



In creation we see God's hand; in redemption we see His heart.

Lesson 2

Created in God's Image

Life Principle

Because we are created in the image of God, we are to attach dignity to our own lives and to the lives of those around us.

Graduation day was especially sweet for Cindy and Hannah. They were best of friends throughout their academy years, and they shared so many memories.

But the pictures from graduation day were the most special ones they ever shared. The pictures served as a capstone to their academy days. They were going to different colleges, and so wanted their pictures from graduation day to be special reminders of their bond. Or so it seemed to Cindy.

Cindy got double prints of the whole roll and two 5 x 7 prints of the best one. When she took Hannah's copies to her, she even bought a special frame for the 5 x 7 that said something on it about being "friends forever." Cindy had framed her own 5 x 7 print and promised Hannah to put it up in her room at college. Hannah looked through the pictures and then put them, along with the frame, on the counter next to the refrigerator.

Although they didn't work at the same

place that summer, they visited in Hannah's home frequently. Occasionally Cindy would notice that the pictures and frame had not moved very far. They remained on top of the fridge, with the exception of the 5 x 7, which was now stuck to the fridge with magnets.

In the fall as she packed her things, Cindy put her framed 5 x 7 of graduation carefully into her suitcase, but as she did, her mind flashed to Hannah's kitchen, where her 5 x 7 was still stuck to the fridge. She wondered if Hannah would just leave it there or take it with her to be reminded of the very special friendship they shared. She hoped that Hannah would take it with her and put it in the frame that Cindy had so carefully selected.

At Christmas break her question was answered: the picture had remained on the fridge. It was partially covered now with various other items. It looked as though juice had been splashed on it as well. The frame and the other pictures still sat on top of the

fridge. Cindy was hurt by Hannah's treatment of their picture. It was a reflection of her attitude that their friendship didn't really matter anymore. The picture was becoming little more than a faint image of something they shared in the past, something fading in importance.

God's Image in Us

Thoughtful Christians today must ask whether or not God's image is anything more than a faint picture of something human beings shared with God in the past. The Genesis account of Creation records that God made humans in His image, a Bible teaching that is central to a life philosophy.

Christians have long pondered what it means to be created in God's image.

- Some argue that it means we have certain **capacities**, such as rational thought, mutual relationships, and freedom to make moral decisions.
- Some believe it is more of a **function** than a capacity and thus consider humans as "Godlike" keepers of this earth.
- There is also the question of whether the image refers primarily to our physical or our spiritual natures. Some, Seventh-day Adventists among them, have argued for the biblical concept of an integrated person and so do not argue for an either/or position.
- The image of God may also refer to freedom of choice. "Freedom is the most important characteristic which human beings share with God"¹
- Another question focuses on the state

of the image in humankind. Was the image entirely destroyed in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned, or was it only marred?

Regardless of the particular definition of what the image of God is, the image was profoundly corrupted when Adam and Eve sinned. But the shadow of the image of God in us confers a dignity upon humanity that should not be denied, regardless of the corruption of sin. Jesus is Himself the only perfect expression of God's image (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15). Through Christ, God seeks to restore His image in humans and transform us into the fullness of God's image.

The biblical teaching about the image of God affects one's life philosophy and has important consequences for the resolution of moral issues. Three vital teachings are tied together in the truth of God's image in us: First, we are created in His image. Second, this confers dignity to all human beings. Third, God longs to fully restore His image in us.

Ellen White puts these thoughts together in clear and concise terms. "To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life."²

As these concepts of human nature and God's relation to us through Christ are incorporated into our life philosophy, a basis for determining our ethical approach to

moral issues is simultaneously developed. Christ's presence transforms the inner character, and biblical principles will determine our approach to the difficult moral issues of our day. At the same time that Christ secures our salvation, His renewing spirit begins the process of restoring His image in us and begins shaping our life philosophy and ethical response to moral issues.

Ellen White again puts these concepts together in a concise manner. "[The] principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity . . . become a living power to shape the character, through the acquaintance of the soul with Christ, through an acceptance of His wisdom as the guide, His power as the strength, of heart and life. This union formed, the student has found the Source of wisdom. He has within his reach the power to realize in himself his noblest ideals."³

How one answers questions of human nature and destiny determines how one interprets the meaning of the image of God. As noted above, human freedom is an essential element of that image. While there are many things we cannot choose, such as our height, hair color, and parents, we are free to choose God and His salvation. We are free to yield our hearts to Him and let Him transform our characters. This aspect of our life philosophy is in stark contrast to fatalism, a secular life philosophy. *Fatalism* is a life philosophy that rejects freedom, asserting that an individual is unable to alter himself or herself or change his or her fate. A fatalist rejects Christ's transforming presence in one's heart, believing that a sinful heart cannot be changed.

Christians, on the other hand, affirm the dignity of humankind created in the image of God. In the shaping of our life philosophy, we recognize God in our past, present, and future. When we yield our lives to God, He begins to restore His image in us, giving us freedom once again. This fabulous freedom includes responsibility that will be explored in coming lessons.

Pulling the Image off the Refrigerator Door

Just as Cindy wanted to pull the picture off of Hannah's refrigerator door and carefully put it on display in an attractive frame, God also wants so much to restore His image in you and me.

Dave is an excellent emergency room nurse, but his real career passion is rebuilding cars. He buys late-model cars that have been wrecked so badly that the cost of fixing them often exceeds their value. Obviously Dave doesn't make much money doing this, but he loves the challenge. He dismantles the car down to its frame and begins the restoration by straightening and aligning the frame. He repairs or replaces every damaged part on the car. Finally he applies the various coats of paint and clear coats needed so that the car doesn't just look as good as new, it is as good as new.

That is something like what God does with us. There we were—in the salvage yard—totaled, without hope and without a future. But God comes along and purchases us, not with dollars but with His own lifeblood. Right at that moment, we belong totally to Him. We don't become valuable to Him because He intends to fix us up; we are

Reaction

valuable to Him the moment He lays eyes on us. Then, with the greatest skill and patience, He rebuilds our characters—straightening our hearts and reshaping every damaged piece. When He is finished, we have not become more valuable to Him, but we reflect much more clearly the image of the Maker. He causes us to shine and reflect His glory. Just as Dave delights in his restoration projects, so God exults in His workmanship that bears the stamp of God's own image.

Anchor Text

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17, 18).

Bible Search 1

Why We're Valuable

The truth of our creation by God in His

Discussion Questions

1. We understand what a physical image is, but can there be such a thing as a "spiritual" image?
2. Describe the relationship between the image and the maker of the image.
3. Can an image be repaired once it is damaged? If so, how?
4. If we are really made in God's image, does that mean that God has hands and feet like ours?
5. How does God's image in us give us a dignity that demands we treat each other with care?
6. A person in a permanent vegetative state lacks the ability to
 - (a) have relationships,
 - (b) make moral decisions,
 - (c) think rational thought, or
 - (d) exercise any functional role in this world. Should a person in this condition be considered as having completely lost the image of God?
7. What does it mean to "yield our hearts to God"?
8. What are the personal and social results of the realization that you are created in the image of God?
9. Creationism, as understood by Seventh-day Adventists, teaches that we are made in the image of God. According to evolution, what is our image?

image is of vital importance to Seventh-day Adventist life philosophy. It interprets our past, provides meaning for the present, and provides hope for a complete restoration in the future. To learn more about this, complete the worksheet provided by your teacher.



Bible Search 2

Restoring the Image

After the Israelites had spent hundreds of years in rebellion and sin, God came to His

people with a very special promise about what He would do for them through His Holy Spirit and Son Jesus. Complete the worksheet provided by your teacher to study more about this special promise.

Endnotes

1. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology From a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd edition (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1985), 135.
2. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), 15, 16.
3. Ellen G. White, *Education*, 29, 30.

Personal Response

In what specific area of my personal character is God seeking to restore His image right now?

Practical Application

1. Find something in your classroom, school, or home that once had a striking image but is now dirty or faded and needs restoration. Restore it, as best you can, to its original glory. For example, restore the shine of a chrome faucet, sterling silverware, or leather shoes; prune a plant that is neglected; brush a pet that needs attention; make the white board white again; clean your desk!
2. Form groups of two or three and present to the class an oral interpretation of one of

the following passages:

Genesis 1:26-2:3

Genesis 2:4-25

Ephesians 3:14-21

Philippians 3:17-21

Colossians 2:6-15

Colossians 3:1-17

3. In the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, look up the phrase "image of God" and compose a paper addressing the questions "What happened to the image of God in humans after sin was introduced?" and "How do I see (or not see) the image of God in me?"