

NO ORDINARY PEOPLE

Pondering the Implications of Being Made in the Image of God

A few years ago there was a movie called Ordinary People. I never saw the movie, and I have no idea what it was about, but as I think about people being created in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) *ordinary* hardly seems like the appropriate adjective. What does it mean for men and women to be made in God's image? To state it simply, it means that we reflect God and represent God. Among other characteristics it includes having intelligence, emotions, volition and a conscience. It means we are relational, spiritual and immortal (eventually) creatures. It also consists of being the recipients of the command to subdue creation and exercise dominion over it (Gen. 1:28-29). Bearing God's image is what sets us apart from the rest of the creation (like apes, insects and trees), and it is what gives us our identity and self-worth.

It used to be a given in this great country to say that men and women reflect the image of their Maker. That is until Charles Darwin seriously challenged that doctrine in *The Origin of Species* (1859). Now when we ask that basic, yet fundamental question "Who are you?" some will answer "God's image bearer" while others will say "Evolved primordial slime." As you can imagine the implications for how you respond to this question are myriad and monumental.

Repeatedly the Scriptures assert that all people—red and yellow, black and white, tall and short, skinny and not so skinny—are to be treated with dignity and respect, due to the imprint of God that is indelibly stamped upon their being. Remove that imprint and you remove the primary grounds for why we are supposed to be kind and compassionate to one another. And it doesn't take a social scientist to provide us with the latest statistics to convince us that our beloved country is becoming increasingly cold and cruel. But if you would like some statistics, consider that 4,000 pre-born babies are killed every day, for no other reason, usually, than that they would simply be an unwanted inconvenience.

I can still remember when my wife was pregnant with blessing number five. The doctor wanted to have the baby tested to see if he/she had any birth defects. Why? To see if the child was worthy of life? Once again, we declined. I'm not denying the benefits of such tests during a precarious pregnancy. But what I am denying is that a child's worth, or an adult's, is based upon intelligence or good looks or athletic ability, etc. The value of any and every human being is based squarely upon being made in God's image. How specifically God chooses to knit a baby together in his mother's womb is His prerogative. "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Ex. 4:11). In His sovereignty God has wise and loving purposes for these "handicaps" (Jn. 9:3). And these "handicaps" are irrelevant when it comes to evaluating the value of people, including ourselves. What counts is the image of God which is intricately woven throughout the fabric of every individual. Yes, the fall distorted that image, but it did not destroy it.

Consider why murder is such a heinous and intolerable sin that requires the death penalty. God told Noah, "And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image'" (Gen. 9:5-6, emphasis added). The rationale behind the death penalty is not complicated. Murderers must be executed, for murder is a direct assault upon the image of God, which means it is also an assault upon God Himself. And since man is still made in the image of God, there is no reason to rescind the death penalty. Upon the credible testimony of two or three witnesses it should be implemented.

Liberals are often confused as to why Christians are against abortion (i.e., killing helpless innocent babies), but in favor of the death penalty (i.e., killing responsible guilty adults). To them, being Pro-Death Penalty isn't consistent with being "Pro-Life." Christians are Pro-God first. And God places a high premium on all human life, because it reflects His image. Murder will never be taken as serious as it should be until we see its connection to God Himself. Apart from God's image, murder may be bad, but it's not really *that* bad. Until liberals raise their appraisal of human life they will remain confused.

Finally, we should ask who is really being inconsistent. Those who favor the innocent living and the guilty dying, or those who favor the innocent dying and the guilty living?

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