

GENESIS 1:26-31 | IMAGO DEI

This guide is designed to be used for community group discussions, but can easily be adapted for personal reflection.

ENGAGE (15-20 MINUTES)

Real Biblical community involves people “doing life together.” As much as we can, we want to create an atmosphere where people get to know one another, and feel comfortable sharing the ups, downs, and in-betweens of life. So take some time for people to get acquainted. A possible icebreaker question: Share a high and a low from the previous week. Or, rate your week 1-10. Or, make up one of your own.

REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

Opening: There’s questions everyone asks. Among them are questions about it means to be human. Who am I? What am I here to do? What’s the significance of it all. We get at some of those answers this week as we consider what it means for humanity to be made in the image of God.

Read Genesis 1:1-26-31

- 1.) Deep down mankind is basically evil. Deep down, mankind is basically good. What evidence you would use if you had to argue for one side or the other?
- 2.) According to this passage, what is unique about mankind?
- 3.) What does it mean that man is made in the image and likeness of God? Those words are only used a few other times in Genesis. Look up Genesis 5:3 and 9:6 to see if it sheds any light on the meaning “image of God.”
- 4.) What is man’s job description? What are the implications of this for our relationship to the rest of the created world?
- 5.) Do we still bear the image of God? In what sense?
- 6.) How does this point you to Jesus? (See Colossians 1:15, 3:9-10)

Article: Read the sermon summary on the next page (or hand it out for everyone to read).

- 6.) Does anything stand out to you as helpful, challenging or confusing?
- 7.) How does this passage challenge your view of:
 - the value of human life
 - the dignity of work
 - the importance of relationships
 - the natural world
 - children
- 8.) What is the “cultural mandate” (see v. 28). How can we take part in this?

PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

Break into men and women for prayer. Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

IMAGO DEI

God creates lots of things in Genesis 1. But only mankind is said to be made in the image or likeness of God (*imago Dei*). An image is a reflection, or a small scale copy. John Calvin said humans are a mirror, meant to reflect something of God into the earth.

Resemblance

Genesis 5:3 uses the same words to talk about the way Seth resembled his father Adam. Children resemble their parents, whether they want to or not. In the same way, there's a sense in which we bear the image of God, simply because he made us. It's not something we do, it's who we are. Derek Kidner says "As long as we are human we are, by definition, in the image of God." Sin warps the image of God in us, but it doesn't eradicate it (Genesis 9:6, James 3:9). *This means that all human life is valuable.* Even the weakest forms of human life deserve to be protected, because they are made in the image of God. This dramatically affects our attitude toward the old, the sick, the mentally retarded, the physically handicapped, and the unborn.

Relationship

We were created to have a relationship with God (v.28 – God blesses and speaks with man), and for relationships with others (v.27 – they are made male and female). This makes sense because God is, in his being, relational. See the plural pronouns in verse 26 "*Let us make man in our image.*" *Like God, you are a relational being.* You are most human when you are in community with other people. This means relationships aren't just nice, they are fundamental for you to live out your calling.

Rule

"The rulers of the ancient Near East set up images and statues of themselves in places where they exercised or claimed to exercise authority. The images represented the ruler himself as symbols of his presence and authority" (J.A. Moyter). People are called to represent the authority of God as we exercise dominion over the earth (v.26). Verse 28 is sometimes called the "cultural mandate." We are called to be fruitful and multiply and spread out over the earth, and have dominion over the rest of creation. Sin has distorted this calling. But Christians still take part in the cultural mandate as we seek to build a city within a city. We view kids as a blessing, rather than a burden. And we are a "city on a hill" (Matt 5:14), showing the human city what life can be like in the kingdom of God.

The Human Paradox

Mankind is capable of the most admirable thoughts and the most barbaric evil. The image of God is still in us, but it is obscured and warped by sin. Jesus is the only perfect image of God (Col 1:15). Only he has a perfect relationship with the Father. Only Jesus represents God in perfect service and obedience. Where we have failed, he succeeds. The good news is, he came to grant us peace with God by the blood of his Cross (Col 1:20). When we trust in Jesus we are forgiven of our sin, and we also begin to be renewed in the image of God (Col 3:9-10).