

“It sounds extremely odd to our ears, but God’s intention all along was that the world be full of idols—full of images. More exactly, the world was meant to be full of representatives of its Maker. And the only adequate representatives of the Creator are the image bearers, not lifeless images, since only persons can adequately reflect the image of a relational, personal Creator.”

ANDY CROUCH, PLAYING GOD: REDEEMING THE GIFT OF POWER

In all of creation, men and women are the only ones created in the *Imago Dei*, Latin for the image of God. From the porcupine to platypus, none reflect God as we do.

The Bible says that we bear the image of God. We are not God or a part of God, but we are more than just another kind of animal or a random collection of atoms brought together by chance. We are image bearers of the almighty, all-powerful Creator of the universe who poured Himself out on a cross to buy us back from sin and death.

Being an image bearer means that we reflect God’s glory and are his appointed representatives. Our purpose is to rule here on earth over God’s creation and serve as Jesus did. How well we do that is directly related to how well we see the image of God in ourselves and others.

Throughout this study, we will look at what it means to be an image bearer and how that informs the way we engage with poverty and those caught in its web.

Scripture

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

GENESIS 1:26–28

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

ROMANS 5:18–19

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

PSALM 9:9

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

JOHN 13:3–5

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

PROVERBS 31:8–9

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

PROVERBS 14:31

Discussion

1. Think about a photograph, what is the purpose of that image?

2. According to Genesis 1, how does mankind reflect the image of God?

3. What are some ways that we rule on earth?

4. How has sin impacted the image of God in us and our method of ruling over creation?

5. How does Jesus demonstrate what it means to rule?

6. How might poverty impact people's ability to rule over creation?

 Watch



VIDEO
"Imago Dei"

Discussion

1. What did you see that stood out from the video?
2. What prevents us from seeing people as image bearers of God?
3. How could a deeper understanding of the image of God in mankind change the way we see people who come out of situations like Jimmy's?
4. In what ways do we see Jimmy reflecting the image of God by ruling?
5. How is poverty particularly damaging to the image of God?
6. How could the work of justice, mercy and evangelism (motivated by an understanding of the image of God in others) better honor God by reflecting His image?

 Practice

READ Genesis 1:26–28, Genesis 9:6, Colossians 1:15, James 3:9 and Revelation 5:1–10

PRAY Ask God to give you a vision to live, reign and rule in ways that reflect the image of God in you, for the benefit of others.

JOURNAL Take time to write down your observations from these scriptures and additional insights the Lord gives you about the image of God in every person.

DO Challenge yourself to recognize the image of God in those you encounter this week. Intentionally consider those you might normally avoid.