

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 Bible reveals the origin of man. God made man different from the rest of His creation. Unlike plants and animals, man was made in the image of God. With this distinctive quality came responsibility. Man was to fill the earth with the glory of God through wise stewardship of God's good earth. Adam and Eve faithfully kept this trust for a time; however, they sinned. The image of God was ruined in man. Therefore, God sought to restore His image in man by sending the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15). Today, we can be renewed in the image of God by obeying Jesus (Col. 3:1-10).

The Bible explains our need to have our image renewed. There is a major emphasis placed on the responsibilities of bearing the image of God. But, have you ever wondered what it means that we were made in the image of God? What traits do humans share with the Creator?

Shared Traits

1. Love. The Bible gives many descriptions of the Creator. Perhaps the simplest yet most profound description of the Creator is love: God is love (1 John 4:16). God gives and receives love. Recognizing Adam's need for companionship, love compelled Him to form Eve. By love, God gave Adam and Eve all they needed to have a glorious life. Even when Adam and Eve sinned, it was love that caused God to expel them from the Garden. Had they stayed in the Garden and eaten from the tree of life they would have been eternally separated from God. God wanted to have a loving relationship with humans. Of course, God sending the world His Son is the supreme demonstration of His love for the human family.

Like God, we can give and receive love. We respond to God's love by wise use of His blessings and obedience. By experiencing His love, we become affectionate, self-giving creatures. Sadly, our ability to give and receive love is often corrupted by lust and selfishness. This was first demonstrated in the Garden; yet, the corrupting influences of lust and selfishness have been replicated many times in the human family. These impulsive desires are the reasons why our image needs to be restored.

2. Language. Our Creator made the universe by speaking. He used language to frame the world. He ordered human society by giving laws. The Savior He sent was a physical manifestation of His word and logic (John 1:1-5). Acceptance of the words of God is how our image is restored and upheld.

Like God, humans can form language. While animals can communicate with themselves, their faculties do not begin to compare with the sophistication of human language. We can express emotion through words. The human experience is ordered through carefully crafted articulation. We can express praise to God and love for one another through language. On the other hand, the human experience is ruined through language. Like it was in the Garden, language is used to deceive and harm. Abusing the trait of language is another reason we need to have our image restored.

3. Creative ability. We stand in awe of God's creative ability. God made something from nothing. He animated dust. God designed the family unit as the building block of human society. He made the government to aid in the continuance of peaceful societies. He created the Church to express His wisdom in saving the human family. He gave life to the dead.

Like God, humans have creative abilities. We are constantly building, inventing, and innovating. We are always trying to improve life in the world. We explore the unknown. We create art and music. Sadly, our creative potential is often misused. In the days of Noah, man set his mind on devising evil (Gen. 6:5). Nearly every profitable creation of man is abused in some fashion.

Much of the harm caused on the earth and among the human family has been designed by our hands. In reflecting on his discovery of splitting the atom, Robert Oppenheimer cited a Hindu scripture: "I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." While the creation of the atomic bomb is an extreme example of the misuse of man's creative abilities, through sin we become death, the destroyer of our world. This is why we need God's image restored. The world would be better served by its stewards properly bearing the image of God.

4. Sense of eternity. The Bible tells us that the Creator is eternal. He has no beginning or end. This is difficult for us as humans to fully grasp. We have a beginning and end. We are born and we die; yet, we possess a sense of eternity. Solomon wrote that God placed eternity in the hearts of man (Eccl. 3:11). This is why humans yearn to be part of something bigger than themselves. This is why we often wonder, "Is this all there is?"

While we possess a sense of eternity, we often ignore this intuition. Instead of focusing on eternity, we live for today. Many live as if life is one big party. They give no regard to God or their eternal future. This is another reason why we need our image renewed. God raised Jesus from the dead to show that if a man dies, he will live again (Job 14:14). We are to use our lives in preparation for eternity with the Creator.

Conclusion

Being made in the image of God is thought provoking. There are other traits we share in common with God. We can use each trait for good or evil. God has created us with free will. We can choose to fill the earth with His glory or we can choose to ruin His image. We can be self-giving or we can be self-serving.

Faithfully bearing the image of God requires us to obey Jesus. Through Jesus, we are recreated. The image of God is restored in us. In our new life, we learn how to use our abilities to His glory in hope of eternal life. Learning to properly use the traits we share with the Creator will improve our lives to His glory.