

GOD'S CREATED IMAGE

SESSION 4



SMALL GROUP SERIES

FOUNDATIONS

THE SALVATION ARMY - USA EAST

**“SO GOD CREATED HUMAN BEINGS IN HIS OWN IMAGE.
IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED THEM; MALE AND
FEMALE HE CREATED THEM. ~ GENESIS 1:27 NLT**

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In Genesis 1:20-22 God proclaims the following on the fourth day of creation, "And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." (NIV)

The word teem, in this scripture means to abound or be in abundance. This describes God's intention with creation. Yet we see a disconnect between God's original design and our own reality. In this session you will examine this paradox through the lens of scripture and practical application.

Opening Questions

- When you hear the phrase "created in the image of God", what does that mean to you? Think about it for a moment - not for your neighbor, friend, or spouse, but for you.
- If God created us in His image and loves us, why do bad things happen in our world?

Watch the DVD

Please watch the video about God's Creation and Providence, and take time to fill in the blanks and discuss what you watch together.

Creation Story

Genesis 1 (JPS) from the Hebrew-English Tanak

When God began to create heaven and earth – the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water – God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water." God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

God said, "Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times – the days and the years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

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of the sky." God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so. God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth." And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on the earth."

God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created.

1. What is the climax of the creation story? How do we know this is the climax?

In the Image of God

1. Most scholars believe God is addressing himself in the plural, like a king would do to an audience, the "_____".
2. One of the most accepted meanings of this term is for mankind to be _____'s _____ on earth.
3. Karl Barth argued that the 'image of God' means that a person has the _____ to relate to God.

Genesis 1:28

²⁸ *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

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Male & Female He Created Them

1. These thoughts are speculative and provided in the Matthew Henry commentary. That both male and female were created equal by God. One is not superior to the other. Actually if we turn over to chapter 2 and read how a bone was taken from the man-Adam by God to form and create the woman-Eve, we will note that the bone was a rib. The bone selected was not from the head indicating to rule over, neither was it from the foot symbolizing to be trampled on, instead it was from the side to be co-equal. Likewise, the rib bone was located under the man's arm symbolizing to protect and it was close to his heart symbolizing to be loved.
2. It is by our differences that we can know who we are as a male or female. To know self, it is important to have something / someone from which to differentiate oneself. Humans were able to differentiate themselves from animals as Adam was unable to find a companion, and when Eve was created she was compatible. In Eve's gender difference, Adam was able to know his maleness.
3. Being made both male and female reveals a completeness that is God's divine order. Male and female are compatible in order to form a union and from this union to procreate. God blessed the union of man and woman and spoke directly to them to be fruitful and multiply.
4. The omission of 'after its kind' as stated in the creation of other living creatures reveals that it was only Adam and Eve created. Adam and Eve were compatible for each other being male and female and their union/marriage ordained. In Genesis 2, we find a commentary on their union with verse 24 stating a man shall leave his parents and shall cleave to his wife, as they become one flesh.
5. Following on from the union of the first parents' means that all genealogy can be traced back to Adam and Eve. Even though people differ today based on race, culture and creed, all individuals are still equal since we all share the same ancestry of our first parents.

Providence

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Providence, Providence, see it laying down the cornerstone,
The hand of Providence – it's evident,
For we could never make it on our own.
Apportioning the power, weighing all that it entails,
Giving us the fulcrum and a balance to the scales.

Oh, the Hand of Providence
Is guiding us through choices that we make
Oh, the Hand of Providence
Is reaching out to help us on our way.

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Webster Dictionary Definitions of Providence (Check Outline)

1. The foreseeing care and guardianship of God over His creatures.
2. God directing the universe and affairs of man with wise benevolence.
3. A manifestation of divine care or direction
4. Prudent management of resources.

John Calvin, a Reformed Theologian, in *The Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, offers this opinion: "What is the chief end of human life? To know God by whom men were created. What reasons have you for saying so? Because he created us and placed us in this world to be glorified by us, and it is indeed right that our life, of which he himself is the beginning, should be devoted to his glory."

One View: Openness of God

1. God's _____ is attached to the promise to participate in our struggles and in our ambiguous existence so that His purposes can be attained.
2. We live in a world that has a high degree of randomness in which danger and suffering occur. God _____ creates a tragedy in order to bring about a good thing. God instead can _____ any good without the need of tragedy.
3. It is like when we drive a car, we are in _____ of the car but things can happen out of our control like getting a flat tire.
4. The open position maintains that God can and does _____ whenever He so chooses.

God is all-powerful and in control, according to Clark Pinnock in *The Openness of God*, "God is one whose ways are marked by flexibility and dynamism, who acts and reacts on behalf of His people, who does not exist in splendid isolation from a world of change, but relates to His creatures and shares His life with them." God's providence is to be with us in all situations!

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

1. If God is all-powerful but has not the will to prevent evil, then he is a cruel and malicious god.
2. If God is loving and good but lacks the power to prevent evil then he is weak and an impotent god.
3. If God has both the will and the power to prevent evil, then why is there evil?

Habakkuk's question in chapter 1:2-4, 13;

² How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?

³ Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. ⁴ Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

⁴ "See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness—

Do I Deserve It?

by Luis Palau

The War Cry (August 4, 2001)

When tragedies overtake people, many instantly think, Am I being punished for something I did? Most cultures around the world accept some kind of tit-for-tat punishment and reward system. That is, if something good happens to me, I deserve it; if something bad happens to me, I deserve that, too.

A strong refrain of this idea can be heard in our own culture. One song in the film version of *The Sound of Music* – one of the most popular musicals in Western history – echoes this philosophy exactly. When Julie Andrews' character, Maria, realizes that she has won the love of the heretofore unattainable Captain von Trapp, she sings that sometime while growing up, "I must have done something good."

I wonder if the prevalence of this belief isn't one reason the Eastern doctrine of karma and reincarnation developed. It seems to explain the inexplicable. When tragedy strikes an apparently innocent victim, Hinduism sees the answer in an evil act committed by the person in a past life. After all, nothing comes from nothing; so if you get it in the neck, you must have deserved it. Even if your sin occurred in a previous life.

The Bible doesn't see things that way at all. While a few biblical cases describe some calamity as a punishment for sin, it sees most of the tragedies of life simply as a consequence of living in a fallen world. Otherwise, why would so many murders and assassins live to a healthy, ripe old age, while so many saints die young, poor and in pain? As the Apostle Paul wrote, "The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them" (1 Tim. 5:24).

When the psalmist tried to understand why evil people could prosper, he nearly lost his faith. He looked at “the arrogant” and “the wicked” and he said of them, “They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. This is what the wicked are like – always carefree, they increase in wealth” (Ps. 7:4-5, 12). Such injustice made no sense to the psalmist until he reasoned, “Whom have I in heaven but You? And being with You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:25-26).

It is usually inaccurate and fruitless to suppose that tragedy overtook a person as a punishment for some sin committed in secret. The Bible rarely says that an illness or an accident is divine punishment for sin. Unless God tells us that some specific calamity is the result of sin, it is both arrogant and foolish to think we can discern the “real truth.”

Therefore, when tragedy strikes, we should not leap to the conclusion that it is divine punishment. It is possible that God is allowing us to suffer the consequences of our sinful decisions. But our hardships may simply be a consequence of living in a fallen world.

Group Discussion

- Does God cause events that produce human suffering? We have covered this question and the answer is no. Laws of nature, fallen humanity and a fallen world that groans for redemption, along with randomness cause suffering.
- Is our response: Satan caused them all? This, too, is perverse as it gives way too much credence to the power and authority of Satan.
- Does God allow Satan to have his way in the world? Think of Job!
- Does God intervene in some cases of suffering and not others? For example, a man visits LA and is assaulted and robbed by three men. He survives the assault and declares it was due to God’s faithfulness he survived in preserving his life. IS this really God’s faithfulness or a psychological coping mechanism? If God is faithful why didn’t he stop the attack from happening? What about those people who are attacked and die – why isn’t God faithful to them?
- Does God permit evil in order to work for good?