

CSF Penn State Berks – September 8, 2022

Made in God's Image (Creation Week 2)

Week 1 Summary:

The story begins with God. **God is not a name for a powerful being, but God is the term we give to Being Itself, the Ultimate Reality.** God is the infinite who breathes all else that is into existence - from the smallest quark to the largest galaxy. **The God who is eternally exists as a relationship of love which we describe as Trinity** (Father, Son and Spirit; as a sidenote, though we use masculine terms, God is not male nor female but beyond our finite understanding/experience of gender).

How we understand God matters. Other ancient peoples believed creation was a result of bloody wars between the gods. Genesis presents a picture of God simply speaking. Creation is not built on violence, but on God's love. **Built on love, creation is good (not bad), orderly (not chaotic), energetic (not static) and beautiful.**

Where we start the story matters - sin and brokenness will come in - but in the beginning, creation is Good.

Read - Genesis 1:26-31

What thoughts, questions or comments do you have from this passage?

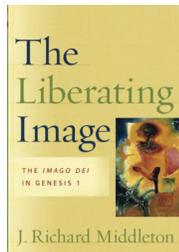
What do we learn about humans in this passage?

What do you think it means to be created in God's image?

What do you think it means to have "dominion"?

Humans are created in God's image – Humans are unique among God's creation.

I. God's Image = God's Representatives on Earth:



Imagine you live in a city in the ancient near east, perhaps as a citizen of one of the great empires such as Babylon or Assyria. Throughout your city are idols that represent certain gods. These idols are not the real, actual god, instead they are images of that god. Their function is to remind people of the absent god. The same thing could be said of statues of kings in such cities. While the king is not present, the statue is there to remind the residents of the king's power and authority. The story of Genesis 1 picks up on this idea, only this time there are no idols. Rather, it is humans who function as the image of god.

They are god's representatives to rule over God's creation. As Richard Middleton puts it, the humans exercise power in creation on God's behalf. In other words, the humans are like God in that they rule on earth as God's delegates (Middleton, Liberating the Image, 88).

"The twofold original human task is to develop and preserve our creational environment" (Walsh and Middleton, The Transforming Vision, 54).

Read Psalm 65:9-10 and 104:30

What do these two verses tell us about how God relates to creation?



II. Create, Cultivate, Care, Culture, Civilization

- **God is Creator (capital C)** – humans are creators (little c)
- **God Creates** – we **cultivate** and **care** for this creation
 - (This is what “dominion” means - we do not dominate creation, abusing the world and squeezing everything out of it as a resource [there is even a curse on those who harm the earth in Revelation]. We nurture this world (or, we should).
- **God creates** – we develop **culture** and **civilization** – the original creation was not meant to be left unchanged. *The question is, would humans shape and change culture and civilization in the way God desired or in their own way?*

Understanding God’s creation in this way, what does this tell us about our responsibility to the world (climate)? Does what we consume - the food we eat, cars, we drive, etc. - matter to God?

III. Made in God’s Image - What this tells us about Ourselves

From the beginning humans were created with a job to do: “That is, humans are called to imitate or continue God’s own twofold creative activity by populating and organizing (in a manner appropriate to humans) the unformed and unfilled earth” (Middleton, 89)

We see this in the early chapters of Genesis:

1. 1:28; 2:20 - Caring for the land and naming animals = gardening and agriculture
2. 2:23 - Adam praising Eve = poetry
3. 2:24-25 - Adam and Eve together = marriage
4. *Genesis 3-4 tells story of this relationship breaking and the introduction of the curse makes the work of humanity more difficult - yet the next people continue to develop culture.
5. 4:20 - Jabal is the father of all who live in tents and raise livestock = farming
6. 4:21 - Jubal is father of those who play harp and flute = music
7. 4:22 - Tubal-Cain creating tools = engineering, inventing

What does this have to do with college life in 2022?

The so-called spiritual practice you do (church, prayer, etc.) is not separate from your class work. There is their classwork. Each of you is called to work in a specific area by God. God desires a world with nurses and doctors caring for the sick, teachers passing on knowledge and understanding, entrepreneurs starting new businesses that provide needed products and jobs, engineers creating and developing those products and more.

"Your college education is meant to prepare you for prime citizenship in the kingdom of God...Your calling is to prepare for further calling, and to do so in a Christian community that cares as much about the kind of person you are becoming as what kind of job you will eventually get, and as much about how you will do your job as about which job you do" - Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

Discuss:

- What is your major? Why did you choose that major?
- What are two of your dreams for life?
- How do your dreams for life and career relate to your faith?

Whatever path you take - you are serving God in that field

IV. Who is Made in God's Image - What this tells us about others

Other cultures surrounding ancient Israel believed some people to be in the image of the gods. The king might have been seen as a god, a representative from the realm of the gods on earth. In this way, he was higher above all his subjects, separated from them. One of the radical moves in Genesis 1 is to democratize the image of God. In the Bible story, it is all humans, every single one, who carries God's image. As Middleton says, the "*democratization of Mesopotamian royal ideology serves to elevate and dignify the human race with a noble status in the world, analogous to that of royalty in the ancient Near East*" (Middleton, 204)

Genesis 1 gives us a picture of humanity where all people are created equal. The understanding of humanity in Genesis reveals all humans have inherent worth and value and leads to morals/ethics that work for the common good.

Read Mark 12:28-34

- Can you love God without loving your neighbor?
- What do you think it means to love God? To love your neighbor?
- Do you perhaps love God BY loving your neighbor?

The Christian way is a way that considers what is good for all people - the common good.

Genesis presents a picture where humans flourish when in right relationship with God, others, creation around us

Key Points

1. The story of humanity starts with our creation in God's image – we were created good and this goodness remains; we were created with a mission and purpose and this mission and purpose remain.
2. As God's image-bearers, we are tasked with ruling over God's creation as God's representatives. This includes creating and cultivating, bringing further goodness out of original creation.
3. All humans bear God's image so all humans are equal before God and can equally approach God.
4. Humans reflect God's relationship vertically by worshipping God and horizontally by living in relationship with one another.

Take it with you:

- How would you treat people different if you considered them image-bearers of God, possessing inherent worth and value?
- Do you see yourself as called by God in your life? What can you do to understand God's call better?