

# Image

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want you guys to open up your Bibles to Genesis chapter 1.! The further we get along in this book, the faster we'll move.

But this morning we're going to be simply looking at verses 26 all the way down through the end in verse 31. And so I want you guys to stand with me as we read from God's Word together. Moses writes in verse 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 upon the earth.

So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them. 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.

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. 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. 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.

[ 1 : 56 ] Father, I pray that Your Spirit would take Your Word now. Open our eyes to see its truth. Open our hearts to be transformed and changed by what we see. I pray in Christ's name.

Amen. You guys be seated. Amen. You know, there are always some strange mixers, some strange dichotomies in the way that people look at the world, in the way that people think about things, the way that people say things.

So that one of the things that I find somewhat strange about the culture that we live in, the world that we live in, is its view of man. So that on the one hand, you have people who will demote man. Human beings are nothing more than animals. We're just a more highly evolved form of other animals. And while we have abilities and faculties not possessed by other animals, we're nothing more than animals.

But then at the same time, those same people who argue for that will also make man's reason the measure of all truth. So how do they come to the conclusion that man is nothing more than an animal?

[ 3 : 07 ] By exalting man's ability to, on his own, apart from any divine revelation, understand the world around him. Exalting human reason with the result of demoting humanity to a lower level.

That seems weird to me. Does that seem strange to you? That that's how our world thinks? That that's sort of how things work? In fact, I was reading this week, and I'm not sure how many of you have ever heard of a man by the name of Christopher Hitchens.

He died, I think, last year or the year before. But he was a well-known, noted atheist, and he engaged in a lot of debates with Christians and leaders of other religions. And that was sort of his thing that he was known for.

He wrote a number of books on atheism, wrote a number of books against Christianity, against religion in general. But one of the things that he said, and I'm paraphrasing him here, of course, one of the things that he found most absurd about religion and about Christianity in general was this desire to place man at the center of the universe.

He thought that it was incredibly arrogant for human beings to think of themselves as, in our world, as the center of all of the universe. We would say, at the center of creation, he just says, the center of the universe.

[ 4 : 18 ] And he felt that that was arrogant and misguided and wrong, that man is nothing more than an evolved animal, no more important than any other creature in the world.

And yet, as we look here in Genesis chapter 1, and we look at God's account of how he created the world, we see that man stands at the pinnacle of all of God's creation.

In fact, I said a few weeks ago, as we were beginning Genesis, that as you move through Genesis chapter 1, one of the things that you notice very quickly is that God does things the way that he does them.

He creates everything in the order in which he creates it. He begins to fix the formlessness and void of verse 2 through verses 3 to the end of the chapter, and he does all that with the ultimate aim of making the world a habitable, livable place suitable for the greatest of all of his creations, mankind. So that in a real sense, all of Genesis chapter 1 is moving towards and looking forward to the creation of man here on day 6. Everything is set up to make the world optimal for man.

[ 5 : 30 ] So land is drawn up out of the waters. Before that, light is created. The sun, moon, and stars are given, the writer says, so that they could be markers for times and seasons upon the earth and to give light upon the earth.

Everything happens here in Genesis chapter 1 to prepare the world for man. Plants are given for food, sun, moon, and stars. Animals are created on days 5 and 6 so that man will have creatures over which he rules and exercises his dominion and authority.

Everything is arranged and ordered in such a way as to point to the significance of mankind. You can see it not only in the structure of Genesis chapter 1.

You can see it when you arrive in verse 26 where we're told that God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

Compare that to everything else God says in the chapter. Verse 3, God said, let there be light.

Verse 6, God said, let there be an expanse. Verse 9, God said, let the waters be gathered together.

[ 6 : 37 ] Verse 11, God said, let the earth sprout vegetation. On and on. This is the only time in all the records of all that God said in Genesis chapter 1 do we see any sort of internal dialogue from God Himself where we have a record of God actually deliberating.

He doesn't simply say, let man live upon the earth or let man be formed from the ground. He doesn't simply do that. He says, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

Even in the way in which God goes about initiating the creation of human beings, it points to the significance of mankind. And then, of course, by virtue of His creating us alone in His image after His likeness, that by itself points to the significance of man.

One of the things that I said a few weeks ago when we think about how Genesis chapter 1 is in a real sense a very man-centered type chapter, what we should really think about is that the Bible presents man as the pinnacle of God's creation.

And yet, it does it in such a way that what we have here in Genesis and really throughout the Scriptures is a God-centered, man-centeredness. Now that sounds very strange.

[ 7 : 55 ] We tend to, preachers especially, tend to put God-centeredness and man-centeredness on opposite ends of the spectrum. And we want to be God-centered and we don't want to be man-centered. And that's really true in a lot of ways.

But when we're thinking about God's creation, when we're thinking about the world that God has made, we have to recognize that God has made the world in a real sense for man.

He has placed man as the highest of all His creations. And yet, man himself is to be a God-centered creation.

So that what we end up here is with a God-centered, man-centeredness. I came up with a lot more complicated term for that that I shared with Allie a few weeks ago.

And she confirmed that you chose right in not using that term. But I find myself needing to say it out loud because I was so impressed by this term, all right? Here's the term I came up with. It was theocentric anthropocentrism.

[ 8 : 56 ] Do you guys like that? I think I'm going to copyright it. Nobody really knows what it means, but I liked it. I wrote it out on a piece of paper and I thought, I like that, but I'm not going to tell that to them because they won't know what I'm talking about.

What I mean is God-centered, theocentric, man-centeredness. Yes, the creation has man at its pinnacle, but man himself exists, as we'll see in a moment, for the praise and glory of God so that all of creation is aiming at enabling man and appointing man to give praise and glory to God.

And so that what we find here is not arrogance in the account of the creation of man because man doesn't exist for himself. We don't find arrogance. But what we find is the reality that within God's created world, man stands central, highest, the final, greatest of all of God's creations.

And that's due primarily to the fact that man is created in the image of God. Notice what we're told here. Verse 26, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

Verse 27, So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Now, don't get hung up on the use of two different words, image and likeness, because they essentially mean the same thing.

[ 10 : 20 ] There are slightly different nuances to those two terms, but it's not like the image of God and the likeness of God are two different things. They mean essentially the same thing.

And if I were to summarize, what does the Bible mean by the use of the word image or likeness? What does that mean? If I had to summarize it in one word, I would probably say it means reflection.

It means that human beings exist to be a reflection of who God is. Or you might substitute the word representative. That human beings exist upon the earth to represent God to the rest of creation.

We are a reflection of who God is. We are a representation of God's rulership over the creation within the world. That's what it means to be made in God's image. So that our ultimate role as human beings is to reflect to the rest of creation the glory and magnificence of God Himself.

That's what we're put here on this earth to do. That's why God says in Isaiah, bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, all those whom I have created for my glory.

[ 11 : 30 ] God creates human beings in His image so that we might image forth His glory and His majesty to the rest of creation. That's why He made us.

But before we begin to really break down how that happens and what that really looks like, I think it might be important for me just real quickly to talk to you about who exactly is in God's image.

Who are we talking about here? Because there have been various theories that have been put forward that would exclude you and I immediately from the category of made in God's image.

Because there is an event that takes place only two chapters after this called the fall in Genesis chapter 3 in which Adam commits sin and all of Adam's descendants are drug into sin with him.

We are all born with a sinful nature. We all deserve death and condemnation because of Adam's sin. And so there have been some theologians and some preachers who have said, well, when Adam fell, the image of God was destroyed.

[ 12 : 34 ] It was broken beyond repair. And so now those of us who have come after Adam no longer possess the image of God.

Let me give you two biblical reasons why I don't think that that's true. One from Genesis and one from the New Testament. So if you can, just flip over a few pages to Genesis chapter 9. Genesis chapter 9 obviously takes place after chapter 3.

That's pretty simple. In fact, it takes place after the flood of Genesis chapter 6 through 8. And after Noah and his sons disembark from the ark, we're told in chapter 9 verse 1 that God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

That sounds familiar, doesn't it? It's exactly what God told Adam and Eve to do in Genesis chapter 1. So what we have in Genesis chapter 9 here is sort of a restarting of things after the flood.

God has wiped everyone else other than Noah's family off the map and now God is restarting things with Noah and his family. He says to do the same thing that He tells Adam and Eve. But then you move down just a few verses to verse 6.

[ 13 : 44 ] And God's giving instructions because though God is sort of resetting things and restarting things after the flood, Noah is still a descendant of Adam.

Shem, Ham, Japheth, Noah's sons are still descendants of Adam, which means they still inherited a sinful nature from Adam. So God is well aware that though He's sort of resetting things after the flood, Noah's not another Adam in an ultimate sense because Noah comes into the world as a sinner.

So God has to deal with that and He gives them some instructions that are unique to sinful fallen human beings. Listen to what He says. Verse 6. Whoever sheds the blood of man...

So God assumes there's going to be violence still in the world. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed for God made man in His own image.

You see that? After the fall, after the flood even, God says do not murder, do not kill other human beings because those human beings that you murder are in God's image.

[14:59] Which means the image of God could not have been lost with Genesis chapter 3. I'll give you one other reason from the New Testament. Similar passage in the book of James.

All the way back near the end of your New Testament. In James. James is discussing the danger of our words, of how we use our tongue. And he says in James chapter 3 verse 9, he says, With it, with our mouths or with our tongues, we bless our Lord and Father and with it, we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

So what James assumes here is that when you say something about someone else, when you utter a hateful, mean thing about another person in your life, you're saying that about somebody who is made in the image of God.

I mean, man's dignity does not derive from the fact that he was shaped out of the dirt by God. Man's dignity does not derive by the fact that he's better than the animals. Man's dignity derives by the fact that he is made in the image and likeness of God.

And James says, Because of that, be careful how you speak to and about other people because they are made in the image of God. So we haven't lost the image of God.

[16:15] It's not erased or destroyed with the fall. It is, however, damaged. It is, you might say, if the image of God is a mirror, the mirror has been warped like a carnival mirror.

You know, you see those mirrors and they make your head look like it's a huge block or they make your head look tiny and your hips look huge or something like that. We go to Chewy's in Humble, a Mexican restaurant over there, and they have a couple of those mirrors in the waiting area.

And Nate and Calvin and Eli love to stand and just stare at it and move around and laugh at each other because their heads get big and then their hips get big or whatever and all these sorts of things. They think it's hilarious.

But that's essentially what has happened to the image of God in man after the fall. It's not that we're just like Adam was when he was created. We are damaged. We are broken. The image of God has been marred in us, but not destroyed.

In fact, for all those who've trusted in Christ, the image of God is in process of being repaired. Take a look at Ephesians chapter 4. Let me just show you what the Apostle Paul says here about the image of God.

[17:26] Ephesians chapter 4, he says that we are to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

We put on the new self. There's something new about us now that we're in Christ. And that new self is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So when we are saved and the Spirit comes to dwell within us, one of the things that He does is He begins to recreate us, reshape, refashion and form us after the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness.

So in terms of reflecting God's righteous character and His holy character, the image of God within us is distorted and warped and we are now depraved people and Christ sends His Spirit within us to repair that.

And we've trusted in Christ. We see the same thing in Colossians chapter 3. Paul says, Don't lie to each other, seeing that you've put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

So the image of God, whatever we might say about it, is still possessed by every human being upon the planet. And yet it is misshapen, it is broken, it is marred by sin.

[18:48] But still present and still there. And those truths are going to affect the way that we apply what we learn about the image of God in Genesis chapter 1. We're going to have to think long and hard about how do we as fallen people apply the commands and blessings of God in Genesis chapter 1?

And then how do we as new covenant followers of Christ apply those commands? We're going to have to think about that. But the thing that we need to recognize, first of all, is that the image of God did not disappear with the fall of man into sin.

Second thing I want you to see about answering the question who has the image of God from Genesis chapter 1 is that the image of God is possessed equally by both men and women.

Take a look at verse 27. I didn't read the last part of verse 27, but if you read the whole verse, it says that God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and

female, he created them.

So I don't want you to be thrown off by all this language about man in these verses. God created man in his image. I don't want you to be thrown off by that as if to somehow think that, well, men are in the image of God and women, on the other hand, are not.

[ 20 : 00 ] Now, we don't live in a culture that would tend to lean towards seeing that, but we need to see explicitly that the Bible affirms men and women both created in the image of God. But we also need to see that as people created in his image, we are distinctly male and female.

That's a reality that we need to recognize, that we'll spend more time when we get to Genesis chapter 2 talking about what it means. What are the distinctions between men and women? We are in the image of God.

We are of equal worth and value before God, and yet there are differences among us. In fact, I read an article this week, and it just, on one hand it made me laugh, on the other hand it made me sad. An article about a group of students at a university, I think it was in California, I hadn't actually heard of the university, but it was a group of students there who are part of a particular kind of club for people of particular orientations, and they have elected to choose the pronouns that they prefer for themselves.

So they would rather not, it's an all-women's college, which is ironic, so it's all women in the group, but that many of them have elected, they don't want to be called she. They don't really want to be called she.

[ 21 : 14 ] They don't want to identify with that gender distinction. Some of them want to be called they. Some of them want to be called he. Some of them want to be called, I don't understand this, Z, like Z-E, I don't even know how to pronounce that.

You say Z, do you say Z? I don't even know how to pronounce that, but that's what the article said. Some of them would prefer be their pronoun. So don't call them she or her, call them Z or they or him or something like that.

As if gender and sexual identity is something that can be cast aside at our own preferences and our own whims. And yet according to Genesis, to be made in the image of God is for us to be made also male and female, distinct and different from one another, equally reflecting the image of God into the world, yet uniquely different.

So that everybody in this room, as a descendant of Adam, as male or female, everybody in this room possesses the image of God.

You are made in God's image. You need to believe that. You need to know that before you begin to think about what to do with the rest of this passage.

[ 22 : 28 ] So let's ask this question. What exactly is the image of God? Or we might put it this way. How do we go about reflecting God's glory and majesty and perfections in the world?

How do we do that? In what way are we as human beings, in what way are we representative of God? And there's two things I think that come out in the text here that I would point us to.

And they are first of all through relationship and through ruling. Those are the two ways I think that Genesis would tell us. Now there have of course been all sorts of debates throughout church history about what the image of God is.

And some people have said, well the image of God is our intellectual capacity. Others have said, well the image of God is our emotional capacity. Others have said that the image of God is our souls and the fact that we will live beyond physical death.

None of that, although those may be tied into the image of God, none of those things are definitive of what the image of God is according to Genesis chapter 1. If I'm understanding this correctly, what's definitive of the image of God for us is that we live in relationships and we rule over the world in God's stead or in His place.

[ 23 : 40 ] Let me show you that from the text. There's a couple of things that we've already briefly looked at that point out the nature of us as relational beings. First of all, there is the fact that before God says that He's going to make man in our image, He says, let us make man in our image.

Everywhere else, it's just God by Himself singly creating. And yet now, we're introduced to this strange pronoun, us.

Who's the us? Who is God talking to? Some have said, well He's talking to the angels. But we're not made in the image of the angels. That doesn't make any sense. There's been no mention of any angelic beings.

For all we know, they may not have been created yet. We don't know. It's not the angels. Some have said, well, God is here speaking like the Queen of England. You ever notice that the Queen of England always, she never says I, she always says we.

I've always found that a little strange. But that's what a lot of royalty will do. They use a plural pronoun to emphasize their own greatness and majesty. It's kind of a tradition. And some will say, well that's all God's doing.

[ 24 : 49 ] God is just identifying Himself as the King of creation by saying let us. There's only one problem with that. He never does that anywhere else in the Bible. And that's not an aspect of Hebrew grammar that we find anywhere in any ancient Hebrew documents of what's called a plural of majesty.

It just doesn't exist. It's not found there. So we're back at square one and left to say who's the us? Who's God consulting? Who is God talking to?

And as you turn to the New Testament the answer becomes clear. The Word that God speaks forth to create these things, let there be light, in John chapter 1 is the Word that took on flesh who was there already in the beginning, Jesus Himself.

The Spirit of God in verse 2 hovers over the waters. So that while I wouldn't say that Genesis chapter 1 teaches a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity.

I wouldn't say that. I would say that the us of this verse is a hint, a veiled reference to the three persons that exist in the one Godhead.

[ 25 : 59 ] Who is God consulting? Himself. Father, Son, and Spirit together consulting and saying let us, let us make man in our image.

So that we are at the very beginning, we are made in the image of a God who exists within eternal relationship with Himself.

I know I'm getting into difficult doctrine here. I know that I'm going, I'm skirting the edge of the mysterious here when we get into the doctrine of the Trinity. But what you need to know about the doctrine of the Trinity is that the Scriptures clearly reveal that though there is one God, He has for all eternity existed as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So that when God creates man in Genesis chapter 1, He doesn't create man because He needs someone to love or needs someone to love Him back. God doesn't create man because He's lonely. God cannot be lonely.

He is three in one. There is the perfect fellowship of the Godhead throughout all eternity past. Jesus in John chapter 17 prays, Father, restore to me the glory that I had with you before the worlds existed.

[ 27 : 11 ] This is an eternal relationship that exists between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is, in His very nature, a relational being. That's who He is and has been throughout all eternity.

So for us to be created in His image and for Him to deliberate, let us make man in our image, means automatically that we are also relational beings.

And I think that's borne out in the fact that God creates us male and female in verse 27. Male and female. Different, distinct from one another, yet related to one another.

So there's the possibility here now of real relationship existing. I know that you can look in the animal kingdom and you can see animals that tend to recognize each other and know each other and work together in groups and those sorts of things.

And I know that people can build these strong bonds with their pets, with their dogs, with their cats, and those sorts of things. But that's not at all what God is teaching us here.

[ 28 : 19 ] The level of relationship we're talking about here is far, far and above anything we can see anywhere else in creation. We're uniquely made in the image of God with a unique ability to relate to God and to other people.

So let me suggest two ways in which this relational aspect of the image of God works itself out in our lives. I mean, you obviously, you have the relationship with God, obviously, but let's just talk about two ways in which this being created in the image of God affects the way that we relate to other people.

Okay? The first and the most obvious example is marriage itself because we're created male and female. Because if you just turn the page in Genesis chapter 2, God gives a detailed account of the creation of Adam and then Eve and then the two are joined together as one flesh, as husband and wife.

And so, one of the most meaningful places one of the most important places where the image of God expresses itself in our lives is within our marriages. And you might broaden that out to say within our families.

This is where the image of God takes shape. This is where the image of God expresses itself. Which means the question that we have to ask in regard to our marriages is how does this relationship reflect the glory of God to the rest of creation.

[ 29 : 49 ] If the image of God means you are designed and made to reflect God's glory to the rest of creation and a part of the image of God is the ability to live in relationships and preeminent among them is marriage, we have to ask the question of our marriages, how does my marriage reflect the glory of God to the rest of creation?

That's why marriage exists. If you ever wonder, marriage exists primarily for the reflection of the glory of God to creation. And Ephesians 5 tells us exactly how that happens.

Where Paul commands wives, wives, submit to your husbands. Then he commands husbands, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, gave himself up for her.

You see, the way in which we glorify God, the way in which the image of God shines forth in our marriages is that we recognize and we joyfully live out the distinctive roles that God has given us as husband and wife.

I realize that people around us, not only do they not celebrate these distinctives, but they deny them or they denigrate those who believe in these distinctions of role, and yet they're very clearly laid out for us in Scripture from the beginning in Genesis chapter 2 on through the New Testament even.

[ 31 : 23 ] These distinctions in roles for husbands and wives are clearly laid out for us. And if we ignore them and if we set them aside, we will fail in our marriages to fully reflect the glory of God to the world.

Because what marriage is designed to do is to point people to Christ. So husbands, do you lay your lives down? Do you sacrifice for your wives in such a way that when others observe your marriage, they think of Christ?

Or when non-believers observe the way that you relate to your wife, do they wonder, how can a man sacrifice so much and lay down so much for his wife?

So that when asked, you can reply, Jesus laid down his life and he died for his bride. I can give up a Saturday of golf for the sake of my life.

I can do that. It's not difficult. Marriage is the first and primary place in which the image of God in relationship shines forth for us.

[ 32 : 41 ] But not the only place. And maybe not, though primary, maybe not ultimately the most significant in terms of in terms of giving a witness to the world.

Because the secondary, the second primary main place where the image of God shines forth in relationship is within the church itself. I mean, we are the people who are being renewed in the knowledge after the image of our Creator.

We are those people. So if we are being transformed and renewed as followers of Christ, then shouldn't there be among us a new, better way of relating to one another than is experienced out in the world?

Shouldn't we have greater love for one another than lost people do in the world? Should that not be true? Jesus says in the Gospel of John that we ought to love one another and it's by this, by our love for one another that people will know, that people will see that we are His followers and disciples by our love for one another.

In fact, if you look at that passage in Colossians that we read briefly from that says we're being renewed after the image of our Creator, if you move down just two verses, you hear all of these statements about how we as members of the body of Christ are supposed to relate to one another.

[ 34 : 12 ] Let me just read a little bit. Two verses later, verse 12, put on then as God's chosen ones holy and beloved compassionate hearts kindness, humility, meekness, and patience bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive.

Above all these put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. That's supposed to be descriptive of the ways in which Christians relate to one another.

That's the image of God being renewed and reshaped and reformed, put on display in the relationships that we have within the church. But so often we do the opposite.

We have a complaint against another and so we write them off or we grow angry and bitter with them rather than having the default reaction of saying Christ forgave me so much I must forgive the wrong that they've done.

Or being frustrated with one another and disagreeing with one another and not liking everything, the decisions that we make rather than bearing with one another we just decide I don't really want anything to do with them.

[ 35 : 27 ] We try to do it in a nice sort of Christian way and use our Christian ease so we'll say things like oh well I love him as a brother but I just can't stand the guy. We say stuff like that you know.

Oh well I mean I love her but I don't want to be around her. I don't want to talk to her at all. Does that make any sense to you? I mean does that in any way line up with what the Apostle Paul tells us here?

I can't see how it does. I can't see how it does. And this is a part of what it means to be not only created in God's image but to be among those who are being renewed in knowledge after the image of our creator.

We relate to one another differently. But of course those things are only the case for those who have been given a new self.

For those who have set aside their own self in repentance and turned and trusted in Christ and begun to walk with him. These realities only take shape in the hearts and lives of those who have been saved by him and are now being sanctified and made holy by him.

[ 36 : 39 ] We're made in the image of God and we're created for relationship and he saves us and sanctifies us so that our relationships might more fully and more perfectly reflect his glory to the world.

And then secondly the other aspect of the image of God that I see fairly clearly here in Genesis chapter one is that we are to be rulers in the world. It comes out very clearly in the passage.

Take a look at what God says. Verse 26 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.

That's all the different kinds of animals that God's put in the world and he says let man have dominion over the animals. And then verse 28 we come to a restatement of that but it's stated in a more full and complete fashion.

In fact verse 28 has been called by theologians the cultural mandate. This is the thing that shapes and drives human culture.

[ 37 : 51 ] Here it is. And God blessed them man and woman. 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.

And God said behold I've given you every green plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth and every tree with its seed in it you shall have them for food. There's a sequence there's an order in which things are done here.

Notice what he says be fruitful multiply fill the earth subdue it have dominion. five things here five things. Now you could read this passage as if to say all five of these things are equally important things that we do and they are equal aspects of this cultural mandate that should drive the way that we behave in the world and our relationship with the world around us.

You could say they're all five equal things which is why you will find a lot of Christians who emphasize the aspect of being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth and so there would be among some a great great emphasis upon the importance of having children raising families and the family being at the center of everything.

There is an emphasis here upon family. There is an emphasis upon procreation. That's absolutely true but I don't think that that's placed on an even level with everything else here.

[ 39 : 22 ] In fact I think that these five commands lead logically from one to the next moving towards the goal. Take a look at it.

First to be fruitful. That is to be capable of producing offspring and producing some offspring. The next word that's translated multiply is used several times throughout the Old Testament to describe a massive multiplying.

A massive multiplying. So that in the story of Abraham in Genesis several times, Abraham is told that he is to be fruitful and multiply and then as a result of that multiplying there will be produced out of him a multitude of nations.

So to multiply is more than simply to be fruitful. To be fruitful is to have children. To multiply is to have not only children but whole families birthed out of you.

Whole families. And in some instances whole nations as in the case of Abraham birthed out of you. So there's fruitfulness that leads to multiplication and multiplication automatically leads to filling the earth.

[ 40 : 34 ] Spreading out over the earth. That's the problem later on in Genesis at the Tower of Babel. They obeyed the first few commands. They were fruitful. They multiplied. But they didn't spread out.

They didn't fill the earth. They gathered together. They huddled up. Decided to build a monument to themselves up into the heavens. Fruitfulness leads to multiplication.

Multiplication leads to filling the earth. And filling the earth leads to subduing it. Bringing it under submission. It's an active thing. This is not like something that just happens.

Like, well, you're a human being, so there you go. The earth is yours. It's just going to do whatever you want. It's an active subduing and making the earth submit.

It has to do with creating things, fashioning things, forming things. That's what it has to do with. And then as a result of that, coming out of that, results our dominion, our rule over all of creation.

[ 41 : 36 ] So, if you see these commands not as all equal, same level type commands, but if you see them as leading one to the next, one causing the next, then the goal of this is that we as human beings would have dominion over the whole earth.

Now, you can't do that if there's only two of you. So, you have to procreate. You have to multiply. That's essential. That's important. Don't want to downplay that. But it's not the goal.

The goal is to be God's representative by being a vice regent, a ruler underneath God's ultimate kingship over the created order.

Now, in a fallen world, the creation does not comply with that. In a fallen world, subduing the earth is much, much more difficult.

After the fall, God tells Adam that the ground is now going to yield thorns and thistles for you. It's going to be difficult for you to produce food. No longer do you get to simply pluck the fruit off the tree. all day long.

[ 42 : 43 ] That's still there occasionally, but now you're going to have to farm. And not only farm, you're going to have to fight against the elements. You're going to have to fight against weeds and thorns all the time. Farming will be difficult for you now.

It's even difficult today in the modern world. I mean, I know we have tractors and combines and we have crop dusters and chemicals and fertilizers and sprays and all those things. And you might think that it's simple today, but I know it's not because my father-in-law has been dealing with farmers for a long, long time.

And I'll ask a lot of questions. I'm like, so how does this work? Why do they do this over there? Why that? And what I've learned from him is that it's still hard. I mean, farmers who are experts at farming need his expert advice on what chemicals, what pesticides, what fertilizers, what to use, when to use it, how to use it.

Why? Because the ground is fighting against them. Even with all that we might have at our disposal, the world is still difficult to subdue. So in a fallen world, it's difficult, but nonetheless, we are still in the image of God and we still have this responsibility to exercise dominion over the world. Which means for us that we ought to be creative people. We ought to make things and we ought to fashion things in the world. And we ought to bring the world under our submission.

[ 44 : 05 ] We ought to think it a good thing that we're able to build things out of wood and clay and stone. We ought to think it a good thing that we can do all those things. And yet it comes with a very profound responsibility.

Because if you're the king of a realm, yes, the subjects of your realm serve in your army. They pay your taxes. They do those things. They farm the lands and you get some of the food from the farms. But when the king from the neighboring kingdom brings his army intent on burning the fields of your people, what do you do? You saddle up.

You ride out. You take your army. You stand between that army and the field. You rule. You protect. You care for. That's our role in the world.

Yes, the world exists for the benefit of humanity. That's true in a very real sense. But we're also its rulers and protectors and guardians. This is the foundation of what we could call biblical environmentalism.

[ 45 : 14 ] Secular environmentalism says we're no better than any other thing in the world, so therefore we don't have the right to do things with things in the world. Biblical environmentalism says no, we're in the image of God.

We get to make things. We can chop down a tree and build something with it, but we don't burn down forests. You see the difference? We exercise dominion, but a part of exercising dominion is we have a responsibility to care for and nurture the creation around us.

So that this command, have dominion, should shape our politics. It should shape the way that we teach our children about how they interact in the world.

You take your kids out to go hunting. You teach them about when to shoot something and when not to shoot something. We're in Texas. That's a legitimate application of the passage here, right?

A lot of you hunt and kill things. Well, why are you killing things? Why are you doing it? What kind of dominion are you exercising? What's happening here? We have a stewardship.

[ 46 : 21 ] We have a stewardship over the world. But our stewardship, I think, goes beyond mere physical maintenance of the world around us. I think it goes beyond that.

Because Jesus says that we are to be salt and light in the world. It's not merely as new covenant followers of Christ.

It's not merely by literally obeying the command to subdue the earth and rule over living creatures that we find complete fulfillment to God's intention here.

I think that for us, when we consider the command to be fruitful and multiply, it still in a measure means literal procreation.

Have kids. But more than that, the great commandment of the New Testament is not be fruitful and multiply. The great commandment of the New Testament is go and make disciples.

[ 47 : 24 ] We multiply. We multiply. We multiply. But not just physically. Our aim in all that we do is to multiply the people of God. That's why our mission statement as a church is we exist to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ.

We multiply. We multiply. Not merely by having children. We multiply by taking the gospel into the world. And only as we do that, only as the gospel is carried out to the ends of the earth and people are converted and saved and made a part of the people of God, only by doing that will we really see dominion, biblical dominion being exercised over the earth.

Because we can't do it. What are there, 60, 65 people here this morning? And we're a pretty small church. What if we were a mega church and we had 5,000 people here? There's 2 million people in Houston.

I mean, we can't just cluster it up. We can't obey these commands. We have to multiply. Lest we find ourselves in the same place as the people at Babel, building our own towers.

Never filing out into the world so that real spiritual dominion can be exercised in the world. One of the greatest responsibilities that we have is to simply live as people who are made in God's image.

[ 48 : 51 ] One of the greatest privileges that we have is to live as people who are made in God's image. To know that it's not arrogant to see the creation as, in a sense, man-centered.

So long as we recognize ourselves as human beings as profoundly God-centered in all that we do. And confess in everything that we do, in all of our relationships, and in the ways in which we rule and create and do things in the world.

We recognize that we do all of that so that we might be a clearer, better picture of the glory of God to the rest of creation.

Let's pray. It's humbling to recognize that you've made us for yourself.

And to know that in all that we do, we either reflect your glory, or we take the light and we hide it under a basket.

[ 50 : 00 ] Pray, Father, that we would be a people, that we would be a church that seeks in all of our relationships with each other, with our family members, in our marriages, that we seek the honor and glory of Jesus in all of those things.

And that as we go out into the world, whether we stay at home or we go out to a job in another place, as we exercise dominion in the places where you've put us, I pray, Father, that you enable us every day to remember we do this for the sake of the spreading of the fame and name of God in the world.

Help us to remember that. Help us to pursue that in everything that we do. I pray in Christ's name. Amen.