

## *The Image of God*

**Does the image of God have anything to do with the current 2010 election and the 2011 election? John Piper makes a connection:**

*As everyone knows, our new President, over whom we have rejoiced, does not share this reverence for the beginning of human life. He is trapped and blinded by a culture of deceit. On the 36th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, he said, "We are reminded that this decision not only protects women's health and reproductive freedom, but stands for a broader principle: that government should not intrude on our most private family matters."*

*To which I say . . .*

*No, Mr. President, you are not protecting women's health; you are authorizing the destruction of half a million tiny women every year.*

*No, Mr. President, you are not protecting reproductive freedom; you are authorizing the destruction of freedom for a million helpless people every year.*

*No, Mr. President, killing our children does not cease to be killing our children no matter how many times you call it a private family matter. Call it what you will, they are dead, and we have killed them. And you, Mr. President, would keep the killing legal.*

*Some of us wept with joy over the inauguration of the first African-American President. We will pray for you. And may God grant that there arises in your heart an amazed and happy reverence for the beginning of every human life.*

In Genesis 9:6, God commanded that no life should be taken in murder because murder is a direct assault on "the image of God" in which God made man. It is like burning God in effigy.

The image of God not only has to do with the beginning of each person in his/her mother's womb but with the beginning of all life.

Robert Reymond starts his discussion on the Biblical view of man with these questions, "What is man? Simply the 'outcome of accidental collocations of atoms'? The highest evolutionary stage to date of the primate? Is he among world species primarily *homo sapiens*? According to the Bible, none of these popular current ideas captures what man is essentially. Rather, man is a creature of God, indeed, the crowning work of God's creative activity; uniquely the 'image of God' with whom God has entered into covenant, and as a covenant creature man is accordingly *homo religious* before he is *homo sapiens*" (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 416).

God creating man in His image is what sets man apart from animals. Prior to the creation of man and woman, God had prefaced His acts of creation with, "Let there be" (Genesis 1:3;

6; 9; 11; 14; 20; 24). But with man, God said, “Let us make man in our image” indicating the divine counsel took place before the creation of man.

Because “image” and “likeness” are used interchangeably, they “are practically synonymous. Exegetically it would be hard to prove a difference between ‘image’ and ‘likeness.’ In Genesis 1:26, 27 the two words look like they are synonyms. In verse 26, both words are used; whereas, in verse 27 only the one word ‘image’ (used twice) is used. Apparently, in verse 27 ‘image’ is used for both words, being used twice in the verse. In Genesis 5:1, 3 the prepositions of Genesis 1:26 are reversed. Genesis 1:26 indicates ‘in image and after likeness’ but in Genesis 5:3 it is ‘in likeness, after image’” (*An Outline of Anthropology*, Dr. Bowman, p.22).

So what does “image” and “likeness” mean? Here is Grudem’s definition: “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God. . . .The expression refers to every way in which man is like God” (*Systematic Theology*, page 442-443).

In Jehoiada’s revival in Judah, he broke the statues or idols of Baal in the house of Baal. These statues or idols were called Baal’s “images” (2 Kings 11:18). The images looked like and represented Baal.

In Matthew 22:20-21, Jesus asked the Herodians in reference to the Roman coin, “Whose is this image and superscription? They said unto him, Caesar’s.” The image on the coin looked like and represented Caesar.

In Genesis 5:3 “image” and “likeness” are used to describe Adam’s son Seth: “Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness after his image.” While Seth was not identical to Adam, apparently Seth was similar to Adam in many ways. In every way that Seth was similar to his father, Seth was in the image of Adam.

Every way we are resemble and represent God we are in His image. How are we like God? How can we bear the image of God?

## **I. Man and woman were Formed in God’s Image at Creation**

**A. *The image of God is not physical*** because John 4:24 says that “God is spirit.” Yet God has chosen man’s physical being, not animals, to be His representative. The theophanies or the appearances of God in the OT, such as the Angel of the Lord, were as man and not as animals. The anthropomorphisms, in the OT where God revealed Himself in terms of a man so man could better understand Him, were expressed as “The hand of the God” (Psa. 139:5, 10) and not the paw or hoof of God.

**B. *The image of God is seen in leadership.*** God commanded man or mankind including women in Genesis 1:26-27 to exercise “dominion over” creation. God is the Leader or Ruler of the universe (Psalm 103:19). We reflect His image when we lead and influence

others. In 1 Corinthians 11, there was a leadership crisis. So Paul used the leadership of God the Father as an example: “The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” At Corinth, the women were usurping authority over the men and Paul wrote that the man “is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man (1 Corinthians 11:8). In this specific case, the man was to reflect the image or leadership of God the Father in the local church.

**C. *The image of God is moral.*** God declared all of His creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31) which included man. After the Fall of Adam into sin, man has to be exhorted to do and be what he was before man became a sinner. In Luke 6:36, Jesus exhorts, “Be you therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” The verses surrounding this exhortation show how we can reflect the image of God to others: “love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be you therefore merciful as, your Father also is merciful.” When we are compassionate to the undeserving, as God is to us, we mirror God’s image.

**D. *The image of God is social.*** In the Genesis 1:26-27 passage, God said, “Let us make man (mankind or humanity) in our image. The Trinity who has eternal, interpersonal relationships created man a social being. That is why in the next chapter, God told Adam, “It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him (Genesis 2:18). This is not denigrating for the woman to be called the helper for man. As Mark Driscoll says, it means we men need help. What about singles? They are to have social networks such as is provided at church. The local church is a family according to Ephesians 3:14-15). When we build strong relationships with our mates, children, and friends we are image bearers of God.

**E. *The image of God is mental.*** Man’s ability to think in abstract reasoning separates him from animals. “No group of chimpanzees will ever sit around the table arguing about the doctrine of the Trinity or the relative merits of Calvinism and Arminianism! In fact, even in developing physical and technical skills we are far different from animals: beavers still build the same kind of dams they built for a thousand generation, birds still build the same kind of nests, and bees still build the same kinds of hives. But we continue to develop greater skill and complexity in technology, in agriculture, in science, and in nearly every field of endeavor” (Grudem, page 446). In Genesis 2:19-20, Adam reflected the mental image of God when he named every animal.

Because we are made in the image of God we can read and understand the Bible. Animals cannot.

**F. *The image of God is spiritual.*** Because God is Spirit we too have a immaterial and spiritual capacity to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Animals do not sing God’s praises nor pray one for another. Only man can fellowship and worship God as Adam did in the garden until he sinned (Genesis 3:8). Only man is said to be “God’s

offspring” (Acts 17:28). When we come into church and lift our voices to God in song and praise we are bearing the image of God.

## **II. The Image of God was Deformed at the Fall of Man into Sin**

As Ryrie states it, the image of God “was defaced though not erased” (*Basic Theology*, first edition, p. 192). The image of God was not totally erased or the following exhortations relevant to the image of God would be meaningless.

*A. The image of God is the basis for the exhortation not to murder (Genesis 9:6).*

*B. The image of God is the basis for the exhortation for men to heads of home (1 Corinthians 11:3-16).*

*C. The image of God is the basis for proper speech (James 3:7).*

*D. The result of the Fall was Total Depravity.* Every dimension of man was tainted by sin. All of the above areas of the image of God were also corrupted so that we are not as much like God as we were before the Fall. “His moral purity has been lost and his sinful character certainly does not reflect ‘god’s holiness. His intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding; his speech no longer continually glorifies God; his relationships are often governed by selfishness rather than love, and so forth” (Grudem, page 444).

## **III. The Believer is being Transformed into the Image of God since Salvation.**

Though the sinner is totally depraved and the original image or likeness of God in us has been greatly distorted there is the hope that salvation can start restoring that likeness. This is the assurance of 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Since our conversion we are closer to the original image of God. There are two parallel passages that make this point. The first is Colossians 3:10 where image is mentioned. The next is the parallel to Colossians 3:10 which is Ephesians 4:24 which alludes to creation. “Charles Hodge contends that ‘knowledge’ refers to (true) knowledge of God, since the word has this sense in Colossians 1:6, 9, 27-28; 2:2-3, that ‘righteousness’ refers to moral rectitude toward one’s neighbor, that is, justice, and that ‘holiness’ refers to the Godward relation known as piety toward God. . . .this means that these three’ renewed image virtues are indicative of right relationships with God and neighbor” (Reymond, p. 429).

The key is in Colossians 3:10 says this restoration of the image of God takes place as we are “renewed in knowledge.”

According to Romans 12:1-2 this renewal and transformation is taking place by the renewing of our minds in Word of God.

## **IV. The Believer will be Perfectly Conformed to God’s Image in**

## **Heaven.**

The perfect image of God is Christ. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul promised that we are being changed more and more into the image of the Lord. A few verses later in 4:4, Paul says that Christ “is the image of God.”

### **A. This Image Includes a physical likeness to Christ**

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul describes the future resurrection body of the believer. In 15:49, Paul says “we have borne the image of the earthy” that is Adam. Because Adam sinned, God said, “This day you will surely die.” Because we bear the image of Adam, we physically are dying. Paul described how that physical likeness to Adam causes us to die in verses 42-45: Our physical body which is like Adam’s dies in corruption, dishonor, weakness, as a natural body.

But Paul also promises the believer that “we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (15:49b). Because we know Christ though buried in the image of Adam we will be raised in the physical image of Christ’s resurrection body or “in incorruption, in glory, and in power” (15:42-45).

Every person now is has the physical image of Adam stamped on his person.

### **B. This Image Includes a moral and spiritual likeness to Christ**

One day we will be like Christ morally and spiritually (1 John 3:2). According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:44, we will enjoy a “spiritual body” that is a physical body with spiritual significance just like the children of Israel ate real meat and drank real water that had a spiritual significance in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Paul in Romans 8:28-29 says we are being conformed to the image of Christ who according to Heb. 1:3 is the “express image of God.” In 2 Cor. 3:18, Paul writes that believers are being changed or transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The end of this process of “glory to glory” is glorification (intended misspell) or glorification or perfect likeness to Christ.

What are some important implications of the Image of God

1. Abortion is wrong because pre-born babies are in the image of God
2. Euthanasia is also wrong. The elderly do not lose any of the image of God with age. Not only  
we should we have programs and ministries for the children and youth but the elderly.
3. Racism is sin because all peoples are made in the image of God.
4. The deformed are important to God because they bear His image.
5. The comatose is still a person. The sanctity of life is not reduced when the quality of life is reduced.