

REFLECTING THE IMAGE
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of
to

GOD'S FAMILY PORTRAIT
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Focus on Family 2024

SCRIPTURE: *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by
Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

Ephesians 1:5

Participant's Study Guide

REFLECTING the IMAGE Of GOD'S FAMILY PORTRAIT

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Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*
Ephesians 1:5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis is the record of earth's foundation (**Hebrews 1:10**), upon which all else in the bible is built. This is the first moment in time as followers of Christ know it to be. All the animals, fowls, fish, plants, trees, light, darkness, land, and bodies of water were fashioned by God.

After creating all that man needed to sustain him, God then decided to create man in his image (**Genesis 1:26-27**). God joined man and woman together as one, to become a family, to care for the earth, to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (**v. 1:28**). God was well pleased with his design (**v. 1:31**).

In the beginning man was a perfect image (likeness) of God the creator. Since God is a Spirit, without a "physical" form, man's likeness of God was fashioned after God's character/attributes. It is man's soul that bears God's image (**Ecclesiastes 7:29**).

All of mankind is a result of the first created man and woman, Adam and Eve. We are part of their family. All humans become part of a family either by birth, adoption, or by marrying into a family. Our behaviors are shaped and molded by the impacts of our family. The family of God (the church) is fashioned after the earthly family.

When Adam and Eve (the first man and woman) were tempted by Satan and chose to yield to their temptation, sin entered the earth. That sin marred man's image and severed the relationship between God and man. Because man's relationship with God was severed, it also caused a rip between man and the rest of God's creation. The way was now made for sin to take root. The result of sin affected man's understanding, his knowledge, his affections, his desires, and his will to please God. Because of sin, the image God created became distorted. Even today, man continues to lust after the things that please his flesh rather the things that please God. Instead of reproducing godly fruit, the fruit of sin has been repeatedly produced.

Just as sin impacted the first family God created, families today continue to suffer from the results of sin. Abuse, addiction, adultery, divorce, incest, and many more "ills" plague families and distort our perception of God and his plan for man and the family. Apart from God, man's attempts to reflect the image of God have all been futile, senseless, and counter-productive.

However, God, in his infinite wisdom and his unconditional love for man, made a way to restore the relationship between him and man. God chose to fashion a physical body for himself to show man how to live as he was originally designed to live. Jesus Christ chose to come down from heaven (born of a virgin woman, by the Holy Spirit) and to die on the cross (bearing man's sins) to restore man's relationship with God and to reconcile man back to God.

These lessons will examine how sin has affected man's relationship with God and distorted the image God created in man. The lessons will also demonstrate God's love toward man to reconcile their broken relationship and restore man's image. It is our prayer that this study will help you develop a better understanding of God's plan for the family.

You Will Find In This Study Guide: Background Info on the FAMILY, Weekly Discussion Material, Scriptural Passages. We recommend that you read the scriptures provided, pray, and meditate on them to receive God's guidance. It is also helpful to write down any questions you may have and share your thoughts or questions during class.

WEEK I: CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE- This lesson will define what is a family, how we become a part of a family, and the purpose of a family, examine some of the attributes of God, and show how man is created in the image of God and how man is to reflect that image

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: Genesis 1:26-27
2:7
James 1:22-25

WEEK II: GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN DISTORTED BY SIN- This lesson will highlight some of the effects of sin on the family as we look at some families in the bible, and compare "functional" families to "dysfunctional families"

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: Genesis 3
Psalm 127:1
128
Joshua 24:15
Matthew 7:26

WEEK III: RESTORED BY GOD'S GRACE- This lesson will show how only God, through his grace, love, and mercy can restore man's image and man's relationship with God

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: Matthew 9:12
Luke 4:18
Romans 7:19-20
II Corinthians 5:18-19
Galatians 5:16-23

WEEK IV: REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP- This lesson will examine the importance of man's relationships with God and with each other in fulfilling God's plan for man

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: 1 Corinthians 1:10
Proverbs 24:3
Ephesians 4:2-3
Colossians 3:9-11
Genesis 4:1-9

WEEK I

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

This lesson will define what is a family, how we become a part of a family, and the purpose of a family. The lesson will also examine some of the attributes of God and show how man is created in the image of God and how man is to reflect that image

**KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: Genesis 1:26-27
2:7
James 1:22-25**

WEEK I

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 1:26-27

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

Throughout history, the concept of family has served as a foundational unit, providing support, structure, and a sense of belonging. Adam and Eve were created to become as “one”; to care for the earth and to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. In essence, they were to become a family and reproduce more of their kind.

FAMILY: a group of people experiencing life together; often adults and the children they care for

A **nuclear family** is a family unit consisting of two parents (mother and father) and their biological or adopted children living together in a single household.

An **extended family system** includes additional relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, or godparents/children. It includes people we love and who love us; those we feel closely connected to through a shared history and experience. Some close friends may consider their relationship to be one of a family.

Typically, we become a part of a family either by being **born into the family** (natural/biological) or by being **adopted into the family**, or by **marrying into a family** (in-laws; joining two families together).

According to the article **“Nuclear Family, Definition + History”**, published by Practical Psychology October 8, 2023, **in ancient Rome, the family structure was predominantly patriarchal.** The *paterfamilias*, or the **male head of the family, held considerable authority and power**, dictating the family's decisions and actions. Within this patriarchal setup, **the nuclear family was a visible unit**, distinguished by its **immediate family members sharing a household**, apart from the extended family.

The nuclear family in ancient Rome **functioned as a fundamental economic, social, and educational unit.** Parents, particularly fathers, bore the responsibility of nurturing the children, imparting **cultural norms, values, and traditions**, ensuring the continuity of Roman heritage. The Roman household was a microcosm of Roman society, reflecting societal hierarchies, roles, and responsibilities.

Ancient Greece, much like Rome, valued the concept of the *oikos* or household, which typically consisted of the father, mother, and children.

The **Greek polis (city-state)** had a profound impact on family life, as it underscored the nuclear family's role in contributing to civic responsibilities and duties. Families were seen as the building blocks of a city-state, and the familial roles were often aligned with serving the interests of the community.

Transitioning from ancient civilizations to the **Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the nuclear family experienced shifts and adaptations, reflecting the changing socio-economic and cultural landscapes of the times.**

The church played a significant role in dictating family values, norms, and practices, influencing marriage, parenthood, and children's upbringing.

The Renaissance period marked a departure from the rigid societal structures of the Middle Ages, ushering in an era of enlightenment, art, science, and individualism.

The emphasis on personal fulfillment, intellectual growth, and artistic expression brought about shifts in family dynamics and individual roles within the nuclear family.

The twentieth Century ushered in more changes to the nuclear family. Wars forced women into the workforce to provide for their families while the men were away in battle. Technology, and globalization also altered the landscape of families.

A wave of social and cultural movements during the latter part of the Twentieth Century challenged the "traditional" ideas of the nuclear family, advocating for more "inclusiveness".

GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN FOR THE FAMILY

There are **7 PILLARS OF SOCIETY** that each of us has a role to affect and that sustain our culture. Each of them holds up an equal portion of society but when one begins to weaken or crumble, the others take on more weight. When all of them crumble, society falls apart.

The FAMILY Pillar: represents the core unit of society. It is the 1st and last line of defense and the most critical factor in the survival of a civilized society.

Just as Adam and Eve were called to care for the earth, the Bible clearly places upon the parents the responsibility to train up (**Proverbs 22:6**), teach (**Deuteronomy 6:7-9**), and to nurture and admonish (**Ephesians 6:4**) their children's growth and development. That responsibility included not only children's physical growth and development, but also their spiritual, emotional, cognitive, and social development as well. Faith begins at home. **Parents are children's first and primary teachers.** Although some parents wish to abdicate (give up) that role, God specifically gave that to parents. **The role/purpose of the family is to. .**

-Love One Another (John 13:34-35)

-Care for/Help One Another (I Corinthians 12:25)

-Teach/Train (Colossians 3:16)

-Nurture/Admonish (Ephesians 6:4)

-Obey God's Commands (Matthew 28:20)

-Obey One Another (Ephesians 6:1-9)

The most important thing for parents to remember is that God created our children and he has a plan for their lives. Children have been entrusted to parents, and God (their Creator) expects parents to take the responsibility to raise them in a godly manner.

-Availability – Deuteronomy 6:6-7

-Involvement –Ephesians 6:4

-Teaching –Psalm 78:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:10; Ephesians 6:4

-Training –Proverbs 22:6; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12

-Discipline – Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15-17

-Nurture –Titus 2:4; 2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 4:29-32; 5:1-2; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:8-9

-Modeling with Integrity- Deuteronomy 4:9, 15, 23; Proverbs 10:9; 11:3; Psalm 37:18, 37

God’s original intentions for the “ideal” or “perfect” family consisted of stability and support, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and socialization. **Training children in the ways of God helped to pass on godly traits and characteristics from one generation to the next.** Unfortunately, because of the effects of sin, the “ideal” or “perfect” family does not exist.

BECOMING PART OF GOD’S FAMILY

The CHURCH Pillar: is also called the "Religion" Pillar and is our moral foundation and our most intimate and basic belief.

Adoption was not common in the Jewish world. A person’s standing was based on his birth.

In the Roman world, adoption was a significant and common practice. With few exceptions, a man had to pass his wealth on to his son(s). If a man had no sons or if he felt that his sons were incapable of managing his wealth or were unworthy of it, he would have to adopt someone who would make a worthy son. These adoptions were not infant adoptions as is common today.

-older boys and adult men were normally adopted.

-the adoptee might even be older than the man who was adopting him.

-the adoptee would have all his debts cancelled and he would receive a new name.

-He would be the legal son and entitled to all the rights and benefits of a son.

-A father could disown his natural-born son, but an adoption was irreversible.

Jesus Christ is the “only begotten Son” of God (**Hebrews 1:1-4**); the Firstborn Son of God, the only one “physically” born into the family of God; the firstborn of many brethren (**Romans 8:29**).

All other believers have been added to the family through adoption. The Bible refers to believers as “children of God”, and as sons and heirs adopted into His family (**Galatians 4:4-7**).

Because of Jesus’ obedience to God the Father, we all share in the benefits of being a part of God’s family. **Ephesians 1:5** reassures us that we all have a right to become part of God’s family whether we were part of God’s original “chosen” people, or adopted by faith into the family. We are now legitimate “heirs” to the kingdom with a legal right to all benefits. **When we come to**

faith in Christ, our debts are cancelled, we are given a new name, and we are given all the rights that heirs of God possess.

REFLECTING GOD’S IMAGE

REFLECT: to give back or exhibit as an image, likeness, or outline : mirror

A reflection gives an image of it’s subject; what it is focused on. When we look in a mirror we can see our reflection. **Mirrors reflect light through a process**

Seven Years Bad Luck: Mirrors are supposed to deeply disclose who we truly are. Roman artisans learned how to manufacture mirrors from polished metal surfaces. They believed their gods observed souls through these devices. To damage a mirror was considered to be disrespectful.

IMAGE: a representation of the external form of a person or thing in art:

PORTRAIT: a pictorial representation of a person usually showing the face; aimed toward capturing the personality of a person or group of people by using effective lighting, backdrops, and poses.

“A picture is worth a thousand words” is a proverb from Confucius, a Japanese philosopher. Fred R. Barnard wrote an article in 1921 promoting the use of pictures or images in advertising. He quoted Confucius’ saying in his article.

-complex and multiple ideas can be conveyed by a single still image which conveys its meaning or essence more effectively than a mere verbal description

Pictures are used to capture (preserve) a specific moment in time to “remind” us of what was.

What about AI (Artificial Intelligence)?

AI Generated Imagery and How It Works: The AI system is trained using an algorithm called a neural network. This is a computational model that mimics the neural networks in the human brain. The neural network learns to identify and recognize the patterns, features, and styles of an image.

What you see in the photo, may not necessarily be what was.

How can we reflect what we have not seen? (Exodus 33:19-23; John 1:18; 6:46). To know Jesus, however, is to know and see the Father (**John 14:7**). Christ came to show us the way to live holy and righteous. Likewise, we are called to be “Christ-like”, which means we are to follow Christ’s example. **By following Christ’s example, we learn what it means to be like the Father.**

As part of God’s family, we are called to reflect the image God placed in us from the beginning. Reflecting God’s image requires that our “focus” be on what we are to reflect (Him); our heart, our mind, our soul must all be committed to God in order to reflect God (**Deuteronomy 11:22; Matthew 22:37**). We are called to be light (**Matthew 5:14**). Just as the mirror uses light to reflect images, our light should reflect the image of God to others.

What exactly are we to reflect? In **Psalm 8:4**, the question is asked, “*What is man that thou art mindful of him?*”. Man, in comparison with all of God’s magnificent creation, seems small and insignificant. However, despite man’s seemingly insignificance, God showed a particular interest in man. The writer goes on to show how God created man and gave man a purpose on earth above all other creatures.

Genesis 2:7 helps us to better understand the part of man that was made in God’s image. Once God breathed the breath of life into man, man, then became a “living soul”. It is the soul that God is most concerned about (**Matthew 10:28**). It is the soul that returns back to God when man’s earthly body expires. It is the soul that will live on in eternity either in heaven or in hell (**Hebrews 9:27**).

James 1:22-25 Makes it even clearer when he talks about being “doers” of the word and not “hearers” only. As long as we look in the mirror, we can see our reflection, but once we walk away from the mirror, we are no longer able to see that reflection. In order for us to cast a reflection, we must be in front of the mirror. In order for us to “follow” the perfect law, we must be constantly focused on it. In order for us to “reflect” God, we must be constantly focused on his image.

Jesus declared in **John 10:30** that he and the Father “are one”. When we see Jesus we see the Father. When people look at us, they should see a representation of who God is. Our lives should paint a portrait of God so others will know what God is like. We may be the only image of God some people see.

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

A.W. Tozer wrote, “**God is pure existence, or what some call pure actuality**; many things can “have” existence (e.g., human beings, animals, plants), but only one thing can “be” existence.

“**Second, God is a necessary being.** A necessary being is one whose nonexistence is impossible (**GotQuestions.org, What Is God?**).

Only God has chosen to reveal himself to man (Ephesians 1:17; John 1:14). Only by studying God’s Word, following the living Word, and relying upon the Holy Spirit are we able to begin to understand what God is like (**Jeremiah 29:13**). **Romans 1:18-20** also points out how God reveals himself through his creation.

Because God’s ways are higher than man’s ways, and his thoughts are higher than man’s thoughts (**Isaiah 55:8-9**), man’s finite mind cannot fully comprehend the extent of God’s “Being”.

In the book of Genesis it says God created man in His own image (**Genesis 1:27**). We were created to resemble God. Since God is a spirit (**John 4:24**), it did not mean that man’s fleshly body resembled God. **The image of God (Latin, *imago dei*) refers to the immaterial part of humanity.**

- Mentally** man is the only created being with the ability to reason or choose
- Morally** man was created in the image of God’s righteousness and perfect innocence
- Socially** man was created to have fellowship with God and with one another

WEEK II

GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN **DISTORTED BY SIN**

This lesson will take a look at some families in the bible, as it compares “functional” families to “dysfunctional families” and highlights some of the effects of sin on the family

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: Genesis 3
Psalm 127:1
128
Joshua 24:15
Matthew 7:26

WEEK II

GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN DISTORTED BY SIN

GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN

DISTORT: to twist out of a natural, normal, or original shape or condition

God's original plan for man and the family was without flaws. However, because of sin, this image was marred, distorted, and blurred.

Part of being made in God's image is that Adam had the capacity to make free choices. Although Adam and Eve were given a righteous nature, they chose to make an evil choice to rebel against God (**Genesis 3:6**). In choosing to do this, they marred and distorted the image of God within themselves, and passed that damaged likeness on to all their descendants (**Genesis 3:16-24; Romans 5:12**). Today, we still bear the image of God (**James 3:9**), but we also bear the scars of sin. Mentally, morally, socially, and physically, we show the effects of sin.

Because of sin man's relationship with God was severed. God no longer communed with man in the garden as he once did (**Genesis 3:8**).

As believers in Christ Jesus we are called to be a reflection of Christ (**Romans 12:1-2**). Just as Adam and Eve had a choice to choose good or evil, thereby choosing what they would reflect to the world, we also must make a choice (**Joshua 24:15; Ephesians 4:24**). Because of sin, man is constantly at war within himself to do good (**Romans 7:18-24**).

The husband is to assume leadership in the home (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23). This leadership should not be dictatorial, condescending, or patronizing to the wife, but should be in accordance with the example of Christ leading the church. (**Ephesians 5:25-29**).

Wives are to submit to the authority of their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22-24). Although women should submit to their husbands, the Bible also tells men several times how they are supposed to treat their wives.

Children are to honor, obey their parents (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-2).

Ephesians 6:4 is a summary of instructions to the father, stated in both a negative and positive way.

-**The negative part of this verse indicates that a father is not to foster negativity in his children** by severity, injustice, partiality, or unreasonable exercise of authority. Harsh, unreasonable conduct toward a child will only serve to nurture evil in the heart.

The word *provoke* means "to irritate, exasperate, rub the wrong way, or incite." This is done by a wrong spirit and wrong methods—Such provocation will produce adverse reactions, deadening children's affection, reducing their desire for holiness, and making them feel that they cannot possibly please their parents.

- **A wise parent seeks to make obedience desirable and attainable by love and gentleness.**

-The positive part of Ephesians 6:4 is expressed in a comprehensive direction— educate them, bring them up, develop their conduct in all of life by the instruction and admonition of the Lord. This is the whole process of educating and discipline. **The word *admonition* carries the idea of reminding the child of faults (constructively) and duties (responsibilities).**

Spare the rod, spoil the child is a modern-day proverb on the wisdom of discipline (**Proverbs 13:24**). It means that, if a parent refuses to discipline an unruly child, that child will grow accustomed to getting his own way and develop an air of entitlement. He will become, in the common vernacular, a spoiled brat.

This proverb is usually cited in the context of spanking or other means of corporal punishment. The primary point of the biblical proverb is that loving discipline benefits the child. Discipline, if not administered in a loving, godly spirit, may cause more harm than good.

The Christian father is really an instrument in God's hand. The whole process of instruction and discipline must be that which God commands and which He administers, so that His authority should be brought into constant and immediate contact with the mind, heart, and conscience of children.

THE HOME vs THE CHURCH

The family (nuclear and extended) are to be examples of what God's family (the church) looks like, and vice-versa. When people look at the church, they should have a good idea of what the family should look like.

As with most family squabbles because of sin and human imperfection, we do not experience church as it was originally intended. Instead, there's a tendency to overstress certain ministry areas. What's more, divisive arguments--many of which concern minor issues--too often destroy unity. Greed, pride, selfishness, and gossip can also tear a church family apart. (**The Church: God's Design**; Dr. Charles Stanley).

"The family is the domestic church". The meaning of this traditional Christian idea is that **the home is the Church in miniature.** The Church is the sacrament of God's love. She is a communion of faith and life. She is a mother and teacher. She is at the service of the whole human family as it goes forward towards its ultimate destiny. **The family is the "first and vital cell of society". The future of the world and of the Church, therefore, passes through the family.** (excerpt from a **letter written by Pope John Paul II**, November 30, 1986, during his Apostolic Pilgrimage To Bangladesh, Singapore, Fiji Islands, New Zealand, Australia And Seychelles)

A FUNCTIONAL FAMILY: one where healthy interpersonal relationships are nurtured and where problems are addressed rather than avoided.

- structure and discipline are maintained by parents
- individual responsibility is required
- love and obedience to God are developed
- children are secure
- family relationships are balanced (**Deuteronomy 12:7**)

The foundations of a “functional” family are built on the Lord (Psalm 127:1). Psalm 128 speaks of the blessings that are bestowed upon those who *fear the Lord and walk in his ways*. In contrast, dysfunctional families experience chaos, confusion, and a total absence of peace. They are like the man who built his house upon sand (Matthew 7:26).

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY: one in which family members are impaired emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

“Appearances can be deceiving”. Dysfunctional families may look perfect on the outside, but behind closed doors they are falling apart. Abuse and abusive behaviors thrive in secrecy (Genesis 3:10-11; Ecclesiastes 4:9-14). Right is made to appear wrong and wrong is made to appear right (John 8:44).

Because of sin in the world, all families are dysfunctional to some extent; there is no such thing as a “perfect” family. We learn how to parent by how we were parented. Many families in the church struggle with how to discipline and guide their children because of how they were raised. Either they follow the same patterns they learned from their parents or they go to the extreme opposite to avoid being like their parents. Either way, without the guidance of the holy Spirit, can lead to dysfunction in the family. Unless efforts are made to change behaviors, dysfunctional families repeat the cycle from generation to generation (Deuteronomy 5:9); even into adulthood. Darkness cannot stand when exposed to light.

Dysfunctional families are characterized by **eight dominant traits**

- chaos
- control
- denial
- inconsistency
- indifference
- instability
- shame
- unpredictability

Healthy relationships are mutually beneficial, providing love and support to both parties. This does not imply that all families (functional and dysfunctional) won’t experience problems or become chaotic from time to time. Scriptures tell us that God rains on the just as well as the unjust; situations, test, and trials come to all families (Matthew 5:45). Families cannot know or predict when situations will arise in their lives that disrupt or alter their lives. However, how they view their situations, problems, trials, and tests, and how they deal with them, determines what the outcome will be.

CODEPENDENCY: is a dysfunctional relationship dynamic where one person assumes the role of “the giver,” sacrificing their own needs and well-being for the sake of the other, “the taker.” By being caring, highly functional, and helpful, that person is said to support, perpetuate, or “enable” a loved one’s irresponsible or destructive behavior.

CODEPENDENT FAMILY:

- conformity is strong within the family
- self-direction is lacking

- parents are overly possessive
- children are smothered
- family members are constantly making excuses for behaviors or actions
- family members are insecure

Just as there may be multiple reasons people do the things they do, there may be **multiple reasons why families are dysfunctional**

- chemical addiction
- emotional, physical, psychological disorders
- abusive (learned) behavior
- rigid, dogmatic belief system leading to bondage
- unexpected death of a significant family member

(excerpts from **Dysfunctional Family: Making Peace with Your Past**; by June Hunt)

A BIBLICAL LOOK AT DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

- Adam & Eve (disobedience): Genesis 3:1-24
- Cain & Abel (fratricide): Genesis 4:1-16
- Abraham, Sarah, & Hagar (lack of faith): Genesis 16
- Lot & His Daughters (incest): Genesis 19:31-38
- Joseph & His Brothers (jealousy): Genesis 37
- Hosea & Gomer (adultery): Hosea 1:1-11

RESULTS OF DYSFUNCTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

We are “**S.H.A.P.E. (d)**” by our experiences (what happens to us). Brokenness affects our actions (**Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 15:18**). **Hurt people, hurt people (Romans 12:1-2)**. The emotional trauma from being exposed to dysfunctional environments can impact an individual’s life far beyond the actual event.

“**Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me**” is a childhood chant which signifies that physical objects, like sticks and stones, can cause physical harm, but intangible words cannot cause physical pain. Although it is used as a defense against verbal bullying or insults, it has been proven to be untrue.

How many have ever been called or know of someone who may have been called (or perhaps have called someone) any of the following?:

- fat
- skinny
- ugly
- stupid
- dumb
- racial slurs

-How did it make you feel?

-How do you think it made the other person feel?

-Why do people call other people derogatory names like these?

WEEK III

RESTORED BY **GOD'S GRACE**

This lesson will show how only God, through his grace, love, and mercy can restore man's image and man's relationship with God

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: Matthew 9:12

Luke 4:18

Romans 7:19-20

II Corinthians 5:18-19

Galatians 5:16-23

WEEK III

RESTORED BY GOD'S GRACE

RESTORATION: bringing back to a former position or condition: reinstatement

Colors change, cracks appear, and spots can mar photo images. There are many tools and DIY apps that can analyze the image and bring back (restore) the original colors or even enhance them for a more vivid look.

Sin created cracks, blemishes, and changed and marred the image which God originally created. Just as images change and deteriorate over time, sin deteriorates everything it comes into contact with, leaving scars that go far beyond the surface; scars that could last a lifetime.

Erik Rees, in his book, **S.H.A.P.E.: Finding & Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life**, expounds on Rick Warren's concept of how each of us are designed by God for a specific "purpose". Our S.H.A.P.E. consists of **S** (spiritual gifts), **H** (heart, passion, or motivation), **A** (abilities, skills, talents), **P** (personality), **E** (experiences).

According to Erik Rees, God uses all of our experiences (good and bad) to craft us into the finished product we are to become (**Romans 8:28**).

Change, letting go of bad habits, moving past bad experiences is difficult. What we continually do becomes a habit that determines who we are to become (**Romans 12:1-2**). Deep scars and unresolved emotional experiences in our past can affect what we do or how we respond to certain situations in the present.

We cannot serve two masters (**Matthew 6:24; Romans 6:12-16**).

Man's (DIY) attempts to restore his image are only "temporary fixes" that only serve to worsen man's condition. Any attempt to change that is not rooted in God (and God's Word) are counterfeit efforts that only satisfy the flesh (**Galatians 5:16-21**) and result in spiritual death (**Romans 1:18-32**).

RETURNING TO THE MANUFACTURER

Because of sin, man's relationship with God was severed. Because God is so holy and man's disobedience and sin caused a separation between God and man, man in his own strength, was unable to restore that broken relationship. God is able and stands ready and willing to take our "dysfunction" and use it for his good.

God, showing compassion on man, made a way to restore man **John 14:6** and to reconcile his relationship with man through Jesus Christ (**Romans 5:19**). God, through Jesus Christ, became the bridge to deliver man from his sinful ways and restore man's relationship back to God. Jesus was "the perfect bridge" between imperfect man and a holy God. God desires to heal man's brokenness and restore man's relationship.

Restoration, however, is a process. One that requires returning to the manufacturer; the original creator to repair what has been broken. It requires acknowledging (confessing) our sins,

repenting of them (turning away from them), and surrendering them to God (acknowledging to God that we cannot do it on our own). Repentance demands dramatic change.

REPENT: (teshuvah in Hebrew and metanoia in Greek) refers to a change of mind that leads to a change of direction.

CONFESS: to admit that one is guilty

Confession of sin is the admission of what we did and the agreement with God that our actions or words were wrong. We are admitting that we violated God's law. We admit that we chose to do, say, or think something opposed to God's will, and we stand guilty before Him (**I John 1:9**).

God also calls us to confess our faults to others (**James 5:16**). When we have wronged someone, we must confess our wrongdoing to that person and seek forgiveness.

Some factors that may prevent a person from confessing their faults or sins may include

-**pride** (refusal to admit being wrong)

Proverbs 16:18

James 4:6

1 Peter 5:5

-**ignorance of God's Word** (unaware of God's moral standards)

II Timothy 2:15

I Corinthians 9:27

10:12

God wants us to live with a clear conscience and a pure heart (**Matthew 5:8; Psalm 24:4-5**).

This is only possible when we regularly confess and forsake our sins, following Jesus's example (**1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1**).

Because sin is so interwoven into man's being (thoughts and actions), man must daily surrender his will to God (**Romans 3:23; 12:1-2**).

God, being the potter (the original creator and manufacturer) and a loving and forgiving God, stands ready to accept man's confession and take man's broken pieces and mold them and shape them into something new (**Jeremiah 18:4**).

GOD'S SOLUTION TO RESTORING MAN'S IMAGE

Paul cautions us against following our own path (fleshly desires) instead of relying on the Holy Spirit and choosing the path of righteousness (**Romans 1:17-32**).

GRACE: "God's favor toward the unworthy" or "God's benevolence on the undeserving; God's "unmerited" favor.

The word translated "grace" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *charis*, which means "favor, blessing, or kindness." **Grace is an essential part of God's character.** In His grace, God is willing to forgive us and bless us abundantly, in spite of the fact that we don't deserve to be treated so well or dealt with so generously (excerpt from **GotQuestions.org: What is Grace?**).

Essential benefits of Grace

- saves us **Ephesians 2:8**
- is the essence of the gospel **Acts 20:24**
- gives us victory over sin **James 4:6**
- gives us “eternal encouragement and good hope” **2 Thessalonians 2:16**
- Paul repeatedly identified grace as the basis of his calling as an apostle
 - Romans 15:15**
 - 1 Corinthians 3:10**
 - Ephesians 3:2, 7**
- Jesus Christ is the embodiment of grace, coupled with truth **John 1:14**
- is a “gift” **Ephesians 4:7**
- justifies us before a holy God
 - Romans 3:24**
 - Ephesians 1:6**
 - Titus 3:7**
- provides us access to God
 - Ephesians 1:6**
 - Hebrews 4:16).**
- wins for us a new relationship of intimacy with God **Exodus 33:17**
- disciplines and trains us to live in a way that honors God
 - Titus 2:11–14**
 - 2 Corinthians 8:7**
- grants us immeasurable spiritual riches
 - Proverbs 10:22**
 - Ephesians 2:7**
- helps us in our every need (**Hebrews 4:16**)
- the reason behind our every deliverance
 - Psalms 44:3–8**
 - Hebrews 4:16**
- preserves us and comforts, encourages, and strengthens us
 - 2 Corinthians 13:14**
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17**
 - 2 Timothy 2:1**

The only way man can enter into a restored relationship with God is because of God’s grace toward man. God gives man his gift of grace freely, for man to keep, for man’s benefit, and most importantly, God extends grace to man despite his sinfulness (**Romans 5:8-21**).

Although grace is a “free gift” to man, grace is costly; there was a price for it. Jesus paid the price so that man could reap the benefits (**Romans 5:8**). God could have chosen to destroy Adam and Eve because of their disobedience and start over, however, he chose to extend grace instead.

Reflecting the image of God as the recipients of God’s grace, means that Christians are to extend grace to others. Grace is given to us to serve others and to exercise our spiritual gifts for the building up of the church.

-Romans 12:6

-1 Peter 4:10

-Ephesians 3:2, 7

4:7

REGENERATION : rebirth, related to the biblical phrase “born again.”

Regeneration is accomplished only by the Holy Spirit, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we are regenerated, we are

- made alive together with Christ (**Ephesians 2:5**)
- renewed by the Holy Spirit (**Titus 3:5**).
- like being born a second time (**John 3:3, 7**)

Our rebirth is distinguished from our first birth, when we were conceived physically and inherited our sin nature. Man in his natural state is “dead in trespasses and sins” until he is “made alive” (regenerated) by Christ. This happens when he places his faith in Christ (**Ephesians 2:1**).

Regeneration is a radical change. After regeneration, we begin to see and hear and seek after divine things; we begin to live a life of faith and holiness. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). God, not man, is the source of this transformation (**Ephesians 2:1, 8**). (excerpt from **What is regeneration according to the Bible**; GotQuestions.org)

RECONCILIATION: the restoration of a relationship to a harmonious state after a dispute; the bringing of accord out of discord between two parties.

Christian reconciliation is the work of God through Christ by which He restores mankind to a favorable relationship with Himself. Sin broke the relationship between man and God and alienated man from God. The Bible reveals God’s plan to reconcile man back to him; from Adam and Eve’s fall into sin, to Jesus dying on the cross, and man’s ultimate reunion with God in heaven.

Reconciliation involves change. In Christian reconciliation, God does not change. He remains perfect. But He changes us. As a result, our relationship with Him changes (II Corinthians 5:18-19).

As a result of man’s reconciled relationship with God, man is now able to reflect the image he was originally designed by God to show to the world. Man is now able to be fruitful, reproduce, and replenish the earth with what God originally intended him to do (**II Corinthians 5:20-21**).

RESULTS OF MAN’S RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

God is a Spirit (**John 4:24**). In order to truly worship God; in order to truly reflect God’s image, we must worship him in “spirit and in truth”. When man “chooses” to follow God’s plan instead of his own, the results will be manifested in his life. The fruit God originally intended for man to reproduce are outlined in **Galatians 5:22-23**:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The remaining verses (**Galatians 5:24-25**) remind us that we must crucify the flesh in order for the fruit of the Spirit to manifest itself in us. Producing good fruit requires pruning fruit which is not useful (unhealthy) in order for the healthy fruit to flourish. All our thoughts, all our desires, and all our plans must be surrendered to God. We must remain connected to the true vine (**John**

WEEK IV

REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE **THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS**

This lesson will examine the importance of man's relationships with God and with each other in fulfilling God's plan for man

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES: 1 Corinthians 1:10

Proverbs 24:3

Ephesians 4:2-3

Colossians 3:9-11

Genesis 4:

WEEK IV

REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIP: the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected:

A healthy relationship is a partnership between two people that is based on respect and trust, according to the University of Alabama.

Here are some **signs of a healthy relationship**, according to Northwestern Medicine:

- Listening and communicating without judgment
- Trusting and respecting one another
- Making time for each other
- Remembering details about one's life
- Participating in healthy activities together
- Working as a team
- Feeling whole as individuals, rather than leaning on the partner for healing
- Focusing on how the relationship can be mutually beneficial

All the different types of relationships in your life serve a purpose and can help you in distinct ways. Consider the following relationships:

- **Romantic** according to Northwestern Medicine. "In a romantic relationship, two or more individuals are intimately connected and share trust, respect, fondness, and a mutual desire to support and grow together and as individuals," Aasmundsen-Fry says.
- **Parent-Child** A healthy parent-child relationship is marked by loving interactions, set boundaries, and a willingness to problem solve.
- **Sibling** Aasmundsen-Fry says. "A close, healthy sibling relationship would involve confiding, spending time together, and involving each other in their lives and important events."
- **Friendship** Like other relationships, healthy friendships are built on trust and respect and make you feel good.
- **Mentor-Mentee** These relationships are built on trust, respect, open communication, perseverance to overcome obstacle, and an understanding of the other's perspective, according to Yale University. However, there's a definite power imbalance here, which makes it different from other relationships, Aasmundsen-Fry says.

- **Parasocial Relationships** These are one-sided relationships where one party invests time, energy, and interest toward the other party, and the other party is not aware they exist, according to the National Register of Health Service Psychologists.. These relationships can skew unhealthy if they morph into stalking, but for the most part these relationships are healthy and harmless.

Relationship is a key factor in our worship and service to God. Man’s chief end and highest purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever (**Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Psalm 86:9**).

Just as God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are one and work in harmony with one another, man was created to be part of a whole; to work in harmony with one another (Genesis 2:18; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Man’s relationship with others reflects his relationship with God. Sometimes we may not want to hear what God is saying to us, but we “need” to hear it (and obey it) if we want to remain in right relationship with God.

Adam’s sin severed man’s relationship with God. One of the immediate effects of the Fall was that mankind was separated from God. After disobeying God, Adam and Eve became aware of their sin and were ashamed before God. They hid from Him (**Genesis 3:8-10**). Adam’s act of hiding from God (**Genesis 3:8**) demonstrates this separation in his relationship to God.

Adam’s attempt to shift blame for the sin to the woman, and her subsequent attempt to shift the blame to the serpent, also demonstrates the effect sin had on Adam’s relationship with the one God created to be his helper (**Genesis 3:12**). Today, man still attempts to “shift the blame” of his actions to others (throw them under the bus) to save our own image. How we choose to deal with our brokenness impacts our relationship with others.

When Adam chose to rebel against his Creator, he lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of physical and spiritual death, and his mind was darkened by sin, as are the minds of his successors (**Romans 1:28**).

However, it is not for man to judge another’s behavior; only God knows a man’s true nature and man’s reasoning for his behavior (**I Samuel 16:7; II Peter 3:9**). As a reflection of God’s image, we are to remember where we once were (**Romans 3:23**) and to extend compassion and grace in relating to others we consider to be “undeserving”.

AM I MY BROTHER’S KEEPER? (Genesis 4:1-9)

While no one is the absolute “keeper” of others in that we are not responsible for everyone’s safety when we are not present, every man is his brother’s keeper in that we are not to commit violent acts against them or allow others to do so if we can prevent it.

Cain’s reply to God’s question indicates a total lack of any kind of feeling for another human being—not to mention the absence of brotherly love

So are Christians to be the keepers of other Christians? (2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Peter 3:8).

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

When we have a relationship with God, we feel satisfied, content, and peaceful. Our relationship with God also allows room for us to establish and maintain positive relationships with other people. It does not matter if our friends, family or peers treat us favorably, the relationship we have with God allows us to still be content because we get what we need from God.

Let's take a look at what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 1:10

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfect."

Paul is teaching us that Christ is the standard for every thought and judgment. As every person conforms to Christ, they will come into alignment with each other. Differences of opinion will be secondary to fundamental agreement and brotherhood, through Christ.

Unity, of course, does not mean uniformity. It does mean that the church ought not allow itself to be divided by things like human leaders but instead ought to keep the Gospel and the power of the cross of Christ firmly in view.

How does our relationship with God reflect His image? A few ways include our actions, our words, our treatment of people. Make a list of how you can reflect God's image in your relationships.

There is a children's song that says, "Oh be careful little tongue what you say..."

Proverbs 24:3

"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established".

A prosperous and long-lasting family and estate are built by wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. There are no shortcuts. There are no alternatives. The foolish and wicked may appear to be building great houses, but they are coming down soon. There is no cheating this rule. If you compromise wisdom, you will lose your family and estate.

Now what does that have to do with God's image? Teaching and learning of the Lord and His expectations of us starts in our home. Before we leave our houses every day, our goal should be to let God be made manifest in our lives and the relationship we have with Him should be a positive image. **Ask yourself these questions...**

- 1. What attitude am I taking out of my house every day?**
- 2. As I am preparing to leave my home and checking myself in the mirror, what do I look like other than my physical appearance?**

3. Who is being shown in my image? Am I reflecting godliness or am I showing a self-seeking reflection?

This scripture comes to us in two parts.

Part 1 - By wisdom is a house is built: There are several relationship building tools that we can use to reflect God's image.

1. The Word of God. Remaining steadfast in His teaching and studying his word daily is a way to reflect God's image.
2. Availing yourself to teaching under spiritual leaders: Bible Study, Sunday School, Life Group Classes (GriefShare, Leadership Training, Women's Ministry, Brotherhood, Youth Department)

These are just a few examples of how we, the Body of Christ, can use the spiritual tools provided for us to reflect God's image in every way.

Part 2 - and by understanding it is established. The reflection of our family is continued by the relationship we establish with God.

When we use these tools, we gain a better understanding of **how** to maintain positive reflections of God in our lives. Our entire demeanor changes when we make a concerted effort to reflect God in our lives.

1. We can talk about God's goodness and mercy with surety.
2. We can lead others to Christ. Keep in mind this familiar phrase, "We may be the only Jesus some people may see."
3. We are able to look beyond the exterior appearance and appeal more to the heart.

Ephesians 4:2-3

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

This verse reminds us of the importance of cultivating godly relationships and unity in our interactions with others. It encourages us to approach relationships and situations with a mindset of humility, putting others before ourselves. Remember this, we are all equal in the eyes of God. There no BIG I's or little you's. God's image is not reflected in the arrogance or power of position that one may have. The leader of an organization can only lead if they are humble and willing to bond with followers. We are called to reflect empathy and understanding, fostering a sense of compassion and kindness in our interactions.

Paul, in this scripture emphasizes the significance of love and unity in our relationships. It is calling us to work towards building harmonious connections with one another. We are encouraged to seek resolution in conflicts, promote understanding, and create a sense of tranquility and unity in our communities by striving to maintain peace.

Colossians 3:9-11

“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”

When we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we are not bound by the ways of the world. We are no longer connected to sin, but in fact greatly separated from it. In these verses, Paul is reminding us that we are to reflect and exude what the Creator has designed us to be. Christ is calling believers to live in accordance with a new identity in Him. We are to put off the old self (lying, cheating, gossiping, selfishness) and embrace the new self that is being renewed in knowledge after the image of our God.

God created us in His image and it is vitally important to reflect Him in every single thing we do. Think about how intricately the Lord made us:

A few scientific facts about God’s creation and how His image is to be shown in every part of our body:

- 1. Eyes:** Did you know that the lens in our eyes sees the world upside down? God saw fit to create the part of our brain that receives and bends light to make everything we see right side up. Because of this we can see God’s beauty.
- 2. Feet:** Did you know that we are always a split second from falling flat on our faces? God saw fit to create our foot movement to place one foot in front of the other to catch us every time we move. Because of this we know that God has truly ordered out steps.
- 3. Heart:** Did you know that you cannot make your heart beat? God created two involuntary systems to keep our heart beating without us even thinking about it. The sympathetic and parasympathetic systems work together to release hormones to keep your heart going and going. The heart is where the Lord resides in us.
- 4. Ears:** Did you know that your hearing comes from sound waves and vibrations? God created narrow passageways in our ears that help us to interpret and differentiate between sounds. This is how we know God created us to hear the gospel and turn away from gossip.
- 5. Cells:** Did you know that the average body has about 37.2 trillion cells. These cells protect our insides from disease and sickness. They die, but they renew themselves constantly without us having to do that for ourselves. This is an example of how God replenishes us.
- 6. Skin:** Did you know that the skin is the largest bodily organ? While cells are working on the inside, skin is working on the outside. Without it our insides will be exposed to

