CREDO 4
IMAGO DEI — Made in the Image of God

This is our FOURTH study in a series titled CREDO –

Tonight we are going to look at the doctrine of Imago Dei — which means “image of God” in Latin. So let’s to turn to Genesis 1

Tonight we’re going to lead with the question:

QUESTION 1 — What does it mean to be human?

This is a question that the average man or woman on the street has probably never even considered. If you asked them they would probably not even know where to begin. The ANSWER to this question has HUGE consequences in virtually every area of life — from theology to sociology, history, biology, and psychology. Bottom line — the world that we observe around us PROCESSES life and BEHAVES according to the way it understands what it means to be human!

If you want to understand the News @ Ten — Yu have t understand that the news you are watching is the result of people living according to the way they answer that question!

Before we get to the text of Genesis we ware going to take a broad kook as to HOW man has understood himself and his humanity throughout history.

Up until the time of Augustine (one of the Church fathers who lived in the 4th-5th centuries AD) man essentially understood himself and his humanity in terms of his relationships and the way those things influenced him. He understood himself in terms family; locality; state/nation — religious group; ethnicity and language. Then came Augustine, who wrote a book titled “The Confessions.” He did not see himself as defined by his relationships or social influences around him. Instead — he looked at himself as an individual possessing a personal, autonomous identity. This led to the concept of man being an AUTONOMOUS (or self-governing) INDIVIDUAL.
In the late 16th century there came another Christian — Rene Descartes (1596-1650). Where Augustine said that we are autonomous individuals — Descartes said that we are more than that. He said that we are autonomous individuals with rational minds. He said that our mind is what makes us human. He coined the saying “Cogito ergo sum” — “I think, therefore I am.”

In the 18th century another Christian — Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) — added to the concept of what it means to be human. Edwards was a very famous Puritan. He was a great thinker and academic. Some believe him to be perhaps the most brilliant mind in America’s history. Edwards said that we are individuals with rational minds who can be saved, transformed and improved by God’s grace, to God’s glory.

Around the same time there was a very influential, non-Christian philosopher, named Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Rousseau said that humans possess an autonomous identity, and a rational mind; but he said that man does not need to look outside of himself to God for a sense of identity. He essentially said that man needs to look INWARD to SELF for the resources to change. Rather than defining man as a sinner — he saw man as basically good. You don’t need to seek God’s love — you need to love your self. You don’t need to seek God’s acceptance through Jesus — You need to accept yourself as you are. You don’t want to have the condemning self-assessment of calling yourself a sinner.

Then came a man named William James (1842-1910). James is one of the most influential psychologists in the history of America. He said that man is an autonomous, rational being that is by nature good; possessing within himself all that he needs to be fully human. But man needs more than self-love and self-acceptance in order to fully appreciate his humanity — he needs one more component — a highly trained specialized psychologist. In other words — You don’t need God — you need ME! You don’t need GOD to walk with you — you need ME to walk with you! You don’t need GOD to speak to you — You need ME to speak to you! You don’t need GOD to assess you — You need ME to assess you! The assumption is that man is
essentially a MACHINE and that you can tune that machine through psychology and therapy.

Metro is not against ALL counseling, psychology or therapy. But in it’s MODERN FORM (from William James) it omits God who is the GREAT counselor. In fact the Bible says that Jesus is called WONDERFUL COUNSELOR (Isaiah 9:6). We are not opposed to wonderful counselor Jesus and those who counsel with Jesus; counsel for Jesus; counsel like Jesus; counsel by means of the wisdom and power of Jesus; and counsel people to Jesus. We ARE opposed to those who counsel without Jesus — without God — and without an acknowledgment of human sin and the need for grace and the transforming power of the Gospel. THIS IS HUGE — ULTIMATELY this is looking to someone OTHER than Jesus to be your functional Savior!

In the heart of the 20th century we come to a man named Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). He came up with what is known as the Hierarchy of needs in which he claims that man’s greatest need in defining his humanity is NOT to glorify God — instead, man’s greatest need is to achieve Self-Actualization. You want to be as healthy as you can be — as successful as you can be — as influential and affluent as you can possibly be.

This leads to our contemporary culture and a sociologist named Christian Smith. Christian Smith, Professor and associate chair in the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and director of the National Study of Youth and Religion. He researched the religious and spiritual beliefs held by U.S. teenagers. After hundreds of discussions about religion, God, faith, prayer, and other spiritual practices, they summarized those beliefs

1) A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem (cosmic therapist)

5) Good people go to heaven when they die.

They referred to them as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (MTD).

THAT is the world you live in. You ARE on your own because God is more a fictional character who, IF He does exist, might love you. But He is not intimately involved in your life to help you. THE RESULT is a CULTURE of PRIDE and DESPAIR. Pride because we think we can fix ourselves. Despair because when we are honest we have to admit that we don’t know what to do.

**ALL OF THAT BEGS THE QUESTION — What does the Bible tell us about what it mean to be Human?**

FIRST — The Bible tells us that we were created by God. This is exactly the opposite of atheistic thought.

SIDE NOTE — I am not using the term atheist in an inflammatory way — not using it to picks sides for a fight. Words mean things. The prefix A = without; Theos = God. It means WITHOUT God. It speaks of the man or woman who processes their life and the world around them from the position that there is NO GOD.

Ludwig Feuerbach (19th century) was an atheist who declared that God did not make us, but rather we made God as a figment of our imagination. Students of his thinking include Karl Marx (who applied this politically); Sigmund Freud (who applied this psychologically); Friedrich Nietzsche (who applied this philosophically).

**By way CONTRAST to Feuerbach** who said that we made God — the Bible tells us in Genesis 1–2 that we did not create God, but rather God created us. So we are going to roll back a bit to last weeks CREDO study on the Doctrine of Creation.
Gen. 1: 1 In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.

From that we learned that God pre-exists the universe and is separate from creation. He created everything. Following from that is the 6 days in which He prepares the earth form man.

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, —

Remember — He is the God who speaks

“Let us —

We see the Trinity — One God who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Spirit

make man —

A reference to mankind — specifically Adam — it also includes woman

in our —

Again — the Trinity — One God who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Spirit

image, after our likeness.

We are made in God’s IMAGE and LIKENESS. THAT is what we are going to talk about tonight — What it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. We are going to see how THAT defines us as humans — and then what it means for us to be image bearers.

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 creep 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.

If you look back to Verse 25 that God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds. But when we read of mankind we are told that we were made in the image of God! The Bible tells us that of all God’s creation, we IMAGE BEARERS of God.

Next week we will look at sin — we will look at the record of “the Fall,” recorded in Genesis 3, and the effects that it has on the world and mankind. Some ask the question — “Is the IMAGE OF GOD still seen in mankind after the fall in the garden and after the curse pronounced upon mankind and the world because of the fall?” The Biblical answer is YES! Genesis 5; Genesis 9; James 3, each of them are post Genesis 3 — and each of them refers to man as being in the likeness of God.

Genesis 5:1-3 This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

James 3:9 With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

Being made in the image and likeness of God is what defines as as human. Sin does not make us LESS than human — but it does make us FALLEN and LOST humans in need of a Savior.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

SOME ASK — IF God created us in His image — and SINCE He created man and woman — Is God male or female? That is the subject for a lot of discussion today. In fact, there are some bizarre translations of the Bible that want to paint God as a woman.
Jesus said in John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." God is NOT gendered — He is NOT male or female. But the Scriptures declare that Male and female PROCEED from God and are made EQUAL in the image and likeness of God. This addresses the chauvinist and the feminist as to which gender is superior? The TRUTH is that men and women are EQUAL because they bear the image and likeness of God.

Some ask — If that’s true, how do we explain this in regards to gender differences — for example the emotional differences that we see between men and women? It is not that there are male and female emotions — rather there are human emotions that are expressed in masculine and feminine ways. Men and women both LOVE — get ANGRY — GRIEVE. We SHARE the SAME emotions but we work them out a bit differently according to GENDER.

Big picture — We are made in the image and likeness of God — MALE and FEMALE. God does REVEAL Himself as FATHER in the Bible. Jesus referred to Him as FATHER. Jesus is worshipped as the SON of God.

NOWHERE in the Bible do we find God called MOTHER. Though God predominately REVEALS Himself in masculine terms — God is NOT gendered! In His Incarnation Jesus came as a MAN. We can’t refute that — He was born as the son of Mary and was believed to be the son of Joseph. But as we think of the person of God revealed in the Scriptures — He reveals Himself as Father — but He is NOT engendered — God is SPIRIT. But He made US male and female.

Then we read

28 And God blessed them.

Please note the LOVING relationship — Grace and kindness and affection towards the man and the woman.

And God said to them,

NOTICE — God speaks to them KNOWING that UNLIKE the animals He had created — the man and the woman were made in His image
Remember in our study of the Trinity we learned that within the Immanent Trinity there is perfect love and communication. As created in the image and likeness of God we can COMMUNICATE. He can talk to us and we can respond.

28 “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

God finishes His created work and said — I’ve created and prepared all of this as a gift for YOU! The earth is YOURS — have dominion and be good stewards of it — take care of it.

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

SO — as He finishes His creative work it is VERY GOOD. There’s no sin — There’s no curse — no death — no tears.

Some wonder why there are two creation accounts. Think of it in terms of cinematography. GENESIS 1 is a PANORAMIC view of creation. GENESIS 2 zooms in on the account with the focus on the man and the woman.

So let’s look at Genesis 2 in which the close up is on the man and the woman.

7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground
This is one of the most amazing observations! How did God make the rest of creation? He SPOKE. How did He make Man? He FORMED man out of the dust of the earth. God is more than pleased — in a way — to be detached from the rest of creation — He is content to speak it into existence. But when it comes to man — God take materials that He had spoken into existence, and then FORM man from those materials — He forms man. A personal God personally created us as persons. He was intimately and personally involved with the creation of man — THAT defines our humanity!

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

We are given a spiritual dimension that separates us from animal life.

8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

IMPORTANT OBSERVATION: BEFORE sin there IS work

We were MADE to GLORIFY God in WORK! When sin comes into the picture work takes on a much more complicated and difficult.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,

THIS IS HUGE — We are trying to define what it means to be human. Here the Bible teaches that Man is a MORAL being — We are not like animals or plants. God can SPEAK to us moral commands that REQUIRE moral action to be taken.
“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

As a moral beings, God gave to man a moral choice that carried moral with consequences. Obey and Live — Disobey and die.

8Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone;

INTERESTING: Genesis 1 ended in Verse 31 with God saying that everything was very good! There is NO sin yet. Adam is in a PERFECT environment — Enjoying PERFECT relationship with God. But God says there is something that is NOT good! It was NOT good for man to be alone!

The man has God ABOVE him and creation BELOW him. But he does not have anyone along side of him — a friend — a peer — a helper. God is going to remedy that.

I will make him a helper fit for him

Many women bristle at this — to be referred to as man’s helper! But this is no slight at all. It is a high compliment.

FIRST — It implies that man NEEDS help!

SECOND — The term HELPER is used in reference to God. He is CONSTANTLY referred to as HELPER in the Psalms. Jesus calls God the Holy Spirit THE HELPER!

This is NOT a DENEGRATION — It is a DECLARATION of her NECESSITY and of the striking way in which the woman bears the image of God.

19So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was
its name. \textsuperscript{20}The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.

The man gave names (Dylan tune). This is speaking of AUTHORITY — of mankind’s RULE over the earth.

\textbf{But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.} \textsuperscript{21}So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

This is BEAUTIFUL! Everything was spoken into existence by the Word of God EXCEPT for man — He was FORMED by the “metaphorical hands” of God. And now the woman is created from the SIDE of the man. This shows us that the woman is not to be out ahead of the man — as feminism teaches. She is not to be behind the man — as chauvinism teaches. But she is to be along side of the man as an EQUAL IMAGE BEARER of God. While the genders are distinct they are equal.

\textsuperscript{22}And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

\textbf{NOTE:} God MAKES the woman and BRINGS the woman to man. God STILL works that way — He forms the woman in the womb (Psalm 139 — fearfully and wonderfully made) and then BRINGS her providentially to the man for which she was made.

I want to speak to every one of you men who are wanting to be married (and that is God’s plan for the MAJORITY of both men and women, though there are some that He has called to singleness) — You need to know that in the same way He made the woman and brought her to man — He is going to do the same for you. There is woman that He has made for you and will bring her to you. I pray for the women that God has made for my sons — I pray He will be blessing them and preparing their hearts for the day He brings them to my sons. And for you ladies that are single — there is a man that He made you for. FOLLOW JESUS and He will bring you to that man!
SO — God has FINISHED making the woman — It his her first day of existence. And He brings her to Adam. WHAT DID THAT LOOK look like? And we have recorded for us the FIRST SPOKEN WORDS in all of human history!

He looks at his wife and says

23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

In the Hebrew this is rhyme — It is poetry. Then he makes a three-fold declaration on the nature of the binding relationship that God just established. Jesus references this three-fold declaration. God becomes man and ratifies it — and it is still binding upon marriage today!

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother

Grow up and be a man!

and hold fast to his wife,

Get married

and they shall become one flesh.

Enjoy the physical intimacy that is prescribed by God, created and blessed by God, but only within the context of a life long — heterosexual — monogamous relationship

ONE is the same word used for God in the Shemma Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear O Israel — The Lord our God is ONE. As the Father Son and Spirit are ONE — So the man and woman in marriage and in the consummation of the relationship are ONE.

HUGE STUFF HERE — MARRIAGE images the loving community that is enjoyed by the Trinity. How are you going to process your life
and your relationships? You can look at the world and say *This is how we’re going to define life — define marriage. Marriage comes and it goes — who needs a life-long, heterosexual, monogamous relationship? You can have it here, you can have it there.*

NO! Listen — the subject of defining marriage is not a political position to be taken. It is a matter of preserving what GOD SAID images Him!

**WHAT ABOUT** those who are SINGLE? *It doesn’t mean* that single people DON’T bear the image of God. THEY DO! It means that single people are NOT to be alone. If you are single you need to know that God does not want you to be alone. You need to be involved in a loving community — you should be involved in friendship — extended family. You should be committed to a church community. THAT is how the SINGLE person images the Triune God. THE BIG IDEA is that RELATIONSHIPS are what God intended as a reflection of His image.

*25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

No shame — There was just intimacy and pleasure in marriage. In our next study we will see how sin ruins all of this.

THE MAIN POINT is that we were made for FOUR categories of relationship

- We are to relate to GOD — That is our THEOLOGICAL relationship.
- We are to relate to OTHERS — That is our SOCIOLOGICAL relationship
- We are to relate CREATION — that is our ENVIRONMENTAL relationship.
- We also to have a PERSONAL identity or PSYCHOLOGICAL relationship.
I know I’ve been created by God. I know that HE loves me. I know that He speaks to me. I know that there are things He wants me to do and other things He doesn’t want me to do.

In our next study we will see how SIN mars ALL of those relationships

Ruins our relationship with God
Ruins our relationship with others
Ruins our relationship with the environment
Ruins our lives psychologically.

The world is a MESS because the individuals within it are marred by sin!

**QUESTION #3 — Where does man fit in relationship to God and Creation?**

**Psalm 8** is like a mini-commentary on Genesis 1-2.

5 Yet you (God) have made him (man) a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.

7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

The Hebrew could mean the angels — or it could mean God himself (elohim). The Bible defines our place relative to GOD and CREATION.

Mankind is **BELOW** God as a WORSHIPPER — And **ABOVE** lower creation in dominion

Nearly every error in anthropology is the result of shoving us **UP TOO HIGH** in relationship to God (we have the spark of the divine within — we are actually gods — we are evolving towards divinity); or shoving us **DOWN TOO LOW** in relationship to creation (We are basically animals). **THAT** is too Low. Many take that position as the excuse for every kind of sin
**QUOTE:** Hugh Hefner — “Sex is a function of the body. A drive which man shares with animals. Like eating, drinking and sleeping. It’s a physical demand that must be satisfied. If you don’t satisfy it you will have all sorts of neurosis and repression psychosis. Sex is here to stay. Let’s forget the prudery that makes us hide from it. Throw away those inhibitions, find a girl who’s like minded and let yourself go.”

We are not just animals that are high enough up the evolutionary ladder to have a college degree, a driver’s licenses and a job! We are HUMANS made in the IMAGE of God with moral responsibility and accountability. It is ONLY by seeing ourselves between God and the animals do we have both our humility and dignity.

**QUESTION #4 — What does it mean that we bear God’s image?**

We have MORAL LIKENESS to God. We have the ability to make decisions that have an impact on others around us and the environment and ourselves.

We have SOCIAL ABILITIES. We can communicate — we possess emotion.

We also have NON-MORAL LIKENESS to God. We can reason — think — learn. We are immortal (not eternal). We have a spiritual dimension. We have the ability to create. We have the ability to appreciate beauty and aesthetics. ALL of these come from the doctrine of IMAGO DEI.

Having said that we must understand that there are certain of God’s attributes that are NOT shared with us. These are called the INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES of God. These belong to God alone because ONLY He is God — and we are not!

- God is Omnipresent — He is everywhere — we can not be
- God is Omniscient — He knows everything — we do not
- God is Omnipotent — He is all powerful — we are not
God is Immutable — He never changes — and we do
God is Eternal— He alone has no beginning — we were made
God is Sovereign — He rules over everyone and everything — and we don’t

There are ways that we are somewhat like God — These are Shared Attributes or **COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES** that belong to God and us

God is Spirit — We possess a spirit
God is Holy — We can live — by God’s grace — a holy life.
God is Love/Good — We can know and experience and give the love of God and the goodness of God
God is Truth — We can be truth tellers and truth receivers
God is Just/Righteous — We can love and fight for
God is Merciful — We too can be
God is Beautiful — We can create and appreciate beauty — music art — architecture — fashion — food

ALL of this comes out of the fact that we are the image bearers of God.

Whether Christian or not, you still enjoy the benefits of being made in the image and likeness of God. We will see next week that we are marred and stained by sin — but we are still blessed by being made in the image and likeness of God.

**QUESTION #5 — What are some of the common ways that people misunderstand the concept of the image of God?**

We are made up of multiple parts.

We have a mind that thinks.

We have what the Bible calls the HEART — the seat of our affections.

We have a soul — a spirit.
We have a body.

Errors are made when — in an attempt to define the essence of our humanity — what it means to be a human being — we reduce our existence to just ONE of those aspects of human existence.

**EXAMPLE: The Materialist** — We are just a body — a piece of meat. No soul — NOTHING beyond our last breath — Nothing SPIRITUAL about us

**EXAMPLE: We are just the MIND** — That alone makes us human. Descartes — “Cogito ero sum” — “I think, therefore I am.” But what about the person that is in a comma? Is he LESS than human? What about the unborn child, and we are not sure what they are thinking? Is he less than human? What about the child born with a Mental defect? Does that make them less than human? NO — They bear the image and likeness of God.

**EXAMPLE: Others, Like B.F. Skinner** — say that to be human consists in being acted upon by your environment. **IF THAT is what defines us as HUMAN** — THEN our humanity is essentially a matter of VICTIMHOOD. We are victims of culture and environment. **SKINNER** says we essentially a product of our environment rather than the product of the image and likeness of God.

This view ROBS us of our dignity. This view fails to take into account the fact that WE make culture. We CAN’T say people are good but culture is bad. Who made culture? People! Why is culture bad? Because people are bad! This view overlooks the problem of SIN! It creates a VICTIM mentality. If you didn’t have a dad you get a blank check to live however you want for the rest of your life. If someone has abused you — you assume your posture as VICTIM and NOT as an image-bearer of God.

**You are NOT** just a body — NOT just a mind — NOT just held hostage by your environment.

**EXAMPLE: We are not just a soul.** Hinduism and Buddhism make this error. The goal is to get the soul separated from their body.
Jesus came as a human being in a human body in order to show us that the ESSENCE of being human is to have a SOUL and a BODY. When we stand before God after death — saved by His grace — we will not be merely a SOUL — we will live forever in a glorified body.

EXAMPLE: We’re not just emotions. Some say that the essence of humanity is to merely FEEL deeply. Go ahead and get angry — that makes you human. GO ahead and cry — that makes you human — Do anything to laugh — that makes you human. Ultimately that is played out today in popular psychology in the concept of loving yourself. According to popular psychology you can’t love God or others unless you first love yourself. THAT is NOT our problem. Jesus said that we are to Love others as we love (present active indicative) ourselves. We love God — not because we have learned to love ourselves. We love God because HE FIRST LOVED us. And THAT makes us want to love God and love others.

BIG POINT: You are NOT just a body — a mind — emotions — the product of environment. You are a whole person made in the image of God.

ALMOST ALL of our modern counseling is based upon the idea of REDUCTIONISM — that is, seeing yourself as just ONE of these things that collectively make us human; and then treating only ONE aspect of your being. You have to deal with the WHOLE person — That is what God does. God deals with us in such a way that we RESPOND to Him with all of our heart, soul, body, and strength.

By taking ONE aspect of our being over and above the rest, we are guilty of worshiping created things such as our body, mind, emotions, soul, or culture instead of the Creator God who makes all things.

QUESTION # 6 — Who BEST images God?

JESUS!

2 Cor. 4:4 speaks of Christ, who is the image — there’s the language of Genesis 1; 5; 9 — of God. Paul writes in Col. 1:15 He is the image — there it is again — of the invisible God,
**HERE WE COME** to the application of this great doctrine of Imago Dei. The Bible says that I have been MADE by God with DIGNITY and VALUE — PURPOSE and HONOR. The question is — HOW do I LIVE my life in a way that best images God? WHERE should I look for my model?

One of the GREAT FLAWS of secular counseling (and sadly, many times “Christian counseling) is that there is NO FUNCTIONAL EXAMPLE of what NORMAL IS and what NORMAL DOES. If you are going to help someone you have to say — HERE is NORMAL — compare yourself to that and see what changes must be affected. If we CAN’T do THAT — we are never going to help people.

JESUS is what a NORMAL human being is SUPPOSED to be like. JESUS is what you and I would be like without sin. Without sin we would love God — we would obey God — we would serve others — we would be humble — we would be compassionate — we would be generous.

THE WORST THING we can do is to compare others to ourselves. THE WORST THING we can do is to say “I’M normal — and if people aren’t like me there is something wrong with them!” THAT is what man does — and in that we attempt to define NORMAL humanity. And of course that is why you see the politically liberal defining the politically conservative as abnormal — the fashion conscious person defines the unfashionable as abnormal.

WHAT does a NORMAL person look like? JESUS is NORMAL! HE is our model! ALL of US are ABNORMAL. We are SINNERS — HE is NOT. Had sin not come into the world, you and I would image God — reflect God — show God — like Jesus does.

**ILLUSTRATION:** John Calvin — “To image God means to REFLECT God like a mirror.”

God is LOVING — Our spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/co-workers should see that through us. God is TRUTHFUL — Our spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/co-workers should see that through us. God is LOVING —
spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/co-workers earth should see that through us.
God is MERCIFUL and COMPASSIONATE — Our spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/
spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/co-workers should see that through us.
God is JUST and HOLY and RIGHTEOUS — Our spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/should see that through us.

QUESTION #7 — HOW do we do that?

In our everyday life this is worked out from two sides.

FIRST — it is the result of RELATIONSHIP with our creator.

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew — he knew that He would make you and love you from eternity past.

he also predestined to be conformed to the image — there’s our word again — of his Son

For us to IMAGE God begins with the work of the Holy Spirit CONFORMING US into the IMAGE of Jesus — Who is THE perfect image bearer of God! Being made more and more like Jesus.

Our JOB is NOT to set up someone else as our example of example normal. Neither is it our job to by our own strength TRY to act and talk and live more and more by Jesus. Every day the Christian should get up and seek by the grace of God and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to become more and more like Jesus — and bearing more fully and completely the image of God

SECOND — we make decisions to put off those things that hinder our life-changing relationship with God — and distort the reflection of the image of God.

Col. 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
A Christian is someone who has PUT OFF an old way of living and has PUT ON a new way of living that has it’s source in the transforming power of the Gospel. **YOU PUT OFF** lying and stealing because those things do not mirror God — God doesn’t lie! God doesn’t steal!

You might say — *Well in my environment* (inner city / third world / floor of the NY Stock Exchange) **people lie and steal!** **WRONG** environment! You should be in relationship with God.

You might say — *Well my physical desires say…** **WRONG** desires! Our GOAL — our HOPE is — to PUT OFF the old way of living and thinking, acting and feeling — and then LIVING OUT our NEW IDENTITY as God’s image bearers.

We are not gods. We are not animals. We are humans created in the image and likeness of God — to be in relationship with God and others and then mirror God to the earth.

**LISTEN METRO — THIS TRUTH** determines our moral decision making process!

When faced with the question — Should I believe this; do this; feel this; think this; say this — the real issue is— **Will that reflect God well to others? Will they see Jesus?** What am I preaching with my life, my money, my food, my sex, my drink? What am I preaching with my relationships — work ethic? What am I reflecting and showing? Is God pleased?

And when I make a wrong moral choice — when I sin — I need to REPENT of sin and TRUST in Jesus and ENJOY the process of Jesus putting together the proverbial broken mirror of my life so that more and more the broken mirror of my life can more accurately reflect the goodness of my God — that Jesus would be seen.

**This reflecting of the image of God is culminated and perfected in death!**

*1 Cor. 15:49* Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust (The first Adam), we shall also bear the image of the man of
heaven (Jesus — the 2nd Adam).

In our next Credo study we will see how in our sin we reflect the image of our father, Adam. But when we are transformed by the power of the Gospel — in Jesus we are able to image our creator God more and more as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord. And then one day we will go to be with the Lord we will be given glorified bodies and our minds and our hearts and our wills and our emotions will be fully restored to their intended state and we will forever be God’s PERFECT — non-corrupted image bearers forever.

All of life is enjoying the work of God enabling us to image Him in the earth.

LAST QUESTION — What is a life that images God?

1 Cor 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

THIS IS A GREAT LIFE. This IS LIFE. It is LIFE when you’re broke. It is LIFE when you are suffering. It is LIFE when you are failing hurting and dying. Because the question is NOT — how can I live a life that glorifies me? The question is — How can I act in such a way as to mirror Him? That means that the WORST parts of life can become the GREATEST opportunities to reflect the glory God. I can mirror Him not just by loving people who love me — but loving enemies; not by forgiving people for their minor wrongs against us — but the BIG ones. I can mirror God by not falling into a pit of despair when suffering — but suffer like Jesus who brought glory to God the father in His suffering and death.

THAT IS BIBLICAL LIVING.

Most church goers have been given the impression that the joy of the Christian life is rooted in something other than the mirroring of Jesus!
Most church goers have been given the impression that Jesus exists to give them everything they want and need!

Contemporary Christian theology leaves Christians miserable because they are looking for something that cannot be found. They are looking for joy and meaning and significance apart from what they were made to do — Our joy is inextricably linked to reflecting the image of God to the earth and bringing glory to Jesus. As Solomon said — Everything else is vanity — a chasing after the wind.

HERE is how we do image God

By submitting to God and to His authority — Admitting that He is God and you are not — do what He says.

BY worshipping God — He speaks and acts we respond.

We represent God — With truth and justice. We don’t simply accept people as they are

Some of you in the name of compassion and kindness say of your loved ones — well that’s the way they are. YOU SHOULD BELIEVE BETTER for them.

By serving God — By advancing His kingdom. By making culture that glorifies Him as he commanded our first parents to do. By loving in your marriage. By living as a witness to the world. Jesus said — Let your light so shine that.....

By loving ALL people of ALL races — Humans bear the image and likeness of God. There is no place for racism or gender discrimination because ALL People male/female — young/old — black/white — rich/poor ALL EQUALLY bear the image and likeness of God. Jesus died for ALL those people so that ALL of them could mirror Him and be with Him forever! In fact in Revelation 5 we see men and women before the throne of God who were redeemed from every tribe and language and people and nation

By respecting ALL human life — The weak — the powerless — the elderly — the unborn — the marginalized — those who struggle with disability.
WHY is that unborn kid — that elderly shut in — that person in a comatose state — worthy of my time energy money love concern and compassion? Shouldn’t we just leave them behind? NO — because they bear the image and likeness of God. And when extend compassion and mercy and care to them we are reflecting the image of God and we are honoring God who made them.

Look at a nation without Christian foundations or a nation that has abandoned Christian foundations — and they regard such as throw-aways.

THE ONLY WAY TO DO ALL OF THIS IS THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

FIRST — with God! We have been made to experience loving relationship with Him! You do that by repenting of sin and trusting Jesus. Jesus is God, who became man. He lived a life we should have lived and have not. He died the death we should have died — and will not if we trust in Him. Trust your life to Jesus as the only One who can and He will send the Holy Spirit to live within you and transform you into a new person — who more and more — day by day — will reflect the glory of God to the world. And when you die you will image and reflect the glory of God perfectly forever in your glorified body.

SECONDLY — You need to be connected to people because God said that it is NOT GOOD for you to be alone.

You need God and His people. Before sin entered the world Adam had a perfect relationship and God still looked at Adam and said that it was not good for him to be alone.

You need to be a meaningful part of a church family. Don’t just come for goods and services. Church is the place where we reflect God’s image to others as a functioning community.

NEXT CREDO
The Fall: The Doctrine of Sin