



ACBC 2015
Counseling. Discipleship. Training

Biblical Counseling and the Image of God

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Why is understanding you, others and man important?

- Because the world system, government, your relatives, your neighbors, and your families say they do.
- At a theological level, many people have suggested to understand man you need to understand the difference between the positions: dichotomy and trichotomy.
- At all other levels, there are many ways to study, understand and consider man.
 - ❶ Personality tests and/or assessments
 - ❷ Evolutionary theory
 - ❸ Needs, longings, cravings theory
 - ❹ Individualism or relativism
- Warning: all systems of trying to understand you, others and man fail because they are not consistent with a biblical anthropology. In other words, they in fact do not understand you, others and man.
- Other reasons it is important to understand you, others and man:
 - Because God is interested in your self-awareness and resultant growth.
 - In order to fulfill your responsibilities toward others, you must understand those same individuals.
 - You can sin because of your failure to understand people.



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I. The three main ideas / concepts that capture man (Genesis 1)

- Man is created in the image of God.
- As created, man is totally dependent on God – thus, creaturehood.
- As created, man is also a person – thus, personhood.
- How do these two things correspond together with this perceived contradiction?
To be a creature means totally/absolutely dependent on God,
to be a person means relative independence.
 - (a) To be a creature means that I cannot move a finger or utter a word apart from God; to be a person means that when my fingers are moved, I move them, and that when words are uttered, I utter them.
 - (b) To be creatures means that God is the potter and we the clay (Rom 9:21); to be persons means that we are the ones who fashion our lives by our own decisions (Gal 6:7-8).

Note: Though we cannot rationally comprehend how it is possible for the human being to be a creature and a person at the same time, clearly this is what we must think. All secular anthropologies fail to take into account human creatureliness and therefore give a distorted view of man. On the other hand, all deterministic anteterministic anthropologies, which treat humans as if they were puppets or robots, fail to do justice to human personhood, and therefore give an equally distorted view of man.

- What are the implications then for how we think about people?
 - a) Sin and the fall of man
 - b) Redemption
 - c) Sanctification
 - d) Eternity



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II. Understanding Image of God

- Only man was created in God's image and after God's likeness (Gen 1:26-28).
 1. This indicates that the creation of man is in a class by itself. (This expression is not used with any of the other creation).
 2. The word translated "man" is the Hebrew word *adam*.
Sometimes used as a proper name or man in the generic sense (Gen 5:1; 6:5).
 3. The words "in our image" and "after our likeness"
 - a. There is no essential difference between these two words. Compare Gen. 1:26,27; 5:1; 5:3; and 9:6. The words are used interchangeably.
 - b. The Hebrew word for image *tselem*, means "to carve" or "to cut." When used in Gn 1, it indicates that man images God or is a representation of God.
 - c. The Hebrew word *demuth*, means "to be like." Thus, in Gn 1, the image is a likeness of or "an image which is like us." The two words used together tell us that man is a representation of God who is like God in certain aspects. This is implied in three ways from the text:
 - 1). We may infer that dominion over the animals and the earth is one aspect of the image of God.
 - 2). We may infer that the image of God is man's having been created male and female. That resemblance is found in the fact that man needs the companionship of another; thus, man is a social being.



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- 3). We may infer that humans also resemble God in that they are persons - beings who can be addressed by God and who are ultimately responsible to God as their creator and ruler.
- The image of God makes us responsible for how we treat others (Gen 9:6; James 3:9).
 - Jesus Christ is the exact image of God (John 1:14; Eph 5:1-2).
 - God's goal for all of mankind is to be Christ-like, living out the image of God (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4; 5:1-2; 2 Cor 3:18).
 - The restoration of the image of God is a renewal process (Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:22-24).
 - Summary statements:
 1. Man as fallen is still a bearer of the image of God.
 2. But, this fallen man needs to be restored to the image of God.



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3. The image has been marred and corrupted by sin; thus, fallen man images God in a very distorted way.
4. Thus, the image of God as such is an unlosable aspect of man, a part of his essence and existence. To lose it is to cease from being man.
5. The image of God must also be understood as that likeness to God which was perverted when man fell into sin and can only be restored through regeneration and sanctification.

III. So What?

- Man has a responsibility to be like God.
 - a. By mirroring God
 - b. By representing God
- Man has a responsibility to obey God. (Functional view of life)
 - a. We must love God supremely – worship.
 - b. We must love our neighbor sincerely – service.
 - c. We must love nature appropriately – subdue and dominion.



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- How does this relate to counseling?
 - a. Worship / Morality:
 - Idolatry –
 - Use morality to gain meaning & power
 - Curse God, Slave to sin
 - Receive pleasure from pride
 - Christ-likeness –
 - Interpret life through obedience and service
 - Bless God
 - Receive pleasure from God
 - b. Service / Social:
 - Idolatry –
 - Use people to gain meaning & power
 - Curse others, Ego-driven
 - Receive pleasure from acceptance
 - Christ-likeness –
 - Use power and understanding to serve others
 - Bless Others
 - Receive peace from God
 - c. Subdue and dominion / Productive:
 - Idolatry –
 - Use productivity to gain meaning & power
 - Curse God's creation
 - Sluggard, Receive pleasure from success
 - Christ-likeness –
 - Use power and creativity to work,
 - Bless God's creation,
 - Receive fulfillment from God



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- So how do we think about people?
 - a. Material / Immaterial or Outer Man / Inner Man
 - b. Functional submission to God in Christ through the Spirit by the power of the Word.
 - c. You and your counselees are people in the image of God striving to be like Christ who is the true image of God looking forward/motivated by the ultimate end of being like Christ for eternity.

While you are responsible for your doing, thinking and wanting,
your doing, thinking and wanting are dependent upon God.

RESOURCES:

Created in God's Image by Anthony A. Hoekema

Who Am I? Identity in Christ by Jerry Bridges

The Image of God by Mark J. Mangano

Christ Formed In You: The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change by Brian G. Hedges