



Week Four: Imago Dei – Study Guide

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August 24, 2013

Is it image, or imagination? Although similar in root, these words are very different. Image is a replication, or a like copy, of something. Imagination is a personal perception. As this series of study draws to a close, we have gathered some valuable truths about the image of God, and uncovered the imaginations that have falsely defined God, others, and us. We can get off track when we lose the image and live the imagination. This week in *Images*, we have the task of applying how we are progressing as those who are following Christ. We will be taking the 'Imago Dei,' the image of God, to our world.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) Through this *Images* study, have you started viewing yourself differently? Have you seen God differently? Or seen others in a new light? Explain.

- 2) Seeing value in each person is much easier than it sounds. Our world mostly revolves around us, and it is always challenging to be outwardly focused in the showing of love. When you hear news of the current terror that is happening in Egypt, or corrupt ethical decisions some national leaders are condoning, you can find your imagination running wild and getting very angry with an entire group or class of people. Try to think of any prejudices you may have against some individual, group or nation. Although you may find just cause, do you currently focus your blame toward people themselves, or are you angry at the temptations that control them?

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Into the Bible

- 3) To view others in the image God, as He created them, is to remove any imaginations that we may have falsely formed. We can be lured into thinking we can pick and choose whom we can love. Read **John 14:15** and **1 John 4:19-21**. Is it correct to think we can love God, yet withhold love from another person of our choosing? Would God grant us permission to withhold undeserved love and grace to someone who is not a believer? Elaborate.

- 4) Paul the Apostle, before his conversion to follow Jesus, was named Saul. Read **Acts 7:58-8:3**. What would today's headlines read about Saul of Tarsus? For more on the conversion of Saul, you can look at Acts, Chapter 9. As a Christian it would have been easy to hate Saul. This may look differently for the towns we live in today, but how would you see yourself adapting to a supposed "enemy" of yours, coming to your Life Group?

- 5) To uncover what may be holding our hearts back from truly seeing others in God's image, we need to try and explore all areas of our lives. At times, the most obvious area may be the Church. Yes, the capital 'C' Church. Read **1 Corinthians 1:10-15** and answer the following questions:
 - a) Have you experienced denominational hatred? Explain.
 - b) Will the Church of Christ have divisions? Does this mean only one denomination has the answers, and all the rest are in trouble?
 - c) What is essential to faith in Christ?
 - d) How can we love and show support for the greater Church?

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How Does This Apply?

- 6) To be reconciled is to be restored, or brought back into a close and accepting relationship. Read **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**. Which ministry are we purposed for and entrusted with? What does it mean to be an ambassador? This passage states that Christ was reconciling the world back to God—the entire creation! Any purpose that we fulfill as followers of Jesus will point toward restoring images of sin back to images of God. How can we be a part of reconciliation? How can images of hatred, whether it is of people, nations, or churches, hinder us?

Prayer Focus

This series, **we are praying for people who are created in the image of God** around the world. Here is a specific way you can be praying this week:

This Week's Focus: Unrest in Egypt

Pray for the people of Egypt as they experience political upheaval, and for Christians as they experience persecution in the midst of the turmoil. See www.covechurch.org/prayerfocus for links to further reading on this topic.

Continue Learning on Your Own

- 7) We can be compelled to love as Christ no matter where we are in our journey with Him. Maturity comes as we continue to strive day by day to know Him more. Even the smallest things in scripture will sometimes allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes in a whole new way, thus adding more depth to the journey. 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 teaches the ministry of reconciliation. This is a ministry of loving our neighbor. Ever since the Garden of Eden in Genesis Chapter 3, mankind has been in a process of restoration back to God. Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection gave us confidence that we too can be resurrected into eternity with Christ. In **2 Corinthians 5:14-17**, what does it mean that since Christ died for mankind, all have died?