

Bite Size Bible Study

Living the Image of God #147

By Pastor Lee

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
Genesis 1:27 NIV

In our last study we tried to determine what being in God's image was. We discovered that it was not a physical image. It was an assignment to be the representative of God on this earth. We were to "rule and subdue" the earth as the representatives of God, its creator. Our rule was to properly represent God as if it were He that was ruling.

To get a better look at how this works, let's look at a physical example of an image. If we look at ourselves in a mirror we see what we look like. If we move the image in the mirror moves. It is a real time representation of ourselves. But if the mirror is warped in some way the image is not a true representation of ourselves – it may get too wide or too narrow or put emphasis on some parts of us and reduce parts. If the mirror is very dirty the image becomes unclear. When the image becomes distorted it fails to represent what we are really like.

Even when the mirror is not distorting our image it is only a representation of us. It is not us. If we move, the image must move in the same manner. It is not allowed to do something that we have not done. However, God created us with free will so we are not restricted to move as He does. If God moves in a certain way we are not required to move in the same direction, but when we don't we are distorting His image, just as a dirty or warped mirror distorts our image. And even when we get it right we are not God but only an image of Him.

So how do we learn to get it right? It seems obvious that we cannot represent something that we know nothing about. We must learn who He is, His character, plans, and desires for humanity. This requires a relationship. Any relationship is only built through sustained contact and communication. How are we to do that with someone we can't even see, one who is not even on the same plane of existence as we are?

The first step is to recognize that everyone who ever lived has properly reflected His image in some way – some more and some less. But everyone has fallen short of reflecting His image in some way.

Secondly in order to reflect His image we must know what He represents. In other words what is His character? Where do we find that information – in the scriptures. He reveals Himself in those scriptures. Sometimes they are from a positive point of view – do this, other times from a negative point of view – don't do that; and he demonstrates

that by examples of people not following the "do this" instructions, and people following the "do this" instruction.

One of the easiest sections is to read the Gospels very closely. Jesus was the perfect example of the image of God.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
2 Corinthians 4:4

Studying the scriptures will give us "head knowledge" but unless it is attached to a relationship with Him it will not be of much use. Our relationship comes through our communication with Him in the form of prayer and listening to the Holy Spirit.

Now is the time for action – to really reflect His image in a concrete way. When He placed His image in Adam and Eve, He tasked them to care for the earth and its inhabitance.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in the likeness of ourselves"; . . . So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them. God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth." Gen 1: 26-28 CJB

I think we need to ask ourselves: "Are we as humankind protecting all of the earth and all of its inhabitance? Or are we, in our greed, exploiting it for our own individual benefit?"

I think that if one were truthful we would have to agree with the second statement. A large percentage of our families are in shambles with divorce, abandonment, orphaned children, and worse. As far as the creatures on the planet, it is estimated that 900 species have gone extinct since 1500. This includes zoological species, plant species and the microbiological species. In addition over one million species of plants and animals are currently at risk of extinction.

Living out the Image of God doesn't seem to be our forte. It is our calling but we are not very good at it. God did not create each of these species for us to destroy; instead we are to take care of them. We speak a lot about humankind being created in the Image of God, but our history tells us that a majority of people either know nothing about His image or could not care less. As believers in the Creator God it seems to be time to re-evaluate our actions in light of the task God gave us all.

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