

Salvation and the image of God

Now as is the case with everything God does, He created people to display His **glory**. He achieved this by making people in **“His own image and likeness.”** Here in the text of Genesis God explicitly tells us that we were made to **bear His image** and to show forth His **likeness**. See here the reason **why** people were created by God.

Genesis 1:26-27 - 26 Then God said, **“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;** and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 And **God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** NASB

But what does it mean that we were created in the **“image and likeness of God?”** It really is a very simple concept and means that people are like God and represent Him in many divers ways. Grudem comments.... *“Out of all the creatures God made, only one creature, man, is said to be made “in the image of God.” What does that mean? We may use the following definition: The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God. When God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26), the meaning is that God plans to make a creature similar to himself. Both the Hebrew word for “image” and the Hebrew word for “likeness” refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an “image” of. The word image can also be used of something that represents something else.... Because “image” and “likeness” had these meanings, Scripture does not need to say something like, The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God in the following ways: intellectual ability, moral purity, spiritual nature, dominion over the earth, creativity, ability to make ethical choices, and immortality [or some similar statement]. Such an explanation is unnecessary, not only because the terms had clear meanings, but also because no such list could do justice to the subject: the text only needs to affirm that man is like God and the rest of Scripture fills in more details to explain this. In fact, as we read the rest of Scripture, we realize that a full understanding of man’s likeness to God would require a full understanding of who God is in his being and in his actions and a full understanding of who man is and what he does. The more we know about God and man the more similarities we will recognize, and the more fully we will understand what Scripture means when it says that man is in the image of God. The expression refers to every way in which man is like God.”*
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In this idea of **bearing the image of God**, we see the **reason** and **purpose** for which we were created and **why we exist**. Here is the **significance** and meaning for human life, it is to **be like God** and **bear His image**. And it is for this reason that we know that mankind is the highest created order of beings and has the unique role and responsibility to **bear God’s own image**. And as a result, we have also been created to experience God in profound ways. We are created with a capacity to **enjoy** the **pleasantness** and **beauty** of the virtue and **Goodness of God**.

Psalms 16:11 - 11 Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; **In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.** NASB

Psalms 17:15 - 15 As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; **I will be satisfied with Thy likeness** when I awake. NASB

2 Corinthians 4:17 - 17 For momentary, light affliction is **producing for us an eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison NASB

Ephesians 2:4-7 - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 **in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** NASB

Ephesians 3:16-19 - 16 that He would **grant you, according to the riches of His glory**, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 **may be able to comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and **to know the love of Christ** which surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled up to all the fullness of God**. NASB

1 Timothy 6:17 - 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, **who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy**. NASB

He created us to be both **receptors** and **reflectors** of **His virtue** and **glory**. Receptors so that we could be *“satisfied”* and *“filled up to all the fullness of God”* so that in **our full satisfaction** we would then seek after and **sound forth the praise of His glory** as an overflow of the enjoyment of His Goodness, the excellency of His own virtue or the pleasantness of His attributes.

Reflectors so that we would then **seek after** and **sound forth the praise of His name** and **worship Him** for His own profound excellency, the highest and most worthy glory, the Glory of the Triune God! We were created to put on display the Glory of God and this is the great meaning and purpose of our lives, to **bear His image**. In this we will both glorify and enjoy God! Grudem comments... *“The fact that God created us for his own glory determines the correct answer to the question, “What is our purpose in life?” Our purpose must be to fulfill the reason that God created us: to glorify him. When we are speaking with respect to God himself, that is a good summary of our purpose. But when we think of our own interests, we make the happy discovery that we are to enjoy God and take delight in him and in our relationship to him. Jesus says, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). David tells God, “In your presence there is fulness of joy in your right hand are pleasures for evermore” (Ps 16:11). He longs to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, “to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Ps 27:4)... Fullness of joy is found in knowing God and delighting in the excellence of his character. To be in his presence, to enjoy fellowship with him, is a greater blessing than anything that can be imagined. How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God....For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. (Ps 84:1-2,10).”* (from Systematic Theology, Copyright © 1994 by Wayne Grudem)

Enjoying God, Worshipping and becoming like Him

God wants to make us happy and blessed in the enjoyment of Himself so that in our enjoyment of Him we would overflow with praise and worship. Then as we increase in the enjoyment of God's nature, as we worship Him we become more like Him, displaying with even greater intensity the glory of His virtue in ourselves as we take on and participate in the very nature of God.

2 Peter 1:2-4 - 2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

This cannot truly happen in us until we truly appreciate the virtue and Goodness of God's own nature through the *“true knowledge of Him.”* We must come to know Him personally and intimately, to *“know”* Him truly in our heart. It is *“through”* this *“true knowledge of Him”* that His virtue is *“multiplied”* to us as Peter states, *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”* And this he tells us is how we become like God. We have *“everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him.”* This is to say that we become like God or we **bear His image** and **likeness** in an increasing way, we *“participate in the divine nature,”* in *“godliness,”* through coming to know Him as His

character is **"multiplied"** to us **"in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord."** Therefore Peter tells us to **"apply all diligence"** in the exercise of our **"faith"** to become like Him and take on His wonderful virtue.

2 Peter 1:5-8 - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence,** and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

Thus the manifest glory of God is increasing in intensity through our lives as we become more like Him, because in becoming like Him we therefore **bear His image**, with greater intensity we manifest and display His excellent goodness as **reflectors** of His image. This is why we were both created and saved. Consider Jesus words in Matthew 5:16 with this in mind.

Matthew 5:16 - 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, **and glorify your Father who is in heaven.** NASB

And so God calls us to both **worship Him** and to **become like Him**, to bear His image, so that we might put on display His glory through our lives.

The meaning of **worship** is to **"ascribe worth or value to something."** As we worship God, if it is truly motivated from the heart, we are praising Him because in our hearts we truly value the worth of His person. We value His glory, the sum total of His Goodness, the excellency of His attributes. We value and cherish His patience and mercy, His wisdom and love, His power and knowledge. As we grow in the personal knowledge of God and experience of Him through that knowledge, we grow in our appreciation of His glory, and because in our hearts we truly are valuing His Goodness, we seek therefore by default to **become more like Him** because we truly value His nature and want to be like that ourselves. We **value His love**, so we want to be **loving**, because we appreciate love and seek after it to possess it fully. We **value His wisdom**, so we seek to become **wise**, because we have eaten the good fruit of wisdom, and experienced the pleasantness of her who is more valuable than rubies (Prov 3:13-18)! In this way we become what we worship. We long and thirst for Him, and glory in Him, then we long for Him again, and glory in Him again. We feast on the table He has prepared for us in His Word!

Psalms 42:1-2 - 1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So **my soul pants for Thee, O God.**

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? NASB

Psalms 63:1-5 - O God, Thou art my God; **I shall seek Thee earnestly; My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.** 2 Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, To see Thy power and Thy glory. 3 Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise Thee. 4 So I will bless Thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name. 5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. NASB

Psalms 84:2 - 2 **My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.** NASB

This process of enjoying, worshipping and becoming like God is very pleasing to God. Grudem comments... *"As we glorify God and enjoy him, Scripture tells us that he rejoices in us. We read, 'As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you' (Isa 62:5), and Zephaniah prophesies that the Lord 'will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival' (Zeph 3:17-18)."* (from Systematic Theology, Copyright © 1994 by Wayne Grudem)

But consider that even the wicked become what they worship.

Psalms 115:1-8 - 1 Not to us, O Lord, not to us, But **to Thy name give glory Because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth.** 2 Why should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?"

3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. 4 **Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands.** 5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; 6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; 7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. 8 **Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.** NASB

See here how the “nations” are described as having *“god’s that are idols which are the work of man’s hands,”* dead lifeless things made by men. He says in verse 8, *“those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.”* See here that even the wicked become like what they worship, even if it is a dead and lifeless image made with their own hands. But notice here that the prophet told us where the glory and praise properly belonged, *“to thy name give glory, because of thy lovingkindness because of thy truth.”* Here we are told to worship God and give Him glory because He is worthy of our devoted worship. And there is also this element of **trust in God**. Not only do we value and worship Him, but **we earnestly trust in Him** to be our God and **provide** for us, **deliver** us, **heal** us and **meet all of our needs** and even our deepest spiritual needs. We were made as **receptors to experience and enjoy** the Goodness of God and also as **reflectors to shine forth His virtue** in our own being as we become like Him. See in these things that we ultimately begin to take on the nature of what we value, worship and trust in the most.

Jesus Must be Supreme in Our Affections

What do you love? What do you treasure? Of what can it be said about you that you long for and desire it above all other things in your life? Whatever that thing may be, it can be said that this is what you *worship*. That is because the word *worship* originates from the idea of “*ascribing worth*” or “*value*” to something. So then, that which you **worship** is that which you **value** or ascribe worth to, that which you **treasure** or **adore**. It is that which you **revere** or **honor**, that which you **venerate** or **idolize**, it is that which you **glorify** or consider to be highly **valuable**. Now if Christ is supremely valuable in reality, and there is truly nothing that even comes close to being as infinitely worthy of all glory and honor, worship and adoration as Him, it only stands to reason that to fail to give Him this proper place of honor in our hearts and affections is to be sorely mistaken and **self-deceived** in our **value system**. This is because He is the One who is worthy of Glory and honor!

Revelation 4:11 - 11 **"Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power;** for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." NASB
Revelation 5:12-14 – 12 **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.** 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, **"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."** 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped. NASB

If we love something more than Christ, we have **misplaced affections**. He is altogether lovely, therefore not to love Him is to have a **degraded mind**, and to throw contempt on the highest manifestation of human excellence and Divine love. This is why the Scripture pronounces a curse upon those who fail to love Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:22 - 22 **If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.** Maranatha. NASB
This is to say if you do not love Christ, you are accursed already! In fact, the very state of being accursed is the state of not properly valuing that which is truly valuable. If we love and adore that which is wretched and worthless, we are then by virtue of this, wretched and worthless. If we truly love what is supremely lovely and virtuous and valuable, we will then become lovely and virtuous in ourselves, because we properly value what is *truly* virtuous. More than this, as we **trust in** and **rely upon Jesus**, our great God and King, **enjoying Him** and our daily

relationship with Him, it has a **transforming** affect that propels us with increasing intensity toward Christ's likeness. We live out this **union in Christ** that we have with Him.

Knowing this, we should be all the more **eager to worship** the Glorious Creator, **Jesus Christ!** Even Jesus Himself taught us that **our love for Him was to exceed all other loves** and affections in our lives.

Luke 14:25-27 - 25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 **"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** 27 **"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. NASB**

The word **"hate"** here does not suggest positive antagonism but rather "to love less". Our love for Christ must be so strong that **all other love is like hatred in comparison** to it. In fact, we must hate **"our own lives"** and be willing to lose our lives and **"carry our own cross"** to follow Him. We must love Him more than our own very lives because He is more valuable than our very lives themselves. When we **trust** Him and **rely** upon Him and **enjoy** Him, following Him in obedience to His Lordship, we show forth the genuine character of our love for Him and living for Christ becomes our main life purpose. When we do this, we have **properly placed our affections** on that which is worthy of our love, and our trust in that place where it properly belongs, and we will then become like Him because we value His virtue and long to possess it more than anything else. As we truly love to follow Him and obey His commandments, we begin to live out His virtues and His character which is being created in us by the Holy Spirit. If you **treasure joy**, you will **seek to be joyful**. If you honor and **esteem justice**, you will **seek to be just** in all your affairs. If you esteem love and compassion as most valuable, then you will become loving and compassionate. If **you trust in, honor, esteem, venerate, treasure and glorify God** more than anything else, in all of His glorious virtue, then you will **become like Him**, because you seek to possess Him above all other things. Consider how loving, hungering and thirsting for God takes on a new meaning in this context.

Psalms 143:5-6 - 5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy doings; **I muse on the work of Thy hands.** 6 **I stretch out my hands to Thee; My soul longs for Thee**, as a parched land. NASB

The most loving and beneficial thing that God can command us is to treasure, esteem and love Him more than anything. This because **He is what is in reality most worthy of being loved**, and this causes us to become like Him because we seek His virtue and want to possess it more than anything else. Thus we see the reason why the greatest of all commandments is to love God! In other words **the highest of priorities for our lives is the love and honor of God**. It is imperative to understand that He must have **first place**, or **preeminence** in our hearts and affections. We must **love Him above** all other things.

Matthew 6:33 - 33 **"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness;** and all these things shall be added to you. NASB

Matthew 22:36-38 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, **"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'** 38 **"This is the great and foremost commandment. NASB**

Philippians 2:12-16 - 12 So then, my beloved, **just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more** in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 **that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach** in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you appear as lights in the world**, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. NASB