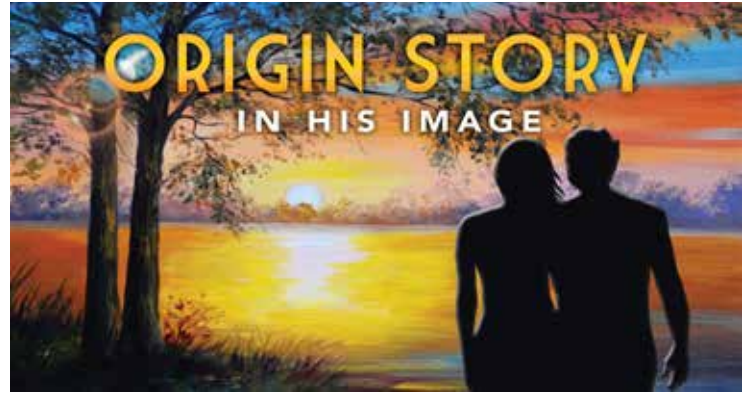


WEEK OF JULY 9



DAY

1

You Are Alive!

Genesis 2:7; Psalm 139:13–18

Take a moment and simply be aware. You are alive! Life is a gift—a beautiful, unexpected, unearned GIFT. You weren't alive; now you are. And the Christian faith says that through faith in Christ you will be alive forever (John 3:16; 11:25–26).

What is life? What does it mean to be alive? Plants are alive. Bacteria are alive. Animals are alive. Angels are alive. You are alive. Genesis 2:7 says you are a living being. You are formed from the dust and within you is the breath-life-spirit-RUACH of God. You have physicality (a body) and you have spirit. The Bible uses words like spirit, soul, and heart in a synonymous way. You are a unified being.

You are not only a living being, you are a human being. The NIV translation uses the phrase *human being* 50 times (see Deuteronomy 4:32). To be a living human being means you are a person. While you share the core characteristics of all human beings, you are also distinct and unique. You are YOU. You have a particular identity.

You are a conscious and self-aware being. You have thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories. You perceive, experience, react, and respond. You will, choose, and decide. You act.

You are a growing being. You are not static or stuck; you change. You are always in the process of becoming. It is fair to say you are a human “becoming.”

You are a free person. While you are influenced and while much about you is simply given to you, you also shape your own living and being. At the same time, you are a dependent person. In Jesus we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). And this is only the start. No wonder the psalmist says, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

All day long just be aware that you are alive. Your life is sheer GIFT. Be humble, grateful, and worship the Lord God who has created you.

DAY

2

The Image of God

Genesis 1:26–27; James 3:9

Throughout July, we will return to these verses many times. This is the essence of what it means to be a living human being. You are made in the image and likeness of God. While Bible scholars have some disagreement, most of them see these two words as near synonyms. It is an example of Hebrew poetry. The main feature of Hebrew poetry is repetition of ideas using different words. You are the image-likeness of God! The entire month of July will unpack and explore that beautiful reality.

You are a “chip off the old block.” “Like Father, like daughter and son.” You reflect the reality of God. In *The Message* translation, Eugene Peterson appropriately says, “He created them godlike, reflecting God’s nature” (Genesis 1:27). You are not an animal, an angel, or a machine. Instead...

God is a person – you are a person.

God is rational (a thinking being) – you have a mind.

God is relational – you are relational.

God has moral qualities – you have moral qualities.

God is creative and works – you create and work as well.
God is spiritual – you are spiritual.

And the list goes on.

One of the amazing aspects of being made in God's image is that "male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). We will spend an entire week this summer looking at that phrase.

Not only does being an image mean you reflect who God is, it means you represent who God is. You are his delegate, representative, and responsible agent in the world. You are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10) and God's partner.

The reality of God's image in you is among the most powerful, life-changing, purpose-creating, meaning-infusing truths you will ever know.

Does the reality of being made in the image of God change how you think about yourself?

DAY 3

Remade in the Image of Christ

Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:23–24; Colossians 3:10

Genesis 1–3 is a tightly woven and seamless introduction to EVERYTHING else in the Bible. These chapters do not stand on their own. Each chapter merges with the others on every theme. This is true for the image of God and the essence of being a living human being.

Genesis 1: We are created in God's image.

Genesis 2: That image is reaffirmed and there is more description of what we do as image-bearers.

Genesis 3: This is the story of sin entering into human existence and a description of what sin has done to the image of God in us.

The image of God has not been lost or destroyed, but it is damaged, defaced, and diminished. One of the beautiful ways to understand salvation is as the restoration of the image of God in humanity. This is done through Jesus Christ.

Jesus being very God and the Son of God is the exact representation of God (Hebrews 1:1–3). Jesus is the very image of God and the fullness of God with us (Colossians 1:15–20). The texts you read to begin this reflection all talk about salvation as the restoration of you and me back into the fullness of the original image.

Every single day, Christian discipleship has ONE MAIN PURPOSE: To remake you more and more like God. Not to make you God, to make you LIKE God—as you were meant to be. If you look back at the Day 2 reflection and the many aspects or components of God's image, that is what God is doing and restoring every day of your life. That is exciting beyond words. This is LIFE (John 1:4). This is your highest purpose in life and the greatest meaning in life.

What steps can you take today to move more toward becoming like God?

DAY 4

Dignity and Worth

Genesis 9:6; Acts 10:34; Proverbs 22:2; 1 Peter 2:16–17

Of the 50 times the phrase *human being* appears in the NIV translation, sometimes it is comparing human life with God. Other times, it has to do with the value and worth of human life. The Bible gives us clear answers to these questions:

- How much is a person worth?
- How valuable is a human being?
- How much are you worth and how valuable are you?
- Are all people of equal worth and value?

The biblical doctrine of humanity in the image of God is the SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE of many of our most cherished ideals.

You are created by God. You belong to God (even if you are in rebellion against God). You are loved by God. God does the unthinkable in giving Jesus to the world to die for you. Through our own actions we made ourselves God's enemy (Romans 5:6–11). When we were sinful, ungodly, and enemies of God, we were still of incalculable worth. How much do you matter to God? Look to Jesus on the cross. That is how much you are worth.

And not just you. Everyone has equal worth in the sight of God (Galatians 3:28). This is the basis for human rights, equality, and justice. This is where our dignity comes from. This is why we respect others. This is where responsibility and accountability are based. This is, in part, why grace and unconditional love are what they are. Everyone is precious in God's sight. Everyone is to be precious in our sight. Even people with whom you most disagree are made in God's image, deeply loved, of infinite value, and human beings.

One of the most Christlike things you will ever do is to respect the image of God in others. Lament that image as broken and marred, but be humble and gentle with others, for the same is true for you. And be full of joy, for God will complete the good work he has started (Philippians 1:6). One day his image will be fully restored, and you will be who you were meant to be.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.

ONE: What does it mean to you to be fearfully and wonderfully made? Do you ever think about this? How does that awareness change how you think about yourself?

TWO: Do you ever think about being made in the image of God? What does that phrase mean to you?

THREE: What steps are you taking in your life to become more like God? What discipleship steps are in place?