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## IMAGE: GOD LOVES

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### Part 4 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | April 20, 2008

You are listening to Doctrine, a sermon series where Pastor Mark Driscoll covers the basic beliefs of Christianity. This series also serves as a prerequisite for membership at Mars Hill Church. For more audio and video content, visit [MarsHillChurch.org](http://MarsHillChurch.org).

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. We're studying today something called Image: God Loves. It's part of our series called Doctrine. We're taking 13 weeks, going through the storyline of the Bible. And for those who want to become church members, this will fill that prerequisite. I'm gonna go ahead and pray. We're gonna get right to work. If you do have a Bible you can find Genesis 1 – it should be easy to find. It's just at the very beginning. And then we'll get to that point of the Bible in a few minutes. I'll go ahead and pray, set everything up – we'll get right to work. We've got a ton to cover.

Father God, we come today thanking you for making us, male and female, in your image and likeness for relationship with one another and with you. As we study your word today, Lord God, it is our prayer that we would see Jesus as the perfect image-bearer, and that by the power of the Holy Spirit we would understand what the Scriptures have to say to us so that we might be like Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

I'll start by saying you're a human being. That might be the only point that you agree with me on in this whole sermon. The question is what does it mean to be a human being? Many of you are philosophical in nature. You wake up everyday, look in the mirror, "Who is this person who ruins my life?" (Laughter) What are you? Are you an animal? Are you a God? Are you somewhere in the middle? How you define humanity, human life, what it means to be a human being pretty much affects everything. It underscores philosophy, sociology, history – everything. It's one of the most important questions. What does it mean to be a human being?

Historically this has been an enormous issue. I'll give you a brief historical sweep and then we'll jump into the Scriptures. Up until the days of a man named Augustine, an early church father, most people would've seen their identity and the essence of their humanity as being rooted in their relationships. You're part of a family. You're part of a family lineage. You're part of a local place. You're part of a city, a nation, a state. You're part of a religion, a tribe, a tongue, an ethnicity. You see yourself in relationship with others.

And then Augustine did something very interesting. He wrote the famous book called The Confessions. And he started to look at himself as an individual and to write about his own inner life and started to identify himself not just by the sphere of influence and circle of relationships that were around him, but rather his own internal, personal, autonomous identity. This led to the birth in the western world of a concept of being an autonomous individual. Some years later another man named Rene Descartes – also a Christian – came up with something called the cogito ergo sum – "I think, therefore I am." And he was trying to answer the essence of the question, "What does it mean to be a human being?" Augustine said we're individuals. Descartes said not just individuals, but individuals with a rational mind. We can think and our brain, our mind, is essentially that which makes us human.

Building upon that, then there was another Christian named Jonathan Edwards, great Puritan thinker, brilliant. And he said that we are individuals with reasonable minds who can be changed, transformed, saved, improved by the assistance of God's grace. So you're an individual with a mind and God's grace, and as an individual with your mind and God's grace together you can live a better life. You can change and be a better person.

Well, this leads to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and he says, "You are an individual with a mind, but you don't really need God and his grace to help you. You don't need to look outward to God. You need to look inward to self. You're not really a sinner. You're basically a good person. What you need to do is not seek God's love, but love yourself. You need not seek God's acceptance through Jesus. You need to learn to accept yourself as you are." Give yourself a big hug, as it were. That's Rousseau. And so we don't need God. We need to love ourselves and accept ourselves – not think so negative, that we're sinners, and not have that kind of condemning sort of self-assessment.

Well, this continues forward to a man named William James, one of the dominant psychologists in the history of America. And he said, "Not only are you a pretty good person, and not only are the answers in you instead of in God, you don't really need God at all. What you need is a highly-trained specialized psychiatrist. You need a therapist. You need a psychologist." Of course a therapist would come up with that idea. "You don't need God, you need me." And, "You don't need God to walk with you, you need me to walk with you." And, "You don't need God to speak to you, you need me to speak to you." And, "You don't need God to assess you, you need me to assess you."

And the assumption was that we're really, in many ways, a machine – that the human body is a machine and that, through clinical psychology and therapy, you can fix people by reordering their understanding and their component parts psychologically. Not against all counseling, not against all therapy and all psychology, but in its modern form from William James, it omitted God, who is the great counselor. The Bible calls Jesus, in fact,

Wonderful Counselor. We're not opposed to Wonderful Counselor Jesus and counselors who counsel with, for, like, through, to Jesus, but this is counseling without Jesus, without God, without an acknowledgement of human sin. And this is having someone else, other than Jesus, be your functional savior. You don't go to Jesus to get your life together, you go to a professional. And the goal of the professional is not to help you get to know Jesus at all.

Well, this leads as well to a man named Abraham Maslow. He comes up with something you may have heard called the hierarchy of needs, and your greatest need is not to glorify God, but to glorify self. Self-actualization – you want to achieve your full potential, you want to make all the money you can make, you want to be as healthy as you could be, you want to be as successful, as powerful, as influential, as affluent as you could possibly be. You want to be all you can be.

And then this leads to our modern day culture. There's a man named Christian Smith. He's a sociologist. He calls it moralistic therapeutic deism. He says that's the American religion of today. Moralistic: you want to be a good person and do the best you can. Therapeutic: God is the big therapist in the sky. Deism: he's far, far away. God's not really there to help you. Occasionally he'll slingshot in a little bit of encouragement. And occasionally if you slingshot him a prayer, he may answer. But for the most part, you're on your own. You gotta fix yourself, love yourself, accept yourself, save yourself, transform yourself because basically you're a pretty good person.

I tell you all of that because that's the world you live in, grew up in. You may see yourself completely as an individual, that you're really on your own. God's sort of a fairy tale figment of your imagination. Maybe he does love you and tell you what to do but he's not really intimately involved in your life to help you. And the result is a culture of despair and pride. Very interesting. Pride: we think we're great. Despair: when we're honest, we know we're not and we don't know what to do.

That leads to a series of questions about what it means to be human. The first is in comparison to culture and what has transpired, what does the Bible reveal about the origin of human life? We pick that up in Genesis 1. It's interesting. What Genesis 1 and 2 tells us is that we are created by God. That's the exact opposite of atheistic thinking. There's a man named – I'll get the name right – Ludwig Feuerbach. He lived in the 19th century. He was an atheist. He said, "We made God. God didn't make us, we made God. He's a figment of our imagination." Karl Marx applied that politically with communism. Sigmund Freud applied that psychologically with therapy. Friedrich Nietzsche applied that philosophically with atheism and nihilism. They were all students of Feuerbach.

Now, you compare the concept that we made God to the concept that God made us, which is what the Bible says beginning in Genesis 1. We'll look at 1:1: "In the beginning" – we looked at this last week – "God" – Elohim – "created the heavens and the earth." So God pre-exists. We looked at he makes everything and everyone. The rest of Genesis 1 looks at the days of creation.

Jump down to verse 26. "Then God said" – so God's a God who speaks. "Then God said, 'Let us'" – again, there's the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit – "'us make man'" – that's mankind or Adam, mankind that will include man and woman – "'in our'" – Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, one God, three Persons – "'our image after our likeness.'" Okay, that's what we're gonna talk about today, is what does it mean to be made in God's image and likeness. Theologically there's been a debate. Are these two terms referring to different things? I think they are essentially saying the same thing. God's image and likeness – that's what you and I are made in.

God then says, "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the ground." Now up until this point God would say he made this, and then the other animals after its own kind. Here we see God made us not after the kind of animal, but after the image and likeness of God. And God made us with dominion over lower animal forms.

So God created man, verse 27, in his own image – again, stressing we are the image-bearers of God. Next we'll look at sin in Genesis 3 and its effects. Some have asked, "Does the image and likeness of God persist in men and women after sin and the fall and the curse?" And the answer is yes. Genesis 5, Genesis 9, James 3 all continue to say that though sinful, we are still God's image-bearers. At this point there is no sin in history or in the world or in the life of our first parents. And once they do sin and we, as sinners, continue to bear the image and likeness of God. We don't become less than human.

It goes on to say, "In the image of God he created him. Male and female, he created them." Some ask is God a man or a woman? Well, Jesus says in John that God is spirit, and as a spirit-being God is not gendered. God is not male or female. So male and female proceed from God. And male and female are made equal in the image and likeness of God. There's been a big debate between chauvinists and feminists as to who is better. And the truth is that men and women both are equal because they bear the image and likeness of God.

My wife Grace, as we were discussing this this week, she said, "So how do you explain this emotionally?" I said, "Well, the way I would explain it emotionally is not that there are masculine and feminine emotions, but that as men and women we express those emotions in masculine and feminine ways." Men and women both love. Men and women both get angry. Men and women both grieve. But by virtue of gender distinction the way it works itself out may be different, which explains my relationship with my wife. We have the same emotions and we work them out quite differently.

So it is not that man is good, woman bad or woman is good and man is bad, that man and woman both bear the image and likeness of God. As such, they are equal. They share the same emotions and they work them out a bit differently upon occasion according to gender. But we are made male and female.

God does reveal himself as Father. Jesus prays to God as Father. Jesus Christ is worshiped as the Son of God. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to call

God Mother. So he predominantly reveals himself in masculine terms, but God is not engendered. Jesus came as a man, but God is not engendered. God is a spirit being and he made us engendered, male and female.

And then we read in verse 28 God's first act after speaking, "And God blessed them." You see this loving relationship. Here's grace and kindness and affection toward the man and the woman. "And God said to them" – so he speaks to them, knowing that unlike other animal forms and life forms, you and I are personal. We're made in the image and likeness of God. We can communicate. He can talk to us. We can respond. This is the essence of our relationship.

"God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply'" – right? Make babies, have kids, be a family – "and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and every to bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that I have given breath of life, I have given every green plant for food,' and it was so." God says, "I made creation and then prepared it as a gift for you, and the earth is yours. Have dominion. Use it. Be good stewards. Take care of it. And make sure that you cultivate the earth as you need." "And God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was" – what? Very good. There's no sin. There's no curse. There's no death. There is no injury or illness or tears of any sort or kind.

Genesis 1 is a panoramic scope of creation, and then Genesis 2 moves in to look in particular at the man and the woman. If this were a movie you would think of a panoramic scene that then moves into the main characters: the man, the woman, God, and then ultimately the serpent joins in the scene in Genesis 3.

Some have wondered why Genesis 1 and 2 tell the creation story twice. This is the eastern form of storytelling. The western form of storytelling is beginning, middle, and end. "And they lived happily ever after," right? The eastern form of storytelling is beginning, middle, beginning. That's why Genesis 1 and 2 is about the beginning, and then 3 onward is about sin, fall, the curse. And then the end of Revelation 19 and 20 is about judgment, and then 21 and 22 – new heaven, new earth, new creation, a new tree of life, and a new forever with God as he intended. The story of the Bible is beginning, middle, beginning. If you've seen Sixth Sense, Fight Club, The Matrix – these are beginning, middle, beginning stories. Many of our modern day films are following a more eastern and Hebrew storytelling format. So here, in the book of Genesis, it goes beginning, middle, beginning in Genesis 1 and 2. God created in seven days – let's look at that again. Let's look at it in a global scope. Let's now look at it with greater detail as it pertains to the man and the woman.

So Genesis 2, beginning in verse 7. "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the earth." How did God make the rest of creation? He spoke. How did he make the man? He formed – very personal involvement in the making of humanity. "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." That's giving us a soul or a spirit. We're not just material bodies. There is also an immaterial soul that is part of our existence. That's God breathing his spirit-life into us.

~~And in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.~~ And in the beginning God made Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life" – you eat of that, you live forever. It shows up again in Revelation – "was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

You jump down to verse 15. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it." Before sin there is work. We are made to work, and work is one of the ways that we worship. Once we sin – you'll look at it next week – work becomes far more complicated and difficult. "And the Lord God commanded the man" – so he's a moral being. We're moral, right? We're not like animals and we're not like plants. God can speak to us moral commands and we can understand those and choose to obey or disobey. "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die." The wage for sin is death. God says, "Eat of anything except for one thing. And if you do, that is sin, and you will die."

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'" What did we just hear in Genesis 1:31? It was very good. There's no sin yet. There's one thing that's not good. It's not good for the man to be alone. The man has God above him. He has creation beneath him. He doesn't have anyone alongside of him. He doesn't have a peer, a lover, a friend, an equal, a helper. God's going to remedy that.

"'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper fit for him.'" That will be his wife. Many women bristle at the concept of helper. It's actually a very positive term. First of all, it infers that the man needs help, (Laughter) which all men would agree. And secondly, that same language is used for God, that God is our helper, that the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is called the helper. So in the same that God helps the man, the woman is also helpful to the man. This is not a denigration. It's a declaration of her necessity. She is helpful.

"So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name." The man gave names, right? This is dominion, authority. This is rule. "To all the livestock, the birds of the heaven, to beasts of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him." It's like, "I hope that's not my wife. It has horns." (Laughter)

"So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up that place with flesh." This is beautiful. Everything is created by God's word. The man is created from the dust of the earth by God's metaphorical hands. And the woman is created from the rib, the side of the man. This shows that the woman is not to be out ahead of him, as feminism would teach, or behind him, as chauvinism would teach, but alongside of him as an equal image-bearer of God, as the Scriptures teach.

And my wife and I always have this joke. She's a total snuggler. She likes to just burrow in and I always tell her, "Welcome home," 'cause that's where

she comes from, so that's where she belongs. And that's where we both like her to be. It's biblical. (Laughter) Snuggle with your girl. It's good, and that's where she's supposed to be.

"And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." So God makes the woman, brings her to the man – right, we see God's providential provision for a wife in this way. He still works this way.

Now the man sees his wife, first day. He has to speak to her – first impressions count, right? She just got made, it's a big day. (Laughter) And what he does – he sings to her. These are the first recorded words of any human being in history. Adam looks at his wife and he sings to her. In the Hebrew it actually rhymes. "This at last" – right? Praise God, she's here – "is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman for she was taken out of Man." He sings to her. Men like Gordon McDonald would postulate that we don't see anyone speaking until sin enters the world. And maybe prior to that, life was one big musical and we all sang. (Laughter) I don't know, but we know that Adam sings to Eve – very poetic, very loving.

"Therefore" – a three-fold process that is binding today and the Lord Jesus rearticulates it in the New Testament – "first a man shall leave his mother and father" – he's gotta grow up and be his own man – "and hold fast to his wife" – get married – "and they shall become one flesh" – then they can enjoy marital unity and intimacy. And the "one" there is the same word used for God in Deuteronomy 6:4 (something called the shema) that Jews articulate three times a day. Echad. The Lord our God, he is echad, he is one. So as the Father, Son, and Spirit are one – God – so the man and the woman in marriage, in love, in unity, in consummation are one. There is not a good analogy of the Trinity. One of the few that the Bible gives us is marriage.

My eight year old son, buddy Zac, he recently asked me – he said, "Explain the Trinity to me. How could God be Father, Son, and Spirit, and the three of them – those three Persons – one God?" I said, "It's kind of like your mom and I. We're one. One last name, one bank account, one house, one bed, one life, one theology, one family – we're one." He said, "Oh, okay. I get it." That marriage is a little picture of the Trinity, that's why it's not good for us to be alone, because God lives in loving community.

Now how does this pertain to single people? It doesn't mean that single people don't bear the image and likeness of God – they do. And it means that single people are not to be alone, meaning loving relationship, community, friendship, extended family, church membership. That's how you are acting in a Trinitarian way, saying, "It's not good for me to be alone." The big idea is that relationships are what God intends for us to have. And additionally, marriage is the covenant relationship that God gives to nearly all of us statistically at some point in our life.

"And the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed." There's no shame. There is just intimacy and pleasure in the marriage. "God made us" – Ecclesiastes 7:29 says – "upright, clean, pure, holy." We'll look at next week the result of sin, but I want you to see that God made us for relationship – four categories of relationship. We are to relate to God. That is our theological relationship. We are to relate to one another, other human beings. Those are our social relationships. We are to relate to creation and the rest of the world that God has made, and the animals and the plants and the trees. That is our environmental relationship. And we are to have a relationship with ourself, where we know I'm made by God. He loves me. He speaks to me. He's created me to do certain things, to not do other things. That is our psychological relationship.

You'll see next week when sin happens it mars all of those relationships. There's distance between us and God, and other people, and the environment, and ourselves. There is total chaos as a result. But God initially made us for relationships.

That leads to the next question. What is the place of human beings in relation to God and creation? I'll give you one verse that I think is particularly helpful, Psalm 8:5-8. And in many ways Psalm 8 is a commentary on Genesis 1 and 2. "You" – that is God – "have made him" – that is humanity, male and female – "a little lower" – some translations say "than the heavenly beings." The word there I think is best rendered God – that in Corinthians we're told we'll judge the angels so I think ultimately we're over them as God's image-bearers. "You have made him a little lower than God and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over sheep and oxen, and also the beasts in the field, the birds in the heaven, the fish in the sea." What is our place? Well, it is under God and above the rest of creation.

Every flaw anthropologically speaking either presses us up too far, to where we're God, we're divine, there's a spark of the divine within us, we're not sinners, we're basically good, that we are like God or we're our own little God, or it pushes us too far down where we are just basically animals.

Okay? Heard one quote this last week in the paper, and that was from a religious leader – very well known – said, "There is goodness and the divine within each of us." That's too high. I was listening to talk radio on that same day and there was a guy who called in, said, "I keep cheating on my wife, committing adultery. She found out. She's really angry. What do you think about that?" And the radio show host said, "Well, just tell her you're an animal. You know, you're just a highly evolved animal with a job and that's the way we are as man." I said, "No, we're not animals." We're human beings crowned with – I love the language here – glory and honor. You can't say, "I'm just a highly evolved animal with a driver's license." No, you're an image-bearer of God with moral accountability, responsibility.

Some push us too high to where we're like God. Some push us too low where we're like animals. We're in the middle. We're image-bearers of God, beneath God and above lower forms of creation.

That leads to the next question. What does it mean that we are God's image? What does that mean? That means we have moral likeness to God. I'll give you some examples. We can make decisions. We have moral decision-making ability. We have dominion over lower creation. We can have great effect, positive and negative, on the environment and other animals and plants and species. We have social ability. We can write. We can communicate. We can speak. We have emotions. We feel things deeply. We also have non-moral likenesses, like intellect and reason. We can think. We can learn. We're immortal and spirit, that we can live forever. Our soul will go on beyond the physical life. We have creative ability. We also have the ability to appreciate beauty and aesthetics and the art. All of this comes out of our, what the theologians call, Imago Dei. Imago Dei simply means "the image of God."

Another way to look at it is to say that God has certain attributes that belong to him alone. We'll call those the unshared or the incommunicable attributes. I'll give you an example. God is omnipresent – he's everywhere. We're not. God is omniscient – he's all-knowing. We're not. God is omnipotent – he's all-powerful. We're not. God is immutable – he doesn't change, and we do. God is eternal – he is without a beginning, and we are not. We came into existence at a point in time. And God is sovereign – he rules over everyone and everything, and we're not.

So in those ways we're not like God. There are ways, however, that we are somewhat like God. We'll call those communicable or shared attributes. This is the theological nomenclature that some use. That we bear certain aspects or attributes of God in a limited form. I'll give you an example. God is spirit. Well, we have a spirit. We're more than just physical beings. Two, God is holy. We can live, by God's grace, a holy life. Three, God loves and he's good. And we can love and have goodness toward others. Number four, God is truth. We don't need to live with lies. We can be truth-tellers and truth-receivers. Five, God is just and he loves righteousness. And we, too, can fight for justice and righteousness on the earth. Six, God is merciful and he's compassionate. As his image-bearers, we, too, can be merciful and compassionate. And last, God is beautiful. And we can appreciate and create beauty – music, art, architecture, aesthetics, fashion, food. All of this comes out of the fact that we're image-bearers of God.

And what this means is, whether you're a Christian or not, you still enjoy the benefits of being image-bearer of God. We'll look at next week that that image is marred and stained by sin, but truly we are continually blessed being God's image-bearers and enjoying the sharing in some of his attributes.

That leads to the next question – I think this one is important. What are some common errors regarding the image of God? How do people misunderstand this? And I would simply say this, that we are made up of multiple parts. You have a mind that things, right? The Bible calls our heart the seat of our emotions and decision-making and will. It's not the literal organ, but it refers to the center of our personhood. We have a spirit. We have a body. We have different aspects of our being. And errors are made when, at an attempt to define the essence of humanity, what it means to be a human being, you reduce it down to one thing, to one aspect of human existence.

Those who are pure materialists, for example, and tend to be atheists, say that we're just a body. All we are is meat. That's all we are. That's it. There's no soul. There's nothing beyond the grave. There's nothing spiritual about us, just the physical body.

Others would say, "No, the essence of what it means to be a human being is the mind, the fact that we can think." Again, Rene Descartes and his *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am." The mind makes me human. The mind makes me human. I would not fully endorse that. What about those who are in a coma? What about those that are in a vegetative state? What about those who are unborn and we're not sure what they're thinking? Does that mean they're less than human? No, it doesn't. They bear the image and likeness of God.

Others would say, like BF Skinner, that what it means to be human is to be acted upon by your environment. The result is you're really a victim of culture. If you grew up in a bad family, it's your parents' fault. If you grew up in a bad country, it's your nation's fault. If you grew up in a bad neighborhood, it's your friends' fault. If somebody sinned against you, it's their fault. You're a victim.

BF Skinner says that we are essentially the product of our environment and not the product of the image and likeness of God. The result is it robs us, I think, of our dignity. Also, it doesn't take into account the fact that we made culture, so how can we blame it on the culture we made? Again, culture doesn't exist independent of people. How do you say, "People are good. Culture is bad, makes them bad." Who made culture? People. Why's it bad? They're bad. It overlooks the human sin problem and it teaches you to be a victim. You didn't have a dad? You can act a certain way. You get a blank check to sin for the rest of your life. You're a victim. Somebody raped, molested, abused you? You assume your posture as victim, not as image-bearer of God. You live in light of that sin you've committed or sin that's been committed against you. It's everyone else's fault. We can play the blame game. And if we're really lucky maybe we can get some money by achieving victim status.

You are not just a body. You are not just a mind. You're not just held hostage by your environment. Some would say that we are just a soul, the immaterial part of our being. John Calvin, the great theologian, made this error. Hinduism and Buddhism makes this error. That's why through yoga and meditation your goal is to get your soul separated from your body because the true essence of your humanity is your soul. That's why some Christians are totally into the rapture. Their whole goal is to get their soul out of their body so they could really live a life. Jesus came as a human being, in human history, in a physical body to show us that the essence of what it means to be alive and a person is not to be separated from our body. Even one day after resurrection our soul will reenter our body and we'll live forever in our body.

Still others say it's just our emotions. It's our feelings. So the essence of humanity is that you get angry and you cry and you're passionate and you feel deeply. Some people who believe this just continue to pick the scabs of the wounds of their life so that they continue to feel pain and hurt and mourning and loss because for them, that's the essence of what it means to be human. That leads today to thinking such as, "You can't love God until you first love yourself," that it begins with me. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as you" – present, active, indicative – "already do love yourself." We all love ourselves. We need to learn to love others.

I was listening to a song on Christian radio. Every once in a while I turn in. I always regret it and then I don't tune in for a long time. And then I listen again and then I get all upset, but it's good preaching material. And I'll give you the song that I heard. It said, "God, thank you for loving me and teaching me to love myself. And now that I love myself I can love you." That's completely insane. The Bible says we don't love – God doesn't love us because we first love him, but rather we love God because he first loved us. God loves us. That enables us to love God. It is not that we love ourselves and that enables us to love God. It's not like I get connected to me and now I'm ready to connect with God. That God connects himself to me and enables me to connect to him.

You're not just emotions. You're not just a mind. You're not just a body. You're not just the product of your environment. You're a whole person, all connected together. And the way this works itself out in therapy and such is this: if you think you're just the body, then we just treat your body. We

give you medication. We give you diet and exercise. We work on your physical being. If you think the problem is just mental, well, then we give you a counselor and some new principles and insight and encouragement. If you think it's just emotions, we want to get you to cry, to be emotional, to be passionate, to be connected with your hurt, your pain, your mourning, your loss, your hopes, your fears, your dreams, and then you'll be truly human. If you're a victim of your environment then our goal is to change your environment so you can live a new life.

Almost all of our modern counseling is a result of erroneous reductionism – not seeing people as whole. The mind, the body, the will, the emotions, the soul – it all works together. You can't fix someone, heal someone, save someone, transform someone by addressing one aspect of their being. You gotta deal with the whole person, and that's what God does. He deals with us in such a way that we are to respond to him by loving him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength – the whole person responding to God.

And I'm not saying that counseling and therapy or medicine or all bad, but in and of themselves they may not address the whole person. And in so doing, they don't provide the most help. And I would say – Romans 1:25 says that idolatry is worshiping created things rather than the Creator. When you worship your emotions, your mind, your body, your environment – when you lift them up to be too important you're committing idolatry. Our identity, the essence of humanity, is that we bear the image and likeness of God in the totality of who we are.

Next question. Who is the best image of God? Well, you know where this is going, right? Where's it going? Who? Ah, Jesus, right. Not shocking. 2 Corinthians 4:4 speaks of Christ who is the image – well, there's the image of Genesis 1, 5, 9 – there it is. "Christ is the image of God." Colossians 1:15: "He is the image of the invisible God." You say, "Well, I don't know how to image God. I don't know how to show God forth to the earth. I don't know how to live a life in light of the fact that I'm made by God with dignity and value and purpose and honor. How am I to live my life? Where should I look?"

See, again, one of my great complaints with secular therapy and counseling is that there is not functional example of what a normal person is or does, right? To me, if you're gonna help someone you gotta say, "Here's normal. Compare yourself to normal, and wherever you fall short, those are areas that are gonna need work." If we can't agree on what normal is then we can't really help people.

Jesus is what a normal human being is supposed to be like. Jesus is what you and I would be like without sin. We would love God. We would obey God. We would serve others. We would be humble. We would have complete, ongoing trust in God. We'd have empathy and compassion for others. We'd be generous with our stuff.

The worst thing that we do – the worst thing that we do – we say, "I'm normal. I'm gonna judge everyone else by me. And if they're not like me, there's something wrong with them." This is what we do. In that, there's this attempt to define what's a regular person look like. What's a normal person look like? Jesus is normal. He is normative. All of us: abnormal. We're sinners. He's not. Had sin not come into the world you and I would image God, reflect God, show God like Jesus does.

I'll use an analogy from John Calvin – great theologian. He said that we are – to image God means to reflect God like a mirror. You remember when Moses got some time with God in the Old Testament? His face, his countenance radiated the glory of God. Calvin says rightly, "We are to radiate the glory of God." We are to, like a mirror, reflect God to the earth. That's what we are to do. God is loving; the earth should see that through us. God is truthful; the earth should see that through us. God is compassionate and merciful and just and patient and holy and righteous, and the earth should see that as we mirror God to the earth.

Because of sin we don't mirror God well. Jesus Christ, without sin, he mirrors God perfectly. So if you want to know what you're supposed to look like, don't compare yourself to yourself. Don't compare yourself to your friends. Don't compare yourself to your family. Continue to look to Jesus. Who is he? That's what a mirrored life looks like. He's the one who has perfectly imaged God.

That leads to the next question. How do we image God? How do we do that? Well, in life we do that, according to Romans 8:29 – here's what it says: "For those he foreknew" – God in advance knew he would make you, that he would save you, that he would love you, from eternity past. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image" – there's our word – "of his Son." Romans 8:29 says you and I, to image God, we need to continually be made more and more and more like Jesus, like Jesus, like Jesus.

So our goal is not to set up someone else as our normative, prototypical example, but to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Every day the Christian gets up and is seeking, by God's empowering grace, to be more like Jesus. And to reflect, to mirror, to image, to show forth, to bear forth God's image, God's goodness, God's truth, God's justice, God's love to the earth.

How does this happen? Well, Colossians 3:9-10 says it this way. "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices" – habits, behaviors, sinful proclivities, goofy thinking – "and have put on the new self" – new identity – "which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." To be a Christian is by definition to be one who has put off an old way of life, has put on a new way of life, has put off lying and stealing – Paul says this in Colossians and Ephesians, those kinds of sins – because that doesn't mirror God. Say, "Why shouldn't I steal?" God doesn't steal. "Why shouldn't I lie?" God doesn't lie. Say, "Well, in my environment" – wrong environment. You should be in relationship with God. "Well, my physical desires say" – well, they're corrupted. Our job is to – our goal is, our hope is, our joy is, honestly, to image Jesus Christ by putting off the old way of thinking, the old way of acting, the old way of feeling, and then living out of our new identity as God's image-bearers.

We're not animals. We're not gods. We're men and women made in the image and likeness of God to be in relationship with God and others and to mirror God to the earth. When you know that, this helps determine all of your moral decision making. "Am I going to sin? That doesn't mirror God. I shouldn't do that. Should I believe this, do this, feel this, think this, say this?" The question is, "Will that reflect God well to others? Will they see Jesus?"

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Or am I a broken mirror and I don't reflect God well? And when others see me they're getting a very distorted image of what God is like. Then I need to repent of sin and trust in Jesus. And I need to enjoy the opportunity to have my proverbial mirror put back together so that more and more the broken mirror of my life can more accurately reflect the goodness of my God – that Jesus would be seen. Sin is the equivalent of busting the mirror. Salvation is where continually God, in his grace, puts the mirror back together so that we mirror, we image, we reflect, we show forth God to the earth better, clearer, because it's all about Jesus.

And ultimately this is fulfilled in death. 1 Corinthians 15:49 says this: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of the dust” – that's the first Adam – “we also shall bear the image of the man from heaven” – that's Jesus, the second Adam. We'll look at it next week. In sin we reflect forth our father Adam in our sin. We're broken mirrors. But in Jesus we are able to continually mirror God better and better. And then we will die and we will rise, as Jesus died and he rose. And our body and our soul and our mind and our will and our heart and our emotions will be fully restored to their intended place. And we will be God's perfect, non-corrupted, fully-redeemed image bearers reflecting him forever with our thoughts and our words and our deeds and in our body and in our mind and from our heart, with our soul – totality. And so all of life is recovering, is enjoying God's work of enabling us to image him on the earth.

Here's what I want you to know. When you go to make decisions, ask this question: “What will this reflect about Jesus? What am I preaching with my life? What am I preaching with my money? What am I preaching with my food, my sex, my drink? What am I preaching with my relationships? What am I preaching with my work ethic? What am I reflecting? What am I showing? If it is supposed to be the glory of God shining down on me and reflecting forth to others, how am I doing? How is that going? Is God pleased?”

That leads to the last question, which is what is a life that images God? 2 Corinthians 3:18 says it this way: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord” – right, seeing Jesus is God. Jesus became a man. Jesus imaged, mirrored, reflected God perfectly. God became a man. When we see the glory of God in Jesus Christ. He goes on to say we, then, “are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” Better and better imaging, reflecting, showing forth all the time. “For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” – speaking of the Holy Spirit.

What he's saying is this: God made us in his image and likeness to mirror him on the earth. That through sin – which we'll deal with next week – the mirror is broken and we don't reflect God well. But through Jesus we see what it looks like to perfectly image, reflect, mirror God. And by the power of the Holy Spirit who enabled and empowered the life of Jesus, we, too, can be redeemed to where everyday, a little bit better and a little bit more, we reflect the glory of God on the earth and we show forth the goodness of Jesus to others – by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here's what I want you to know. This is a great life. This is a happy life. This is a joyous life. And this is a life that even works when you're broke. It works when you're suffering. It works when you're failing and hurting and dying. Because the question is not, “How can I live a life that glorifies me?” The question is, “How can I act in such a way that mirrors him?” That means that even the most painful, arduous, difficult parts of life are redeemed by God's people as the greatest opportunities to reflect the glory of God. Not just love people, but enemies. Not just forgive people who do what we would consider minor sins against us, but the big ones. Not just fall apart into a pit of despair when we are struggling and suffering, but trusting that as Jesus suffered well, we can suffer well to the glory of God, which gives us joy.

What I hate so much about so much of Christian theology today is that your joy is to be rooted in someone and something other than the mirroring of Jesus. And Jesus exists to give you success and glory and fame and power. No, you exist to give God glory at all times and places. And the reason people are miserable is because your joy is inextricably rooted to your willingness to mirror Jesus. That's the source of happiness. Everything else is vanity, Ecclesiastes says. It's a chasing after the wind. It's a wild goose chase with no goose. You're looking for something that cannot be found, and that is joy, meaning, purpose, value, dignity, significance apart from Creator, not understanding that you're his image-bearer. And not living to do what you were made to do: to reflect God to the earth.

Here's how we do this. First of all, we submit to God and his authority. I'm not God. He is. I trust him. Do what he says.

Secondly, by worshiping God. He speaks like he did to our first parents. We respond. He teaches us something. We live in light of it. We read the Bible. We pray. We listen to God and good counseling from those who love God, and good teachers of the Bible. And we respond.

Thirdly, we represent God with truth and justice. We don't simply accept people as they are. Some of you, in the name of mercy and compassion and tolerance and kindness, you let people get away with murder. You say, “Well, that's the way they are.” You should believe better for them. They bear the image and likeness of God. They can change. They should change. They, by God's grace, will change. I've met so many people, say, “Why do you let your spouse continue to live like that?” “Well, that's the way they are.” That's not the way they were made to be. They were made to image God, they're not. So lovingly, truthfully, respectfully speak to them. Confront them. It is working for the fullness of God's glory on the earth.

This includes my next point, which is by serving God, by advancing his Kingdom, by making culture as he told our first parents to, by loving in your marriage, by living as a witness to the world. That's where Jesus says to let our light so shine before others that they would see our good deeds and praise our Father who is in heaven. That light that we are to shine does not emanate from within us. It emanates from Jesus, and we reflect it fourth.

Number six: by loving all people of all races. Our country is inclusive of a tragedy that said that blacks were only a percentage human. What that means is they bear a percentage of the image and likeness of God, that somehow they're part human, part animal. That is completely antithetical to everything that the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that there are animals and people. People bear the image and likeness of God. Animals do not. Racism is the belief that some races are closer to animals than other races. That's the root of racism. And it comes from evolutionary thinking. It doesn't come from

biblical thinking.

In fact, as you read, like, Revelation 5, it says people from every language, tribe, tongue, nation, skin color – they're all in the Kingdom, all around Jesus, all worshipping him, altogether imaging him fully forever. There is no place for racism. There is no place for racial, class, gender discrimination that says, "You are inferior and I am superior." Because all people – male, female, young, old, black, white, rich, poor – all equally bear the image and likeness of God. Jesus died for all those people so that they all could mirror him well and be with him forever.

And what I find curious is we live in the world, it's like, "We need to have racial harmony." Why? Because we all evolved from the same primordial soup? No, because we're all made by the same God and bear his image and likeness.

This means as well we are to respect all human life: the weak, the powerless, the elderly, the unborn, the marginalized, those who suffer or struggle with debilitating injury and disability. Say, "Why? Why is that unborn kid, why is that elderly shut-in, why is that person in a vegetative state – why are they worth time, energy, money, prayer, love, concern, compassion? Don't they get in the way of our evolutionary progress? Aren't they less fit? Shouldn't we leave them behind?" No, they bear the image and likeness of God. And they reflect the image and likeness of God to the earth. And we are to reflect the image and likeness of God to them with love, mercy, grace, compassion, empathy. And in so doing we are not just honoring them, we're honoring God who made them. We're honoring God who made them.

This is the root of why we live a certain way and why we believe certain things. If you find a nation that isn't rooted with any Christian history or understanding it oftentimes very much struggles to have compassion, justice, equality. That only comes from the Imago Dei. We're all made by God. We're all equal because we're made in the image and likeness of God. Yeah, some are rich, some are poor. Some are healthy, some are sick. Some are young, some are old. Some are black, some are white. Some are born, some are unborn. Some are cognitive, some are comatose. And they all bear the image and likeness of God equally. And he's crowned them with glory and honor, and we should as well.

I'll close with this. The only way to do this is to be in relationship, first with God. We're made by God for relationship with God. God is a Trinitarian community of loving relationship. We're made in his image and likeness to be in relationship with him. You do that by repenting of sin, trusting in Jesus – God who came to image God to us perfectly. God became a man. He lived the life we should have lived and have not. He died the death we should die and will not if we trust in him. Give your sin to Jesus. Have him forgive your sin and send the Holy Spirit to help putting the mirror of your life back together so you can image him well. That's the source of your joy. And that at the end of your life you will have matured and grown, and then you will die. And everything will be perfected and you will image God perfectly forever in your glorified, resurrected body.

Secondly, you need not only be connected to God but to people, because it's not good for you to be alone. It's not good for you to be alone. You need God and his people. Adam, before sin even entered the world, had a perfect relationship with God. And God say, "You also need a relationship with others. It's not good for you to be alone." So let us, as a church, come alongside of you as Eve was brought alongside of Adam. That was his bride. The church is Jesus' bride. Let her come alongside of you – us, as the church. We want you to get plugged in. We want you to get connected. We want you to know people. We want them to know you.

Here's how we do that at Mars Hill. We plug you in digitally to The City so you can be informed of what's going on and who's here. We plug you into things called community groups. You get together with people for love and friendship and prayer and accountability and encouragement, mirroring God to one another, reflecting Jesus to one another so that you'll be conformed to his image a bit more everyday. And then thirdly, we do that through church membership, saying, "Be a part of the church family. Don't just come to the church to take goods and services. Come here for your mind. I got some teaching. Come here for your heart. I got encouraged. Come here so that you might, in totality, reflect God's image to others as a functioning, effective member of this church family and community."

And that's what this whole series is about, to see as many people as possible connected to God and one another so that together we mirror Jesus to one another and to the world that desperately needs him so much.

I'll pray and transition at this point.

Father God, I thank you that you have made us in your Trinitarian image and likeness. I thank you that you're honest and you say it's not good for us to be alone. We need other people to mirror Jesus into our life and to allow us to mirror Jesus into their life. God, I pray so desperately for those who would hear this message, that they would know they are not animals. They're not gods. They're not victims. They're not baseless emotions and untangled feelings. They're image-bearers of God. God, we bear your image. What a glorious opportunity. What an amazing job description. How superior that is to everything and anything else we would choose to give our lives to. I pray, Lord God, that by your Spirit you would regenerate our hearts, that you would renew our minds, that you would transform our lives so that we might mirror Jesus well. And in so doing, we might be happy doing what we were made to. In his good name, amen.