

Waking Up: Who Am I?

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Lesson One

Lesson Objective: That students realize the honor of being chosen to bear God's image and desire to reflect that image well.

Bible Passage: Genesis 1: 1- 2:7

Bible Truth: Man is the only part of creation that God chose to bear his image.

Before You Begin, Gather These:

- ◆ magazines and or newspapers
- ◆ glue
- ◆ scissors
- ◆ blank sheets of paper for each student
- ◆ colored pens or pencils
- ◆ Bibles
- ◆ copies of the handout
- ◆ pencils
- ◆ a mirror

Opening:

Arrange your chairs in a circle or around a table and put the magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue, and colored pens or pencils on the floor or table in the middle of the circle. After an opening prayer explain that each student will have 10 minutes to make a collage which describes themselves through pictures (images) or words. To help them understand show them a collage about yourself that you have prepared ahead of time (Since yours will be the model that the students will imitate, make it descriptive of you as a person.) Briefly explain about yourself through the pictures and words and then give each student a blank sheet of paper. While they make their collages, walk around the room encouraging them.

A Word to the Leader

After the 10 minutes have passed and the majority of the students have finished their collages, have each student explain to the group about his/her collage. If your group is large, divide into as many small groups as necessary to have less than eight people per group. Make sure that all listen respectfully. Thank each participant after he/she shares.

Introducing the Message

Two high school students had so much going for them. They came from upper-middle class families. No struggle with poverty. They seemed to have stable homes. Their parents weren't divorced. They had activities like bowling and boy scouts. They were intelligent.

So what caused them to walk into Columbine High School and unleash an arsenal of weapons, killing 12 students and a teacher, and wounding many for life? Sure, they were fed up with the bullying, taunting and teasing. But lots of students take abuse from other students without plotting a sinister revenge.

I think a root of their problem goes back to their belief system. If they believed in God at all, they despised Him. So to them, people had no great worth in themselves. To them, people were just another species of animal. So what's wrong with taking a few of them out? (Written by Steve Miller, Facts from Angie Cannon; Betsy Streisand; Dan McGraw; David Whitman; Douglas Pasternak; Chitra Ragavan; James Morrow; Franklin Foer, Why?. Vol. 126, U.S. News & World Report, 05-03-1999, pp 16.)

How we view ourselves and other people makes a tremendous difference in how we treat ourselves and others. Today we begin a study of Adam and Eve. We meet them as they are just waking up and trying to understand the world around them. As we have seen in these collages each person in this room is unique. We all have different personalities, different likes and dislikes, different talents and abilities, different strengths and weaknesses. This variety is wonderful! Who we are is a gift from God.

But we all have something in common: the incredible honor of being made in the image of God. This is a concept that may seem hard to understand so let's go to the Bible and see if it can help us understand better who we are.

Bible Application

Divide the students into four groups (if your group is larger than 25, divide into smaller groups and divide up the scriptures.) Give one of the following passages to each of the four groups: 1) Genesis 1:1-19, 2) Genesis 1: 20-25, 3) Genesis 1:26-2:1, 4) Genesis 2: 4-7. Explain that each group has five minutes to read the verses and plan a skit to act out their verses for the group. Emphasize that all group members must participate in their skit, even if they're only a tree or the moon! Encourage them to be creative and use their imagination. When the majority of the groups are ready to perform (or when you need to move on because of the time) have each group present its skit in order according to their scripture passage. Following the skits ask the following questions and get several responses from a variety of students:

- *What differences did you notice about the way God created different things? (the students may not notice the following so after they give some answers point out : in chapter 1 God said "let X happen" for everything but man. But when he created man he said, "Let us make man in our image" and then "created" man; in chapter 2 it says God "made" the earth and heavens but "formed" man and "breathed the breath of life" into him.)*
- *What do you think it means that man is made in the image and likeness of God?*
- *How is man different from the sun, moon, and stars? (He is alive, a person with a mind and emotions who can have relationships.)*
- *How is man different from the birds, fish, and animals? (He doesn't just act from instinct but can reason and make decisions; man was told by God to rule over the animals and the world.)*
- *These things that make us distinct from the heavenly bodies and the animals help us understand what the "image of God" in us is. But obviously, we are not God. In what specific ways are we different from God? (He is infinite, we're finite; he knows everything, is everywhere, is all-powerful, has no beginning and no end and we're none of those; He is pure spirit while we have a spirit and a body)*

Point out that in their study they just explained the basics of what it means that we are made in the "image of God", highlighting and restating correct observations that they have made. (For example, we are living beings that have a mind so we don't just act according to our instincts but we can analyze a situation and act based on our reasoning and our will.)

Illustration: So What?

You might ask, "So what? What practical difference should it make in my life, understanding that people are made in God's image?" In our introduction we saw what can happen when we don't believe people are in God's image. Klebold and Harris didn't see people's inherent worth. So, when people put them down, killing

them to get even was a live option. After all, if people are just animals, why not do the world a favor and get rid of those bothersome people that you consider lower on the food chain? Just think of it like swatting a pesky mosquito.

But if we can see people as being in God's image, it can change our lives. Let me introduce you to a woman who clearly saw the image of God in people. Because of this insight, she treated people very differently from others. Her name is Mother Teresa. She's known worldwide for spending her life helping the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta, India. She took the terminally ill off the streets and loved them so that they died with dignity. She bandaged stinking wounds and gave her food to the starving. Inspired by her life of sacrifice for the poor, similar ministries have been established in over 100 countries. She was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize. What do you think motivated her to spend her life, not worrying about how people treated her, but serving the less fortunate? (Get their input.) In her own words,

"Jesus said, whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me. If you give a glass of water in my name, you give it to me. If you receive a little child in my name, you receive me. That is why I want to receive all these unborn children. God's own image is in every single child, no matter what that child is, disabled or beautiful or ugly - it's God's beautiful image created for greater things - to love and be loved." (Mother Teresa, by Navin Chawla, Element Books, Massachusetts, 1992, p. 208)

Another time, she told an acquaintance, "If we did not believe that this was the body of Christ, we would never be able to do this work. No amount of money could make us do it. In our wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor, it is Christ we touch in the broken bodies of the starving and destitute. He said, "What you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me." Then she took the interviewer's hand and pressed his thumb and each finger while saying "You - did - it - to - me." (Mother Teresa, by Navin Chawla, Element Books, Massachusetts, 1992, p. 61)

How do you think that seeing people as made in God's image motivated Mother Teresa to love the poorest of the poor? How can understanding this truth change our lives?

Personal Application

Give each student a copy of the handout (last page of this lesson) and a pen or pencil, explaining that it is possible to summarize aspects of the image of God in six primary areas as listed on the sheet: Personal/ Relational, Emotional, Rational, Volitional, Moral, Creative, and Rulers over Creation. Read through the sheet together by asking a volunteer to read the name, verse, and explanation of each category and then discuss each one until you feel that they understand what is being described.

God demonstrates each one of these qualities perfectly, while as humans with our limitations and our sin we reflect His image imperfectly. It is like this mirror (hold up the mirror with dirt or water spots or something to obscure the image on it and pass it around) the reflection that you see on it is not clear. Because the image of God is so beautiful, our desire is to reflect it as well as we can.

During the next few minutes I want each of you to fill in a specific way that you can better reflect God in as many of these areas as you can. For example, you can choose to live out good stewardship of the world by throwing your trash in a trashcan instead of on the ground.

Here is an example in each category in case the students have trouble with this. Don't read these to them; just use them as extra help if needed.

- ♦ Personal/Relational – when someone does something that hurts me I will forgive rather than giving even.
- ♦ Emotional – When I get angry I won't take it out on those around me.
- ♦ Rational – I will analyze difficult situations instead of just reacting to them.
- ♦ Volitional – I will do what is right instead of what I feel like doing (if they are different.)
- ♦ Moral--When I lie to my parents I am sinning against God as well as them so I will ask forgiveness from God and my parents.
- ♦ Creative--Using whatever creative talent God has given me for His glory, not mine.
- ♦ Rulers over creation---I will take care of the world around me.

Make sure that the students write down their answers on the worksheet. When they have finished spend a few minutes hearing some examples of what they wrote down from each category.

Commitment

All of us have been given the great honor of bearing God's image. Those of us who have asked Jesus to be our savior reflect God in an even more specific way as individuals and as a group because we are "the body of Christ." But we all know that we do not reflect that perfectly. We need God's help. We also need God's help to see his image in others, especially those we're tempted to despise or dislike. So let's take a few minutes to ask God to help us reflect him more clearly.

Option 1--the leader can pray asking God to help everyone in the room to reflect His image and recognize His image in others.

Option 2--Stand up and have everyone hold hands. Explain that each person will ask God to help him or her in one of the specific areas they wrote down on their worksheet. If they feel comfortable they can pray out loud, but if they prefer to pray silently they should squeeze the hand of the person next to them to "pass."

Aspects of the Image of God in Mankind

Category	Biblical text	Explanation	Applying it to my life
Personal/ Relational	<i>"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone.' "</i> (Genesis 2:18a)	Just as the essence of God is the relationship between the members of the Trinity and as God desires to have a relationship with us, we are made to have relationships and intimacy with other humans and with God.	
Emotional	<i>"Love the Lord your God with all of you heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself"</i> (Mt. 22: 37, 39)	Just as throughout Scripture God expresses many emotions, we also have emotions and feelings.	
Rational	<i>"But I have a mind as well as you...Who does not know all these things?"</i> (Job 12:3)	God is all knowing and the source of all wisdom. He has given us minds that can analyze, remember, and learn.	
Volitional	<i>"I desire to do your will, O my God"</i> (Psalm 40:8)	God's will determines His actions and the course of everything that happens in the universe. Our wills determine our actions and what we desire can be guided and controlled by our reason.	
Moral	<i>"Be holy, because I am holy."</i> (Lev. 11:44)	God is morally perfect, holy. Our actions have a moral value; they can be morally good or morally bad.	
Creative	<i>"The Lord has chosen Bezalel and filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts..."</i> (Ex. 35: 30, 31.)	God expressed his power and creativity by making everything that exists. We have the desire and the ability to make things, both useful and decorative, to meet our needs and to express ourselves.	
Rulers over Creation	<i>"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."</i> (Genesis 1: 26)	God is the ruler over everything that exists and he has appointed mankind to govern and take care of the earth.	