

“Let Us Make Man in Our Image”: What Does It Mean? (Genesis 1:26-28)

Genesis 1:26-28 – ²⁶ Then God said, “**Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, 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 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “**Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**”

Male and Female He Created Them

1. The primary purpose of gender is procreation (the bearing and raising of children).
2. Marriage (gender) is designed for two people and only two people.
3. Marriage (gender) can only be for two people of the opposite gender.
4. Marriage (gender) requires two which are similar yet different.
5. Marriage (gender) assumes the design and blessing of sex by God.
6. Marriage (gender) would assume a relationship between adults.
7. Marriage (gender) would be limited to human relationships.

“Let Us Make Man in Our Image”: Mankind Is Special!

1. Mankind Is Similar to the Animals:
 - a. We are similar in design (= Common Designer)
 - b. We are similar in physical makeup (same chemical elements)
 - c. We were created on the same day
2. Mankind Is Different than the Animals:
 - a. Man is a completely separate step – We were not created at the same time as the animals.
 - b. We were not just announced, but God’s was personally involved in creating each individual (cf. Genesis 2)
 - c. Our Creation Is Personal with God’s “Let Us”
 - d. Earth Was Created for Mankind
 - e. Mankind Rules Over All of The Earth
3. Man is Created in the Image & Likeness of God!
 - a. The image of God is passed on – Gen 5:1-3
 - b. Sin marred the image of God, but did not remove it (Gen 9:6)
 - c. The Image Of God Sets Us Apart from the Animals – We Are Special!
 - i. Our value indicated by the penalty for murder (Genesis 9:6)
 - ii. Our value is indicated by the honorable speech required (James 3:9-10)

What Does It Mean to Be Created in the Image & Likeness of God?

1. They Are Qualities that Are Unique in Creation (No other creature or creation has them.)

Angels (and thus demons, who are fallen angels) have some characteristics, but are never said to be in the “image” or “likeness” of God.

But here of Man it is repeated again and again to enforce the attention of all who tremble at God’s word. Not only was Man an unprecedented creature, but he had a place in God’s mind altogether peculiar, not merely in time on earth, but for all eternity. (William Kelly: *In The Beginning, And The Adamic Earth*)

2. They Are Qualities that Were Given Immediately, Not Through Evolutionary Processes Over Time

3. They Are Qualities That Describe What We ARE, Not Something IN Us

“The biblical concept is not that the image is *in* man, but that man *is* the image of God.” (Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible)

4. They Are Qualities That Encompass Us as a Unit, Not a Single, Identifiable Characteristic (All of Man, not Just Part)

Another perspective is afforded by further reflection on the nature of man. Consideration of the image of God usually proceeds on the premise of a distinction between the material aspect (body) and immaterial aspect (spirit) of man’s constitution; recent discussions have focused on the unity and integrity of man. Thus it is man as a physical-spiritual unity who is in the image of God as Spirit. This explains why the same words can be used both of God and man. God sees and hears as men do, but men do so in a way appropriate to their constitution as physical-spiritual creatures (with ears and mouth) and God in a way appropriate to his nature as spiritual and uncreated.

However, as man’s kinship with the earth is most clearly visible in his body, so the image of God is best seen when man is viewed from the perspective of his spirituality. Theologians have sought at this point to enumerate those aspects of man’s spirituality that define his humanity and set him apart from the animal creation. The image of God is then found to reside in some attribute or combination of attributes, such as rationality, will, freedom, responsibility, or the like. Contemporary theologians prefer not to enumerate attributes, and the Bible does not set forth the image of God in this way. Nevertheless, it is the personality of man which separates him from the animals, and is a reflection of the personality of God. The animals have their existence *from* God, but man has his being *in* God, and is his offspring (Acts 17:28, 29). (Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible)

5. **They Are Two Qualities** (Some see the terms as synonymous, describing the same thing in parallel.)

A frequent question is raised as to the force of the terms and their precise shade of difference; for those are not to be heard who hide their ignorance under the assumption that both mean the same thing. The usage throughout the O. and N. Testaments seems to indicate that “**image**” represents, and “**likeness**” resembles. Thus the “image” of the world power in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represented the succession of Gentile empires from first to last: likeness could not be the point. So it is “image” in the plain of Dura (Dan. 3), the proportions of which exclude a human figure, or the resemblance of any living creature. Whatever it might not be like, it definitely represented what the monarch commanded to be an object of worship. Again, in the N.T. the denarius our Lord asked for had on its face the image and superscription of Caesar. It might have been a faulty likeness, but was an indisputable image of the Roman emperor. It expressed his authority and represented his claim over the Jews because of their departure from God, ill as they liked to own either.

So men (ver. 26) are said to have been made in God’s image, after His likeness, as the former is emphatically repeated in ver. 27: not in His likeness, after His image. In God’s image is the truth insisted on, though here also man is declared to be made after or according to His likeness. To man only was it given to represent God here below. Angels are never called to such a place. They excel in might. They fulfill God’s word, they hearken unto the voice of His word. Yet no angel rules in His name, nor does he represent Him, as a centre of a system subjected to Him, and looking up to Him. But man was made to represent God in the midst of a lower creation dependent on him; though in order to be created in God’s image, he was also made “after His likeness,” without evil and upright. But even when through sin the likeness existed no more, he abode His image; however inadequate to represent God aright, he was still responsible to represent Him. Hence in chap. 5:1, 2, we read that God made man in His likeness; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day of their creation. But it is significantly added in ver. 3 that Adam begat in *his* likeness. Seth resembled his father, now fallen, as well as represented him. Again, when after the deluge animals were given for the food of man, blood was interdicted, and the most jealous care of human life insisted on; for in the image of God made He man. To kill him was rebellion against God’s image, though a man was now anything but like God. (William Kelly: *In The Beginning, And The Adamic Earth*)

6. **They Are Two Qualities Reflected By Multiple Characteristics:**

Being in God’s image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God’s nature, that is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him. (B Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

1) **We Are Emotional [we can feel, experience]**

2) **We Are Immortal [we, unlike animals, will live forever, either with Christ or without Him]**

3) **We Are Moral [we know of right & wrong; conscience; we are responsible; able to choose]**

4) **We Are Original [we can come up with new ideas; creativity]**

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world’s greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little beside ourselves. – A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)

5) **We Are Personal [we are not just a thing but a person, with self-awareness; consciousness]**

6) **We Are Purposeful [we have meaning, mission, calling – we don’t just exist and react – we plan and act]**

7) **We Are Rational [we can think, reason, & decide; we desire to know]**

8) **We Are Regal [we rule the earth]**

What is the image of God in man? The traditional view is that God’s image is certain moral, ethical, and intellectual abilities. A more recent view, based on Hebrew grammar and the knowledge of the ancient Near East, interprets the phrase as meaning “Let us make man *as* our image” (the Hebrew preposition in this phrase can be translated *as*). In ancient times an emperor might command statues of himself to be placed in remote parts of his empire. These symbols would declare that these areas were under his power and reign. So God placed humankind as living symbols of Himself on earth to represent His reign. This interpretation fits well with the command that follows—to reign over all that God has made. **according to Our likeness:** This phrase draws attention to the preceding figure of speech. Since God is Spirit (John 4:24), there can be no “image” or “likeness” of Him in the normal sense of these words. Indeed, image-making was later strongly prohibited because of the clear ties that has with idolatry (see Ex. 20:4–6). We may not make images of God for He has already done so! *We are His images; it is we who are in His likeness.* This is the reason God values people so much: we are made to reflect His majesty on earth. (Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible*)

9) **We Are Relational [we can inter-relate with others, and need to]**

10) **We Are Spiritual [we can relate on an immaterial, eternal level, with God—a God-capacity; we worship]**

He that is made in the image of God must know him or be desolate. – George Macdonald (1824–1905)

The trinity of the mind (memory—understanding—love) is the image of God, not because the mind remembers itself, understands itself, and loves itself, but rather because it can remember, understand, and love its Maker. And when it does this, the mind is made wise. – Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430)

NEXT WEEK: *The Limitations & Obligations of the Image of God*