***Created in the Image of God***

Bruce Reeves

Highway 65 Church of Christ

Conway, AR

Brochuck1@aol.com

Introduction: In 2006, Michael Vick became the first quarterback to rush for the illustrious 1,000 yards in a season. His future looked very bright in the NFL. Along with his NFL salary, Vick earned money for being the face of Rawlings, Nike, and other companies. In 2006 he made an estimated $25.4 million.

 By the end of 2007, Michael Vick was broke and in prison for his contributions to an illegal dog-fighting ring. His estimated losses totaled $142 million, with some $50 million lost in endorsements. These companies had no choice, but to terminate their relationship. To continue using Vick as a spokesperson would have been tantamount to promoting dog-fighting themselves. Eventually, he recognized the error of his destructive behaviors due to the mentoring of Tony Dungy, well-known former NFL coach, and he played in the NFL before his retirement.

 There is something very important for us to learn as Christians. When you represent someone, everything you do reflects on that person. God created humanity to represent and declare His glory. We were meant to be His image-bearers to the ends of the earth. Sadly, through sin we have abdicated and abandoned this high calling by bringing shame on our God. Yet through Christ we can reclaim the purpose for which God created us!

1. **Identity of God’s People: “Who am I?”**
	1. ***Representation of God***
		1. There are two causes of humanity being “in the image of God”:
			1. Creation of God: Children of God
				1. By virtue of creation we are the children of God, therefore, all human beings are in the image of God in this sense (Acts 17:24-29).
				2. Unique image-bearers of God: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness…God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26, 27).
				3. Adam was made in the image of God and his son Seth was in his image. Thus, even after the fall into sin (Gen. 3) human beings are described as being in the image of God.
				4. In Gen. 9:6, the Lord condemns the violence of murder by emphasizing the fact that all human beings have been made in “the image of God.”
				5. Speaking of the sins of the tongue James writes, “With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with we curse men, who have been made in the image of God” (James 3:9).
			2. Expression of the character of God
				1. The shared attributes of God and His people

God has certain characteristics that are unique to His divine nature: perfect knowledge and power, infinite holiness, transcends time and space, etc.

Through a relationship with God those who live a life fully “in the image of God” demonstrate love, mercy, grace, reason, relationality, morality, compassion, etc.

We express His image to the world when we imitate His character (Eph. 5:1-2; 1 John 3:7-10; 4:7-8).

Yet, Sin has invaded and disrupted the expression of God’s image in our character.

In that sense we are broken and damaged by our own sin and by the domination of Sin (Psa. 51:4-12).

Rom. 3:23: “…and fall short of the glory of God.”

Slavery to sin prevents us from being God’s image bearers in our character and influence (Matt. 5:1-16).

“Sin” is a power that lords over a person (Rom. 6:12, 14), a master to which one must pay wages (Rom. 6:23), and an owner to which people have been sold in the spiritual slave market (Rom. 7:14).

Satan wants to destroy our full humanity through sin – God wants to restore us to be the full expression of His “image bearers” (Psa. 115:5-8).

* + 1. Understanding who we impacts all of our relationships:
			1. Brethren
			2. Marriage
			3. Family
			4. Fellowman
			5. Enemies
			6. Evangelism of the lost
	1. Rule over God’s Creation
		1. Man was to serve as a responsible representative of God as faithful stewards who would rule over the natural creation (Gen. 1:26, 28; Psa. 8).
		2. His ruling has spiritual implications (Gen. 3:17-19). Initially, man did not live in the fear of death because of his innocence before God and access to the tree of life.
		3. However, sin invaded the paradise because of the decisions Adam and Eve made (Heb. 2:14-15).
		4. Psalm 8 presents man in his ideal condition and the writer of Hebrews uses this psalm to picture Jesus as the perfect man (Heb. 2:5-9).
		5. Jesus is the solution to the problem that removed him from such a condition (Heb. 2:10-18; 1 Cor. 15:55-57).
		6. Through God’s restoration we can be fellow-heirs with Christ in the promise of our future glory (Rom. 8:17).
	2. Relationship
		1. The phrase, “Let Us” refers to Gen. 1:1,“In the beginning God,” (Elohim), which describes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
		2. “The Word was with God and the Word was God…” (John 1:1-3).
		3. God loved His Son “before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).
		4. God desires fellowship and communion and created us to desire the same (Gen. 2:18; Matt. 22:37-40)
		5. Notice both Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).
		6. Even our marriages are representing and revealing the unity of the Godhead and Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-33).
1. **How Can I Live Fully in God’s Image?** “Renewed by Christ”
	1. Re-creation:
		1. The New Man in Christ (Eph. 4:22-24)
			1. The “old self” is “worn out,” “corrupt,” “ruined,” “morally defiled,” and constantly getting worse.
			2. In Christ we are being “renewed in the spirit of our mind” (Eph. 4:22).
			3. As a result, we “put on the new self” which “in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:23-24; cf. 5:1).
		2. “Renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Colossians 3:10-11).
			1. Unity among believers (Col. 3:11)
			2. Holiness, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another, forgiveness (Col. 3:12-13)
	2. Redemption (1 Peter 1:18-19)
		1. Jesus’ incarnation was the only way to bring humanity back to the Creator.
		2. The divine Jesus showed us true humanity as God intended it (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 4:14-15).
		3. Sin is foreign and alien to God’s purpose for created humanity – sin actually dehumanizes us – it brings us down to the depravity, darkness, and vileness of a sub-human condition, rather than living in the image of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
		4. In order to save us Jesus was dehumanized on the cross in anguish and agony, (Psa. 22:6-8): “But I am a worm and not a man…” (Heb. 12:2).
		5. We have been freed from slavery to sin by the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus and brought into the spiritual exodus of His freedom (Rom. 6:3, 4, 16-18; 8:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:18)
	3. Restoration and Transformation in Christ
		1. Participants in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)
		2. Transformed through the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2).
		3. “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18)
		4. This transformation is experienced through the New Covenant of grace and the gospel of Christ!
	4. Future Resurrection
		1. The final phase of us being renewed in the image of God is the future resurrection, which will remove all vestige effects of sin (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23-28, 42-49, 57).
		2. The whole self will be sanctified in “body, soul, and spirit” (1 Thess. 5:23).
		3. We will have a glorified body like Jesus (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2).
		4. We will be conformed into the image of Christ in character and in our resurrection (Rom. 8:29-30).
2. **Mission of God’s Image Bearers – God’s Love For The Lost!**
	1. Fill the earth with God’s glory
		1. We are not “selfies but mirrors” (John 8:12; Matt. 5:13-16)
		2. Man’s rebellion declares, “…Let us build for ourselves a city…let us make for ourselves a name” (Gen. 11:4)
		3. Whereas those in the image of God are intent on glorifying Him in body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
		4. Our heart’s desire is to fill the earth with God’s glory (Hab. 2:14; 3:3; Rom. 9:1-3).
	2. Fill the earth with Christ’s salvation and grace (Matt. 28:18-19).
	3. Fill the earth with the Holy Spirit’s teaching (Isa. 11:9)
		1. Matthew 25:31-45 “What you have done to the least of these you have done to me…”
		2. Do we see the image of God in others?
		3. Do see Jesus in others?

Conclusion: Are we living out our identity? Are we representing our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as those who have been renewed in the image of God through Jesus? Don’t let Satan rob you of your true identity!