
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 1.1-31. The climax of God's creative work was people. The text structure shows this: people are the *final* thing God created; in v.26, God changed his method, saying, "Let us make mankind" instead of "Let there be..."; then v.27 elaborates, repeating the verb "created" as emphasis, to get our attention. After God set up the Earth to sustain life and created the plants and animals, he created people in a special way. God created all animal life "according to their kinds," but vv.26-27 say God created people – both man and woman – *in his own image*. What does this mean? It does not mean we are gods or a part of God. God did not create people of the same essence as himself; rather God created people according to his likeness, to somehow be a faithful representation of himself. Still, since we are created in God's image, we exist at a higher level than other forms of life: we are self-aware, able to discern spiritual things, to make moral decisions, to feel moral results in our conscience; we can analyze, synthesize ideas together, and build a logical argument; we can never create something out of nothing, but in a reflection of God we too are creative; vv.28-30 imply that we can have a relationship with God; and just as the Father, Son, and Spirit enjoy fellowship with each other, God created us to be in community.

Reflect: This week, work on memorizing Genesis 1.27. How does this passage encourage you? Can you understand how the world's alternate view of how we came about can lead to hopelessness? How healthy is your relationship with God? Can you think of any ways to strengthen it or to remove obstacles to it?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 1.26-28. What purpose did God have for people? One was to rule in God's name. The NIV²⁰¹¹ and NET best bring out the sense of the Hebrew verb structure in v.26: God created people in his own image *for the purpose of* those people ruling over the rest of creation. It is important to realize that God intended people to rule in God's name, not by their own impulses: culturally [when God inspired Genesis] that meant people were to rule by God's *authority*, by God's *will*, by God's *direction*, and for God's *glory*. They were to rule *for God*, not in place of God. Genesis 2.15 shows that in Eden people were to work the garden and *take care* of it: they were to be blessed by the garden, but they were not to exploit it, rather they were to ensure the long-term health of it.

A second purpose was to reproduce God's image throughout the Earth, *so that* they could rule effectively [v.28]. God blessed people with fruitfulness, the ability to reproduce their own kind [see Genesis 5.3 too]. Compared to the plants and animals, this blessing was improved for people, because we could reproduce not only a baby human, but also the image of God: v.28 is a command to multiply people *so as to* rule in God's name, but the only way filling the earth with people would help us rule in God's name was if we were multiplying the image of God. God invested spiritual life in people and blessed them to procreate that spiritual life in new physical life [their babies].

Reflect: How can you fulfill our purpose of ruling over creation in God's name? In what ways should this purpose shape our approach to governance and policy? Not all of us can reproduce with children today, because of our corrupted nature [about which we learn more in Genesis 3]. Another result of our corruption, however, is that we now can reproduce God's image through making disciples as in Matthew 28.18-20. How intentional are you at building relationships and sharing spiritual truth with unchurched people? How could you make that more integral to your way of life, rather than just something on your "to do" list? How could you help with building up new or young believers in the church? God has ways for every personality type and all natural talents and spiritual gifts!

Day 3

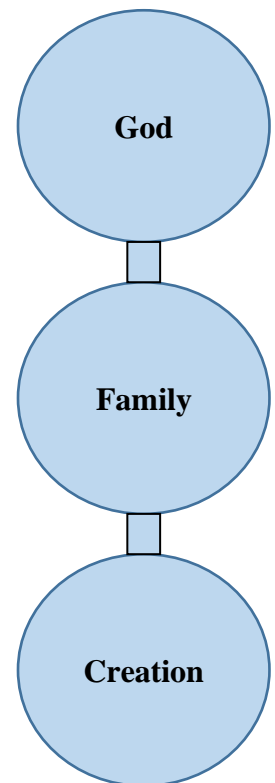
Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 1.26-27. An image is a reflection, a representation of yourself, like what you see in the mirror. One way God wants us to be in his likeness is to reflect his character. The Bible's moral guidance shows us how to do this, as does much of its theology. This is needed, because the corruption in our nature makes us like a shatter-cracked mirror, reflecting a very distorted image; we are born not reflecting God's character. Only Jesus perfectly reflected God the Father, because he was sinless as a person, and he also is the divine Son of God [see Colossians 1.15]. As the Holy Spirit works the sanctification process in us, we become like Christ [see Romans 8.29], thus we become the image of God we were created to be.

As we reflect God's character in each moment of the day, we are able to represent God to others. As people were ruling in God's name and reproducing God's image in their children, they were interacting with each other. Much of the Bible's moral teaching is about how we treat each other, how we can represent God to others. In fact, the context of all biblical teaching is community, relationships; in the New Testament, we get over forty "one-another" commands, because we need to give and receive those things together in order to be spiritually and emotionally healthy and growing. It is not stated *overtly* in Genesis 1, but it is clear looking ahead in the story, that God intended people to represent him in their interactions with each other. This is another reason it is so important that we learn to reflect his character: we cannot represent God to each other if we do not reflect him.

Reflect: If you are not spiritually growing to be more like Christ, then you are stagnating back into fleshiness. In what ways can you see God has grown you over the past year? In what ways would you like to better reflect God's character? How does representing God change your behavior toward people? What are the implications for when you are angry? when you are struggling yourself? when you encounter someone whom you do not like?

Day 4

Learn: Pray. The three circles represent the creation relationship: God as sovereign creator is in authority over the human family. And the purpose of the human family is to be God's image by reflecting God's character, representing God in daily life, reproducing God's image everywhere, and ruling over creation in God's name. God never changes, God's character never changes, and his purposes for people never change. What has changed is the way God works his plan in time, and the unique guidance and promises he has given his people in each time period. For example, when all of humanity was rebelling against God, God selected one family to develop into his representative people: the family of Abraham, which became the nation of Israel. Israel was to reflect God's character, represent God to each other and the other nations, and reproduce God's image by raising up children to walk with God and influencing foreigners to worship God. They should have grown to righteously rule the nations; they will with Christ as king. God stayed the same and his purposes for his representative people stayed the same, but God provided Israel with a great deal of further revelation, especially after the Exodus, revelation that contained promises and commands pertaining to them as a representative nation. Today, the church is to reflect God's character and represent God to all the people groups of the world [to all the people who do not know God]. We do not rule the Earth in God's name, but we are supposed to be God's stewards in each opportunity he gives us to exercise authority, influence culture and law, and take care of nature. And we are to reproduce through raising up our children and discipling others to know and walk with God.



Reflect: Does seeing this model – with continuity in God and his purposes, as well as discontinuity in who represents God and God's covenants with them – help you understand the Bible and the church's place in God's plans? Do you feel any different about your own purpose and role after this study?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 1.26-28. God's plan and purpose for us was that with each pregnancy, we would procreate a new spiritual life. While it is true that every child now is conceived with corruption and thus needs a savior in Jesus, every child has a soul, has spiritual potency, carries inherent within the original design of being the image of God. Thus there is sanctity in all human life.

Reflect: If all human life is sacred, how does that affect the morality of abortion? assisted suicide? How should that affect our perspective of being elderly and frail? of teen pregnancies? How should that affect our attitude toward the "undesirables" of society? Spend some time reflecting on the truth that God created you in his own image; Jesus died so you could be in relationship with God; the Holy Spirit has indwelt you so that you can experience empowerment and transformation to be, and carry out your purpose as, the image of God. Nothing in the universe is as significant and important as you! How should that impact your self-image? your thought life?