



Whose Image Do I Bear?

Life Reference: Genesis 1:27, 5:3; Luke 20:19-26

Focus Verses:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exodus 20:4-5).

Have you ever walked down a hall of carnival mirrors? The first mirror shows you pencil thin. *Wow! This is not too bad.* You move to the next mirror. You are grossly overweight. *Move on.* As you stroll down the hall, your reflection undergoes wacky transformations. Each optical illusion is a shock—bulging Atlas muscles, an inflated head, exaggerated limbs. Mirror after mirror distorts your image into comical, coarse figures.

Life Reflection:

Are you satisfied with your physical image? What about your social or professional image?

How much time, money, effort do you spend trying to improve your image?

Whose Image?

The goal of the chief priests and scribes was to distort Jesus’ image. They constantly tried to trap Him into saying something politically incorrect. One trick question was, “Should we pay taxes?” (Read Luke 20:19-26.)

Had Jesus said no, the Romans would have put His name on the no-fly list. Had He said yes, the Jews would have labeled Him a traitor.

In reply Jesus called for a coin. “Whose image and superscription is on it?”

Staring at Jesus' accusers was Caesar's engraved image—his pointed chin, his hard forehead, and his dead eyes. It was Caesar's autographed picture.

Jesus said, "Give to Caesar the things that bear his image and to God the things that bear His image." Zip! Jesus' accusers' mouths were shut.

Bottom line: We belong to the one whose image we bear.

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Genesis 1:27).

What an image! Beautiful! Perfect! But Self squeezed between God and His creation distorting Adam's and Eve's vision. When their focus blurred, they lost their paradise.

"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son* in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth" (Genesis 5:3).

First, God created Adam in His perfect image, then Adam begat children in his distorted image. After the birth of Adam's grandson Enos, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). They yearned for what Adam had lost.

Life Reflection:

What did Adam lose in the garden?

What were the differences between Adam as created in God's image and the sons of Adam as begotten in Adam's image?

Fake Images

Satan excels at distorting man's vision with smoke and mirrors, making unholy appear holy, evil appear good, and dirty appear clean. Even as God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, Satan played mind games with the Israelites, tricking them into thinking that they could fashion an image of God.

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While studying to teach the second commandment to children, I did an Internet search on "idol," looking for a picture of Buddha and his buddies. Can you guess what I found? Hundreds of links to American Idol.



We Christians do not bow at the shrine of carved sculptures. After all, we are sophisticated, civilized, and educated. But so is Satan. His mission has been the same since the Garden of Eden, and he is smart enough to match his methods with the times.

Life Reflection:

How is Satan attempting to distort the image of Christ? The image of Christians?

What images are sophisticated, civilized and educated Christians tempted to worship?

Name some methods Satan uses to seduce us into idolatry.

Generation Image

“I am Generation Image. The generation that speaks in images is making itself heard.” This advertising slogan by Nikon, a leader in the imaging product business, raises a red flag for Christians.

Do we hear the message Generation Image is screaming from the pages of social media sites? Do we get the picture? It’s all about self—self-image, self-promotion, self-deification. It is the so-called New Age doctrine that is as old as the Garden of Eden. Self-worship is the root of idolatry.

Like Israel in the time of the judges and kings, the idolatry is engraved into our culture. The only difference is the form of images. Instead of worshipping carved idols, we revere bulging portfolios, velvet voices, pigskin-carrying quarterbacks, and enhanced figures. We *imagine* making a million (or billion) like him. Starring on YouTube like her. Dictating to subordinates like that guy. Power. Pleasure. Possessions. Popularity.

What images do our children idolize? Whose pictures are posted on the walls of their rooms? Who are their heroes? Whom do they spend hours watching on YouTube? Whom do they dress like, walk like, and talk like? Our children will become like what they worship.

Do we envision our children becoming Hollywood stars, country-and-western artists, NFL champions, or American idols? Every day we read about the tragic end of the lifestyle of the rich and famous—perversion, addiction, and suicide. Stop. Reality check. Are we so enamored by the images flashed before us that we unconsciously glorify them by our conduct and conversation? Do our unrealistic expectations pressure our children to live up to a certain image?

One of the leading causes of death amongst teenagers is suicide. The Centers for Disease control report that it is the third leading cause of death, behind accidents and homicide, of people aged 15 to 24. Even more disturbing is the fact that suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 14.



Taken from <http://teensuicidestatistics.com/> Accessed 1/3/19

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We stand in danger of being drawn into Israel's cycle—prosperity, idolatry, immorality, bondage. As we glory in our prosperity, we teeter on the edge of a dangerous precipice, one step away from idolatry. Let us carefully consider our position lest we lead the next generation over the cliff into immorality and bondage.



“So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day” (II Kings 17:41).

Read that verse again. They feared God, yet served idols? Is this possible? Did they go through a form of worship? Showing up for the ceremonies, shouting “Hallelujah” at the right time, bowing their knees, but not their hearts? Yet bringing their sacrifices to the groves, indulging in the sexual perversion, rejoicing in their freedom from the law? Does this sound familiar?

Revival came to Israel only when they tore down their idols. So, it will come to our lives when we tear down the images that our culture has built upon every high place. The idols must go!

Jesus, the Master Teacher, often used images to teach eternal lessons. Satan, the great imitator, is not about to let the visual teaching tool gather dust in his tool box. Consider the effect of pornography on our culture and the recent rise in sexting among teens. The master of deceit is still flashing images before our eyes, attempting to infiltrate our minds with his message.

We would do well to adopt the psalmist David’s consecration: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me” (Psalm 101:3).

Life Reflection:

Is there a connection between preteens’ and teens’ perceived images of success and the suicide rate among them? What can we do to protect our children from the distorted images portrayed by our society?

It is possible to engage in a ritual of worship in church, while bowing to idols on our computers, iPads, smart phones, and cameras? Discuss.

Are there idols in your home or life that need to be torn down? When do you plan to do that?

The Image of God

For generations mankind struggled in vain to regain the image God created—to be perfect, to be godlike, to be super-heroes. But nothing man did was enough. The carnal man prevailed. Then Jesus came.

“In whom [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God. . .” (Colossians 1:14-15).

“And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Colossians 3:10, *New International Version*).

Jesus, God revealed in flesh, the image of the invisible God showed us the way to put off the old man and be renewed into the image of our Creator—the image that Adam lost in the garden.

Let Me Lose Myself

(These words are as I remember them.)

Many years I longed for rest
Perfect peace within my breast,
And I often sought the Lord alone in tears.
But I could not pay the price,
Would not make the sacrifice;
So I wandered on and on for many years.

Then one day while knelt in prayer,
Jesus whispered to me there,
"Take up your cross and follow Me to Calvary."
Oh, how hard it was to die, and all self to crucify,
Just to lose myself and find it, Lord, in Thee.

Let me lose myself and find it, Lord, in Thee.
May all self be slain, my friends, see only Thee.
Though it costs me grief and pain,
I will find my life again.
If I lose myself, I'll find it, Lord, in Thee.



Life Reflection

Whose image do others see in me?

Life Response:

Surely God is displeased with the distorted reflections displayed in Generation Image's mirror. Let us tear down the idols in our lives and worship only at the feet of Jesus.
We belong to the one whose image we bear.

My Prayer: *Lord Jesus, help me recognize the tactics of the enemy and resist his attempts to seduce me into worshiping at the altar of self. May Your image be reflected in my face, my attitude, and my action. Make me in Your image.*

More Life with God References

Romans 8:29

Hebrews 1:1-3

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