

# Image of God

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**Concept or Focus:** Image of God

**Setting (three parts):**

Location: In home Bible Study; possibly in the dining room so people can have a surface to write. Participants will sit in a circle (if possible) so each person feels included in the conversation.

Audience: Small Group (3-8 people)

Duration: 45-60+ minutes

**Goal:**

- To engage critically and internalize what it means to be the image of God

**Objectives:**

- The image-bearer will have the opportunity to do “mirror work” (looking in the mirror while making personal claims and affirmations)
- The image-bearer will engage various scriptures that reference being made in the image of God
- The image-bearer will engage in group discussion based on the provided reflection questions
- The image-bearer will look in the mirror and write down five things he or she dislikes about him and how God might see them differently
- The image-bearer will look in the mirror and write down twenty things he or she likes

**Resources:**

- One handheld mirror for each image-bearer (if you are unable to provide mirrors, inform the participants beforehand to bring their own mirror; the bigger the mirror the better but it should at least be large enough where the participant can see his or her full head )
- Image of God Scriptures (Handout) – one sheet per image-bearer
- Forget Me NOT (Handout) - one sheet per image-bearer\*
- My Distortion vs. God’s Delight (Handout) – one sheet per image-bearer\*
- Enough pens for all participants
- Laptop/tablet and internet connection
- speaker
- aux cable
- Youtube.com (do a search for “relaxing music for self love” and pick any video that you like); you could also play an instrumental CD if you have one you like

**NOTE TO LEADER:** This lesson plan merely serves as a guide. Feel free to adjust it based on the specific needs of the group. For example, you might ask only a few of the reflection questions if time is an issue or interests begin to wane. **Make sure to inform group members beforehand to bring a handheld mirror.** Additionally, we intentionally provided more than enough materials for this study. If your group is talkative, you will not have time to go through every activity. This is GREAT! That means they are engaging the material. **Enjoy the lesson. Build Community.**

*\* If possible, to save paper, put both handouts on the front and back of the same piece of paper*

Lesson Step and Time Allotted	Teaching Activity	Resources Needed
<p><b>Opening</b> 5 minutes</p>	<p><b>NOTE TO LEADER:</b> Before you start, make sure that everyone has a mirror or at least has access to one.</p> <p><b>SAY:</b> Today we will talk about what it means to be “made in the image of God.” In this study, we will look at several canonical and non-canonical books of the Bible and see what they present about this topic. Along the way, we will do some “mirror work” (looking in the mirror while making personal claims and affirmations) so keep your mirrors readily available. There might be internal tension, which takes place during this study. I invite you to engage this time as intimately and as vulnerably as you feel comfortable. To begin we will go around the room. Each of you will look into your mirror, into your own eyes and complete the following sentence:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“I am (STATE YOUR NAME) and I feel (STATE THE EMOTION YOU CURRENTLY FEEL)”</p> <p>There is no right or wrong emotions. We will not discuss your emotion any further. It is simply for you to realize and state where you currently are emotionally. Once you complete the sentence, I will say thank you and we will move to the next person. I will start:</p> <p><b>NOTE TO LEADER:</b> Start by completing the above sentence first as a demonstration. If this is your first time meeting as a small group, people might feel uncomfortable but over time, people will get used to it. Avoid making any negative facial expressions based upon expressed emotions as this can make a person feel less comfortable and less likely to share in the future. Simply say thank you to each person and signal for the next person to respond.</p> <p><b>PRAYER:</b> Pray for the group and the journey you are about to embark upon together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handheld mirror</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presenting</b> 10-15 minutes</p>	<p><b>Introductory Reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your perception of God? What adjectives/attributes would you use to describe God?</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE TO LEADER:</b> This question(s) can set the tone of the entire study. Be mindful that everyone’s image of God may not be pleasant. Be sensitive to those who might present a negative perception of God. If the group has been together for a while (e.g. in previous studies) and is comfortable doing so, this could be an opportunity for a deeper theological discussion. If not, respectfully thank them for sharing, the same way you would with everyone else and continue with the lesson. Chances are, the person will feel vulnerable enough about sharing his or her perception without being condemned for doing so. Regardless of the taken action, continue lovingly without attacking the person.</p> <p><b>SAY:</b> We will now read the “Images of God Scriptures” Handout. There are canonical and non-canonical (not included in all Bibles) books. They all can give us insight into what it means to be in the “image of God.” As we go along, feel free to mark on this page however, you desire. After each verse we will discuss, what each says about being in the “image of God”?</p> <p><b>READ</b> the scriptures listed on the “Image of God Scriptures” Handout (either the moderator and/or group members).</p> <p><b>NOTE TO LEADER:</b> After each scripture, invite participants to voice what the passage says about being in the image of God. Answers might include having dominion, being able to reason, etc. Try to review these passages ahead of time and come up with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Image of God Scriptures” (Handout)</li> </ul>

	<p>possible “image of God” references for each one, in case the group is stuck. Encourage people to highlight or mark scripture if they desire.</p> <p><b>Follow-up Reflection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Based on these verses collectively, how might we define being “made in the image of God”?</li> <li>2. Who or what is “made in the image of God”? Animals? Earth? Sky?</li> </ol>	
Lesson Step and Time Allotted	Teaching Activity	Resources Needed
<p><b>Exploring</b> 15-20 minutes</p>	<p><b>SAY:</b> Now that we have seen what these verses say about being in the “image of God,” let us go a step further by applying it to our own lives.</p> <p><b>Follow-up Reflection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does it mean for YOU to be “made in the image of God”? How does it feel? (<b>NOTE TO LEADER:</b> Encourage people to explain their answers thoroughly, moving beyond one word answers such as “Good” or “Fine”)</li> <li>2. What does it mean to honor the image of God in others? How does that look/feel? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. DESCRIBE a time when you DID or DID NOT treat someone like s/he was “made in the image of God.”</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. What does it mean to honor the image of God in YOURSELF? How does that look/feel? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. DESCRIBE a time when you DID or DID NOT treat YOURSELF as if you are “made in the image of God.”</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><b>SAY:</b> Today we are able to see ourselves through natural sources such as water or in human-made sources such as mirrors, metals, and cameras/photography. Each surface affects the way we see ourselves. Yet, if you look in the mirror, the image is only a likeness or reflection of you. The image is not the real thing. It points to something else.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can the medium (e.g. water, metal) affect the way we see ourselves?</li> <li>2. What are some differences between the real image and the reflected image?</li> <li>3. What are some positive or negative implications of the image not being the real thing? (e.g. A person’s identity is not bound to his or her image; this could be positive or negative. Someone can put all of his or her energy into perfecting the external appearance while the internal appearance is decaying )</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<p><b>Responding</b> 10 minutes</p>	<p><b>SAY:</b> James 1:24 informs us, sometimes we can look in a mirror and forget who we are as soon as we walk away. In this next activity, you will create a “Forget Me NOT List.” For the next ten minutes, I invite you to write twenty things that you like about yourself. You should always remember these things. Look in the mirror periodically as you compile this list. It should entail both external and internal traits. This list is for your eyes only, so feel free to be as vulnerable as you feel comfortable.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Distribute “Forget Me NOT” handout and pens. Each participant should write out twenty things s/he likes about her/himself. If someone is done before everyone else, encourage him or her to continue the list beyond twenty. Play soft music throughout the Responding time.</p> <p><b>EXTRA ACTIVITY</b> (If time/energy permits) <b>SAY:</b> Have you ever been to a circus or a place where they have warped mirrors? The mirror distorts the image of whatever is in the mirror. It can make us look bigger or smaller than we really are. Yet, we know that the mirror adds distortion. We do not think we really look like this way. We walk away with our self-image intact knowing that what we saw was just an illusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mirror</li> <li>• “Forget Me NOT” (Handout)</li> <li>• Pens</li> <li>• Laptop and internet connection</li> <li>• speaker</li> <li>• aux cable</li> <li>• “relaxing music for self love” video or instrumental CD</li> </ul> <p><b>EXTRA ACTIVITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Distortion vs.</li> </ul>

	<p>Sometimes, when we look in a regular mirror, it is as if we are looking through a distorted mirror. We do not like what we see. Unlike a distorted mirror, however, we do not walk away saying to ourselves the distorted image we see is not really who we are. Instead, we internalize the distortion and take it as fact. Just because you or someone else sees you negatively, does not mean that is who you really are. It is just a distorted perception. In this next exercise, we will address some of these distortions. As before, this list is for your eyes only, so feel free to be as vulnerable as you feel comfortable.</p> <p><b>READ</b> through the “My Distortion vs. God’s Delight” (Handout)</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Distribute “My Distortion vs. God’s Delight” handout. Have the participants write five things they dislike about themselves (My Distortion) and five ways God could get glory out of them (God’s Delight). This is only for them, so encourage them to be completely vulnerable. If people are having a hard time coming up with ways to view a Distortion as a Delight (and they feel comfortable), they might talk with an individual or the group to brainstorm ideas. (This is ONLY if the person feels comfortable doing so. )</p>	<p>God’s Delight (Handout)</p>
<p><b>Lesson Step and Time Allotted</b></p>	<p><b>Teaching Activity</b></p>	<p><b>Resources Needed</b></p>
<p><b>Closing</b> 5 minutes</p>	<p><b>SAY:</b> As we end, thank you for your self-work today. I know for some, it may have been emotionally uncomfortable at times but hopefully you feel affirmed and encouraged to live into your greatness. Realize that you are made in the image of God. As Psalm 139:14 states, you are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” I encourage you to adopt “mirror work” as a daily practice. Keep your “Forget Me NOT List” available for those days you might feel down or discouraged. Always remember, YOU are made in the “image of God.”</p> <p>The last thing we will do tonight is go around the group one last time and have each person look in the mirror and say one self-affirmation aloud using the following sentence:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“I am... (POSITIVE ATTRIBUTE)”</p> <p>It can be one of the things on your “Forget Me NOT” List or something completely new. I will start:</p> <p><b>PRAYER:</b> Ask one of the image-bearers to lead the group in a closing prayer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handheld mirror</li> </ul>