



Genealogical research is a booming business right now, especially online genealogy sites. In recent years an estimated 60 million people have turned to these sites to learn more about their families, more about their roots, more about who they are. I discovered my last name, Buzzard, is Swiss. In 1735 it was Bossart. Now I know why I like chocolate, cheese, knives, and mountains!

When we want to get to know someone well, we want to meet his family. A person's family is not just his background and context; it's an integral part of who he is. Where do you search? Where do you put in effort to unearth your identity?

We need to go deeper, we need to go back much further, we need to go all the way back to the book of Genesis. In Genesis we get to know our family; the full genealogy comes into view. We're going all the way back to the very beginning where we discover our origin, where we discover who we really are.

Remember last week: we don't so much need more information, we need a story. G.K. Chesterton, when working out his conversion, said: "I had always felt life a story, and if there is a story there is a storyteller."

Genesis shows us that life should be understood as this big story about God and written by God, and we have a part to play in this story. When it comes to the 6th day of creation, the creation of man, Genesis gives us two different vantage points for viewing the start of the story.

In Genesis 1, we see that God is big; he's high above the universe and he creates with his word. In Genesis 2, we see that God is very close, very involved; he's got his hands in the dirt of a garden, forming man and woman, breathing into them the breath of life. I hope you know God like this because this is a uniquely Christian vision.

This climactic day of creation is about man (adam), about what it means to be male and female, about relationship and marriage, but holding it all together is this idea of being created in the image of God.

Remember last week we said "it's not about you." But, in a sense it is. John Calvin begins his Institutes with a sentence: "Nearly all the knowledge we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves."

Mankind being created in the image of God was and is a revolutionary idea. Other ancient creation accounts of man were

that he was not part of the gods' original plan; he was an after-thought. The ancient Mesopotamian creation accounts all give a similar reason for the creation of mankind: minor gods complain to the greater gods of their workload, and humans are created to relieve the gods of their labor, to be slaves.

Genesis revolutionized people's view of what it means to be human, and it has the same power today. What would happen to us if we really understood what it means that we're created in the image of God?

The Importance of the Image of God

Picture the scene: An Israelite in the desert hearing Genesis for the first time. There's this rhythm to the first five days of creation, but then everything changes on the 6th day:

"And God said, 'Let us make'...according to its kind... In our image." We are made after God's kind, God's likeness. *"Dominion"* (purpose/rule). God blesses; God speaks directly to man and says *"good"* and *"very good."*

You're outside listening to this. Humans are the crown jewel of God's creation, because humans are created in the image of God. Today we're not talking about some obscure doctrine, we're talking about the image of God. This is important, this is urgent news that we must hear and that must make a difference in our lives.

All people are created in the image of God

Every single human life on the planet has dignity and value. Nobody is excluded. That weird co-worker, that nasty neighbor, that terrible driver, your in-laws, that church person—look at that person with new eyes this week.

Only the Bible has such a lofty view of what it means to be human. For centuries secular thinkers have been looking for a new and better identity for man by ignoring God, but it's only degrading man.

Remember what atheist Bertrand Russell said: "man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; his origin, his growth, his hopes and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms." The Bible says something about humans that nobody else says, it says something wonderful: all humans are purposely created by the one true God and created in his image! There are no ordinary people! Who's sitting next to you right now? The image of God!

Be careful. That's not an accidental collocation of atoms; that's God's image and likeness.

Male and female are created in the image of God

This was a revolutionary idea in the ancient world, that not only males, but also females, had such a lofty status and identity. This was unheard of. The first thing that God declares "*not good*" is a single sex society. It's not good to just have male; there must be female.

In the creation accounts of other ancient cultures, in for example the Babylonian creation account, the *Enuma Elish*, there is no separate creation of woman. But in Genesis while there's just one verse given to the creation of man, there are six verses dedicated to the creation of woman.

Our maleness or our femaleness, our gender, is so important; it's the particular way God made us to display his image on earth. Are you a man? Be a man. Are you a woman? Be a woman. And through your maleness, through your femaleness, be God's image on earth.

The Bay Area

Recently I heard a pastor tell a story. He was talking about the difference between the city and the country. The city is the place with more people than plants. The country is the place with more plants than people. The Bay Area has a lot of people: 7.5 million. The population here is so high, there are more people than plants. Since God loves people more than plants, God's love must really be concentrated on this place! There's a lot of image of God in this place. This is a great place to live because you're surrounded by images of God.

Human rights

When you study the great justice movements in human history, like the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and America, or the Civil Rights movement, the image of God is what drove it. The first century Greco-Roman world was full of abortion and infanticide, especially girls. It was the Christians who changed the culture of abortion and infanticide because of their belief in the image of God. As early as Noah's day, "*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image*" (Genesis 9:6). Human life is protected because of the doctrine of the image of God.

What happens to human life in a society that ignores God and has lost the doctrine of the image of God? Peter Singer, professor of Bioethics at Princeton, has angered many people by arguing that it's legitimate to take the life of certain types of people, people who lack certain capacities: babies in the womb, babies born with certain disabilities, people with certain physical handicaps and mental disabilities, elderly people who are becoming senile.

But, Peter Singer is being consistent: his view of humanity is that human life is grounded in capacities, not the image of God. He's

consistent, logical: if to be a human you must have certain physical and mental capacities, then aborting a baby is not aborting a human; killing an infant with Down's Syndrome is not killing a human; ending the life of a 73-year-old Alzheimer's patient is not ending human life.

As soon as you start defining what it means to be human on the basis of capacities rather than the image of God, certain people are excluded. For all of us, our physical bodies don't amount to much, just some chemicals and minerals worth maybe a dollar. When we die our bodies decompose back into these elements. But there's more to us. Something makes us living—the image of God! Scripture attributes this to the breath of life that God himself breathes into us. See how important the image of God is?

The Meaning of the Image of God

We've seen why it's important, but what exactly does it mean to be created in the image of God? To answer this question we've got to start with God. Who is God?

God is Trinitarian: Father, Son, and Spirit. What was God doing before he created the world? Enjoying being God—Father, Son, and Spirit were glorifying and loving one another. God has always enjoyed the perfect community of himself. It's heresy to say, "God created us because he was lonely." God created us to increase the glory and community he has always enjoyed. We are created in the image of a God who is 1 and who is 3, an eternally happy God—Father, Son, and Spirit.

And it takes both males and females to image this Trinitarian God. An exclusively male world does not image God. An exclusively female world does not image God. It takes both men and women, created with equal dignity and value, to display the image of God. The differences we have as male and female, and the distinct roles and functions we have as men and women, namely in marriage, are also a reflection of our Trinitarian God.

The persons of the Trinity are equal in status and have distinct roles, equality and diversity in the Trinity. Jesus died on the cross, not the Father. The Spirit indwells believers, not the Father. Their different roles don't take away from their glory and equality.

A husband's call to servant, spiritual leadership in marriage and a woman's call to be a "helper" in marriage ("helper" is used 16 of the 19 times in the Old Testament for God) are reflections of our three-person God who operates with equality and distinct roles. Where trouble and confusion and hurt comes in debates about gender, roles, and marriage is when we talk about these issues without grounding it in the image of God and in the identity of the Trinity.

In the New Testament, whenever Jesus or Paul talk about these issues, they ground their arguments in creation and the Trinity, not culture. When you think about what it means to be created in the image of God, think of one word: representative.

A king placed images or statues of himself in far-off provinces that he conquered. These images represented the king; they reminded everyone of the king, of his character, identity, and his rule. Being created in God's image means that we are the King's representative presence in the world, we are his statues. God positions us on the earth to represent him, to reflect something of what he is like.

What this means is that we are spiritually dependent beings. Our worth, our value, our identity, our purpose, our glory—it doesn't come from inside of us, it comes from outside of us. And if you don't turn to God for your significance, you'll turn to something else for it because you were made to do so. In the beginning God made us in his image, but ever since we've been trying to build our own image. How have you done this?

C.S. Lewis said: "What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could 'be like gods'—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy. The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn...There is no other."

We are spiritually dependent beings. And, we are relational beings. God created us to be in relationship with him and find our greatest joy in him. The first question in the Westminster Larger Catechism is: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Because we are made in the image of a relational God, we are created for relationship. We're created for vertical relationship and horizontal relationships. Even in Paradise a relationship with God wasn't enough. ***"It is not good that the man should be alone..."*** This is why loneliness is so painful. For Adam, having work and power wasn't enough.

The first relationship God creates on earth is marriage. When Adam first sees his bride, his first words are "At last, finally, a match, a fit—the relationship I've been longing for." His first words are poetry, the first poetic couplet in the Bible: ***"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."***

"Bone of my bones!" God formed the woman with a rib from Adam's side. Matthew Henry said: "Eve was not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him,

but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

The first man and woman stand together naked and unashamed. They become one flesh, consummating their marriage.

The first relationship God creates on earth is marriage. It's the closest of all human relationships. Marriage is a relationship that uniquely displays the image of God as a male and a female are united together as one flesh, and as they give life and bear children just as God has done.

But this is also a text that points to how, in general, it is not good to be alone. We are created in the image of a relational God. We are created for relationships and as we enjoy healthy relationships we're doing what God created us to do with our lives.

What does the image of God mean? Our God is Trinitarian, we're created in his image. We're his representatives. We're spiritually dependent beings. We're relational beings.

Monday Morning and the Image of God

Trust God for who you are on Monday

Put this doctrine to work Monday morning. You are created in the image of God—act like it! You might trust God for a lot of things, but do you trust him for who you are? ***"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them"*** (Psalm 139:13–16).

You are created in the image of God! You, precisely! Your height, shape of your nose, chromosomes, mental abilities, etc. God made you the way he did because this is the way he wants you to be. Both nature and nurture are in his hands. If you have difficulty accepting the way God made you, you have a controversy with God.

A good coach always says "play your position." The highest place anyone can attain in life is that for which he was designed and made. On Monday, play your position, be yourself. Trust God for who you are—he didn't make a mistake with you. Ditch the "what ifs" and "if onlys" and glory in "what is."

Find your "very good" from God, not others, on Monday

Genesis tells the story of Creation, Rebellion, Redemption, the story of the whole Bible in one book. As long as we are humans we are in the image of God, but we lost something at The Fall. We've damaged the image of God, we no longer hear God's voice saying to us "very good," and ever since we've been trying to get it back, searching and working to get someone to look at us and

say “very good.” We do this with work, looks, accomplishments, money, relationships. Some of you are still waiting to hear your earthly father say to you, “very good, I’m pleased with you.”

Do you know that if you’re a Christian, your Father has said this to you? Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus *“the image of the invisible God”* (the true image). At his baptism, as he was beginning his work on earth, the Father’s voice sounded from heaven: *“You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”*

Do you know that what the Father says to Jesus he says to you? This is what’s going on when the New Testament talks everywhere about being “in Christ.” When the Father looks at you, he looks at you in Christ. The image of God has been fully repaired in Christ.

You don’t have to build your own image anymore. On Monday, you don’t have to exhaust yourself in hopes that you might hear someone say of you “very good.” Begin Monday morning by finding your “very good” from God, not others. Hear him say to you, “very good,” “You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased.” Perfectionists: you can do your best work and relationships this way.

John Wesley said: “I see it clearly with my head but I do not feel it, and I had better stop preaching until I feel it.” Peter Bohler said: “Do not stop preaching it, but go on preaching it until you do feel it.” The gospel is God’s voice saying, “very good.” Go on preaching me until you feel it!

Forget yourself and give yourself to others on Monday

Our age of self-analysis and introspection is misguided. You’ll never find this emphasis in the Bible. It seems like a paradox, but the best way to find out who you are is to not spend too much time trying to find who you are. Love God, love people, live life, and self discovery will sneak in. Jesus said this: whoever loses his

life will find it. It wasn’t until Adam gave himself to Eve that we hear his voice. In loving someone else, Adam shows up.

The more you forget yourself and throw yourself into serving others, the more the real you will show up, the more you’ll come to understand who God created you to be as his image. Tomorrow morning, try it. Break your patterns.

Pursue marriage and make babies on Monday

This one might be hard to accomplish by tomorrow, but I can marry you right after the service! You out there who are single, unless you feel God has given you a gift for singleness, most of you should be preparing for marriage. God will call most of you in this direction. Our culture puts off marriage and children, but because we understand Genesis 1-2, we should be preparing for marriage. Pursue marriage, then obey the Bible and “be fruitful and multiply.”

For those of you want to be married but aren’t, you are made in the image of God. You already have the most glorious relationship possible. Jesus never married, never had sex, never had children, yet he lived the most fully human life of all, fully living out life in God’s image. If God doesn’t give you a spouse, his plans for you might be similar to his plans for Jesus, to give you a life full of relationships and joy that blesses other people.

Conclusion

What if we took the image of God seriously as a community? Your genealogy runs this deep: God created you in his image and likeness. A man named Jesus has restored the mess we made of this image. Only Christianity says this. God created you in his image. Act like it. Tomorrow’s Monday—put it in action.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.