



Introduction

THE GOD-CENTERED LIFE

The first four words of the Bible may be the most important words: "In the beginning, God..." These are four thunderously important words. They really do change everything, from the way that you think about your identity, meaning, and purpose to the way that you approach even the most incidental of human duties. Everything that was created was made by God and for God. All the glories of the created world were designed to point to His glory. The universe is His, designed to function according to His purpose and plan. That includes you and me. We were not made to live independent, self-directed lives. We were not meant to exist according to our own little self-oriented plans, living for our own moments of glory. No, we were created to live for Him.

—Paul David Tripp

Why this study at this time?

- It is a good follow-up to our study of Ecclesiastes.

Here is the final conclusion, now that you have heard everything: fear God, and keep his mitzvot; this is what being human is all about.

—Ecclesiastes 12:13, CJB

- It is a needed focus on the Great Commandment.

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

—Matthew 22:37-40

- It is our first priority in a crazy, distracted world.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

—Matthew 6:33-34

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR!

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Genesis 1:27 is the first _____ in the Bible.

In Hebrew, it consists of three lines of _____ words each.

Each line repeats the same truth with a different emphasis.

Giving undivided attention is the first and most basic ingredient in any relationship. It is impossible to communicate, much less bond, with someone who won't focus on you. At the same time, we often fail to realize how what we focus on comes to control our thoughts, our actions, and indeed, our very lives. Whatever we focus upon actually wires our neurons.

—Kare Anderson

*All the evils, and I choose my words carefully, **all the evils** of the world stem from our taking ourselves to be the Creator.*

—Jacques Ellul

This phrase, the image of God, is as important as anything in Scripture, because men today can longer answer the crucial question, "Who am I?" In his own naturalistic theories, with the uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system, with an evolutionary concept of a mechanical, chance parade from the atom to man, man has lost his unique identity. ...Quite in contrast, a Christian does not have this problem. He knows who he is. If anything is a gift of God, this is it—knowing who you are.

—Francis Schaeffer

We are made in the image of God (*imago dei*)—designed by the triune God to reflect His glory and to live in relationship with Him.

- We were made to _____ God.
- We were made to _____ others.
- We were made to _____ over creation.

REALIZE YOUR SINFUL SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.
—Romans 5:12

- Sin _____ us from God.
- Sin _____ our focus selfward.
- Sin _____ our worship and our love.

REJOICE IN YOUR REDEEMER!

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
—Romans 8:28-29

- It is God's grace that saves us.
- It is God's goodness that comforts us.
- It is God's purpose to transform us.

The image of God, distorted by sin, is being recreated in us by God's purpose, the Spirit's power, and the Son's perfection.

Walking the God-Centered Path This Week

- Read the Introduction to the Study (pages 1-4)
- Take the Personal Spiritual Inventory on page 145.
- Complete the Lesson 1 study on *Grace: Being Loved by God*.
- Partner with another believer (or with a community group) for interaction, accountability, and encouragement during this study.

You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You. —Augustine

The image of God involves the powers of personality that make humans, like God, beings capable of interacting with other persons, of thinking and reflecting, and of willing freely.
—Millard Erickson

God created mankind alone in His image. In a sense, God created man and woman as His vice-regents, as His deputy rulers over His creation. —R.C. Sproul

Man was responsibly subject to God; he was in fellowship with the neighbor as his equal; he was steward over the natural world; he was at peace with himself.
—Harry Boer

The greatest, deepest, most abiding problem each of us faces is inside, not outside, of us. The Bible names that problem—sin.
—Paul David Tripp

Man's basic psychosis is his separation from God carried into his own personality as a separation from himself. Thus we have self-deception. All men are liars, but, most importantly, each man lies to himself. The greatest falsehood is not lying to others but to ourselves. —Francis Schaeffer

Man now lives in contradiction not only to the will of God, but also to his own creaturely nature, in contradiction with himself. ...The whole work of Jesus Christ in reconciliation and redemption may be summed up in the renewal and consummation of the Divine Image in man.
—Emil Brunner