



CITY OF GOD CHURCH DOCTRINE IMAGE: GOD LOVES

This study is based on the book Doctrine by Mark Driscoll (chapter 4).¹

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1:26-27

There was a time when a human person was understood as a member of a community and was defined by (family, history, parents, ethnicity, nationality, city, religion, and trade).

Now a human person is primarily understood as an autonomous individual.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Augustine – Wrote Confessions in which he primarily dealt with his feelings, convictions, longings, etc.²

Rene Descartes – Synthesized his statement on being human with “I think, therefore I am.”³

Jonathan Edwards – Stressed that an autonomous reasoning individual can be saved and improved by God’s grace to God’s glory.⁴

Jean-Jacques Rousseau – The essence of what it means to be human is that the individual can be improved by self-acceptance and self-love.

William James – The reasoning individual can be improved by self-acceptance and self-love aided by psychology.

¹ Mark Driscoll, *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

² Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, (New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 1997).

³ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method, in The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans, and ed. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 100-102.

⁴ For an accessible introduction to Edwards’ works see: Jonathan Edwards, *The Essential Edwards Collection*, 5 volumes, ed. Owen Strachan and Doug Sweeney, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2010).



Abraham Maslow – Person is aided by self-acceptance and self-love aided by psychology to self-actualization.

Therefore, the nearly millennium-and-a-half transition from Augustine to the present day has resulted in the commonly held belief that God does not save us for his glory and to make us part of his people, the church, to grow in holiness. Rather, we essentially save ourselves through loving and accepting ourselves and heeding the counsel of psychology. The ultimate goal of that is not that we would glorify God, but rather that we would achieve our potential, experience our greatness, or, in theological terms, live for our own glory as worshipers of ourselves, being all we can be, experiencing all we can experience, and doing all we can do.⁵

The religion of many in the West regardless of their religion is *moralistic, therapeutic, deism*.

Moralistic – We are good people who can get better, not sinners who need salvation

Therapeutic – It is counseling and therapy, not God or the church, that enable us

Deism – God is not really involved in our lives, essentially on our own

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REVEAL ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN LIFE?

Text: Genesis 1:26-27

Twelve vital truths that we were made in the image of God (*imago dei*)

1. We were created by the Trinity. We were made for relationships.
2. We were created as persons by a personal God (Gen. 2:7).
3. God originally made mankind without sin (Gen. 1:31). Therefore, all human sin is fully the responsibility of sinners and not of God our creator.
4. God blesses us (Gen. 1:28).
5. Human life is distinct and superior to all created things.
6. God gives commands to us because he made us moral image bearers. We know right and wrong, and we can respond to God.
7. God made us adventurers and granted us permission to explore creation.
8. God created us to be creative and invited us to make culture.
9. God created us to be reproductive and have children.
10. God made us with meaningful work to do (Gen. 2:15-17).
11. God created us as his image bearers, but not because he needed us in any way.
12. God created us to live “before the face of God.” We were created to live all of life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, by the word of God, to the glory of God.

⁵ Driscoll, *Doctrine*, loc. 2,210-28 (Kindle Edition).



WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WE ARE GOD'S IMAGE?

Men and women (unlike the rest of creation) are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). This is repeated even after the Fall and sin (James 3:9).

We are renewed after the image of God.... Hence, too, we learn, on the one hand, what is the end of our regeneration, that is, that we may be made like God, and that his glory may shine forth in us; and, on the other hand, what is the image of God, of which mention is made by Moses in Genesis 9:6, the rectitude and integrity of the whole soul, so that man reflects, like a mirror, the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God. He speaks somewhat differently in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but the meaning is the same. Paul, at the same time, teaches, that there is nothing more excellent at which the Colossians can aspire, inasmuch as this is our highest perfection and blessedness to bear the image of God.⁶

Image is both personal and communal.

- As an individual worshiper am I reflecting God?
- As a church, family, and Christian community are we reflecting God?

In order to image God we must know who he is. God has both unshared and shared attributes.

Unshared Attributes

1. Omnipresence: God is everywhere all the time (Ps. 139:7-12).
2. Omniscience: God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and everything actual or potential (Heb. 4:13).
3. Omnipotence: God is all-powerful and able to do all that he wills (Matt. 19:26; Eph. 3:20).
4. Immutability: God does not change in his essence, character, purpose, or knowledge but does respond to people and their prayers (Num. 23:19; Heb. 13:8).
5. Eternality: God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though he is conscious of time and does work in time (Eph. 3:21)
6. Sovereignty: God is supreme in rule and authority over all things, though he does allow human freedom (1 Chron. 29:10-13; Rom. 8:28)

Shared Attributes

1. Holiness: God is absolutely separate from any evil. We image God by repenting of our sin and fighting against sin in the world (Lev. 19:2; 1 Pt. 1:14-19).
2. Love: God alone is perfectly good and loving, and he alone is the source of all goodness and love (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:8-16).

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 211-212.



3. Truth: God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth (Jn. 14:6; 2 Cor. 1:20).
4. Righteousness: God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of his character. We image God as we fight oppression, injustice, and evil and pursue justice-particularly for those without power (Deut 32:4; James 1:27).
5. Mercy: God does not give some people what they deserve, because he is loving and gracious (Titus 3:5).
6. Beauty: God is beautiful and his creation reflects his beauty. We are also to create works of beauty (Ps. 27:4; 50:2; Eccles. 3:11; Isa. 33:17).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WE WERE MADE MALE AND FEMALE?

God's answer to Adam's being alone was the creation of Eve as Adam's wife and helper (Gen. 2:19-25). It is important to note that the world helper does not denigrate Eve; in fact, God is also referred to as our helper. The first woman was taken from the side of the man, which beautifully illustrates that she belongs alongside him in partnership, not behind him in denigration or in front of him.⁷

God is not engendered, but he does reveal himself as Father and the God-man Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, he makes both men and women in his image. Practically this means that though they are in some ways different, the man and woman are equal in dignity, value, and worth by virtue of the fact they are equally God's image bearers.

God created the covenant of marriage; thus, he alone defines what it is (Gen. 2:24).

1. A man should leave his parent's home and be his own man.
2. A man should marry a woman he loves and who loves him and loves the Lord.
3. The marriage should be intimate in every way becoming "one" (Matt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31).

Also important is that in the creation account God establishes an order to the covenant of marriage and organizes the family with the husband as the leader and head.

1. God calls the race "man" and "mankind" (Gen. 1:26; 5:2).
2. By naming Eve Adam was exercising authority over her (Gen. 2:23).
3. Although the woman sinned first, God came calling for the man and held him responsible (Gen. 3:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14).
4. Adam's sin is imputed to the human race because he is our head (Rom. 5:12-21).
5. Husbands are to lovingly lead their homes (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-34; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11-15; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1).

Practically speaking this biblical teaching (complementarianism) does not mean that a husband is in ultimate authority. God is, and other authorities are over the man, such as

⁷ Mark Driscoll, *Doctrine*, loc. 2,388-406 (Kindle Edition) .



*the state and church governments. Nor does it mean that a wife does not have independent thoughts or seek to influence her husband, or must obey her husband's command to sin, or is less intelligent or competent than her husband.*⁸

WHAT ARE THE ASPECTS OF OUR HUMANITY?

Old Testament

1. Soul (*nepesh*) – the person as creation in relation to God rather than immortal, immaterial substance.
2. Spirit (*ruach*) – in humans it can mean mind, resolve, or will. These come from God who breathed life into dust (Ezek. 11:5).
3. Flesh (*basar*) – what humans share with animals in distinction from God (Ps. 78:39).
4. Blood (*dam*) – the physical life of humans and animals (Ps. 72:13-14).
5. Heart (*leb*) – the focus of the personal life: reason, responding, deciding. It is the deepest center of the human person (Prov. 4:23; 1 Sam. 16:7; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 14:1; 21:2).

New Testament

1. Body – the physical aspect of a person or animal (1 Cor. 13:3; 2 Cor. 10:10).
2. Soul (*psyche*) – refers to the whole person created by God with an inner life of motive, thought, feeling, and the like (Rom. 2:9; 11:3).
3. Spirit (*pneuma*) – describes our inner being juxtaposed with our outer being and is sometimes equivalent to the soul, flesh, and sometimes contrasted with that which is soulish (Rom. 8:10; Philem. 1:17; 2 Cor. 2:13; 1 Cor. 2:14).
4. Heart (*kardia*) – human beings as emotional with feelings, intellectual with thoughts, volitional with a will, moral with decisions, and religious with worship.
5. Mind (*nous*) – the human person as knowing, thinking, judging, self-determining, and responsible.
6. Conscience (*suneidesis*) – the capacity of universal moral judgment.

In summary there isn't a neat and tidy answer to the aspects of our humanity in scripture. A debate has ensued over whether we are a *dichotomy* or *trichotomy*.

Dichotomy teaches that we are basically two parts (physical and spiritual).

Trichotomy teaches that we have a spirit with God-consciousness and a spiritual capacity through which we relate to God in addition to a soul with affections, desires, reason, emotions, will, and consciousness.

⁸ Driscoll, *Doctrine*, loc. 2,407-29 (Kindle Edition).



Why does this matter?

It is our conviction that the Bible reveals the aspects of our being according to the dichotomist view. Furthermore, we believe that it is best to minister out of the personal view, where we are dealing with a whole person, not merely aspects of someone.... To truly help people...we have to minister to the whole person.⁹

Practically this means:

1. If someone has a chemical or hormonal imbalance they should not be derided for not having enough faith, as if every issue is solely a spiritual issue.
2. Sometimes people are depressed and struggling for spiritual, not physical reasons; in these cases, rather than giving them a pill, we need to help them grow in the gospel.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON CHRISTIAN ERRORS REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMAGE OF GOD?

Error 1:

A failure to maintain the tension that Scripture does. We are made under God and over the rest of creation. Only by seeing ourselves between God and the animals can we have both our humility and dignity.

Error 2:

When it is believed that rather than being God's image bearers, we bear the image of God in some specific part of us. It is not just our body, intellect, soul, or emotion.

Error 3:

When we define our humanity in terms of things we do. What about those who are human, but can't perform similar functions?

SUMMARY

1. Human beings alone are God's image bearers.
2. Human beings are under God and over lower creation.
3. Human beings are the image of God, and this fact is not reducible to any one aspect of person or performance.
4. Human beings have particular dignity, value, and worth.
5. Humans were made to mirror God as an act of worship.

⁹ Driscoll, *Doctrine*, loc. 2,509-28 (Kindle Edition).



WHO HAS BEST IMAGED GOD?

Jesus alone has imaged God perfectly:

- Christ is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4)
- He is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)
- He is the radiance of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3)
- Whoever sees Jesus sees him who sent me (John 12:45)
- Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9)

HOW CAN WE BEST IMAGE GOD?

The Gospel has brought about the restoration of that image. Intellect and will indeed have remained, but both very much impaired. And so the Gospel brings it about that we are formed once more according to that familiar and indeed better image, because we are born again into eternal life or rather into the hope of eternal life by faith, that we may live in God and with God and be one with Him, as Christ says (Jn. 17:21).¹⁰

We will sin and do this imperfectly, but we participate in the lifelong process of being restored into God's image.

WHAT DOES A LIFE THAT IMAGES GOD LOOK LIKE?

1. We image God by connecting with God in an informed and passionate way through repenting of sin, believing in Jesus, and living in an ongoing humble and repentant relationship with God.
2. We image God by submitting to godly authority and ultimately to God's authority.
3. We image God by serving him in ways that advance his kingdom, including making culture that honors him.
4. We image God by respecting all of human life (issues of race, disability, etc.)
5. We image God by refusing to live autonomous lives and get in community.
6. We image God by suffering well. Jesus reflected God perfectly while suffering.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, 1:64.