

9. Explain, using biblical categories, your understanding of the image of God in man.

I. Breakdown the Question

- A. What are biblical categories?
- B. Humanity: Made in the Image of God.
 - 1. Created
 - 2. Logic & Reason
 - 3. Morality
 - 4. Relational and Social
 - 5. Stewardship or Dominion
- C. Biblical Counseling Application

II. What are biblical categories?

- A. Biblical categories, as far as I can determine, are categories found within the bible. These would not include psychological, sociological, or medical categories, but simply focus on the Word of God. Man's wisdom, on these matters, simply doesn't address the truth identified in the Scriptures and almost certainly denies the Truth directly.
 - 1. "From every quarter today unbelieving counseling theory attack's man's responsible nature. Skinnerians say he is inevitably controlled by his impersonal environment and may be manipulated in any way that is consistent with his abilities through rearrangement of environmental contingencies backed by proper reward/aversion control (punishment) schedule. Freud's views were no better. His concept of the irrational unconscious as the mass of the iceberg beneath the surface by which we are controlled and motivated, and the meager remaining portion protruding above the waters as the rational side (by which we rationalize our actually irrational behavior) again leads to a sort of determinism that removes all responsible choices from us."¹
 - 2. "Feeling dominates all. Oriental religions, Rogerian feeling-centered counseling, situation ethics and a hundred other such movements proclaim with the bumper sticker, 'If it feels right, do it.' All these forces (again) tend to ignore man's responsible position in the world as a moral creature under God's law."²

III. Humanity: Made in the Image of God.

- A. **Created in the image of God:** Man was created in the image of God. This means that we have similarities to or characteristics consistent with God because we were created in his likeness. However, there are aspects of us that differ from God.

¹ Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 118-119.

² Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 119.

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1. “God made human beings in his own image to be similar to him and to portray his character and work in the world.”³
 - a. **Gen 1:26-27** *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
 2. “Man was created in God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). Commentators have differed widely about what this means (narrower and broader definitions of this image have been given—to say nothing of Barth’s view and others’). All must agree, however, about two facts:
 - (a) that it is his likeness to God that makes man different from the animals, and
 - (b) that (in part at least, though some say this is the whole of it) man is an intelligent, morally responsible creature.”⁴
 3. “The concern for Christians has been what it means that we are made in God’s image. No one passage in Scripture says explicitly what the image of God is, so we must construct our understanding from various passages.”⁵
 4. “Though we have argued above that it would be difficult to define all the ways in which we are like God, we can nevertheless mention several aspects of our existence that show us to be more like God than all the rest of creation.”⁶
 5. “It would be good for us to reflect on our likeness to God more often. It will probably amaze us to realize that when the Creator of the universe wanted to create something ‘in his image,’ something more like himself than all the rest of creation, he made us. This realization will give us a profound sense of dignity and significance as we reflect on the excellence of all the rest of God’s creation: the starry universe, the abundant earth, the world of plants and animals, and the angelic kingdoms are remarkable, even magnificent. But we are more like our Creator than any of these things. We are the culmination of God’s infinitely wise and skillful work of creation. Even though sin has greatly marred that likeness, we nonetheless now reflect much of it and shall even more as we grow in likeness to Christ.”⁷
- B. Logic & Reason:** As a created being, in the image of God, we, like God, are capable of rational, logical thought and reason.
1. “God is a rational being with an amazingly complex ability to think logically and carefully. Our ability to reason pales in comparison to God’s. Being made

³ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 184.

⁴ Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 118.

⁵ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 184.

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 445-446.

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 449-450.

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in God's image does not mean that we are identical to God. It means that we are like him and portray his nature to the world."⁸

- a. **Romans 8:28** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
2. "These two verses (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), of course, also make it clear that God's image in man was so distorted by the fall that man (though still said to retain it in some sense—James 3:9) must renew it by being 'renewed in the spirit of [his] mind' (Eph 4:23). Full knowledge, true holiness and righteousness (or, perhaps, 'righteousness and holiness that come from the truth') are said to reflect God's own knowledge, righteousness and holiness; therefore, they unmistakably constitute the image and likeness of God in man."⁹
 - a. **Ephesians 4:23-24** *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*
 - b. **Colossians 3:9-10** *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

C. **Morality:** As beings created in the image of God, we are moral creatures.

1. "Human beings are inalterably moral. Every person living or who has ever lived has some sense of basic right and wrong (Rom 2:12-16). There has been remarkable overlap in this moral code throughout human history and in every human culture. Lying, stealing, and sexual immorality—to name just a few—are common themes of morality among virtually all people."¹⁰
 - a. "This trait (inalterably moral creatures) separates human beings from grass and wolves, for example, but makes humans similar to God, who is, of course, a moral being."¹¹
 - b. **Romans 2:14-16** *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the works of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to the gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*
2. "(1) We are creatures who are morally accountable before God for our actions. Corresponding to that accountability, we have (2) an inner sense of right and wrong that sets us apart from animals (who have little if any innate sense of morality or justice but simply respond from fear of punishment or hope of reward). When we act according to God's moral standards, our likeness to God

⁸ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 185.

⁹ Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 119-120.

¹⁰ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 185.

¹¹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 185.

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is reflected in (3) behavior that is holy and righteous before him, but, by contrast, our unlikeness to God is reflected whenever we sin.”¹²

3. “Therefore it is important that we understand the full meaning of the image of God not simply from observation of human beings as they currently exist, but from the biblical indications of the nature of Adam and Eve when God created them and when all that God had made was ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31). The true nature of man in the image of God was also seen in the earthly life of Christ. The full measure of the excellence of our humanity will not be seen again in life on earth until Christ returns and we have obtained all the benefits of the salvation he earned for us.”¹³
4. “We might wonder whether man could still be thought to be *like* God after he sinned. This question is answered quite early in Genesis where God gives Noah the authority to establish the death penalty for murder among human beings just after the flood: God says ‘Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; *for God made man in his own image* (Gen. 9:6).’”¹⁴

D. **Relational and Social:** As a being created in the image of God, humans are relational and social. Something that every human has in common is that we have relationships with other humans. To maintain these relationships, we are required to be social.

1. “Even though animals can have some measure of camaraderie, they never know the depth of relationship that human beings experience as we live life together. This (is) a uniquely human experience that separates us from the animals and makes us like God, who enjoys perfect relationships within the Trinity.”¹⁵
2. “Another way humanity is similar to God and portrays him in the world is in our relationships. We see these relationships in Jesus’ teaching on the first and second commandments.”¹⁶
 - a. **Matthew 22:35-40** *And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment of the law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*
3. “Human beings image God by knowing and loving other people.”¹⁷

E. **Stewardship / Dominion:** God created humans in his likeness and give them dominion of the creation. We are called to be stewards of creation and have dominion over it. No other created being has been given this authority or responsibility.

¹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 446.

¹³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 445.

¹⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 444.

¹⁵ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 186-187.

¹⁶ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 186.

¹⁷ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 186.

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1. “Immediately after the divine counsel is revealed about God’s making man in his image, we are told that man is given dominion over the other elements of creation. This dominion has often been referred to as the creation mandate. It may be the most textually obvious of our three categories: mankind is given dominion in the same moment God expresses his intention to make man in the divine image.”¹⁸
2. “Human beings demonstrate this element of the image of God whenever we exercise stewardship in the world.”

IV. Biblical Counseling Application

- A. Every issue that every counseling case is built on can be found in an individual’s failure to manifest the image of God perfectly. When we fail to live up to the standards that God has set forth, we are diverging from the image of God, and that is where you will find the soil, seeds, roots, and plants of devastation that establish the need for counseling.
 1. “The doctrine of the image of God has everything to do with how we counsel. People *are* made in the image of God. This fact is the most important reality about what it means to be a human being. We do not get to choose whether we represent God in the world. That is already true of us. The only issue that remains is whether we will acknowledge this fact and respond to it in a way that honors God.”¹⁹
 - a. “I say the goal of counseling *should be* to facilitate restoration of the image of God because, unfortunately, most counseling approaches do not see it as the job in counseling to have anything at all to do with God and his image in man. This is tragic. As image bearers we refer to the God whose image we bear. It is wrong, corrupt, and ineffective to treat image bearers as though the one whose image they carry does not exist or is irrelevant to the problems they are facing.”²⁰

¹⁸ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 187.

¹⁹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 189.

²⁰ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 190.

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V. Further Resources

A. ACBC Approved Reading

1. **Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 180-191.**
2. **Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption, The Jay Adams Library* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 94-138.**
3. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 169-206.
4. John MacArthur, ed., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 407-416.
5. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 457-474.
6. Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 304-307.
7. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, Complete ed (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2018), 202-210.
8. John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2013), 783-792.

A. **Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 442-450.**