

Why Am I Here?

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The Bible is the only place where we find the answer to the question, “Why am I here?”

Some Christians have stated the answer this way: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

Before we take a look at what it means to “glory” God, what does the Bible tell us about how and why we were created?

1. The Bible tells me that I was planned by God.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. (Gen. 1:26)

What does that mean for me?

The act of creating man was based on the deliberate counsel of God. Though all that God had done in Creation up to that point He pronounced as good, Creation was incomplete without man. Man was no afterthought, but the result of deliberate forethought on the part of the Godhead. And after God created man He then said that everything He had made was “very good” (v. 31).¹

2. The Bible tells me that I was made in God’s image.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:27)

How can I be “in the image of God”?

The Hebrew words in Genesis 1:26-27 are *tselem* and *demuth* (translated in the Vulgate by *imago* and *similitudo*). The equivalent New Testament words are *eikon* and *homoiosis*. ... *Tselem* means a fashioned image, a shaped and representative figure, an image in some concrete sense (2 Kings 11:18; Ezek. 23:14; Amos 5:26). *Demuth* refers also to the idea of similarity but more in the abstract or ideal. By using the two words together, the biblical author “seems to be attempting to express a very difficult idea in which he wants to make clear that man is in some way the concrete reflection of God, but at the same time he wants to spiritualize this toward abstraction” (Addison H. Leitch, “Image of God,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* [Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 1975], 3:256).

The Greek and Latin fathers distinguished between image and likeness, referring the former to the physical and the latter to the ethical part of God's image. Irenaeus understood the image to refer to man's freedom and reason and likeness to the gift of supernatural communion with God which was lost in the Fall. But such distinctions cannot be substantiated on the basis of the words. Note also that the prepositions are used interchangeably in Genesis 1:26-27 and 5:1-3.²

Many have tried to explain what it means to be made "in the image of God." Since this is an important, of often misunderstood concept, we present an extended discussion of what it does, and does not mean:

Much has been written attempting to explain what is meant by man's being created in the image of God. Here are some of the explanations.

1. *The corporeal view.* This relates the image of God to man's total being including his corporeality. Strictly speaking, it includes both the material and immaterial aspects of man. But since it includes the material body of man as part of the image of God, it may be labeled the corporeal view. "Man is a representative by his entire being, for Israelite thought always views man in his totality, by his physical being as well as by his spiritual functions, and if choice had to be made between the two we would say that the external appearance is perhaps even more important than spiritual resemblance. According to L. Koehler the image of God could consist in man's upright position . . . [but] the solemnity with which the priestly writer speaks of the *imago Dei* seems to prove that he did not restrict it to this single aspect. . . . It is also to a rather physical sense that we are directed by the passage in Genesis which refers to the image of God over the matter of blood vengeance (9:6)" (Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* [New York: Harper & Row, 1958], pp. 168-9).

Two obstacles appear to stand in the way of accepting this view.

(1) Since God is spirit and has no body, how could the image of God in which man was created be corporeal? (2) Animals have bodies but are not said to have been created in the image of God, so corporeality does not necessarily have to be related to the image of God.

2. *The noncorporeal view.* This view connects the image of God to facets of personality. Many writers emphasize moral likeness, dominion, the exercise of will and intellectual faculties (ability to speak, organize, etc.) as specifics of the noncorporeal image of God.

3. *A combination view.* I would suggest a combination of the two previous views as follows. Genesis 1:27 states that mankind, male and female, was created in the image of God. No one attributes sex to God because of this statement; yet male and female indicate sex. Similarly, just because man, created in the image of God, has a body, does not necessitate attributing a body to God. But obviously man was created a total being, material and immaterial, and that total being was created in the image of God.

Therefore, (1) man's body is included in the image of God. "While God is not physical in any way, there is a sense in which even a man's body is included in the image of God, for man is a unitary being composed of both body and soul.

His body is a fit instrument for the self-expression of a soul made for fellowship with the Creator and is suited eschatologically to become a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44). . . . [His body] was not something apart from the real self of Adam, but was essentially one with it" (Ralph E. Powell, "Image of God" *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* [Chicago: Moody, 1975], 1:832).

(2) To be created in the image of God also means to be a living being. This was Paul's emphasis on Areopagus (Acts 17:28-29). Refuting the belief that inanimate idols could represent the living God, he argues that since mankind is the offspring of God, and since human beings are living beings, God must also be a living Being.

(3) Man is not only a living being, but a being like God with both intelligence and will that give him the ability to make decisions that enable him to have dominion over the world (Gen. 1:28).

(4) Adam was not only a unitary, living, intelligent, determining being, but also one who was able to have unhindered fellowship with God. How can we express Adam's original condition? Some use the word innocent, but Adam was more than innocent, which seems to connote only the absence of wrong. Adam's original holiness was positive; yet it was not equal with God's—it was creaturely. Because it was subject to testing, it was unconfirmed. It provided immortality, for until Adam failed the test, he was not subject to the inevitable law of death due to sin.

To sum up: the image of God in which man was created included the totality of his being as living, intelligent, determining, and moral.³

3. The Bible tells me that I was created for God's pleasure and glory.

Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made. —Isa. 43:7

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. —Rev. 4:11

So how do we go about glorifying God? Here are some examples of how people in the Bible are said to have given God glory:

- Abraham trusted God (Rom. 4:20)— yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,...
- Asaph offered praise (Psa. 50:23)— He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.
- Believers offer praise by the way they live (1 Cor. 10:31)— Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
- God is glorified when we endure suffering and persecution for His sake (1 Pet. 4:14, 16)— If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. . . . but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.
- We glorify God by glorifying Christ (2 Thess. 1:11-12)—To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 so that the

name ^{R30} of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- God is glorified when we bear fruit (i.e., when we show by our lives that we are Christians) (John 15:8; Phil. 1:11)—My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.... having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
- God is glorified when we are faithful (1 Pet. 4:11)— Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

4. Finally, the Bible tells me that I can enjoy God forever.

In the Bible, God tells us that this benefit—enjoying Him forever—is available to those who have accepted His gracious and free gift of salvation:

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. (Rom. 6:22)

Since we have examined both the topic of salvation and our eternal destiny in companion articles, we will only mention them in passing here.

There is one final point to be made. Christianity is a **relationship**, not a **religion**. Why the distinction? Josh McDowell, one of the most popular speakers on the university campus today has said, “I’ve come to one conclusion. A relationship with Jesus Christ changes lives. You can laugh at Christianity. You can mock and ridicule it. But it works. It changes lives. If you trust Christ, start watching your attitudes and actions because Jesus Christ is in the business of changing lives.”⁴

When God spoke to Jeremiah, He gave him this encouragement: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11).

Why not take the time right now to find out more about the personal God who desires a personal relationship with you—one who wants you to enjoy Him forever?

Notes

¹ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Computer file)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Josh McDowell, “Does Christianity Work?” online at <http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/josh/josh2.html>

3APStaff0905 Why Am I Here?