

Holy Reflector Series

Made in God's Image on purpose for a purpose.

I wonder if any of you have seen the show – who do you think you are? Each episode traces the journey of someone trying to find about their family background. Each celebrity that takes part finds out things about their family that help make sense of their own lives. It tells them a little bit more about who they are.

I want to ask you to do something if you are able to. Could you please grab a mirror, just a small one if you have it, one you can maybe hold in your hand. Okay, I hope I have given you enough time for that.

Now I want you to look in the mirror – really look at yourself.

What do you see when you look in the mirror?

Perhaps you are searching for meaning; or you feel like you don't know who you are; or you do know who you are but you don't like yourself very much; or other people have said things to you that make you feel like you are unlovable; or the way you have been treated makes you feel invisible; or you hide behind a smokescreen of apparent confidence, all the while feeling like the dirt on the bottom of someone's shoe.

This quest to know who we are and whether we are loved and valued is a question that we all need to answer. This is the question that Genesis 1 and 2 answers. It tells us where we come from and how much we are loved and valued.

First Song link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yV0pu60Uqs>

Let's read from Genesis 1:26-31. From the Voice Bible.

God said – now let US conceive a new creation – humanity – made in Our image, fashioned according to Our likeness. And let Us grant them authority over all the earth – the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, the domesticated animals and the small creeping creatures on the earth.

So God did just that. He created humanity in His image, created them male and female.

Then God blessed them and gave them this directive – be fruitful and multiply. Populate the earth. I make you trustees of My estate, so care for My creation and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that roams across the earth.

God said – I have given you every seed-bearing plant that grows on the earth and every fruit-bearing tree. They will be your food and nourishment. As for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and every small creeping creature – everything that breathes the breath of life – I have given them every green plant for food.

And it happened just as God said. Then God surveyed everything He had made, savouring its beauty and appreciating its goodness. Evening gave way to morning. That was day six.

This tells us that the crown of God's creation is a new creature, a creature that can sound the heartbeat of its Creator.

That creature, made male and female, reflects God's own relational richness. The human family is to join God in the ongoing work of creation.

The earth below and the sky above with all their inhabitants are too beautiful and too good to be left alone. They need the tender care and close attention that only God's favoured creature can give – that is us.

God created all of us in His own image. This doctrine is a key to understanding the sacredness and dignity of every human life. You may have heard *imago Dei* which means Image of God. There are a few interpretations of this:

First, the relational view highlights God's closeness to human beings in personal relationship.

Second, the structural view of the image of God points to certain qualities or abilities that distinguish humans from animals: rational capacity, volition, moral awareness and consciousness.

Finally, the functional view focuses on the functions humans are called to serve in God's created order: to be dominion stewards over the earth.

There is truth in all of these options. The most important point to make, however, is that human beings, and only human beings, are imagers of God. This gives every human being special status in God's eyes and requires that they be treated with dignity and respect.

So why do you think God created us after everything else had already been created – the heavens and earth, the sun and moon, various plants and vegetation, animals.

And if you read God states that everything so far He had made is “good.” But after He created us, His final piece, a piece so wonderful that God upgrades His assessment of all He created from “good” to “very good.” What do you think there is about us, that God values so much, to say with humans “very good?”

And we heard that read in Scripture – it is because God said – Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness.

So God created human beings in His own image, male and female. This passage is very clear that all human beings are made in God's image and to be like God.

But sometimes it can be easier to see the fingerprints of God in other people than to recognise it for ourselves. And sometimes

we find it difficult to see the good in other people, whilst thinking that we are the wonderful one here.

But it is clear – the image of God is something that all humans share. And it doesn't matter if you are male or female, white, black, yellow or brown, rich or poor, a Richmond or Geelong supporter or a football agnostic. We are all equally made in the image of God as everyone else.

Being created in the image of God distinguishes people from all other earthly creation. God's image is an immediate and inherent part of being human. It does not refer to any specific ability but our unique creation to be God's representatives on earth. We are God's agents, functioning as He would if He were embodied. Which He does when He comes to save us in the form of Jesus – the ultimate image of God.

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all by His powerful word. After He provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty of Heaven."

Knowing that we are made in God's image and thus share many of His characteristics, provides a solid basis for self-worth. Human worth is not based on possessions,

achievements, physical attractiveness or public acclaim. Instead it is based on being made in God's image. Because we bear God's image we can feel positive about ourselves. Criticizing or downgrading ourselves is criticizing what God has made and the abilities He has given us.

Knowing you are person of worth helps you love God, know Him personally and make a valuable contribution to those around you.

When God delegated some of His authority to humans, He expected us to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures that share our planet. We must not be careless and wasteful as we fulfill this charge.

God was careful how He made this earth. We must not be careless about how we take care of it. We must take an active role which is not destructive, as creation is meant to sustain people.

So you see, God was very deliberate about creating human beings. He made us on purpose – we are not a mistake, an afterthought or an absent-minded accident.

God intentionally made us for the specific purpose of being His vice-regents on earth, ruling on His behalf. We are made in God's image, on purpose and for a purpose.

And this means we are all valuable. Do you feel valuable today? Are you holding onto negative and harmful beliefs about yourself – we may look in the mirror and just concentrate on a few new wrinkles, or the shape of our nose, or double chin – whatever.

None of that matters or is important to God. And knowing that we are made in God's image means none of it should matter to us about anyone else. We are all unique – we may not like exactly how God made us – but we were made according to His plan.

Each of us carries out our role as an image bearer in different ways. We each have a calling to care for a specific part of God's creation in a way that no-one else can.

If you are a married person, part of your image-bearing responsibility is to show the love and care of God to your spouse and serve them in a way that nobody else is called to; similarly in your relationship to your children.

If you are an artist, then your calling as an image-bearer is to reflect the beauty and creativity of our amazing God.

In every moment of our day, our calling is to reflect who God is into His creation. We are here as His representatives.

God did a good job when He created you. You weren't a mistake, you weren't a botch-job. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Sometimes, we don't live up to the great value and trust that God has placed in us. The reality is also that for each of us there will be people in our lives who have mistreated us, because they didn't live up to the great value and trust that God has placed in them.

Over the next 2 weeks we will look at what God is doing about the distortion of His image in the earth.

Second song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14pPevY5sd8>

PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank you that you are a loving, gracious God. Thank you that You've offered us forgiveness and the gift of new life in You. Thank You that Your love is perfect, it never fails, and that nothing can separate us from Your love.

We pray that our lives would be filled and overflowing with the power of Your love so we can make a difference in this world and bring honour to You. We ask for Your help in reminding us that the most important things are not what we do outwardly, it's not based on any talent or gift, but the most significant thing we can do in this life is simply to love You and to choose to love others.

Lord thank You that Your love is patient. Help us show patience with those around us.

Lord thank You that Your love is kind. Help us to extend kindness to others.

Lord thank You that true love is not jealous. Help us cast aside feelings of jealousy or hatred towards others.

Lord thank You that Your love does not brag and is not arrogant. Help us not to live with pride or arrogance, but to choose to walk with humility and grace.

Lord thank You that true love does not act unbecomingly. Lord help us to extend kindness instead of rudeness towards others. Help us to lay aside the critical tone and tearing down with our words, so that we can truly walk in peace.

Lord thank You that true love does not seek its own. Lord help us not to live selfishly, looking only to our own interests.

Lord thank You that true love is not provoked. Lord help us not to become easily angered. Help us not to be so quickly reactive, but instead slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Lord thank You that Your love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Lord help us not to hold grudges, but to choose to forgive, even when it's difficult.

Lord thank You that Your love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Lord help us to love Your words of truth, may we walk in Your freedom and wisdom. Let it be what drives our lives and choices every day.

Lord thank You that Your love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, thank You that Your love never fails.

Help us to love as You love. Fill us with Your Spirit so that we can choose what is best. We are weak Lord, but we know also, that even when we are weak, You are strong within us. Thank You that it's not all up to us. Thank You that You equip us to face each day with the power of Your love, Your forgiveness, and Your grace.

We love You Lord, and we need You today, and every day,

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.