

Man's Nature: Image of God

In the beginning, God created human beings in His image. The apostle Paul states that Jesus “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Col 1:15). How is man an image of God? Is it a visual representation or something more?

1. Carefully observe the creation of man. What do you see?

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen 1:26-27, LSB)

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being. (Gen 2:7, LSB)

2. What is an idol? If God created human beings in His image, what is God saying here?

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. (Ex 20:3-4, LSB)

3. What else do you observe of this passage that tells you how man is created in the image of God?

Then Yahweh God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us to know good and evil; and now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever”— therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen 3:22-24, LSB)

Man's Nature: Image of God Teacher Notes

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Ask the student: what reason does God give to make man in His image?

God's purpose of creating man appears to be making His image as a projection, a visual representation, of power and authority over earth; thus, the image of God includes the idea of supreme authority.

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Ask the student: define the meaning of "idol." What is the contradiction / paradox?

An idol is a handmade image or representation of a god or something used as an object of worship. The contradiction or paradox is that God made man in His own image – why would man need to make an idol?

Ask the student: what is the significance of this contradiction?

The image of God is a living being. This concept becomes apparent when God places an emphasis on the prohibition of creating any idol resembling Him. Idols were dead and as such, represented pagan gods which were dead.

God intended His relationship with man to be based on His covenant and word, which is only possible between living personal beings; faith did not entail trust in a dead idol but trust in the word of the living God.

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Ask the student: what is it called “to know good and evil?” Explore this concept. Is this knowledge something you are born with or learned?

The knowledge of good and evil is called moral knowledge. It appears that by eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (Gen 3:1-7), human beings acquired some sense of what is good (right) and evil (wrong). Moral knowledge does not appear to be something one is born with.

God Himself is holy, without sin, and eternal. However, Adam’s sin of disobedience corrupted the image of God as holy and without sin.

Ask the student: how do you learn what is good and evil? What sources do you use?

The only way to learn is through God’s word, the Bible. You can learn from your parents / family, church, and friends who take the time to teach you God’s word. And you can learn yourself by reading the Bible and using resources that help you in your study.

Take a look at how the apostle Paul learned what sin was and the difficulty of correcting his behavior:

Rather, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law. For I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, worked out in me coveting of every kind. (Rom 7:7-8, LSB)

Ask the student: how do you restore the corrupted image of God? These verses can be read and discussed.

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Rom 7:24-8:2, LSB)

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, also heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom 8:16-17, LSB)