

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Christian Engagement

Topic: Theological Anthropology: Image of God

Spring 2025

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. This week our topic is the image of God.

Review of Last Week

Theological anthropology is a term that means the doctrine of humanity. Many theologians and apologists agree that the doctrine of humanity is the defining theological concern of our era. This is because the post-Christian West has grown increasingly confused about what it means to be human, especially since the 1960s. To varying degrees, this confusion influences people of every worldview, every religion, and every political persuasion. There is a great need for Christians to clarify what the Bible teaches about human nature, as well as the implications of our beliefs for all the great ethical questions of our day.

Six Questions for Consideration:

1. What does the Bible say?
2. What has the church said?
3. Where is our culture confused?
4. What can we learn from non-Christian sources?
5. What should Christians believe?
6. How should Christians respond to our cultural confusion?

What Does the Bible Say?

The most important passage for understanding the *imago Dei* is Genesis 1:26–31.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And

God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Other verses assume that humanity is created in God's image or mention this idea in passing.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. (Gen. 5:1)

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. (Gen. 9:6)

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. (1 Cor. 11:7)

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. (James 3:9)

The New Testament also notes that Jesus in particular is the perfect or ideal image of God.

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor. 4:4)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Col. 1:15)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Heb. 1:3a)

The New Testament says that the image of God is in some sense transformed and fully realized in those who are united with Christ by grace through faith.

Substantive view: humans are in God's image because they share some characteristics with God that are not shared with God by other creatures (e.g. reason, emotion, spirituality, etc.). Held by Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin.

Relational view: humans are in God's image because, like God, we are inherently relational. God exists in eternal community as three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. Humans also exist in community, relating to God and to each other, thus dimly reflecting the perfect relations between the persons of the Trinity. Held by some of the early church fathers, Jonathan Edwards, and many modern European theologians.

The **functional view**: humans are in God's image because they represent God as his vice-regents and exercise dominion over the earth. Held by many modern Old Testament scholars (both Jewish and Christian).

Where is Our Culture Confused?

At the conceptual level, many people in post-Christian culture resonate with the idea of the image of God in the abstract, but they depart from the biblical understanding in how they define the phrase. God is thought of as “deity in general” rather than the one true God who reveals himself through both general revelation (the created order, especially nature) and special revelation (supernatural communication, especially Scripture). The *imago Dei* is often thought of more as humans having all or part of the divine in them. These erroneous ideas fall far short of a biblical view. They are influenced more by some combination of therapeutic, eastern, or pluralistic worldviews.

Our culture is also often confused about the implications of the image of God. Even good affirmations of human dignity normally break down. Most commonly, those who reject a biblical understanding of the image of God do not defend the dignity of all humans. Some reject the sanctity of human life by affirming elective abortion or euthanasia. Others reject the dignity of women, or the developmentally disabled, or certain races or ethnicities, or certain nationalities, or certain religions, or certain political

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The Equip Institute Summer Book Club June-July 2025

This summer, you are invited to our second annual Equip Institute Summer Book Club. We will be reading Rebecca McLaughlin's *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion* (Crossway, 2019).

The reading group will meet on Monday mornings from 7:30-8:30 am. The dates and reading schedule are below.

June 23 – Introduction and Chapters 1-2

June 30 - Chapters 3-4

July 7 - Chapters 5-6

July 14 - Chapters 7-8

July 21 - Chapters 9-10

July 28 - Chapters 11-12

Scan the QR code to sign up!

