

"Created in the Image of God"

Have you considered the fact God created you in His image? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Being created in God's image is no small gift! Let's take some time today to consider it. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. In SEARCH of the Lord's Way began broadcasting 41 years ago on September 1, 1980. Mack Lyon was its founder and speaker for thirty years. He passed away in 2015 at the age of 93. We thank God for his love for God and people and for his hunger to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

When God saw all that He had made, He said it was very good. God created man in His likeness and knew that the more each person grew to be like God the better for all humanity. Like God, man could reason, could choose, and could communicate. God gave each person a conscience that gave them a self-awareness and led them to evaluate their moral behavior. They knew when they had done something wrong and they knew when they did something that was right.

God expects those who turn to Him as Christians to live in a way that reflects the image of God. Ephesians 4:21 to 24 says, "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him (that is in Jesus), just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, that you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." God gave us the Bible so that we may know what it means to follow the Lord and live righteous lives. While God created each of us with the ability to be like Him, we must be willing to follow His teaching.

Now we offer this study free on the need to follow Jesus. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website, www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Genesis 1:26 to 31, and we'll explore being created in the image of God.

Our reading today comes from the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, chapter 1, verses 26 to 31, and discusses the creation of mankind. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' Then God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; and it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food'; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that You have created us in Your image, we're thankful Father for all the blessings that You've given to us through all of these years, and Father we pray that You will continue to be with us, and help us to be devoted to You. In Jesus name, Amen."

Hebrews 12:9 says that God is the father of spirits. The spirit you have and I have came from God. While other creatures on earth are alive, only man was given a spirit and created in the likeness of God. Well, what does that mean? How do humans differ from the other creatures God made? William Grasham in his commentary on Genesis published by Truth for Today presents several differences between mankind and animals. First, only man can think above himself and reason about his thoughts. He can ask the most important questions "well, who am I?", "Where did I come from?", "Why am I here?", or "What will happen to me after I die?" Only man considers his identity or tries to discover his origin or heritage. Only man wants to know about his purpose for existing or evaluates his place in life. Animals never struggle over such concepts; they just exist.

Second, only man is able to learn from experience, to accumulate knowledge from others, and to share that knowledge and wisdom with those who follow. Man is the only creature to whom history and the past is important. He accumulates knowledge from the past and cares enough to share it, so that they, the following generations rather, become more knowledgeable than his own. As William Grasham noted, "Man can preserve knowledge in both oral and written forms, so that his children and grandchildren don't have to discover everything anew."

Third, only man has dominion or rule over the earth and all the animal kingdom. God gave mankind this rule, when He created them; but this rule is a sacred trust and stewardship. While man's physical body requires food, water, and air as the animals do, man is the only creature who can hear and meditate the words that God revealed. Certain animals have physical abilities that far exceed humans, but God made man spiritual as well as physical.

Fourth, only man shows restlessness with the physical things of life. Perhaps this is true, because God "has also set eternity in their heart" (Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 11). While man longs for more than he has, animals are happy with the necessities of life. While man fails to be satisfied with who he is, what he looks like, what he knows, what he experiences, or what he accomplishes. Animals don't desire to see, hear, or experience something new all the time.

Fifth, only man is a moral being with a sense of oughtness. His conscience makes it mandatory for him to wrestle with right and wrong. His conscience bears witness to his behavior and his thoughts alternately accusing or defending him (Romans 2:14 to 16). He longs to have a good conscience (1 Peter 3, verse 21). And while animals act on instinct doing what comes naturally, mankind constantly evaluates his thoughts and actions morally and ethically. Only man is a free moral agent with the ability to choose how he will live.

Romans 6 and verse 16 says that we can present ourselves as slaves for obedience to sin that results in death or to obedience to God, which results in righteousness. Verse 17-18 remind us that we can change course: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." We thank God that we don't have to be trapped by enslavement to sin, that we can become the people God intended!

Sixth, only man has an aesthetic nature that allows him to produce art, music, and poetry. Animals care nothing for aesthetic matters, because such things don't help his well-being. Now though birds can instinctively weave intricate nests from things they find on the ground, and spiders can instinctively produce and weave intricate webs from the silk strands coming from the tiny organs called

spinnerets in their abdomens, only man shows the ability to create many different intricate and beautiful things.

Seventh, only man has a concept of a future life beyond the grave. Only man thinks to prepare for the life beyond. He may fear death and mourn the departed, but he has hope for life beyond. He sees this life as precious but realizes it's not the end. He also realizes there will be a judgment that affects his eternity. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he's done, whether good or bad." Only man works to lay up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy.

Yes, God created mankind in His image; and man is unique. Grasham observed, "The blessing of this uniqueness is attached to a special responsibility to serve and to praise the Creator." We exist to give glory to God, our Creator. The twenty-four elders of Revelation 4:10 and 11 worship God who lives forever and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created." God wanted the best for mankind, but mankind lost sight of God.

Though made in God's image, people chose to follow their selfish desires and ignored the warning of the Lord God. They chose evil and caused themselves much suffering and heartache. First, it was Adam and Eve sinning by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God punished Adam and Eve by expelling them from the Garden of Eden. Adam had to work for his food by the sweat of his brow. And God caused Eve to suffer at childbirth and yet to desire their husbands who will "rule over you (He says to her)." God also cursed the ground because of Adam's sin; "both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you" (Genesis 3:17 to 18).

Genesis 4 tells how Cain offered up a sacrifice that God didn't accept but He accepted Abel's offering. This resulted in Cain becoming angry at his brother and murdering him. In 1 John 3 and verse 12 this describes Cain as one "who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous." Now evil grew in Cain's heart to the extent that he would murder his innocent brother.

Years later the Lord witnessed how evil had multiplied throughout humanity. Genesis 6:5 to 7 says: Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thought of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." God decided to destroy the world, but Noah found favor in God's sight. No matter how bad things got, God was still wanting to offer hope that people could live right before God. Noah built an ark just as the Lord commanded, and God brought eight people safely through the water. 1 Peter 3 and verse 21 says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Just as the ark gave hope to Noah, the blood of Christ that saves through baptism can give us a good conscience.

Now scripture can teach us about the glory and power of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture can open our hearts so that we can see God's holiness; it also helps us to see ourselves as God sees us. Isaiah 6 tells of Isaiah's vision of God. The Lord was sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim, that is heavenly beings stood above him, and one called out, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." When Isaiah

saw the majesty and the holiness of the Lord, he said in verse five, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I'm a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

We sometimes compare ourselves with other people, because we can always find someone who is morally lower than we think we are; but if we compare ourselves with our holy God, we know that we can never measure up. We can begin to see ourselves as we truly are: sinners in need of salvation. Like the prophet Isaiah, we realize that without the Lord Jesus, we too are ruined. Ephesians 2, verses 1 to 3 describes us when we're separated from Christ: he says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Now if the Scripture had stopped there, we'd all have to face being children of wrath. Ephesians 2, verse 12 reminds the Gentiles who had come out of paganism into Christianity, what their way of life was like before coming to Christ: he said "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." I can think of nothing worse. The pandemic of 2020 separated us from one another, which was heartbreaking; but to be separated from God and without hope is the worst condition of all.

I'm thankful for verse 13: "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." You might be living in a way that's far off from God, filled with guilt and regret; but you can draw near to God, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You can change and become a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." People who are without God and without hope can come to Christ and find hope and live for the God who created them. You can break from the old ways and be born again.

Now because of the blood of Jesus, you can be forgiven and become a child of God. Ephesians 2:19 to 22 describes what became of the converted Gentiles who came to Christ: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household (His family), having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." In Christ, you're no longer a stranger to God but part of His family. You're a fellow citizen with the saints. And every person in God's family, the church, is now a saint. A saint is a person whom God considers holy. We are washed, sanctified, and justified by the blood of Christ. And you can leave hopelessness for hope and wrath for salvation. You were created in His image; now become God's child.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father help us to be obedient to Your will, to turn from the things of this sinful world and to live in righteousness, knowing that we were created in Christ to be Your child. Help us heavenly Father to love You and to serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen."

God created you in His image because He wanted you to be like Him and to live in love and righteousness. The Lord Jesus wants you to enjoy forever a place in the Paradise that He is preparing for you in heaven. God wants us all to put away the evil of the past and to live new lives devoted to godly ways. Colossians 3:8 to 10 says, "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old

self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”

Jesus Christ can help us become the person God intended us to be. We can leave the old sinful life and become people who reflect the image of God. Who can choose the righteous path and leave the way of sin. We don't have to be trapped in a lifestyle of shame and guilt. We have an answer in Jesus Christ.

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Decide today that you will no longer practice the sins that make you guilty and ashamed. Repent. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and make Him your Lord. Be baptized into Christ Jesus, uniting with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. You see, when you're immersed (that is, baptized in water), God will wash away your sins and give you newness of life (Acts 22:16; and Romans 6:3 to 7). You can be a new creature, you can be a child of God.

We hope that today's study about being created in the image of God has stirred your heart and your conscience, to want to live like Him. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org.

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