

**Text: Genesis 1**

**Title: “In His Image”**

**BUMPER VIDEO** – Grab your Bibles and open them to the easiest verse in the Bible to find, Genesis 1:1. I’m starting a five-week series today entitled, “In His Image.” Everything starts here. So let’s just dive in.

**Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

Everything else in the Bible builds on this. If we accept that statement as true, then all of life’s questions about who I am ... why I’m here ... how life works, all find their answers in that sentence. If we really believe the Bible’s explanation for the meaning of life it will determine how we see most of the important issues we are facing today. And if we don’t have our rope tied securely to this anchor we will drift into unimaginable misery. And we see this played out all around us in our culture.

So as we scroll down through Genesis 1 we see God’s creation week. Day 1 He created light. Day 2 He created the sky. Day 3 He created dry land, seas, plants and trees. Day 4 He created the Sun, Moon and stars. Day 5 He made creatures that swim and fly. Day 6 was a big day; God created the animals that live on land, but then He came to the crowning achievement of Creation, human beings. **Read Genesis 1:26-27.**

It goes on to explain how the first humans actually operate in the world God created for them. **Read Genesis 1:28-31.**

On Day 7 God finished His creation work and rested. Up to Day 6 in the narrative God saw what He created and “it was good.” Here it’s different. Here, it’s “very good.” What is “very good” is that God created the man and the woman, Adam and Eve, in His image. You may not have given much thought to this, but it is actually one of the most important concepts in the Bible. And over the next five weeks I want to show you how being made in the image of God shapes how we should see ourselves and our purpose in life, and how we should see others. This is about our identity.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Identity is a big deal today. To log into your phone you have to enter a code, or press your thumb on the pad, or through facial recognition. We’re serious about keeping our identity secure so that no one can steal it. But

sadly, what has happened in culture around is that our God-designed identity has been stolen.

The most important thing about who we are, our identity, is that we are created in God's image. To be made in His image means that God has left His imprint upon humanity in a way that brings Him glory through the way we live our lives and manage the world in which He has placed us as His representatives.

**ILLUSTRATION** – In ancient times when a king would take control of a distant land he would place in that land an image, an icon, of himself so that everyone would know who is king. And what the Bible shows us here is that human beings are that image, that icon, that shows the world that there is a Creator who is the ultimate authority in the universe. We as humans have been given that assignment by God. Look again at...

**Genesis 1:27a - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him ...**

Being made in God's image shapes how we see ourselves and how we see others. It gives us dignity. We are made in the image of *God*. What an amazing thing! It also gives us humility. We are made only in the *image* of God. We are creatures who are to reflect our Creator. We aren't all-knowing, all-seeing and all-powerful like God is, but we are a reflection of who He is. He doesn't depend on us; we depend on Him.

So in this vast universe on a tiny planet God created the first humans, the most precious and valuable part of His creation. And God tells them to be fruitful and multiply. Have children. And v.27 shows how God created humans in just the right way for that to happen ... male and female. That's the beauty of the design of God for marriage between a man and a woman. A union between two men or between two women cannot fulfill the purpose of God to be fruitful and multiply. It is biologically impossible. So in the course of time Adam and Eve have children, and their children have children and so on. And each of their offspring is considered also to be in the image of God.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Now let's take a little field trip to the Fort Worth Zoo, one of the top zoos in the country, just a few miles from us. There are some amazing animals there. But you won't find any humans in cages there. Why? Being made in the image of God sets us apart from and above the rest of creation, just as the Bible says.

This gives each of us a special dignity that should shape the way we view ourselves and the way we view others. Every human being has dignity because we all are image-bearers of God. That means that the child with Down Syndrome, the Alzheimer's patient in a care facility, an unborn child in a mother's womb, a person whose skin color is different from ours or who is from a different country, each have been invested with a special dignity as an image-bearer of God. Let me show you what being made in the image of God gives to us. It gives us...

## **1. PERSONALITY**

God is a person. He's not an "it." And in v. 26 there is a conversation within the Godhead, between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Notice the plural pronouns ... "let *us* make man in *our* image." This signals to us something about God's ability and desire to relate as a Person to other Persons ... the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this is something that is imprinted upon humans.

This signals to us something important about our purpose in life. We are created for a relationship with God and with others. The Bible says we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves. We can do that because we are created like God as persons. One of the things that makes us unique is that like nothing else in creation we can know and communicate with God and He can communicate with us. So being in His image gives us personality. But it also gives us...

## **2. RATIONALITY**

Sorry for the big word, but it simply means God has a mind and so do we. You see God reasoning and planning in v.26, "Let us make man in our image..." God thinks. He is wise and rational. And we have that capacity as well. Obviously, we're not anywhere near as intelligent and rational as God. But it's part of being made in His image.

**ILLUSTRATION** – About three weeks ago a young 29 year-old computer whiz named Katie Bouman led a team that developed the first photograph of a black hole way out in space. This had never been done before. Astronomers assembled mountains of data from telescopes all over the world, but young Katie Bouman developed the algorithm that sorted out all that data to develop the first photograph of a black hole. Science is a way to study the rationality of God in creating this marvelous universe and He gave us the capacity to explore these things so that we

might give Him glory. We are able to fulfill that purpose because we are made in His image. But there's more. Being created in the image of God also gives us...

### **3. CREATIVITY**

Genesis 1 tells us that God goes on this creating spree, all the way down to v.27 where He displays His most amazing creation, the first humans. The evidence of God's creativity is all round us, from the intricacies of our bodies to the beauty of nature. And for us to be made in the image of God means we are amazingly creative beings.

**ILLUSTRATION** – A few weeks ago we had the Main Street Arts Festival in downtown Fort Worth. Block after block of human creativity was on display. Some of it I appreciated, some of it I didn't. But we should give glory to God when we experience human creativity and beauty. Being creative beings gives us a way to contribute to society through our talents, our work and our service. That's part of our purpose.

To be made in the image of God also means we are given...

### **4. SPIRITUALITY**

**John 4:24 - God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."**

So to be created in the image of God means we are spiritual beings with the capacity to worship. This is where we soar above the rest of creation. It never occurs to a giraffe at the zoo to look around him and see the people staring at him on the other side of the fence and give God glory. He isn't conscious of God.

Remember later in Genesis when Adam and Eve sin, they hide from God because of their shame and guilt. That spiritual connection with God is broken when we sin. That giraffe at the zoo doesn't deal with that because he's not made in God's image.

As God's image bearers our life is to be directed toward God. That's the way we were designed. And that's why life is miserable when it isn't directed toward Him. We are inescapably related to God. Our freedom, joy, peace and significance in life are found in our relationship to Him. But our sin has destroyed the ability for us to connect to God the way we were originally made to, but there's still the longing in

us. So we're getting to the depth of what it means to be created in the image of God. It also gives us...

## **5. AUTHORITY**

Our place in God's natural order is different. Look at it again. **Read Genesis 1:26, 28.**

So God has given us authority over creation and we are to be responsible stewards of it. We bring order into chaos. We are stewards of nature because that authority has been given to us by God to rule as His representatives. We care for the creation of God. God made it to sustain us and we're supposed to take care of it. This gives value to our work.

In a fallen world humans will have a hard time keeping balance in our stewardship of creation, but we must continually work toward this God-given assignment.

Going even deeper into what it means to be created in the image of God, it also gives us...

## **6. MORALITY**

God is holy and true in every way. He alone is the judge of what is good and evil, right and wrong. He established that in the Garden when He set boundaries over what trees they could eat from and the one they were not to. And being created in God's image means we have the capacity to know right from wrong, to make decisions upon that, and to be held accountable for our choices.

When we order our lives around God's purpose and design we thrive, but when we try to "free" ourselves from God's control we are actually destroying ourselves.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Did you hear the story about the little girl flying a kite? And the kite said to the little girl, "Cut the string, I want to be free." The little girl said, "No, I can't do that." The kite kept insisting, "Cut the string and let me fly freely way up in the air without being tied to you." So the little girl honored the kite's request. She cut the string and you know what happened. The kite fluttered and dipped and finally crashed to the ground. Why? You see, what the kite thought was holding it down was actually what was necessary to hold it up.

The same is true for us as God's image bearers. God's righteous laws are what hold us up, not what keeps us down. And this is connected to the next thing we have because we are given...

## **7. DESTINY**

**1 Timothy 6:16a – (God) alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.**

In the absolute sense of the word, only God is immortal. But the Bible teaches that a human soul created in God's image never dies. And we have an eternal destiny ... heaven or hell.

So there was a dangerous turn of events. The first humans, Adam and Eve, abused the freedom God gave them to make choices. They chose to disobey God ... what we call sin. And from that moment the image of God was shattered like a broken mirror. In a broken mirror you can still see what you look like, but not clearly or accurately. Sin shatters our identity as persons. We can't relate to God as we were created to relate to Him. We use our creativity for evil, not for God. Instead of ruling nature, it rules us. We abuse our freedom to choose by choosing evil instead of good. So we're destined to spend eternity separated from God.

Death entered the human experience ... physical and spiritual. The Bible teaches that the soul survives after the body dies. And Jesus said...

**Matthew 16:26 - What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?**

But God's purposes will not be thwarted. He sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world for the purpose of restoring what sin has destroyed. We are created in His image and every soul is precious to Him. So He sent His Son Jesus into the world ... who showed us what the perfect image of God looks like in a human body.

**Colossians 1:15 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.**

So Christ came, lived, died for our sins and rose again to make it possible for us to do what it says in the NT...

**Ephesians 4:23-24 - to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**