

# How Are We Created in the Image of God

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon delves into the profound concept of being created in the image of God, exploring the implications of this truth and how it relates to our identity and purpose. It addresses the misconception that God being spirit means we are not, highlighting the restoration of the image of God in us through redemption and the harmonization with God on a spiritual level. The sermon emphasizes the communicable attributes of God reflected in humanity, such as love, creativity, reason, worship, and morality, showcasing the unique capacity of humans to bear God's image.*

**Duration:** 31:29

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:26, Genesis 9:6, James 3:9, Colossians 3:10, 1 John 3:1, John 4:23

**Topics:** "Identity in Christ", "Reflecting God's Image"

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## Description

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## Transcript

And I want you to biblically try to discern this, try to answer this. What does it mean when the Bible says that we were created in the image of God? If God is spirit and we are not, so that's basically, if God is, let me actually invert the two sentences here. If God is spirit and we are not, what does it mean when the Bible says that we were created in the image of God? And so I guess the question here, the question has to do with what does it mean, but then there's also a question here about God being spirit and we are not.

You see, the one is a question, the other one is a statement. Whoever's asking this is, I find this happens a lot of times when people submit questions. One of the things over the years when we've done these Ask Pastor Tim kind of Q&A sessions is I really want the people that I'm teaching to be discerning because I know this, that it's not just me who receives questions from people.

You all do the same thing. You all formulate questions, but you also receive questions. As Christians, we get questioned all the time.

And one of the things that you want to look for in people's questions is when they mix questions and assertions, and oftentimes the assertions are not valid. The assertions are not true. And so you want to be careful that you don't let people asking the questions to basically carry you away into trying to answer something that really is perhaps even, there's just a false assumption.

I can't tell you how many times over the years, somebody will come along and make these assertions. I am a Christian. I know when I believed.

I know when I came to the Lord. I mean, I can specifically tell you the time and the place and I know I believed and I know I repented. And then so they make their assertion, I'm a Christian, but then they'll ask a question.

I've actually had people do this. How is it that I'm a slave to pornography? You see what they've done. They basically said, I know I'm a Christian.

Now I want you to answer for me how it is that I can live in sin. Well, you see what they've done, that their premise is faulty from the beginning. I mean, they've just basically contradicted scripture.

And so I'm always looking for that. I'm looking for false assumptions when people are asking this. And you'll notice this, what does it mean when the Bible says that we were created in the image of God? That by itself is a good question.

I mean, I hope you've all asked that question before because it's one that the Bible doesn't specifically come right out and give us like a very detailed, direct answer. In fact, when God tells us that we were made in his image, he just says it like that. He doesn't really give us details about what he means by it.

But then what happens is the person asking the question then makes this assertion, if God is spirit and we are not, well, that's the first part is valid. God is spirit. But then to say we are not, in other words, we are not spirit.

Well, let's think about this. Let's actually go back. What does it mean, brethren, that we are created in the image of God and in the fall? Did we lose that? Has the image been eradicated? Has it been lost, only to be regained when somebody gets saved? I mean, let's just ask some questions about the image of God.

Let's see where this first comes up. Go back to Genesis chapter one. Brethren, I can't ever overestimate how important the book of Genesis is.

It really sets the foundations for everything. And Genesis is under attack. If you're not aware of that, I mean, even among people that are calling themselves evangelicals, the book of Genesis is being doubted.

It's being touted as myth. So in Genesis chapter one, we see that God created everything else. And then finally, on the sixth day, you go to verse 26.

God said, let us make man in our image. Now, one of the things that I think is always worthy of our notice right here is that plural pronoun. Don't miss that.

Let us, this is God. God says, let us make man in our image. Now, I can tell you that I think that's key.

When we want to talk about image, I really believe that this is one of the first places in our Bible. One of, I mean, you can go back before this even, and you can see God and you can see the spirit. But this undoubtedly is a verse to go to to prove the Trinity.

Now, I know you don't get three persons here specifically, but the reality is that you get a plurality. God is speaking about himself as a plurality. Now I know there are people that say, well, he's talking about himself and the angels.

I know people say that, but there's no, it just, that's only somebody just devising something out of their own imagination because it doesn't say that. There's no reference to angels anywhere up to this point in our Bibles. And so that's not a good assumption.

It's not a fair assumption. It's God. God has been creating.

I mean, if you just look at verse 20, God said, and then 21, God created, and 22, God blessed, and 24, God said, and 25, God made the beasts, and 26, God said. See he's, and he's speaking about himself. Let us make man, basically Adam, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

You got to love that. Now look, because we're not specifically told what it means to be made in the image of God, I would say this, based on that verse right there, unquestionably, God has made man to be a social being. He's made man, well, you see it in verse 27, God created man in his own image.

In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And there is an ability among humanity to communicate and to interact and to have a social construct that we don't even see in gorillas or monkeys or chimpanzees.

We have the ability to communicate in ways that they don't. And I think one of the things that you want to look at, think about what an image means. If I say there's an image of you over on my wall over here, we all have an idea about that.

An image might be a statue, it might be a photo on the wall, it might be a painting on the wall. That's basically an image. If God says that we are image bearers, it means that there is something about God that's displayed in us.

There's attributes about man that can be found in God. That's what image bearer means. An image means it's a resemblance, it looks like.

That's the idea. God made man in his image so that we might communicate something about who he is. And one of the things that we definitely see that he is, is he is a plurality.

And there is a communion in the Godhead, in the Trinity. Now, I want you to see something. If you move forward and you go to like, what maybe, where I really want to take you to is I want to take you to Genesis chapter 9. The reason for me to take you here is because we know that man fell in Genesis chapter 3. So if man's fall into sin somehow eradicated the image of God in man, then we wouldn't expect to continue to find that man is in God's image.

And yet, after man falls, we do indeed find that man is still referenced as being made in the image of God. And Genesis 9 is one of those places. If you go to Genesis 9, look at verse 6. This is God's covenant with Noah after the flood.

I mean, so not only is man fallen into sin, man has become so bad that God wiped him out, except for eight souls. And you see in verse 5, for your lifeblood, I will require a reckoning from every beast. I will require it from man.

From his fellow man, I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. Notice this, for God made man in his own image.

I mean, you see what's happening right there. The fall didn't destroy the image of God in man. It defaced it.

Undoubtedly, it was distorted. It wasn't pure anymore. There's no question.

But it didn't destroy it. The image of God survived the fall. And you see it right here.

Otherwise, this doesn't make sense. The point is, it's the image of God that demands capital punishment. That's exactly the argument that God's making here.

You wouldn't demand capital punishment and say that the reason for it is because God made man in his own image if that image didn't survive the fall. And there is another verse where we see this in the New Testament. Let's jump over to James.

If you go to James 3, you'll see somewhat of the same sort of reference. James 3. James is talking about the tongue in chapter 3 of his epistle. And if you look at verse 9, with it, that's the tongue.

With the tongue, we bless our Lord and Father. And with the tongue, we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. So there you see it again.

Now, I didn't really look at that. I mean, I'm reading from the ESV, whether some of the translations actually say image there. It doesn't matter.

I mean, likeness is a synonym to image. And so I didn't look at the word in the original. But the reality is that you have the same concept here.

James sees people post-fall, after the fall. He sees people still in the likeness of God. And we curse people.

And he's not specifically saying whether it's a Christian or not a Christian. It's just people. And people are made in the likeness of God.

So we still are. So that hasn't been lost. I mean, all are now sinners.

And that hasn't destroyed this thing. In James 3.9 and Genesis 9.6, they affirm this. And yet, for all that, the reality is that the apostle Paul says something about restoring the image, both to the Ephesians and to the Colossians.

And because Colossians uses the term image, I want you to look there. Look at Colossians 3.10. And you can see the new man. If you've got the ESV, it says new self.

Self is a really bad translation there. It's new man. We've put on the new man.

This is the new creation in Christ. And notice, we put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. So you see, you see how Scripture treats the image.

Man is made in the plural image of God. Let us make man in our image. And then even after the fall, capital punishment came.

Because if you kill a man, you're killing somebody who's been made in the image of God. And that's why you need to die. And so even fallen man, even sinful man still bears the image.

And James affirms that. But Paul actually would tell us that something does need to be fixed. Something does need to be restored.

And with the new man, we find that it is being restored. And the beauty is, I just want you to see it. You know this text probably, but look at 1 John chapter 3. I mean, just, it's too good to be true, it would seem.

1 John 3, and it says, see what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. Now, I want you to think about that term. You remember what Jesus said about those people who were sons of the devil? And he said, if you were children of Abraham, you would do what Abraham did.

In other words, you'd look like him. You'd act like him. You'd be like him.

But you're children of the devil, actually, which means you do what your father does. You're like him. You see, there's a likeness.

When we talk image, we're talking likeness. And one of the things that happens when somebody gets saved is they become children of God. Children look like their parents.

How often do you see a baby picture of mom and dad, and you say, oh, that looks just like the baby that they had? I mean, because you can see it. I mean, typically you can see a son, and he's got traits of the father. He looks like him.

Well, we're called children of God. Not just by adoption, not just legally. We're children of God because we actually have come into a position where we have been changed, where the resemblance is becoming more and more like him.

And so we are. See, we're called children of God, but John doesn't stop there. He says, and you know what? We actually are.

It's not just that we get the title. It's really a reality with us. And the reason why the world does not know us, the reason they don't recognize us for who we are is because it doesn't know him either.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be, it's not like he's saying we're God's children now and we won't be in the future. He's saying we're God's children now already, but this thing only gets better, and how it materializes in the future, it hasn't yet appeared to us. But we do know this, that when he appears, when Christ appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Now, this is amazing because what it says is in the beginning we were created in the image of God, and when we were saved, we all the more became image bearers of God, and when Christ appears, the culmination of us looking like him and being like him will become a reality. So let's just ask ourselves this. In what ways do we bear the image of God? Now, the person asking this question came along and

asserted, God's spirit and we're not.

Of course, that comes from John 4 where you've got God is spirit. The problem, let's go there, let's go to John 4. The problem is that the person asking the question automatically assumes God's spirit and we are not. Well, I'll grant you that John 4, if we can all get there, I'll grant you that John 4 says that God is spirit, but John 4 never teaches that we are not spirit.

In fact, John 4 teaches exactly the opposite. In fact, if we go down to where the woman, verse 19, John 4, 19, the woman has just been told by the Lord that she has had five husbands and she's now with another man. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet, and that's a good assumption on her part after what Jesus just said to her.

And see, she knows now, hey, this guy has special insight. This guy has a special relationship with God. And she's really curious.

I mean, you know, she gets converted here. She's in glory now. Sometimes commentators say she was using a diversionary tactic here.

I don't think that at all. I think she had serious questions about her own soul. And as soon as she recognized that Jesus answered her in a way that must mean he's special somehow, she brought her theological questions to the table.

I mean, I think she sincerely wants to know answers to this. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain. You say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. Now notice what he's talking about. He's talking about us worshipping the Father.

You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews or of the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here.

You see what he's saying? The hour has already come. It's here. It's arrived.

When true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. You see what he's saying? He's saying not that God is spirit and we're not.

He's actually saying that God is spirit and we need to worship God on that level. Not that we're incapable, but that people will be made capable. And that's exactly who God's looking for.

I mean, obviously this is a picture of redemption. And so if we're going to talk about what in spirit and truth is, I mean, we have to recognize that man is not just physical. Man has that spiritual element about him.

Now we can argue trichotomy and dichotomy if you don't know what that means. I mean, basically, is man made up of the physical, the body and the soul or body, soul and spirit? Theologians love to argue about it. I will just say this.

I mean, I have my theories. I have my opinions. I have verses that I would take you to to try to prove to you.

I lean towards the trichotomy. I am not going to lose sleep over it. I'm not going to go to battle with anyone over it.

But it's safe to say we have a spiritual element about us. We have that which departs from the man when the spirit and body are separated. Jesus, when he died, he gave up the ghost, is what it says in the KJV, that his spirit departed and he came as a man and his spirit as well.

He was fully man through and through. And so I don't think we want to come to any kind of conclusion that God is spirit and we're not. In fact, the reality is that as the image of God is actually restored through redemption, as it's made more complete, we harmonize with God all the more on that spiritual level, and that's exactly what God is seeking.

Now, if we were to make some stabs at what it means to be made in the image of God, I think the primary thing that we have to think about is what is an image? And I've talked about it a little bit already, but basically an image is the fact that we look like him in certain respects. Now, obviously, there's ways that God is alone. There are attributes of God that they don't find their place in man.

But there are many attributes of God that do have reflections in us. Think about love. We have ways of loving that a chimpanzee does not love.

There are ways that we can give of ourselves in a way that a monkey never does. Monkeys don't paint paintings. Monkeys don't fly to the moon.

You see, there's a creativity in man. There's a rationale in man. There's an ability to think in man.

There's a morality in man. Have you ever seen the monkey supreme court? Have you ever seen like nine justices on the monkey court? I mean, it doesn't happen. There's no justice in the jungle.

I mean, if a chimp gets upset because you took its leaf or whatever, I mean, they bite each other. They hit each other. It's basically, there's no sense of justice.

It's the one that's most powerful. I mean, you know, might makes right in the jungle. And so, if you look at man, you see a capacity to reason, a capacity to think, a capacity to worship, a capacity to adore beauty, a morality in men.

We have a conscience. We have a sense of right and wrong. And I think if you're looking for across all the scope of creation and you're looking for that that is in God, that is also found in us, you know, the list could be long.

And oftentimes, the theologians like to talk about communicable attributes. I think Robert Raymond in his systematic theology is right. I think that's an artificial division I don't think it's a good one to talk about communicable and non-communicable attributes.

I think I would agree that it fails massively. But basically, what the theologians are driving at is they recognize there are some qualities in God that you never see in man. And yet, there are aspects in man that we do find that are true in God and God has imparted them and designed them into the fabric of mankind.

And mercy, just faithfulness, the ability, we already talked about it, but the ability to love, the ability to think. I mean, we don't know, we have no idea whether animals have the ability to have thought

processes, but we know that no animals are like man. No animals form marriage covenants with it.

See, God is a covenant-keeping God. In man, we make covenants and we make contracts with each other. The animals never do that.

So there's so many ways. I mean, what we need to remember is this, that to be an image means that we display, we reflect, we image God. And you even see that in marriage.

I mean, the husband and the wife, it's a picture of Christ in the church. You have this image bearing that takes place. Of course, the animals don't have that.

And people, you know, the evolutionists that would basically make us just a higher form of of chimpanzee or something, it fails. Because we have, of all of God's creation, we have an image-bearing capacity that the rest of creation just simply doesn't have.

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