kindness and affection to our spouse and children?
5. Are we honest in our day-to-day interactions with others?
6. Do we love our enemies?
7. Are we trying to get other people to have their image restored?