

Imago Dei

Genesis 1:26-27

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Introduction

Imago Dei is the Latin phrase for the term “*image of God*”. We first find this phrase used by the Godhead in Genesis 1:26-27 during the account of creation.

Many of us have heard of this concept before. That every human is created in the image of God. Now while it is widely known I am not sure how widely understood it is.

It is within this truth that we can begin to understand the most foundational aspects of who we are as humans. I believe all the evils in our world can be traced back to the misunderstanding of that fact that we are made in the image of God. I believe all the confusion and craziness of our world can be traced back to not getting this incredible reality.

What I want to showcase today is not only the very beginning of this but the thread of beauty through the story of God’s redemption regarding us being created in the image of God. And so, our path today will start with mankind being created in the image of God, and then how that very image was marred and distorted by sin but how that image can ultimately be restored within every person as they receive the image of the invisible God, Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Formed In God’s Image

Within these two verses, it is made ABUNDANTLY clear that God created mankind.

- “Let Us **MAKE** man”
- “God **CREATED** man”
- “God **CREATED** him”
- “He **CREATED** them”

REPEATS 4 times within these 2 verses.

It is HE who is our Creator. He is our Maker. He is our Designer.

This fact is repeated and confirmed all throughout Scripture. *This is a theme woven throughout the entire Bible.*

1. Deliberately Designed (v.26)

We are not here by chance. Your existence is not random. We see here from the creation of the very first man and woman, that God had intentionally designed them. It was not by accident. It was not a byproduct of trying to create something else.

Verse 26 gives us this INCREDIBLE insight here into the *counsel* of the Godhead. **Verse 26** is a *conversation* that the Triune Godhead is having amongst themselves.

NOTICE, “Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness.

Who is US? Who is OUR? This is referencing the Triune nature of God. The Father, the Son, & the Spirit of God as seen all over the Bible.

It is in this deliberation, we find out the first thing that is mentioned that God desires man to do, to have dominion OVER all that He has created. This was an intentional act by the Godhead. It was deliberate.

2. Distinctly Designed (v.27)

God distinctly designed mankind male and female. Notice the period here.

“male and female He created them. (period)”

Distinct is the idea of different. This was His design, and it is a GOOD design. He said it Himself, it was very good, and it still can be. It is only when we get away from the understanding God designed us that we get away from the distinction of male and female. The farther away we get, the more weird things get.

3. Directly Designed (Genesis 2:7)

God didn't create a machine to pump us out one by one. He was hands on. From the beginning God has been involved of the formation of mankind. *In Genesis 2, we get more details regarding this...*

Genesis 2:7

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

Formed: to fashion, to shape, to forge

Man was “formed” as a potter forms the clay

The word **formed** describes the work of an artist. Like a potter shaping an earthen vessel from clay, so **God** formed man from clay. Man was made by divine plan. Divine design.

Now God created a lot of incredible things within those 6 days, so what makes the creation of man so special? Well notice how unique verse 26 & 27 are within chapter 1.

God made everything living “after its kind” but not so with man. We learn how God gave significant detail of forming man. To the animals God said, “Let the earth bring forth...” vs. with man God said, “Let us make man...”

It is clear, not only from this Genesis account but from the whole of Scripture that man is the pinnacle and crown jewel of all that God created!

So what makes us so different than everything else that was created?

Answer: Unlike anything else in creation, God made man in His image or in His likeness. (these two things are understood as interchangeable)

- "in Our **IMAGE**"
- "according to Our **LIKENESS**"
- "in His Own **IMAGE**"
- "in the **IMAGE** of God"

Also, **REPEATED** 4 times within these two verses to give emphasis on this idea.

Image & Likeness

This does not mean that God created little versions of Himself as "gods." Man reflects the Lord so by default is not the Lord. Man reflects the Lord as an image bearer. We are the created and we are therefore accountable to God. But God is NOT like man nor is accountable to man.

Portrait to a person (portrait is like the person) or a **model airplane** to an airplane (model is like the airplane)

The model is like the original, the original is not like the model.

SHORT & SIMPLE: images are made to image

A statue is made for you to think about the reality. Like when you go to the Lincoln Memorial

Now unlike a statue that is still or a portrait that is hung, God breathed LIFE into His image.

This **image & likeness** is what distinguishes man from animals. It is out of this that God gives man dominion over the other creatures and earth that He made.

The very first purposes that God gives to man is to have **DOMINION**.

- to rule over, to dominate, to manage & govern over, to control

God has ultimate dominion, but He sought to share and impart this dominion or rule with man.

What does this look like that we are made in the image of God, in His likeness?

Jesus says in **John 4:24** that God is spirit. He was conveying the idea that God is not contained in a physical body. However, I do think there are some interesting designs that man has that reflect the nature and character of God.

EXAMPLE:

- we have eyes that can see, the Bible tells us that God sees
- we have ears that can hear, the Bible tells us that God hears
- we have a mouth that can speak, the Bible tells us that God speaks
- we have a mind to be able to think, the Bible tells us that God has thoughts

When creating man, God knew of a future time that He would enter His own created world and would become human. Incredible to think about.

Acts 15:18

¹⁸ Known to God from eternity are all His works.

I believe God designed the body in such a way knowing that there would be a moment in time He would enter this world in one of those very bodies He designed!

However, there is more than just the way we are constructed physically but it's who we are internally.

I like to break this down in three ways. We are made to resemble God...

1) Mentally (we are able to think with rationality and logic with the ability to choose)
Human intellect is CLEARLY different than that of animals. Our creative and ability to design and do is unmatched within the animal kingdom. I would also put under this category what you could describe as our personality. Our uniqueness. (*architecture, advancement in technologies, etc...*)

We are not just a higher level of an animal; God makes us DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT.

2) Morally (Adam & Eve were created in perfection; God saw that it was indeed very good)
Yet even in our sinful state now, we still have that “moral compass” within us. Knowing right from wrong. The Bible teaches us that God has put eternity in our hearts, and He has revealed Himself internally to each person by writing the law in their hearts.

3) Relationally (*we are very relational beings. Eden was all about relationship with God*)
God saw that it was not good for man to be alone and so Eve was created. This reflects the relationship nature of who God is.

4) Spiritually (*God is spirit and has given us a spirit to relate to Him*)
God created Adam and Eve with a spirit. Though when they sinned that brought not only physical death into the world but spiritual death. Humans still have a spirit that can be made alive in Christ to be able to have fellowship and pray and connect with God who is spirit.

There is much debate on what it means that we are made in His image, but I like to think of it in the way that we are like God because God made us like Him. Then the more we learn about who God is we discover everything good about us comes down to the fact that God made us like that!

When you boil this all down, it shows us that we as human beings made in the image and likeness of God have intrinsic worth and value. That a person’s value isn’t just based on what they do but who they are. This is the ONLY basis for the value of life.

The atheistic opinion of life without God HAS no basis for human value, dignity, and worth.
What makes us better than anything else?

We find this in God’s command to Noah and his family after the flood...

Genesis 6:9

Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.

Notice God’s basis is the fact that God made man in God’s image!

AND SO, it pleased God when Adam and Eve did what they were designed and instructed to do. But we all know that they got off track.

But at first God was able to stand back and say that it was VERY good. And as we get back to what God designed and instructed us to, it can once again be very good.

And so, though we were formed in God’s image, sin made that image deformed from God’s image.

Deformed From God’s Image

It doesn’t seem to take long before things get interesting in the garden. It is only in chapter 3 of Genesis that something happens to that image of God upon man.

We end Genesis 2 and things are FANTASTIC! Garden is great, Adam got to name the animals, Adam and Eve together, unhindered fellowship with God! Scripture isn't clear on how much time actually passes between chapter 2 & 3, but it is clear however long this was, this was the next event.

Turn with me to Genesis 3

Genesis 3 opens up with a dialogue that was had and decisions that were made.

It is that serpent of old, more cunning or crafty than any other animal who is used by Satan to embody when seeking to deceive Eve. The serpent begins to talk to Eve by questioning the word of God to her.

Satan took God's positive command and twisted it in a negative way.

Satan didn't talk about ALL the other trees that they may "FREELY" eat from. Satan's notorious for this move. *Satan attacks the good nature of God toward them to trick Eve in thinking that God is holding back from her.*

It's been said before that Satan tries to get Eve to doubt the goodness of God and doubt the severity of sin!

How true this is still to this day! Satan doesn't have too many new tricks, but they still work!

IT WAS AT THIS POINT that Eve looked at the tree.

1) Good for food 2) Pleasant to the eyes 3) Desirable to make one wise

SHE TOOK and ate. Then SHE TOOK and gave, and he ate.

IT IS AT THIS MOMENT THAT THE IMAGE OF GOD THAT THEY WERE FORMED IN, BECAME DEFORMED. It was not destroyed but damaged greatly. Now marred and scarred by the sinful decision that we still experience the results of to this day. Though each person bears the image of God and many without knowing it, that image has been badly distorted. *But on that day, there were both immediate consequences and future implications.*

We find here THREE IMMEDIATE RESULTS of this decision and how this effects God's divine design of mankind even to this day!

1) Shame (read verse 7)

The first result of sin is shame. We find this in verse 7.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

One of the reasons Satan's temptations were so powerful was because there was truth in it. It was true that their eyes would be open, but their eyes were opened to their own sin and rebellion. Their eyes were now opened to their own depravity.

Ever seen a movie that has a genie? There is always a catch to the wish like in Aladdin.

It is not that they were blind before, but it was rather they were innocent of any sin. They were pure and holy how God made them. Yet they had free choice.

IMMEDIATELY, they realize that they are both naked
- there was this immediate shame and this immediate feeling of being exposed

Many Bible commentators believe that Adam and Eve were previously clothed in God's glorious light and that light went out when they sinned.

Fig Leaves were their attempt to cover themselves, but we see though that their covering wasn't enough....

Genesis 3:21

²¹ Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

But why? Why did God have to use the skin of an animal to clothe them? Why weren't the leaves enough?

We have a picture here. Their own works and attempts to make things right with God again was never going to work. Because of their sin, God had to take a life to cover their sin and shame.
ONLY GOD CAN DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF SHAME IN OUR LIVES.

2) Separation (read verses 8-11)

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Not only did they experience shame, but they experienced separation. This would ultimately lead to be separated from the garden and the unhindered fellowship with the Lord.

Adam & Eve hid themselves from the Lord God. (v.8)

Adam tells God that they were afraid. (v.10). Sin made Adam afraid to be in God's presence.

God asks Adam, "Where are you?"

It wasn't that God didn't know and it wasn't that God was angry but rather this was a heartfelt cry of Father. God knew that there was separation.

God then asks another question to which I believe was an opportunity of repentance!

"Who told you?" "Did you eat?"

THIS SEPARATION IS NOW WHAT EVERY HUMAN IS BORN INTO

3) Shifting of Blame (read verses 12-13)

¹² Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

We see the tragic rate of how quickly sin takes over here when they begin to shift blame with an increasing attitude of "SELF" defense.

Rather than humility and repentance, Adam blames his wife and not so subtly even blames God!

Then God speaks to Eve and she also then shifts the blame to the serpent! And around and around we go!

AND HERE WE HAVE OUR PRESENT-DAY PREDICAMENT....

God goes on from here explaining what the results of this sin to be for the serpent, the woman, and the man which we still feel to this day in what is known as the CURSE of sin.

As a result of this, mankind fell that day. Mankind's original design became stained. Marred and messed up by sin. We experience shame and separation. Rather than owning up to our own sin, we shift the blame on somebody else.

Death entered the world through the disobedience of Adam & Eve, the first image bearers... this is what we are learning on Sundays through the book of Romans with Pastor Jack.

Romans 5:12

Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned....

So God's image in man has become distorted. It has become twisted. Man has used what God has given him for his own glory rather than God's glory. Man has disregarded God as Creator and the source of all and have worshipped the created rather than the Creator.

The further man gets away from the truth of God as Creator and man as made in His image that the greatest evils take place. This is the WHY to so many of our world's evils.

THINK ABOUT....

- Genocide (*Mae Zedong, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot, Adolf Hitler*)
How is something like this even possible? The farther you get from this foundational truth.
- Abortion (*where does this end? Now many push for up to birth and seeing many push for after birth. The farther we get from this truth the more we do what is right in our own eyes.*)
- Racism (*which makes no sense by the way scientifically and biblically because we are all one race which is the human race and we all come from one blood*)

How does someone get to the point where they decide to take their own life?

- they have gotten away from the fact that God has created them in His image
- that they are invaluable and irreplaceable

Why does someone get to the point where they desire to change their gender?

- they are so lost and confused as who they are because they don't know that God created them intentionally and specifically in His image

I BELIEVE THIS IS THE GREATEST ISSUE OF OUR WORLD

We live in a world of lost and confused people trying to find their identity in something other than who God created them to be.

WE MUST COME BACK TO THE REALITY OF WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE.

We are created and made in the image of God yet what does the enemy stir within our minds?

"Has God indeed said....?"

The farther we go into this the greater the shame, separation and shifting of blame.

YET IN ALL THIS MESS, we know that the story doesn't end there!

Formed → Deformed → Transformed

Transformed Into God's Image

It is in the gospel of Jesus Christ that the image of God is able to be restored in man. In Christ we have a renovation, and the image of God is repaired.

How is this even possible? Because Jesus came into this world as the IMAGE of God that was lost so long ago in that garden.

Colossians 1:15

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

As mankind we have gone so far from that image but when we look to Jesus, we once again see God's original design! Without Jesus, that image has gotten so distorted we have no idea what we are supposed to look like.

Hebrews 1:3

³ who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Brightness means the beam or rays that come from a light source
Jesus is that beam from God's glory that shows us WHO HE IS.

Express image means EXACT image (*like a stamp with ink*)

Jesus came into this world in the image or likeness of mankind just as man had been made in the likeness of God!

Philippians 2:7

⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men

Paul talks about the contrast between the first Adam & the second Adam...

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

⁴⁷ The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.

Jesus coming into this world as the perfect Image of the invisible God took the consequences of our sin upon Himself! He took our shame and experienced it. He took our separation and experienced it. He shifted the blame upon Himself and took our punishment!

As Adam and Eve experienced nakedness and shame, Jesus was naked upon that cross. He took our nakedness and then clothed us with His righteousness.

We can once again have this relationship with God that Adam and Eve once had as they walked with God in the coolness of the garden.

DO YOU SEE THE FULL CIRCLE NATURE OF THIS? The best stories end how they begin. The story began with a mankind in a garden with God and God will see to it that we will one day be with Him again in a garden. Read the back of the book!

THIS IS THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL AND THE POWER OF THE CROSS

Our God is a God of restoration and redemption. It is His way. He isn't going to let sin win but rather restore and redeem what sin had taken.

Jesus reverses the curse and begins the restoration process in the lives of those who come to Him but one day the curse will be done away with completely!

Revelation 22:3

³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;

And so, when we receive Jesus, the restoration work begins in us but isn't completed until we see Him fully in eternity! He is forming and molding and shaping us back into the image He had first designed! We still experience the effects of the curse and one day it will be completely done away with but for now this is God's work in us.

THIS IS NOW THE PRIMARY WORK OF GOD IN OUR LIVES, MOLDING AND SHAPING US BACK INTO THAT IMAGE THAT HE HAD FIRST CREATED ADAM AND EVE.

We find this to be true when Paul writes this in...

Romans 8:29

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed* to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Conformed or molded, shaped into (*memory foam or an old couch, kid's play doh*)

This is that process that we know as sanctification by the Spirit of God.

Paul again says something similar when writing to the Corinthian believers...

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

It won't be till heaven that we once again reflect the image of God as we should but day by day we are being transformed into that image!

Transformed: to change, metamorphosis

It describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. Our English word metamorphosis is a transliteration of this Greek word. Metamorphosis describes the process that changes an insect from a larva into a pupa and then into a mature insect.

We have seen this happen in Scripture in a couple different places, we saw this on the Mt of Transfiguration when the glory of Jesus came out and His clothes were as white and there was a bright light and a voice from heaven.

- that was truly the "*glory of the Lord*"

As we BEHOLD HIM, we begin to be transformed into that same IMAGE.

Nothing physically changes, it isn't that the believer begins to glow and the light comes back on and we don't have to wear clothes again like Adam & Eve. But did Jesus not say, "let your light so shine"?

You are being restored and changed from the inside and it is coming out as you become an accurate representative and IMAGE of who God is!

Colossians 3:9-10

⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Notice that this image is renewed in our new man IN KNOWLEDGE.

As we know Him more and more, that IMAGE becomes more and more restored in our lives. As we look to the One in Whose image we were made, then His image is seen in our lives.

One of the great heroes of the faith was the mighty fourth-century theologian, **Athanasius**. His name means “immortal.” And it’s quite appropriate. Athanasius had a lovely image to help us get how **Christ is the image of God and how He restored the image of God in humanity**.

He said, “Adam was like a beautiful portrait painting. On him, the image of God was drawn.” God drew His image, Jesus, onto the canvas of Adam.

And what happened at the fall was that the portrait was utterly wrecked. Adam was no longer anything like God. He’d become vicious, selfish, horribly unholy. And so the image, the painting was ruined.

So, how could this precious portrait be restored? And the problem was, there was nobody who knew what the portrait had once looked like. They couldn’t restore it. To restore it, you had to know God. You had to know what He’s like. Otherwise, you could never know what the image of God should look like. There was only one hope. The original subject of the portrait had to come and have His likeness redrawn on the canvas of humanity. Only the One whose likeness was originally drawn on Adam could restore and renew it. And so, the image of God Himself came. He took humanity to renew His image in it. He came and showed us the image of God in the flesh.

And in Christ alone could humanity be restored from what Athanasius called all this “dehumanizing of mankind.” Only He, the image of God Himself, could rehumanize us. Only in Him could we, as Paul puts it in **Colossians 3:10**, “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.”

IT IS NO WONDER THAT OUR CULTURE IS SO CONFUSED ABOUT WHO THEY ARE.

With the image of God ruined in Adam, we have no idea who we are and why we are here. We know we are broken so we try to put the pieces back together, but we don’t even know what we are supposed to look like. It is like trying to draw a portrait of someone when we don’t know what they look like. And so, we come up with disastrous conclusions that leave us worse off.

OUR ONLY HOPE IS THE WHOLNESS THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN CHRIST THE IMAGE OF GOD.

Every person in this room has experienced the first two. We all have been formed in the image of God whether we believe it or not. We have all been deformed by sin and are born into shame and separation from God.

And there are SOME who have begun to experience that transforming power of the Spirit of God molding and shaping us into who God had always intended us to reflect, Jesus Christ.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?!

You will find no fulfillment, no satisfaction, no contentment outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ. He made you and He died to redeem you to make you whole again, will you put your faith and trust in Him this day?