

SESSION 2

MIDWEEK EVENT

This midweek study will explore the concept of loving your neighbor. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students dive deeper into the context of the Bible for this session.

SCRIPTURE: **MATTHEW 7:12; MATTHEW 22:37-39; JAMES 3:9-12; MATTHEW 5:43-48**

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE • IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMANITY

The image of God in humanity is understood as reflecting God's attributes in our nature, actions, and relationships. In Jesus, we see the true image of God. He perfectly mirrors God's attributes, fulfills God's will, loves his neighbors perfectly, and enjoys a perfect relationship with the Father. The Bible continues to speak of the image of God in humanity even after our fall into sin, even though our ability to rightly reflect God has been marred.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus is the perfect image of God, being God Himself (Heb. 1:3). Jesus came to earth in perfect obedience to the Father so that He might bring all glory and honor due to Him.

1

MATTHEW 7:12; MATTHEW 22:37-39

BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WE LOVE OTHERS AS WE LOVE OURSELVES.

In Matthew 7:12, Jesus commands us to treat our neighbors the way we want to be treated. This idea means that the same fervor, energy, innovation, perseverance, and wisdom we would use to solve our own problems should also be used to solve others; we should seek others' good like we seek our own. Knowing that others are made in God's image should motivate us to energetic, strategic love all the more: we love people not for any worth in themselves, but because they are in God's image, and love our made-in-God's-image neighbor is second to loving God himself (Matt. 22:37-39).

2

JAMES 3:9-12

BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WE SPEAK GRACIOUSLY OF OTHERS.

James points out the irony that we bless God with our mouths but then use those same mouths to curse people made in God's image (James 3:9-12). The

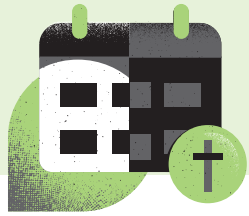
fact that all people are made in God's image should prompt us to speak graciously of others. We should be slow to curse, slow to slander, quick to praise, quick to encourage. The basis for our verbal dealings with others is not in themselves; the basis for the way we speak to and about others is their being made in the image of God.

3

MATTHEW 5:43-48

BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WE LOVE EVEN OUR ENEMIES.

In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus points out that bestows his blessings on both the just and the unjust. In the same way, we should be generous and gracious both to our friends and to our enemies; both are made in God's image, even if they treat us differently. Our treatment of our enemies distinguishes us from others; they love people based on how people treat them, but we love people because they are in God's image.



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1 MATTHEW 7:12; MATTHEW 22:37-39

BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WE LOVE OTHERS AS WE LOVE OURSELVES.

READ MATTHEW 7:12.

WHAT IF THE WAY WE WANT TO BE TREATED ISN'T HOW SOMEONE ELSE WANTS TO BE TREATED? FOR EXAMPLE, MAYBE YOU LIKE TO BE HUGGED BUT SOMEONE ELSE DOESN'T. HOW DO WE OBEY MATTHEW 7:12 THEN?

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE ALL WANT TO BE TREATED? HOW CAN WE TREAT OTHERS THE SAME?

READ MATTHEW 22:37-40.

WHAT IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT? SINCE PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, HOW MIGHT LOVING THEM BE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE FIRST COMMANDMENT?

2 JAMES 3:9-12

BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WE SPEAK GRACIOUSLY OF OTHERS.

DO THIS EXERCISE ONLY IF YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE YOUR GROUP CAN HANDLE IT. HAVE EACH STUDENT WRITE HIS OR HER NAME AT THE TOP OF A SHEET OF PAPER. HAVE EACH STUDENT PASS HIS OR HER PAPER TO THE LEFT; HAVE EACH PERSON WRITE A KIND, TRUE THING ABOUT THE PERSON WHOSE NAME IS AT THE TOP. REPEAT. KEEP GOING UNTIL EVERYONE HAS WRITTEN SOMETHING NICE ABOUT EACH PERSON; THEN LET EACH PERSON READ THEIR SHEET.

HOW DOES IT FEEL FOR SOMEONE TO SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT YOU? MEAN ABOUT YOU? WHY ARE WORDS SO POWERFUL?

READ JAMES 3:9-12.

WHY DOES JAMES THINK IT'S STRANGE THAT WE USE THE SAME MOUTH BOTH TO BLESS GOD AND TO CURSE PEOPLE?

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE SAY BAD THINGS ABOUT OTHERS? (COMPLAINING, SOCIAL MEDIA, GOSSIP)

3 MATTHEW 5:43-48

BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE, WE LOVE EVEN OUR ENEMIES.

READ MATTHEW 5:43-48.

SHOULD WE TREAT OUR ENEMIES (MEAN PEOPLE) DIFFERENTLY FROM OUR FRIENDS (KIND PEOPLE)? WHY NOT?

HOW CAN WE SHOW JESUS BY TREATING OUR ENEMIES DIFFERENTLY FROM HOW MOST PEOPLE TREAT THEM? HOW DOES KNOWING OUR ENEMIES ARE ALSO MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE PROMPT US TO LOVE THEM?

WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC WAYS WE CAN LOVE MEAN PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE?