

**THE STORY — Week 5**  
**Royal Representatives**  
**The Imago Dei**

**Our Rules for the Road**

1. The Bible was written for me but not to me.
2. The Bible is a library with different literary genres (**Narrative**, Poetry & Discourse)
3. The Bible must be read in Context (Ancient, Situational & Biblical)
4. The Bible must be read with an understanding of language and words (Repeated words drive dominant themes)
5. The Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus

**When we apply the Rules for the Road, we see:**

**I. The Original Intention of Imago Dei**

**Genesis 1:26-28** “Then God said, ‘**Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,** so that they may **rule over** the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So **God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase (multiply) in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over** the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

**Rule # 4:** The Bible must be read with an understanding of language and words (Repeated words drive dominant themes). So let’s look at some critical terms:

**Image** - In Hebrew is **Tselem** = a form, a likeness, a model, a drawing, a **shadow**, (“Tsel” means shadow) most often used to describe a statue (i.e. images of false gods)

Your **shadow** doesn’t look like you in its detail but it **behaves** just like you. When we are in the right (intended) relationship with God we behave like God. The New Testament calls this godliness or being godly.

**As Royal Representatives we are made to be Relational & Responsible**

**1. We are (as Image Bearers) Relational:**

- **Our relationship with God** - Fellowship with and Submission to.
- **Our relationship with Nature** - “Rule over or have dominion over...”
- **Our relationship with others** - Rule with, not to rule over...

“You see, the founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole concept of the *imago dei*, as it is expressed in Latin, the ‘image of God,’ is the idea that all men

have something within them that God injected.... every man has a capacity to have fellowship with God. And this gives him a uniqueness, it gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: there are no gradations in the image of God. Every man from a treble white to a bass black is significant on God's keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God. One day we will learn that. We will know one day that God made us to live together as brothers and to respect the dignity and worth of every man." — Martin Luther King Jr.

## 2. We are (as image bearers) **Responsible**:

- **Our calling to Rule over Creation** (To be fruitful & multiply)

**Likeness** - In Hebrew is *Damut* = to resemble or to **be like**.

**Genesis 1:26** "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our **likeness**, so that they may **rule over**..."

The Crescendo (climax) to our first narrative is God's invitation and delegation for us to be co-regents (vice regents/ viceroys); God deputized humanity to be His **representatives** (Reflections). Mankind was created with the capacity to "Rule" like God and in so doing to represent Him well.

How are we to rule? **Like** God Rules.

- **He Rules with speech**

In the Genesis 1 Narrative, "God said, God said, God said..." (10 times)

- **His Rule is Good**

In the Narrative Story of Genesis 1, "Good, Good, Good..." (7 Times)

**Genesis 1:31** "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was **very good**."

"In Genesis 1, 'the *imago Dei*' refers to **human rule**, that is, an exercise of power on God's behalf in creation... This **delegation** of, or sharing in, God's rule suggests the image is 'representative,' designating the **responsible office** and **task entrusted to humanity** in administering the earthly realm on God's behalf... The **royal metaphor**... integrally includes wisdom and artful construction. The humans are called to **imitate or continue** God's own creative activity by populating and organizing the remaining unformed and unfilled earth. God has, in other words, started the process of forming and filling, which **humans, as God's earthly delegates, are to continue**." — J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei In Genesis 1*

- His Rule is **with (not over)** (Male and Female...)

God loves to **delegate** (share) responsibility

### First, to the lights - The Sun & Moon (Two Rulers)

**Genesis 1:14-18** “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And **let them be for signs and for seasons,** and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so. And God made the **two great lights**—the greater light to **rule the day** and the lesser light to **rule the night**—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to **rule** over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.”

### Second, to the Humans - Male & Female (Two Rulers)

**Genesis 1:27** “So God created mankind in his **own image**, in the **image of God** he created them; **male and female** he created them. God blessed them and said to them... **Rule** over...”

**Psalms 8:4-6** “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and **crowned** them with glory and honor. You made them **rulers over the works of your hands;** you put everything under their feet...”

- His Rule is **generous**

**Genesis 1:29-30** “‘Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over **every** living creature that moves on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I give you **every** seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and **every** tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—**everything** that has the breath of life in it—I give **every** green plant for food.’ And it was so.”

## II. The Broken Condition of Imago Dei

**Genesis 3:4-5** “The serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be **like God**, knowing good and evil.”

**2 Corinthians 11:3** “But I am afraid that just as **Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning,** your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

Your Broken Perception is the story you tell yourself about yourself, without God. We have **inherited a broken perception** of who we are, where we come from, and why we are here.

**Rule # 3:** The Bible must be read in Context (Ancient, Situational & Biblical)

*The Ancient, Situational and Biblical Context* all point to a **Broken perception** of Imago Dei. God's intended plan for the Royal Rule was corrupted; domination, slavery, and bondage replaced Divine Partnership with God.

In the ancient literatures like Atrahsis, Enuma Elish and Sumarian texts only the royalty (kings & Queens) were in the image of the gods and humanity, in general, were slaves to the gods.

**The Ancient Context:**

To Adad [Syrian deity]... The likeness of Hadsî'y which he placed before Hadad... controller of water in heaven and earth... **The image**... is for establishing his throne...

**The Situational Context:**

**Egypt**

“Central to this ideology was the **divinity of the pharaoh**, by which he was set apart from all other human beings.... The pharaoh was thought, in a fairly strong sense, to be a physical, local, incarnation of the deity, analogous to that of a cult **statue or image** of a god, which is also such an incarnation... and was a primary means by which the deity worked on earth.”

— J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei In Genesis 1*

**The Biblical Context:**

### **Genesis 3 The Fall Narrative**

**Romans 1:22-25** “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for **images** made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts.... **They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things** rather than the **Creator**—who is forever praised. Amen.”

**Mankind wants the creation without the Creator; the Kingdom without the King!**

**III. The Restored Connection to Imago Dei**

**Rule #5:** The Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

“I know men, and I tell you, Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person who has ever lived, there is no term of comparison. Alexander the Great, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon sheer force. Jesus Christ alone founded His empire upon love; and at this very hour millions of men would die for Him.” — Napoleon Bonaparte

## **In Christ we are restored as Royal Representatives**

**2 Corinthians 4:4** “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the **glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**”

### **Be Royal Representatives**

#### **1. By embracing your spiritual Identity**

**1 Peter 2:9 & 12** “But **you are a chosen** people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.... Live such **good** lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may **see your good deeds** and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

#### **2. By living good lives (serving & doing good to others)**

**Colossians 3:8-11** “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: **anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.** 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.”

#### **3. By how we speak to & of others**

**James 3:9** “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, **who have been made in God’s likeness**.... My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”

#### **4. By how we steward our responsibilities**

**Colossians 3:17** “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Take a few minutes to check in with each other to see how everyone is doing, then do the following mixer and questions.

**Ice Breaker/Mixer Q:** Have you ever had a position/job where you were given the responsibility to represent someone else? Share what that experience was like and if you recall that you were pleased, or not, with your representation.

1. See if anyone can name all five of the principles for interpretation (Rules for the Road).
2. Pastor said that we, as *Imago Dei* representatives, are called to reflect God Relationally and Responsibly. Have you ever considered either of these to be connected to being made in God's image and reflecting him well? Do you perceive that you do one of them better than the other, if so why?
3. Do you think the 3 areas of being relational (to God, nature and with others) have equal value? Why or why not?
4. Pastor suggested that we are to be "Like God" in how he Rules:

**Which of these do you do well and which could you improve?**

- By embracing your spiritual Identity
- By living good lives (serving & doing good to others)
- By how we speak to others
- By how we steward our responsibilities

**Journal or SOAP any of the passages from each day of reading, or answer any of the small group or "Quick questions" as a journal entry.**

**Monday:** Read Genesis 1:26-31 and look for, and journal, everything you can find about what is special about Mankind.

**Tuesday:** Read Genesis 5:3 & 9:6. Notice how the word "image" is used and write some observations about what it reinforces about our Genesis 1:26-27 passage?

**Wednesday:** Read Colossians 3:8-11 and reflect (SOAP) about what the passages say about how we should treat others and especially in light of verse 10.

**Thursday:** Read 1 Peter 2:9-12. What kind of impact would a clear Identity, as God's Royal Representatives, have if we truly grasp our spiritual identity?

**Friday:** Read Colossians 3:17 & 23-24. SOAP this passage and reflect on the idea that we were created to be responsible as a part of being made in God's image. How does this cause you to think through your responsibilities?

**Quick questions:**

If we are Royal Representatives of God, what are the implications to such a calling?

How could we improve our ability to navigate this high calling with all the distractions around us?

Where would you most like to be more responsible, and how could you take a step in that direction?