

## CREDO 4

### IMAGO DEI — Made in the Image of God

Let's to turn in our Bibles to [Genesis 1](#)

I want open our fourth instalment of our CREDO series with a question:

#### **QUESTION #1 — What does it mean to be human?**

I would venture to say that if you walked up to a person and asked them that question, they probably would not even know where to begin. “*Huh? — I am a human!*” No, really, what does it *mean* to be human? The ANSWER to this question has HUGE consequences in virtually every area of life — from theology to sociology, history, biology, and psychology. The answer to this question has massive implications on the issues of abortion and euthanasia (see Sam Harris). It speaks to the issues of race, gender and sexuality. Bottom line — the whole world around us PROCESSES life according to the that question is processed. The whole world around us BEHAVES according to the way it understands what it means to be human! Hitler, Stalin, Mao behaved according to the way they processed that question.

If you want to understand the News @ Ten — you have to 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're going to take a **very broad stroke** look as to HOW man has understood himself and his humanity throughout history.

**Before the time of Augustine** (who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries) man essentially understood himself and his humanity in terms of being a part of his immediate family and his ancestors. He understood himself in terms of where he lived (a specific locality; a state/nation). He understood himself in terms of the religious practices of that people group; his ethnicity and language. Then came Augustine, who wrote a very important book called “*The Confessions.*” Augustine did not see himself as defined by his

relationships or the social influences around him. Instead — he saw himself as possessing a personal, autonomous identity. men and women understanding themselves as an AUTONOMOUS (or self-governing) INDIVIDUAL.

**In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century there came another Christian — Rene Descartes (1596-1650).** Descartes said that we are more than autonomous individuals. He said that we are autonomous individuals with rational minds. He said that our mind is what makes us human. He coined a very famous saying: in Latin — *“Cogito ergo sum”* — *“I think, therefore I am.”*

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

**Around the same time there was a very influential philosopher named Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).** Rousseau was not a Christian. He 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 — man needs to look within himself to define his humanity. Rousseau saw man as basically good. He said that you don’t need to seek God’s love — you need to love your self. You don’t want to have the condemning self-assessment of calling yourself a sinner. You don’t need to seek God’s acceptance through Jesus — you need to accept yourself as you are.

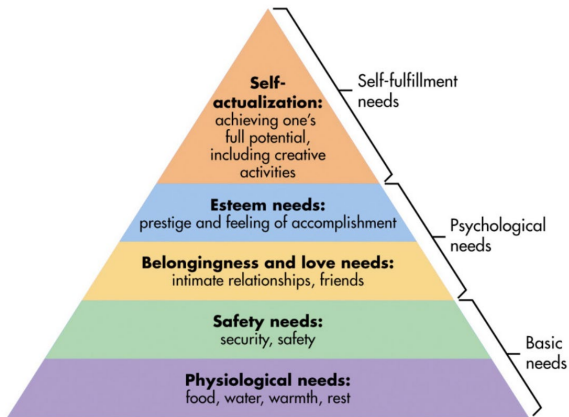
**Later, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and breaking into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century came a man named William James (1842-1910).** James is one of the most influential psychologists in the history of America. He said that man is an autonomous, rational, innately nature good; possessing within 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. James said that man needs one more component to understand what it means to be human: A highly trained specialized therapist to sort all of this out. Leave it

to a therapist to say that what man really needs is a therapist! In other words — You don't need God — you need a therapist! You don't need GOD to **walk** with you — you need a therapist to walk with you! You don't need GOD to **speak** to you —You need a therapist to speak to you! You don't need GOD to **assess** you —You need a therapist to assess you! The assumption that he makes is that the human body is essentially a MACHINE and that you can tune that machine through psychology and therapy.

Metro is not against ALL counseling, psychology or therapy. Remember the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. We bring everything to the test of Scripture. We can bring the information of the behavioral sciences and biological sciences to the test of Scripture. If they don't disagree with scripture, we have the liberty to use that information. There are some men and women who love Jesus and love the Scriptures who have degrees and graduate degrees in psychology. They believe that Jesus is called *WONDERFUL COUNSELOR (Isaiah 9:6)*. They see the places where behavioral science and biological science don't disagree with Scripture, and they have the liberty to apply that information in counseling. Even if they don't post the sign "Christian Counselor," they counsel with Jesus; they counsel for Jesus; they counsel like Jesus; they counsel trusting Jesus for His wisdom and His power so they can be the instrument and the expression of God's compassionate healing work.

Metro *is* opposed to psychology when it is presented as a person's functional savior; when the form and content says: *You don't need Jesus to save you, therapy will save you.*

**In the heart of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we come to a man named Abraham Maslow (1908-1970).** He came up with what is known as the Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow said that our greatest need in defining our humanity is NOT to glorify God — it is to achieve Self-Actualization. You want to be as healthy as you can be — as successful as you can be — as influential and as affluent as you can possibly be.

**This leads to our contemporary culture and a sociologist named Christian Smith.** Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame, the Director of the Global Religion Research Initiative (GRR), was the Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, the Principal Investigator of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). 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 and gave it a label: **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD).**

- 1) A God exists (see Deism in first study in series) 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. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From a version of "Summary Interpretation: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism," from *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, copyright © 2005 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

THAT is such an incredibly accurate description of the world we live in. People do see themselves as on their 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 of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a CULTURE of PRIDE and DESPAIR. Pride because we think we're good and we think we can fix ourselves. Despair because when we are honest, we know that we're not so good and we really don't know what to do about it.

**ALL OF THAT BEGS OUR 2<sup>ND</sup> QUESTION — What does the Bible tell us about what it means 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 to pick sides for a fight. Words mean things. It is from the Greek *áthe(os)*. The prefix A = without; the suffix Theos = God. It means *godless* or *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. By the way, it's possible to intellectually believe in God, but practically live as though there isn't. Practical Atheism. A lot of them go to church every week.

One famous atheist was a man named Ludwig Feuerbach (19th century). He declared that God did not make us, but rather we made God as a figment of our imagination. By the way — this is actually articulated by a lot of evolutionists. You might want to read the book "Homo Deus" by Yuval Noah Harari where he posits that believe in God was a survival mechanism. Students of his thinking include Karl Marx (who applied this politically); Sigmund Freud (who applied this psychologically); Friedrich Nietzsche (who applied this philosophically).

**In 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 is — that He 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 <sup>26</sup>Then God said, —**

Remember from our second study: He is the God who speaks

**“Let us —**

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

**make man —**

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

**in our —**

Again — the Trinity —

**in our 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 the image bearers of God.

**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 creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

**THIS IS HUGE** — 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!** THAT is at the core of humanity. Of all God's creation, **we** are the 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 5:1-3; Genesis 9:6; James 3:9**. Each of these passages are **post Genesis 3** — **post** fall. But 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. <sup>2</sup>Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. <sup>3</sup>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 human. Sin does not make us LESS than human — but it does make us FALLEN and LOST humans in need of a Savior.

This is crucial to how we should process the world around us. **Every** man and woman we see are **human** beings made in the image and likeness of God. But they are fallen image bearers of God who need a savior. THAT is who **we** were before meeting Jesus! We weren't LESS humans because of sin — but we were **LOST** humans in need of a savior.

**<sup>27</sup> 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 of a lot of discussion today. In fact, there are some 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. The Scriptures declare that Male and female EQUALLY bear the image of God. This addresses the chauvinist and the feminist in regard to the age old question: *Which gender is superior?* The TRUTH is that men and women are EQUAL because they both bear the image and likeness of God.

Big picture — We are made in the image and likeness of God — MALE and FEMALE. But concerning the question: Is God gendered? 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 original languages of the Bible do we find God called MOTHER. If you have a translation that refers to God as *mother* you need to know that that language is not in the manuscripts.

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. Though God predominately REVEALS Himself in masculine terms — **God is NOT gendered!** God is SPIRIT. But though God is NOT gendered — He made US male and female.

**Then we read**

**<sup>28</sup>And God blessed them.**

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



## And God said to them,

DON'T MISS THIS — Immediately after creating Adam and Eve, God talks to them. He didn't do this with anything else he created.

God speaks to them KNOWING that UNLIKE the animals He had created — the man and the woman were made in His *image and likeness*. 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 to Him; and we can communicate on the human level.

**<sup>28</sup> “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.” <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>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.*

**<sup>31</sup>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 are there 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. (Sharp focus on near objects in the foreground and everything in the background is blurred).

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

**Genesis 2:7** <sup>7</sup>then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground 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.

<sup>8</sup>And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>15</sup>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! I used to think: *"If Adam and Eve hadn't sinned I'd be bodysurfing, not working. If it wasn't for the fall I wouldn't have schoolwork or homework — or, The only reason have to go to work is because of the fall.* No doubt, when sin came into the picture work took on a much more complicated and difficult nature. But remember — man was created to bear the image of God and express the glory of God in work!

<sup>16</sup>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, <sup>17</sup>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.

**Let’s role back**

**<sup>8</sup>Then 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 even there that is **NOT** good! It was **NOT** good for man to be alone!

The man has God **ABOVE** him and creation **BELOW** him (God said: I’ve created this for you — oversee it — have dominion over it) . 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 actually the highest compliment.

**FIRST** — (and ladies, you have to love this) It implies that man **NEEDS** help! I need to tell you that I **need** Valerie. I am pitiful without her. She occupies such a huge space just being in our home.

**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 how NECESSARY she is for man in the mind of the Creator — and of the **striking** way in which the woman would bear the image of God.

For those of you who face arguments about the low view of women in the Bible — just point them right here and show them the striking way that woman bears the image of God!

By the way: In a series titled “The Controversial Jesus” Jon Tyson has some great things to say about the word “fit”/“suitable” that are crucial to understanding the exclusive heterosexual nature of marriage.

**<sup>19</sup>So 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. <sup>20</sup>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 animal world.

**But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup>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! Man 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. While their genders are distinct she is to be along side of the man as an EQUAL IMAGE BEARER of God. Men — is that the place your wife occupies in your heart? Is that the place she occupies physically; in your arms, and is she glad to be there?

**<sup>22</sup>And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.**

**SO — God has FINISHED making the woman —** It her first day of existence. And He brings her to Adam. He looks at her for the first time! **WHAT DID THAT LOOK, look like?** And it is here that we have recorded for us the **FIRST SPOKEN WORDS** in all of human history!

**He looks at his wife and says**

**<sup>23</sup>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.”**

I can't read Hebrew — but Hebrew scholars say that this is rhyme — it is poetry. Then he makes a three-fold declaration on the nature of the binding relationship that God had just established. Jesus — God incarnate — references this three-fold declaration. God becomes man and ratifies it — and it is still binding upon marriage today!

**<sup>24</sup>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.**

They will 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 exact word used for God in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#). It's known as the Shemma. Orthodox Jews pray this three times each day: [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.

**THIS IS SO IMPORTANT** — MARRIAGE images the loving community that is enjoyed by the Trinity. That is our privilege and that is our calling. 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!** Being made in the image of God is what makes us human. What makes marriage marriage is that it images the Triune God.

WHAT **ABOUT** those who are SINGLE? **It doesn't mean** that single people DON'T bear the image of God.

**Dennis Hollinger** — *“Life without sexual intimacy and marriage is not a deficient life. Rather, life without intimacy with God in Christ is deficient.”*<sup>2</sup>

**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.

**<sup>25</sup>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.

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009)

HUMANITY — as defined by the creation account consists of 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 an internal relationship to our self

*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.*

We could speak of all that as our PSYCHOLOGICAL relationship

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.

<sup>5</sup> Yet **you** (God) have made **him** (man) a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor <sup>6</sup> You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,  
<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup> 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 man **UP TOO HIGH** in relationship to God (we are basically good — 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.”*

That mentality exists because man is shoved to low in relationship to creation. We **are not** just animals that are high enough up the evolutionary ladder to have a college degree, a driver's license 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 that 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. Have ever wondered why you enjoy beautiful things? Why do I enjoy architecture? Why do I enjoy a wonderfully complex delicious meal? 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 — 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 justice and righteousness  
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.

That leads us to our fifth question

**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 — the causal core of our being.

We have a soul —

We have 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 ergo sum” — “I think, therefore I am.” But what about the person that is in a comma? Are they LESS than human? What about the unborn child? We’re not sure what they are thinking? Is that child 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.

Those like Sam Harris define that life as less than human and disposable.

**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 reduced to a matter of VICTIMHOOD. SKINNER says we essentially a product of our environment rather than the product of the image and likeness of God.

This view ROBBS 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 broken? Because people are broken! This view overlooks the problem of SIN!

**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. 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 — we are doing that all the time) 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 should collectively make you 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, mind, soul, body, and strength.

By taking ONE aspect of our being over and above the rest, we are guilty of worshiping created things — we're worshipping 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 **magnificent doctrine** of Imago Dei. The Bible says (and this is lost on so many people) that we 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.

The Bible tells us that **JESUS** (and this is going to shock some of you) is what a **NORMAL** human being is **SUPPOSED** to be like (of course, I am not talking about being divine like Jesus). **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 — we use ourselves to define NORMAL humanity. And those unlike us are 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 in our lives because we’re to be bearing the image of God.

God is TRUTHFUL — Our spouse/ children/ neighbors/ classmates/ co-workers should see that in our lives because we’re to be bearing the image of God.

God is MERCIFUL and COMPASSIONATE — Our spouse/ children/ neighbors/ classmates/ spouse/children/neighbors/classmates/co-workers should see that in our lives because we’re to be bearing the image of God.

God is JUST and HOLY and RIGHTEOUS — Our spouse/ children/ neighbors/ classmates/ should see that in our lives because we’re to be bearing the image of God.

We could say: The world should see that in our lives. But that makes it fairly impersonal. The world is your spouse / your children / your neighbors / your classmates / your co-workers.

**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 reflect the image of God to a lost world (and again: don't impersonalize that) — **begins with** the work of the Holy Spirit **CONFORMING US** into the **IMAGE** of Jesus — being made more and more like Jesus — who is **THE** perfect image bearer of God!

Our **JOB** is **NOT** to set up someone else as our example of 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.

Every day we need to get up and cast ourselves upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and the Word 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 <sup>10</sup>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 its 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 people lie and steal!* Which by the way is true of the whole gamut of social contexts from Kennington in Philadelphia to the floor of the NY Stock Exchange.

WRONG environment! You should be in relationship with God.

You might say — *“Well my physical desires say...”*

WRONG desires! They're corrupted!

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 — the doctrine of IMAGO DEI — 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? What am I preaching with my money? What am I preaching with my food? What am I preaching with my sex? What am I preaching with my drink? What am I preaching with my relationships? What am I preaching with work ethic? What am I reflecting and showing? Is God pleased?

**In keeping with Calvin's metaphor** — Sin is the equivalent of breaking the mirror. How much of our lives — the way we think, the way we speak, the attitudes we harbor — the way we work — the way we act in marriage and parenting — is broken mirror stuff?

When I make a wrong moral choice — when I sin — I need to REPENT of sin — TRUST in Jesus — and ENJOY the process of Jesus putting together the proverbial broken mirror of my life so that more and more the 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 we 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 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,**

I have to pause there because we can read that and think: When have I ever seen the glory of the Lord?

*2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

**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 think, act and live in a way that mirrors 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.

**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 we 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 save 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**