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## Made in His Image: Introduction

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*“So God created man in his own image...in the image of God he created him”*

For us to better understand our true identity, we must look to the origin of humanity. The very first thing Scripture says about human beings is that we are made in God’s image.

### Key Text:

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”  
29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Gen. 2:5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— 7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Gen. 2:18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”  
20...But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 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 its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

- 1) In the rhythmic retelling of the Creation story in Genesis 1, for five days, God says, “Let there be...” and whatever he declares instantly is created and is considered good. On the sixth day of creation, what noticeable substitution is made in the “Let there” narrative in 1:26-27? What significance might this place on the sixth day of creation?
- 2) What does it mean that mankind was created in the *image* of God? How is the word *image* used in the OT (cf. Num. 33:52; 2 Kings 11:18; Amos 5:26)? In today's world? Note: *image* in the Septuagint is translated *eikon*, or a likeness. Literally, a statue, or figuratively, a representation, resemblance.
- 3) If mankind was *created in the image of God*, what might that suggest as man's purpose as his creation?

- 4) What was man's calling after they were created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:28)? Did man succeed?
- 5) Though we still bear his image, albeit imperfectly, the amazing thing about God is that he didn't leave us as shattered, broken, and ruined vessels. He redeems his image bearers by sending his Son as the perfect image bearer and restoring us to our created calling. Jesus reconstructs us back to our original purposes. Read the following verses and consider the questions: "Who should I be?" or "What is God's will for your life?" or "What is my identity"?
- a) Heb. 1:3
  - b) Rom. 8:29
  - c) Col. 1:15
  - d) 1 Pt. 2:21
  - e) 1 Jn. 2:6
- 6) Read Col. 2:9-10. Consider the following questions:
- a) What dwells in Jesus? What does this mean? What does this imply about God's characteristics and attributes?
  - b) Who are we filled in, according to verse 10? What does this imply about God's characteristics and attributes in our lives today? In Christ, we are being filled with what we were always supposed to be, each day becoming image bearers of God.
- 7) How does God restore us back to our created calling (cf. Col. 3:10)? Our identity is found in our older brother, Christ, who in his humanity, displayed to the whole world a perfect image of God. We are called to follow his example as he serves as our model and guide to our true identity. "Yes, the will of God is the narrow path for those who walk it. But we need not wander aimlessly, as those with no sense of where his will would have us place our next step, in danger of straying off a cliff. We simply walk in the steps of our Savior, Jesus Christ" (Wilkin, "In His Image").
- 8) It's important to make the distinction between what divine attributes we can aspire to reflect versus those that belong to God alone.
- a) Incommunicable attributes: Traits that are true of God alone (infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign, etc.). We become his rival when we strive for these types of characteristics.
  - b) Communicable attributes: Traits that can become true of us but also are of God (holy, loving, just, good, merciful, gracious, faithful, etc.). We become "conformed to the image of Christ" when we reflect these attributes.

God's will in our lives is for us to conform ourselves to the image of Christ, who perfectly showed us in his incarnation how to be fully human as God intended. If the Biblical answer to "Who should I be?" is "Be like the very image of God", we must ask: "Who is God?" How should the knowledge that God is (*fill in the blank*) change the way I live?

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## Made in His Image: Holiness

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*“There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you”*

If I am made in the image of God, called to bear his image and conform to the image of Christ, then where do I begin? What should be the first thing that comes to mind when I think about God? His holiness emerges as one of his most important characteristics.

The word holy appears almost seven hundred times in the Bible. In its verb form, sanctify, appears an additional two hundred times. Twenty-nine times Scripture mentions his "holy name". He is called the "Holy One of Israel" twenty-five times in Isaiah alone.

### **Key Text:**

**Isaiah 6:** <sup>1</sup>In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” <sup>4</sup>And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” <sup>6</sup>Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup>And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” <sup>8</sup>And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

- 1) We typically define “holy” as purity, righteousness, possessing a pure character, moral excellence (which is not wrong). The word “holy” has a more basic and fundamental meaning in Scripture than purity. Consider the following passages to help form a more complete definition of “holy”.
  - a) Gen. 2:3
  - b) Exod. 3:5
  - c) Exod. 28:2, 4
  - d) Exod. 30:25
  - e) Exod. 40:11
- 2) What is the first thing that Isaiah hears in his vision? Can you think of other examples of repetition in Scripture? What is the significance of repetition in Scripture?
- 3) Seeing God in all his glory and holiness had a great effect on Isaiah and uncovered his true identity. What was Isaiah’s response when encountering the holiness of God? Why is this a correct response?
- 4) What was God’s response to Isaiah? Why was this required to be in the presence of God?

5) While it may appear that God is only holy (incommunicable attribute), he consistently calls his people to be holy. Consider the following OT passages:

- a) Lev. 11:44-45
- b) Lev. 19:2
- c) Lev. 20:7
- d) Lev. 20:26

Consider the NT passages of God calling his people to holiness:

- a) Heb. 10:10
- b) 1 Thess. 4:3, 7
- c) Heb. 12:14
- d) Rom. 12:1-2

### **Key Text:**

**1 Pt. 1:**<sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. <sup>20</sup> He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. <sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

**1 Pt. 2:**<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

- 6) What was Peter's response to the "Holy and Righteous One" in Luke 5:4-11? Compare to Isaiah 6. Was Peter's response appropriate?
- 7) Based on Peter's exhortation in his letters, what are two traits of a person who is holy?
- 8) According to scholars, 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians really stuck out in Greco-Roman pagan society because of four things: integrity, sympathy, chastity, and generosity. And because they were different, unique, unlike the society surrounding them, it had a powerful impact on the spread of the Gospel. Read through the letters of Peter. He gives us practical application on living lives dedicated to holiness. How can we be holy as God is holy?

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## Made in His Image: Love

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*"We love because he first loved us"*

### **Key Text:**

**Matthew 22:** <sup>34</sup> But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

**Mark 12:** <sup>28</sup> And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup> And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. <sup>33</sup> And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup> And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

- 1) Why is the idea that "God is love" so popular with society? How does the world define love? What are some influences that can pollute our understanding of the *love of God*?
- 2) There are four different kinds of love in the Greek NT language with *agape* predominately used 259 times. *Agape* describes the love of God, which is an act of the will. *Agape* is "an intelligent, purposeful attitude of esteem and devotion; a selfless, purposeful, outgoing attitude that desires to do good to the one loved" (Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*). Consider how the following passages emphasize this definition: Rom. 5:8; Jn. 3:16.
- 3) Based on *agape* love being the great *commandment*, what does that imply that love is not?
- 4) Why does the great commandment instruct to love God first, others second?

- 5) A quick Google search found the following quotes:  
“Love yourself so much that when someone treats you wrong, you recognize it.” – Rena Rose  
“To fall in love with yourself is the first secret to happiness.” – Robert Morely  
“Self-love is the source of all our other loves.” – Pierre Corneille  
“Even when it seems that there is no one else, always remember there’s one person who never ceased to love you – yourself.” – Sanhita Baruah
- a. Consider Mt. 22:39, Mk. 12:31, Lk. 10:27. Based on these passages, does Jesus teach us to love ourselves? Why or why not? Do you have any concerns with the above quotes? If so, why? Also read 2 Tim. 3:1-7.
  - b. How does Paul apply the command to “love your neighbor as you love yourself” in Eph. 5:28-30?
- 6) Romantic love, brotherly love, and a parent’s love for a child is limited in its capacity for the following reasons:
- a. Based on need
  - b. Covets reciprocity
  - c. Weighs the worth of its object

What is the scope or nature of *agape* love according to 1 Cor. 13:4-8?

**Key Text:**

Galatians 5: <sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

<sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. <sup>6:1</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

- 7) What is the law of Christ? How can we fulfill this law based on the context that it was given? How does this show love towards others?

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## Made in His Image: Goodness

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*“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good”*

### **Key Text:**

**Gen. 1:** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

**Gen. 50:** <sup>15</sup>When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.” <sup>16</sup>So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: <sup>17</sup>‘Say to Joseph, ‘Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.’” And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup>His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup>So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

**Ps. 34:** <sup>8</sup>Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! <sup>9</sup>Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! <sup>10</sup>The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. <sup>11</sup>Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. <sup>12</sup>What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? <sup>13</sup>Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. <sup>14</sup>Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

**Gal. 6:** <sup>6</sup>Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. <sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

- 1) God declares in the beginning that the creation of light is good, eventually declaring that all his creation is *very* good. Why is God able to determine what is good (1 Jn. 1:5, James 1:17)? What does it mean that God is good?
- 2) The goodness of God as reflected in human beings is “not a mere passive quality, but a deliberate preference of right to wrong, the firm and persistent resistance of all moral evil, and the choosing and following of all moral good” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary). Why has God given us some reflection of his own sense of goodness?
- 3) Think about the life of Joseph. How is the goodness of God demonstrated in his life? Using Joseph's life as a test case, what is implied that the goodness of God is not? (Gen. 50:20)

- 4) Paul emphasizes our created calling in Eph. 2:10. Who are we created in? What are we created for? How is this even possible? (hint: look at the context of Eph. 2:10, also look at Titus 3:3-8)
  
- 5) What does Jesus want the world to see in us, based on his commission in Mt. 5:14-16?
  
- 6) What is “our walk” referring to in Scripture (cf. Gal. 5:16, Micah 6:6-8, Eph. 4:1)? Why does Paul warn us of the possibility of growing weary in doing good (Gal. 6:6-10)? In what area of your life are you most prone to grow weary of doing good?
  
- 7) Romans 8:28 might be one of the best-known texts in Scripture, however, it is commonly used out of context. In the context of enduring through suffering (v. 17, 23), Paul says:  
<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

There are five truths that we understand from this verse: 1) God works, 2) For the good of his people, 3) in all things, 4) of those who love him, 5) who have been called according to his purpose. Time constrains us from going into depth on this verse but the overall point that we must take from this verse is that we must be careful to define what good is in God’s terms, not ours. He is reminding them of these truths in the face of suffering.

- a. All things happen to Christians. Becoming a Christian doesn’t provide you immunity from bad things. Terrible things happen to people who love God. We must get it out of our minds that not as many bad things will happen to me if I love God.
  
- b. Although bad things happen, they work for good. Bad things are really bad things. Losing a child is a bad thing. Having to fight cancer is a bad thing. Your house burning to the ground is a bad thing. They are working for good, but they are bad. The promise of God is not that you will have better circumstances—that if you love God you will have more good things happen on this side of eternity. The promise is that God will take the bad things and work them for good. God does not promise you better life circumstances, he promises you a better life—the life that is to come. Jesus did not suffer so that you would not suffer. He suffered so that when you suffer you become like him, GLORIFIED.
  
- 8) Can you think of examples in your life where you have seen the goodness of God? What are some practical ways we can show the goodness of God in our circles of influence?



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## Made in His Image: Justice

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*“His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice”*

### **Key Text:**

**Ps. 146:** <sup>5</sup> Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, <sup>6</sup> who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; <sup>7</sup> who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; <sup>8</sup> the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. <sup>9</sup> The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. <sup>10</sup> The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!

**Ps. 19:** <sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup> the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup> the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

**Micah 6:** <sup>6</sup> “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup> Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” <sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

- 1) Dominant animals prey on the weaker within the animal kingdom. An antelope who is peacefully grazing in an African Sahara is commonly chased down by a hungry lion or a mother giant panda can abandon one of her offspring for the betterment of the other. The stronger one will survive and the weaker will die.

But if humans were to act in similar ways towards other humans, it would clearly be unfair, unjust, criminal. Human beings cannot stand for injustice. Even at the youngest of ages, humans want things to be fair. As a parent, you might be the just judge yourself, determining what is fair in your house between a couple of boys fighting for who has the most gummi bears and why it's unfair that he has more or less than the others. Why do you think human beings crave justice when the rest of the animal kingdom could care less?

- 2) On one hand, the concept of *justice* can suggest *righteousness*, which comes from the Hebrew word *tsedek* or the Greek word *dikaiois* suggesting an ethical standard that refers to right relationships between people and treating others with dignity. For example, if I steal something, then I pay the consequences. Additionally, God's righteousness or justice, according to Grudem, suggests “that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right” (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*). Consider the following passages: Deut. 32:4, Gen. 18:25, Isa. 45:19, Ps. 19:7-9, 1 Pt. 1:17.
  - a. What do we learn about the governance of God?
  - b. What is the standard that God governs against?
  - c. How does this compare to today's government and judicial system?

- 3) On the other hand, *justice* is used in Scripture under the Hebrew term *mishpat*, which can indicate seeking out the vulnerable people who are being taken advantage of and helping them, advocating for the vulnerable and making changes to prevent injustice. Read Ps. 146:5-10. What does the *mishpat* of God look like?
- 4) What can we learn from God's *just* discipline and what role does it have in our lives today (cf. Jer. 10:23, Heb. 12:6)? Can you think of a time when you experienced the discipline of God and what was the result?
- 5) **Key Text:**  
**Rom 3:** <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- a. Without Jesus, what is our *just* verdict before God (cf. Jn. 3:36)?
  - b. Why can we stand justified before God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:12-13; 1 Jn. 1:9, 2:1-2)?
  - c. If we become forgetful that we are justified in Christ, what can we quickly seek to justify? What forms of self-justification and keeping score can we be most prone to?
- 6) According to Micah 6:6-8, what is God's will for your life? What does "do justice" look like today? How can we apply *agape* love to doing justice?

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## Made in His Image: Mercy

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*“The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made”*

### **Key Text:**

**Ex. 34:** <sup>6</sup>“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

**Hos. 6:** <sup>4</sup>What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. <sup>5</sup>Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. <sup>6</sup>For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

**Mt. 9:** <sup>9</sup>As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. <sup>10</sup>And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. <sup>11</sup>And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” <sup>12</sup>But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup>Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

**Lk. 18:** <sup>9</sup>He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: <sup>10</sup>“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ <sup>13</sup>But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**1 Pt. 2:** <sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- 1) It can be difficult to fully describe God. Exodus 34:6-7, which is referenced and re-quoted at least 20 more times in Scripture, gives us a snapshot of Yahweh describing himself. What five characteristics are attributed to Yahweh in 34:6? Why does Yahweh describe who he is to Moses? What has happened in the context of this proclamation? What tension do you see between justice and mercy?
- 2) Mercy can be described as the compassionate disposition to forgive someone or to offer aid, assistance, or help to someone in need (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*). In Hebrew, mercy is translated *rakham*. This word is related and has its roots with the Hebrew word *rekhem*, which is translated "womb". Consider the love of a mother for her unborn child or infant. How does this help us understand the mercy or compassion of God (cf. Isa. 49:14-15)? How does Jesus express this motherly compassion (cf. Mt. 23:37)?

- 3) *Rakbum* isn't just an emotional word, rather it also involves action. This word is used to describe God's actions motivated by his emotions, like when he hears the cries of the Israelites in Egyptian bondage (Ex. 2:23-25, 3:7-10). In his ministry, Jesus is moved by this same compassion to help those who need help: healing of the blind (Mt. 9:27-31; 20:29-34), lepers (Mk. 1:41, Lk. 17:11-19), widow's son in Nain (Lk. 7:13).

Describe the context when Jesus says, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt. 9:13). What is he quoting? What is going on in the context of the original quote? How is this applied to his current situation? What is the application of this teaching to us today?

- 4) The ultimate expression of compassion was when Jesus entered into humanity's suffering and death itself, making a way for the justice and mercy of God to be displayed at the cross. How was mercy displayed in Jesus' death (cf. Eph. 2:4-5, 1 Pt. 1:3)? How about justice (cf. 1 Jn. 2:1-2, Gal. 3:13-14)?
- 5) What compels Jesus to teach the parable in Lk. 18:9-14? Describe the prayer of the first man. How about the second? What is the result of each of these prayers? Why? What does this say about the power of the mercy of God?
- 6) According to 1 Pt. 2:9-10, what are five identifiers that belong to those who are image bearers of God?
- 7) Because of God's mercy, Paul states that we must offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2). How should the knowledge that God is merciful and how he has shown us mercy change the way I live (cf. Mt. 18:21-22, Lk. 6:32-36)?

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## Made in His Image: Grace

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*“The LORD waits to be gracious to you”*

### **Key Text:**

**Ex. 34:** <sup>6</sup>“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

**Eph. 2:**<sup>1</sup>And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup>among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Titus. 2:**<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup>waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- 1) What makes it difficult for us today to accurately define the *grace of God*?
  
- 2) Grace describes God's disposition to show favor towards humans, and God's continuing loyalty towards those accepted into divine favor. The Hebrew term *chen* is used to describe acts of God's generous favor or grace shown towards his people. “Finding favor in the eyes of the Lord” is a common expression in the Old Testament to describe *chen*.
  - a. Who was the first person to whom God shows *chen* (cf. Gen. 6:5-8)?
  - b. The best example of God showing *khanun* (which is the adjective form of *chen*), is in the golden calf debacle at the foot of Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex. 33:15-16, 17, 34:6).
  - c. Particularly in the Psalms, there are frequent requests for *khanun* in times of great difficulty or in need of deliverance (cf. Ps. 4:1, 6:2-3, 25:16-20).
  - d. When God's people rebel, in many instances they are asking for God's favor despite the fact that they really don't deserve it (cf. Ps. 103:8-11, 130:1-8).
  - e. Prophets like Isaiah declared that one day God will show *chen* to his people by delivering his people ultimately through the Messiah-King Jesus Christ (Isa. 30:18-26).

- 3) The word used to describe grace in the New Testament is the Greek word *charis*, which simply means “gift”. *Charis* is not an inherently Biblical term. Preston M. Sprinkle writes:

Rich people in the ancient world often gave *charises*, or gifts, to other people. They would donate *charises* to their hometown; a fountain in the city square, a statue of Zeus next to the courthouse. They would give a *charis* to someone in need of food or shelter. The wealthy were eager to give gifts to people. Why? Because the ability to give a *charis* showed (or showed off) that they had the means to give. So Christians weren't the first people to talk about grace. But Christians revolutionized what *charis* meant, and here's why.

When rich people gave a *charis* to this person and a *charis* to that person, they didn't give it indiscriminately. The ancients gave *charises* only to those who were worthy to receive it. *Charis* was given to people who were worthy of *charis*: those who had a high status or who were morally upright, intellectually astute, or physically impressive. After all, we wouldn't want to squander our *charis* on some bum in the gutter who's unworthy of our gift. A rich person wouldn't waste *charises* on outcasts, the unappreciative, or thugs who had nothing to offer in return. But Jesus did. Jesus and his followers gutted the word *charis* and infused it with fresh meaning, with life giving power. Jesus did more than give *charis* to the unworthy dregs of society. He made it his mission to seek them out (*Scandalous Grace*).

- a. How does John describe Jesus as God's *charis* (cf. Jn. 1:14-17)?
- b. How does Paul describe grace (cf. Eph. 2:1-10)?
- c. How does Paul describe his worth and the gift of God's grace (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 15:9-10)?
- d. Who does God extend grace to (cf. James 4:6)?
- e. How much did grace cost to God (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9)? To us? What should this motivate us to do?

- 4) Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns us of the tendency to “cheapen grace”:

Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; Grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; And, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing...In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. “All for sin could not atone.” Well, then let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin (*The Cost of Discipleship*).

How should the knowledge that God is gracious and how he has shown us grace change the way we live (cf. Titus 2:11-14, 2 Pt. 3:17-18, Rom. 6:1-4)?

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## Made in His Image: Faithfulness

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*“Great is your faithfulness”*

**Key Text:**

**Ex. 34:** <sup>6</sup>“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

**Deut. 7:** <sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, <sup>10</sup>and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face.

**Lam. 3:** <sup>22</sup>The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup>they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup>“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

**Rom. 4:** <sup>18</sup>In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” <sup>19</sup>He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness<sup>[b]</sup> of Sarah's womb. <sup>20</sup>No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

- 1) Time and time again, mankind has shown to be inconsistently faithful. What do we know about the faithfulness of God (cf. Ps. 90:1, Isa. 64:4, Deut. 7:9-10)? Define the term faithfulness.
- 2) God knows our tendency toward forgetfulness and has commanded us to remember his faithfulness. In what ways can we tangibly be reminded of his faithfulness (cf. Lam. 3:22-24, Gen. 8:22)?
- 3) No one is free from life's difficulties and trials. What can we learn about the faithfulness of God when we are beset with trials (cf. Heb. 13:5, Gen. 50:20, James 1:2-4)? What did Abraham learn about the faithfulness of God (cf. Heb. 11:17-19, Rom. 4:18-20)?

- 4) What are some characteristics of temptation according to 1 Cor. 10:13? Even when we consider unfaithfulness to God, how does he show his faithfulness?
  
- 5) According to 1 Jn. 1:9, how does God show us his faithfulness? What must we be faithful to do regarding our sins?
  
- 6) “Because of God’s limitless power and unshakeable faithfulness, the hope we have in him is hope with certainty. We do not hope in his promises with our fingers crossed behind our backs. Rather, we hope as those who know he has certainly been faithful in the past and will certainly be faithful to the end. We can hope with certainty that *he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ* (Phil. 1:6) (Wilkin, “In His Image”). Why are we able to hold fast to our future hope (cf. Heb. 10:19-23)?
  
- 7) If God is faithful to do what he says in everything, then how should we be towards him if we are accurately reflecting him (cf. Ps. 119:30)?
  
- 8) How should the knowledge that God is faithful change the way we live?