

WEEK 2 - What Now?

Self-Image & Identity

Spring Emphasis 25 // Canopy Guide

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

These questions are great for breaking the ice and getting your group talking. Pick a question or two that fits your group for an all play conversation.

- Introduce yourself, but make sure to include a detail some of us might not know about you yet.
- A common interview question is to describe yourself in three words. If you had to describe Jesus in three words, what words would you choose?
- How has social media impacted the way you see yourself?

WEEK 2 VIDEO INTRO: [CLICK HERE](#)

SCRIPTURE TO READ

- Genesis 1:26-31
- Psalm 8
- Colossians 1:15-23

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Do you know what Jesus' favorite title for himself was? According to the Gospels, Jesus' favorite title for himself (80+ gospel references) was *the Son of Man*. "Son of Man" is a Hebrew idiom for 'human'. So, Jesus is calling himself "the human." Or, to put it another way, Jesus is calling himself and identifying himself as *the truly human One*. This, we think, provides a good framing for this week's discussion on self-image and identity.

In Colossians 1, Paul writes that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God...." But, given

that the first page of the Bible says that all humans are images of God, we think that what Paul means is that Jesus is *the* image of God. Humans, generally, are images of God; but, Jesus is *the* image of God. Why? Recall Jesus' favorite self-identification: the Son of Man. This title is deep and multi-leveled; but, at least one level of the title is this: Jesus is identifying as the truly human One. He is what humans are meant to be. This is why Jesus is *the* image of God. He is the one who does the human thing perfectly.

What does it mean to be an image of God? The first page of the Bible is where we get the idea that humans are God's image, and the language it uses there (the Hebrew word we translate as 'image') is just the normal word for idol statue. If you think about what ancient idol statues did, they represented the god who was thought to have rule over a particular domain. What the biblical authors want us to see is that humans have this same function for the God of the Bible. That is, humans are walking, talking idol statues or representatives, that, by their presence over the earth, show that the God of the Bible rules over all creation.

We are images of the living God. That is who we are; that is our identity. Indeed, it was Jesus' mission to show us how to properly be human, and to free us from sin and death so that we can be human—that is, truly human. But, this means finding our identity as the images of God, and we follow Jesus' cue so that we can be what God made us to be.

And what God made us to be—his images—is a glorious purpose. If you don't think so, consider what the psalmist says:

“...When I look at your heavens, the work
of your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which you
have set in place,
What is man that you are mindful
Of him,
And the son of man that you care
For him?
Yet you have made humanity a little lower
Than the heavenly beings
And crowned humanity with glory and
Honor.
You have given humanity dominion over the
Works of your hands;
You have put all things under humanity's feet...” (Psalm 8)

Our identity—as humans, images of the living God—is one of glorious purpose, indeed! It's worth pausing the next time you consider saying, “I'm only human.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think it means that you were created in the image of God?
- What is your identity based on? Do you find it easy to slip into any of Henri Nouwen's three big lies as we mentioned in the opening video? (I am what I have; I am what I do; I am what other people say about me.)
- What pressures/expectations do you experience to maintain your identity? Do these pressures come from yourself, from others, or both?
- What could it look like to work toward aligning your identity with "the Son of Man?"
- If you were to introduce yourself again to the group, would you change anything about the way you identified yourself at first?

RESOURCES

These resources are great for leader prep and for group member follow up if you're interested in learning more on the topic today.

- Bible project - You're Supposed to Rule the World:
<https://youtu.be/YbipxLDtY8c?si=k26FyGaB9xwNDFBx> 6 minute video describing the Imago Dei and how humanity is commissioned to be co-rulers with God.
- [Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters](#), Carmen Imes
This book is about what it means to be made in the image of God and how a better understanding of our identity in God's image promotes a flourishing creation.
- [The Lost World of Genesis One](#), John Walton
This book analyzes the origins of the text of Genesis and the context it was written in to provide an account of creation that takes special consideration to where humanity came from.
- ["Being You"](#), Jonathan Heaps, Ph.D.
A very quick read that puts into perspective how unique and special it is to be you.