

A Beautiful Design (Part 2) – In His Image

Matt Chandler – September 14, 2014

[Video]

Male: Be a man.

Male: Be tough.

Female: Be sweet.

Female: No one likes a smarty-pants.

Male: Don't be such a sissy.

Male: Handle it like a man.

Female: You should go on a diet.

Male: Play the field.

Female: Be sexy but not too sexy.

Male: Show them who's boss.

Female: You're a princess.

Male: You make the money.

Female: Let him take care of you.

Male: Pick yourself up.

Female: Know your place.

Female: Keep your mouth shut.

Male: The world tells us who we're supposed to be, but it keeps changing its mind. Throughout time, throughout cultures, we can't decide what makes a man a man and what makes a woman a woman. The message, the plan...it keeps changing. But what if there was something else? What if there was something better, something that existed since the beginning, something untouched by time, something true and perfect?

[End of video]

How are we? Doing well? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, let's go ahead and grab those. Genesis, chapter 1, is where we're going to be. While you're turning there, I want to wish our Dallas Campus a happy anniversary. It was five years ago this weekend that The Village Church, Dallas Northway launched. In the last five years, they've grown to several thousand people and have done a profound gospel work down in Dallas.

The thing I want to keep ever before you is that they are us and we are them, we are woven together as family, we sit under the same Word, we are engaging with the same gospel message. One of the things I'm constantly pressing on us in the gospel's ability to jump over hurdles is that when Dallas Northway approached us and we began to have this conversation about what this might look like, the predominate age group at Dallas Northway was 70, 80, and 90, and the predominant age group at The Village Church was 20, 25, and 28.

Could we mingle, could we, to use Lan Levell's word in Denton, "marinate" 70- 80- and 90-year-olds with 20- 25- and 28-year-olds and see a type of synergy and togetherness that would push back what was dark and herald the good news of Jesus Christ while celebrating the different generational places? The Lord has done a good work in marrying that family together down there and then marrying our family together as The Village Church.

Again, I want us to always celebrate and be glad in the good works the Lord is doing. Even as we continue to move toward rolling our Denton Campus off into an autonomous church, and as we planted Plano last week, to continue to keep ever before us that God's grace upon us as a church is that we've been able to multiply at a very quick rate, both the numerics in our auditoriums all over Dallas, but also the churches and campuses we've been able to plant, campuses with the end goal of letting those churches be autonomous churches. God has been good and gracious, and I just wanted to wish Dallas a happy anniversary.

Now this is the second week of our fall series. We've entitled this series *A Beautiful Design*. What we're talking about, if I could just take the title and move it over to the side, is manhood and womanhood and what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. We said last week that that sounds simple, but it's far more complex than we would like to believe. In fact, the predominate illustration I used last week in regards to confusion was Mount Holyoke College.

One of the ones I had that I left out to spend all my time on that is that on Facebook there are 72 identifiers. There are male, female, and 70 other ways to define who you see yourself to be in regard to gender. To enter this space is a confusing space, so we want to try to bring clarity. Last week we covered one sentence, the most pregnant sentence ever written in the history of the world: **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."** That's all we did: 50 minutes of "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

What we said is embedded in that sentence is all philosophers' dream, the theologians' playground, and the scientists' foundation, because if in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, then all of life's questions around origin, purpose, and design are rooted in that sentence. The question of, "Who am I?" the question of "Why am I here?" and the question of design, "How do things work?" find their root in that sentence.

Last week when we talked about origin, I simply said, very briefly, "We're created," and because we are *created* and not the *creator*, we are not the measure of anything. I pulled back on that and simply said, "We're not the point." That's hard for us, because if we can be honest... It's church. I'm not pretending we can't. But if we could be honest, we like to be the point. I like to be the point. I like everyone to defer to what I want, what I need, what I desire, and so do you. Don't judge me right now. You're just like me.

We want to be the point, and when we feel like we're not the point, a lot of conflict is birthed out of that. I want to continue to tease apart origin today. Here's a sketch of my home. I have a wife I've been married to 15 years. We've been together 17, married 15. I have an 11-year-old daughter, I have an 8-year-old son, and I have a 5-year-old daughter, and then we have an Australian shepherd named Gus and my daughter has a Quarter Horse named Gypsy.

Now whether you're a believer in Christ or not, whether you have a religious background or not, the question I'm about to ask is simple. If we run into a hard time financially... So all of a sudden my financial world comes unraveled, and we don't have enough cash. Who goes? See, we're divided on horse/dog, but notice no one went, "Lauren." Let me tell you this: Lauren costs me more money than that dog and horse combined, multiplied by five.

The answer to that question is not a mathematical one. The answer of who goes is not simple math. It's not, "Well, what costs you the most? Where can you free up the most cap room? Now get rid of that one." That's not how it works. Even if you want nothing to do with Jesus Christ and Christianity, you didn't go, "Get rid of the woman." You didn't think that.

No one in this room all of a sudden had some sort of RACI matrix pop up in their head and figure out that by math and by simple subtraction, addition, and looking at the budget we could make the decision of who had to go. We went dog or horse. Why? I mean, the dog is pretty obedient. I'm going to be straight with you. The dog is sometimes more obedient than the kids. If that's the measure, then one of the kids has to go. In fact, the 5-year-old has to go if it's obedience.

So we know it's not mathematics and we know it's not obedience. We know it's not who makes my life easiest, because, again, I'm keeping the dog if that's what it is. So why is it a no-brainer that it's the dog or the horse but not my wife and not my children? Because you and I have been created distinct and above the rest of the creative order.

Now what I want to try to do throughout this series is quote, as often as possible, atheists who actually believe in the Bible and hate that they believe in the Bible and even in their quotes will mark their frustration in the fact. In fact, I'll quote Nietzsche here in a minute, and it must have been the most painful sentence he ever wrote.

What I want to show is that on the idea of design, how the world actually operates and what's best for human flourishing are inseparably linked to God being the Creator of all things, who not only is

the foundation of our origin but also grants us our purpose and has designed things to work a specific way. When we play in that space, human beings and the world really flourish, and when we refuse to play in that space, things go really badly.

I want to tease out origin a bit more today, and I want to talk to you about why you're special while all the while not being all that special. I can't have you thinking you're too special. You like to think you're God. We can't have that, but let me show you Genesis, chapter 1, starting in verse 24.

"And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.' And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

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."

What's important to notice is, moving forward, there will not be something new created, but rather he will begin to discuss how this crown jewel of his creation, man and woman, actually will operate. Verse 28: **"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'**

And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

That's the first time that's used. Up until this point it was good, it was good, it was good, and now we have man and woman and it's *very* good. The text ends this way: **"And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."** In this passage, we get what theologians have called for a few

millennia now the *imago Dei*, the image of God, and the idea that men and women are different than all of creation because we have been made in the image of God.

There are several things textually that take place in this passage of Scripture that start to reveal that. First, there's a break in the rhythm. It's not just, "I created this and it was good. I created this and it was good." It was all of a sudden a conversation inside the Godhead. "Let us make man in our own image." *Us, our*. This conversation in the Godhead, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Out of the overflow of their unity, joy, and perfection, they began to paint on the canvas of creation their glory, God's glory, and then, in the vastness of this universe, on this tiny little dirt ball in one of the smaller solar systems in this expansive universe, God places his crown jewel of all creation, men and women made in his image and placed with dominion and authority as viceroys.

Our presence on earth is akin to in the ancient Near East, when there were rulers and authorities who ruled over distant lands, there would be statues and what's called *icons* put in place so there would be an image of the reign and rule of that king. You and I, as mankind, as human beings, are that icon. We are that image of God that shows there is a creator who is reigning and ruling, and we have been given the task of being his viceroys.

If you aren't familiar with *viceroys* and it just makes you think of something from the newer *Star Wars* movies, let me define this in a way I think might be helpful. The *imago Dei* is God's investment in humanity of God-like glory and moral capacity to reign and rule the earth as his representatives. This is what sets us apart, and I'll flesh this out. Let me read it again. The *imago Dei* is God's investment in humanity of God-like glory and moral capacity to reign and rule the earth as his representatives.

That works itself out in three ways. What I'll do is compare myself to my Australian shepherd Gus. So let's talk. There are some differences between the two of us. Now there *are* some likenesses. He has eyes; I have eyes. He likes to eat; I like to eat. I'm peculiar about where I sleep; he's peculiar about where he sleeps. There are some likenesses, but the differences are vast. Let's talk about three of them in particular.

The first is that I have the ability and the desire to seek God and understand him. Gus is not wrestling with such things. Gus does not lie awake at night and plead with God for the souls of his

children. He doesn't long for them to know the Lord and worship the Lord. He doesn't pray. He's a dog. He's not wondering about retirement. He doesn't miss his mother. He's not trying to keep good friendships together. He's just not. He's a dog.

He doesn't pray. He doesn't fast...unless we forget to feed him. He doesn't possess this spiritual, moral capacity that we hold as image bearers. He doesn't feel shame. Before you send me that video of your dog hunkering down when you go, "Did you do that?" as your defense that your dog feels shame, let me assure you that might be fear brought about by instinct; it's not shame.

Do you know how I know it? Because you throw your dog out back after he took a dump on your carpet, and when you let him back in, aren't you best friends again? You might not feel best friends toward him, but doesn't he love you just the same? He's not three days later going, "I cannot believe I did that." Why? Because he's a dog. That's why. Now *you'll* do that, won't you? You'll do something you know is wrong and four days later go, "Gosh, I wish I wouldn't have done that." Your dog has never and will never do that. He is a dog. She is a dog.

My relationship toward God is different than any other creature's relationship toward God. Your cat, your dog, your horse. Don't get me started on hamsters and other rodent pets that people have. Tell me we haven't blown through half an ocean of goldfish by now. I mean, just flushing those mugs all the time. We are different than, we are better than, we are greater than. It's not going to be argued. Our place in the natural order is different.

In the text we read, you'll notice that when God created man and woman in his image, he told them to fill the earth and subdue it and twice said he gives us dominion, authority, over the created order. It is not Gus that has dominion over the world; it is you and me. We're the ones with dominion. We exercise authority. We are the ones who bring order into chaos. It's not animals. Animals are chaotic. We bring order into their chaos, which is why we try to train them. That will never be the role of dogs, horses, and, despite Hollywood, monkeys.

There will be no planet of the apes, I assure you. It is mankind alone that is made in the image of God. We will rule, we will exercise authority and dominion, and it is because that dominion has been granted to us by God to rule and reign as his representatives that any type of cruelty toward animals is wicked and evil. Where God's dominion reigns, there is peace, there is *shalom*, and there is harmony, which is why any abuse toward animals would be wicked according to the Scriptures. Our relationship with nature is different.

Finally, our relationship toward one another is different. There are relationships within non-human species that are perfectly acceptable that are not true about human relationships. When a lion attacks and kills another lion, nobody has PTSD. Are you tracking with me? No lion lies there and is like, "Oh my gosh, did you see that?" None of them. It's just he killed him. He had it coming. He was a young lion. He shouldn't have trespassed. He had that trash coming.

Nobody is investigating it. Nobody is filing a report. There's no great concern about it. We're just like, "They're lions. That's what they do." But that's not how our relationships work with one another, is it? In fact, Genesis 9:6 would say this: **"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."**

By and large, nobody gasps with great horror at the idea of me eating a steak. Now there are some outliers, probably in Denton, who would be like, "You killed a cow? That's one of God's creatures." I'm sure that's out there. There are outliers. By and large, most people want to talk about how you like your steak, not that that steak came from a cow. They would be much more like, "So do you like it medium, medium well?" to which I'll respond, "Why would I ruin a piece of meat by cooking it to where I needed to put sauce on it? Get out of my face."

Nobody gasps that I eat bacon or ham or steak or chicken. Nobody is like, "What?" Why? Because we have dominion, because we're to fill the earth and subdue it. Now I'm not talking about brutality. I'm not talking about some of the practices that are about capitalistic materialism. I'm talking about my right and your right as mankind to subdue the earth and exercise dominion.

We have a relationship with one another that is different than our relationship with the rest of the created beings. I can kill and eat chicken; I can't kill and get rid of you. There is a relational component that we have that animals don't have. Now, sure, they look cute and they cuddle and you'll find the monkey that adopts the cat and carries him around and post that on your Facebook page and love that. That's not the same type of relationship we have toward one another as mankind.

There's a soul aspect to it that doesn't exist in animals. They're beautiful, glorious creatures. They don't have souls. Is this too hard for some of you? Do you want to move on to what's next? Okay, we'll move on. I can see it. So what does this mean? What are the implications of the *imago Dei*?

Well, the implication of the *imago Dei* is that there is an intrinsic human dignity that places us above everything else in the creative order.

We have an intrinsic value because of the image God has given to us. It's not a functional thing as much as a gift from God. In our 9:00 a.m. service, right here on the right, Darrin Payne dances and worships the Lord. He's autistic, 13, probably never going to know his ABCs, never going to be able to add and subtract, going to need care the rest of his life, and he is more valuable than Secretariat. Why? Because he has been made in the image of God, and Secretariat, as amazing of an athlete as that horse was, is a horse.

We have an elevated human dignity. Because of that elevation in human dignity, the way we see the world and interact with the world and the way we consider the world in light of the *imago Dei* must be shaped by our theology. Let me quote Nietzsche here. Nietzsche's most famous sentence is "God is dead." If you know philosophy, Nietzsche is up there, and his most famous sentence was, "God is dead." I'd love to ask him about that except he's dead.

Nietzsche said (this had to be a painful sentence for this ardent atheist), "Another Christian concept, no less crazy..." Listen to what he's about to call crazy. "...the concept of equality of souls before God. This concept furnishes the prototype of all theories of equal rights." Do you see how torn he is? Surely Nietzsche, the philosopher, is not saying the equality of human souls is crazy. Or maybe he is. But it's painful for this man to draw it back to what he clearly states is a Christian concept.

What does this mean? This means how we view humanity matters. Let me walk through a couple of cultural things this should inform and shape. First, if human beings, and all human beings, are made in the image of God and are image bearers and have an elevated dignity above and beyond all the rest of creation, that shapes how we view abortion. If you're like, "Oh, here we go. A little Bible Belt Christian culture wars." No, no. I love to play the game of science. I'm not afraid of science in any way.

Scientifically speaking, a human being is created at conception. That's not me going to Psalm 139. I'm telling you, the DNA strand and all that is necessary to be defined as a human being is present in the womb. If you would argue against that... "Well, it doesn't have a personality. It can't make decisions. It's still dependent on its mother." Then why don't we kill Darrin? If that's what you want to believe, why don't we gather all the mentally ill and just slaughter them, if that's how you want to define it?

You can't define it that way. In fact, science is so on the side of life beginning at conception that the argument for choice has completely changed in the last year. The argument for choice is no longer, "That's not really a human; it's a fetus." The argument is now the mother's life is more valuable than the baby's, even if the mother's life is not at stake. Her comfort, what she wants, what she desires, is more valuable than the life of the distinct human being inside of her. This is wicked and dark, evil built on a doctrine of demons, and it's murder.

Now the only people in this room right now are sinners in need of grace. Those are the only people in this room. So if you're like, "Man, this is my first time in church in three years. You're going to start us off with I'm a murderer?" Knowing who we are is the best way to get where Jesus wants to take us. So yes, I am. The hope is that regardless of what baggage we've carried in here today, Christ is bigger and Christ's forgiveness can lay on top of whatever we've done and forgive and heal and deliver.

This should have a profound effect on how we view sex trafficking, a profound impact on how we see slavery. I don't know how familiar you are with American history, but in 1857 there was a landmark case called Dred Scott versus Sandford. In Dred Scott versus Sandford, Dred Scott sued for the right to be a free man, and the Supreme Court of the United States, on a 17 to 2 vote, said African-Americans were not American citizens and, therefore, were not able to tap into the justice system.

There were two dissenting votes. One of those dissenting votes was Supreme Court justice John McLean. Here's what he said: "A slave is not mere chattel. He bears the impress of his Maker, and he is destined to an endless existence." Hear the argument against slavery? The *imago Dei* is the argument. "Made in the image of God. Not mere possession. He's a man." That was the argument.

The *imago Dei* must form and inform how we see racial prejudice and racial injustice. How many of you were here when my man Leonce Crump preached? I mean, that brother is smooth, fashion-wise. That brother is just together. He makes me look homeless. Leonce, a dear friend of mine, on two separate occasions... Leonce is married to a beautiful white woman.

On two separate occasions, Leonce has been pulled over and asked to step to the back of the car. The officer just asked him generic questions, "Hey, where are you headed tonight? What are you up to?" while the second officer went around and asked his wife Breanna if she was there of her own

accord. "Are you here against your will? Is everything all right, ma'am? Are you sure? Just wink at me if you need help."

Now two things. Let me start with this one. I personally can only imagine the stress, fear, and issues that come with being a law enforcement officer, but if you continually rob a man of his God-given dignity, he will begin to behave in a way that is undignified. Trust me. I've already gotten in so much trouble for this I might as well just dive back in. What happened in Ferguson is the result of a people feeling as though they have been stripped of dignity, and our approach to what happened in Ferguson could be... The line could have been drawn straight down ethnic bounds.

What happened is Anglos, who have not been stripped of their dignity by law enforcement and government systems, were like, "Trust the system. Trust the people." My African-American brothers and sisters, who feel as though they have been stripped of their dignity for centuries, are saying, "Are you kidding me?" If you strip people of their God-given dignity, they will eventually act in undignified ways.

I am in no way justifying crime, sin, or responding in sinful ways to sin, but I *am* trying to explain to you how it happens. If you treat people like animals, you remove their dignity... I'm a husband. Can you imagine if I got pulled over, dragged out of the car, and someone circled around and asked my wife if she was okay, if she was with me by her own will, if I kidnapped her, raped her? Are you kidding me? That's an assault on the *imago Dei*. These are *imago Dei* issues. Racial profiling is an *imago Dei* issue.

How we see one another... Do we have souls or do we not? Are we people or are we animals? This is an *imago Dei* issue. In fact, any place and anywhere where mankind is stripped of their inherent dignity as being made in the image of God and degradation and being used as something to be consumed occurs, we are sinning against God, we are mocking his image, and we are belittling his name. Let me give you some of the more common ones.

This will hit close for a lot of us. We are fools if we want to try to divorce the growing statistics in pornography use from the growing statistics of rape, molestation, and sexual abuse. Pornography is the degradation of the performers as not having souls, as not having any real value, and it is consuming their emptiness and despair for our own pleasure. It is deplorable and wicked.

No little girl dreams of that growing up. If we had any idea of the horrific backgrounds we were dealing with, there's no way we would watch and be aroused. We would be heartbroken. We'd be devastated at the molestation, at the rape, at the horrific abuse so many have endured. This is an *imago Dei* issue.

Strip clubs are an *imago Dei* issue. Down in our Dallas Campus, we do a lot of work with those strip clubs off of Walnut Hill. Do you know most of those women hate where they are? They feel like they have no worth, and most of them are just trying to make money to support children, and we take business clients there to entertain? Do you know how depraved and wicked that is? Prostitution... On and on I could go.

Where the *imago Dei* is not understood, it is the weak and the vulnerable who are abused and consumed. One of the reasons Peter says in 1 Peter that women are the weaker vessel... It's not an intellectual statement. It's not a gifts statement. It's that where the *imago Dei* has been fractured, women will bear the brunt of evil in the world. It is women who will most often be consumed. It will be women who are most often not valued. It will be small children.

There are little boys and men who move and get placed into sex trafficking, into prostitution, but by and large, this abuse falls on women and young children. They bear the brunt of it. This is an *imago Dei* issue. Again, if we look at this, then what's the result of us intrinsically knowing that human beings are more valuable than dogs and horses? Well, there are some things that just happened because all of mankind believes this, whether or not we're Christians. There is an echo in our souls that lets us know we're more valuable.

One of the first ways that works itself out is law. I'll do it this way. As Gus (I'm sorry I'm using Gus so much as an illustration; I just think it's helpful) gets older and gets the rickets and gets cataracts and starts hating being alive, by and large (there are always outliers), nobody is coming to my house to arrest me if I put him to sleep. Not me personally. The *imago Dei* would also have me not drag him out back and pop him with my .45.

But if I took him to the vet and they sweetly got him stoned and then put some drugs in him that made him drift off into pastures in glory where he could herd sheep for eternity for the glory of Jesus, nobody really freaks out about that. Now let's be honest. It's sad. We have to come home and mourn the loss of little buddy before we go buy another puppy, right? We just get another one.

Nobody is coming to my door going, "Highland Village Police! Did you murder a dog?" No one is coming. They might, just because I know some of the guys, go, "Hey man, I heard about Gus. Are the kids okay?" I'm like, "Oh, they'll be all right. Do you know where I can get another puppy? Because that's going to make them forget about Gus altogether."

Now let's do this. What about my mom? What about when Mom starts getting old? What about when Mom starts getting cataracts, when Mom gets a little rickety? Can we put her down? Not just can we not drag her out back and pop her, but can we euthanize her? Well, no. Why would that be murder? Because she was made in the image of God. She has a distinct dignity that was given to her by God.

Her overall value to the rest of mankind isn't the question to be asked. We know this. We know we don't put Mom down as she gets older, that we honor her by serving her and caring for her, as exhausting as that is. (Mom, I'm not talking about you. My mom goes to this church.) In the end, what I'm saying is here's one of the things I've learned as I've gotten older.

You take care of your kids, and then you raise your kids and send them off to college, and finally, when they get stabilized, your mom and dad start to tank, and then you have to step in there and start taking care of Mom and Dad. You're really taking care of somebody until you go home to glory. But is it the good, right, godly thing, even according to the Bible, to love and to serve Mom and Dad as they grow old, and is it, in any type of measurable way, useful?

Do you know there are two countries in Europe that not only will euthanize your mom, but if your child is blind, deaf, or mentally ill, they'll also allow you to euthanize your child? This is an affront on the *imago Dei*. This is a wicked, deplorable, evil thing, and we get law, specifically law of crimes against humanity, because of the intrinsic understanding that human beings have great worth.

In fact, this is French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Again, no God-fearer, but listen to what he says. Again, a painful, painful sentence for this man. "The concept of crime against humanity is a Christian concept, and I think there would be no such thing in the law today without the Christian heritage, the Abrahamic heritage, the biblical heritage." If you're an atheist, how badly do you hate writing that sentence? Do you gag a little bit? You're literally dismantling your own argument.

Our French philosopher here says crimes against humanity find their root in biblical Christianity. The *imago Dei* brings laws that protect human beings and laws that even protect animals. Cruelty to

animals... You can go to jail for cruelty to animals. Why? Because the *imago Dei* says we have worth and the creative order should be stewarded well. Whether people want to give the credit to God and the Bible or not, we operate the way the Bible tells us to operate.

This is also why we must fight for racial equality and racial reconciliation. Adam was created in God's image. He is the father of all human beings in all ethnic groups. Therefore, all of them are dignified above the animals. In absolute and unique glorious ways, humans alone have been made in the image of God. Look at me. There is no master race. There's not a smarter race, a better apt race. There's not.

We are all made in the image of God. In the diversity of ethnicity, God simply shows his glory all the more beautifully. It is an absurd idea that there is a master race. It has driven almost every act of genocide in world history. It has driven almost every season in which slavery was permissible. On and on I could go. What's going on right now with the Islamic state is an *imago Dei* issue. What happened in Ferguson is an *imago Dei* issue. You'd be hard-pressed to find something deplorable that doesn't have at its root a failure to understand or apply the *imago Dei*.

That leads us back into our series. The *imago Dei* is also why we fight for and work toward complete gender equality. Both men and women are created in God's image. The image of God indicates the equal value of women with men as being fully human and equal in dignity, worth, and importance. Let me throw this out here. I, Matt Chandler, am 40 years old. I live in the suburbs of Dallas. I have a degree in biblical studies, a bachelor of arts, and I'm middle-class, maybe just on that line of upper middle-class.

I have more in common with a 2-year-old slave girl in the slums of India than I will ever have with my dog Gus who's a male. It is not our maleness that binds us; it is my sameness that binds me to the slave girl in India. We are both made in the image of God. Gus is a dog. There is a sameness that must be celebrated, an equality of worth and value and dignity that must be established.

Let me read you a couple of things. Since this sameness is present, true, and good, there is a way in which men should view women, and there is a way in which women should view men. If we line ourselves up with how God designed the universe to work, we'll flourish. Where we refuse to do that there are going to be major issues.

First, because the *imago Dei* is true, this is how men must view women. Men must think biblically of women and push against the stereotypes of women as mere sexual creatures or servants put here for our pleasure and comfort. Secondly, because of the *imago Dei*, men must think biblically of women and treasure them as sisters and co-heirs, daughters of the King, and glorious, not dismissing them intellectually or robbing them of the right to exercise their gifts within God's beautiful design.

Women, whether single or married, must think rightly about being representatives of God made in his image and fulfilling his purposes. In the same way, women must think biblically about men and push against the stereotypes of men as idiot Neanderthals. Do you watch television? Do you watch sitcoms? Is it not true that in every sitcom the main male character is a high-functioning moron? In fact, the most long running series on television is *The Simpsons*. What do we know about Homer? Is it safe to say he's not a genius? Yeah.

You must fight against this, women, which leads me to the second point. Women must think biblically and have high expectations for how men approach them and honor them as sisters. Because of the *imago Dei*, ladies, because of your intrinsic value to God, you must not treat yourself cheaply. You must have high expectations for how men approach you, high expectations for how they honor you. You must understand your value before God in such a way that you will quickly and easily reject little boys who can shave who seek sexual company but will not honor your soul.

Now here's what happens. For whatever reason, so many... Maybe it's Daddy issues. I chalk it up to sin. Women must have higher expectations of how men approach them and treat them because they have been made in the image of God. You have not been given to man for simple comfort and pleasure. You are made in the image of God. Whether you're married or you're single, you're intrinsically valuable. God has imparted to you a worth that you should gladly walk in and should let no man abuse.

I said this earlier about how men view women. I want to say it to women too. Women, whether single or married, must think biblically and embrace that they are representatives of God made in his image and fulfilling his purpose. Let me tell you why I put that line in both. God did not make man in his image and then go, "Oh, you know what? I'm really not imaging myself correctly so let me add the woman. Now that I have man and woman, I'm imaging myself correctly." No.

Man, distinct, by himself, not with a spouse, images God completely and fully, and the woman, by herself, doesn't need a husband, images completely and fully the image of God. So whether married or single, you image God. You do not become a full part of God's plan at marriage. Stop that. Now we'll talk about how the Lord draws us together and why he does, but not until the very last week or two of this series. Now we're just focusing on what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. Today I want us to celebrate sameness.

Can you imagine if we actually operated like this? When I drive down to our Dallas Campus south of Walnut Hill, I pass by a slew of strip clubs and cheap motels, and I oftentimes pray that God would do such a gospel work in Dallas, like he did at Ephesus in the book of Acts, where you can no longer make money off of sinful gain.

What would it be like if the clientele for such deplorable places dried up? What if the demand vanished? I wonder what would happen in a world where we understood the *imago Dei* to where pornography made us sick and didn't arouse us. I wonder what would happen on that day if men and women could treat one another as brothers and sisters and not objects to be consumed.

I'm going to throw this out here. If I get emails, my guess is this will be where it is. Lauren Chandler is my best friend. I share my soul with her. I express my feelings to her. Sometimes she has to draw those out because I don't know what I'm feeling, but she helps me, and she's a good right gift from God to me. I also have friends who are women who are not my wife. Now there is a smart way to do that and there's a foolish way to do that.

Because of the *imago Dei*, the Lord would bid me to treat all women as sisters, which means I call up my sister at times and check and see how she is. When I see her, I ask her how she's doing, how I can pray, but I don't go, "Let me lay bare before you my soul." I'm not trying to connect with her on some sort of intimate plane but rather just like a brother and sister having those types of conversations.

Here at The Village, I have friends who are women. Last week after prayer meeting out in our foyer, Jen Wilkin and I got to talking. Matt just went to A&M. She has a child out of the nest now, so I just asked, "How is that going? How have you processed that? How is Matt doing?" We just had a great conversation. I didn't see Jen and go, "Oh, she's a woman. She has a vagina. I have to get away from her." That's not what we did. (Was that over the line? I'm sure the elders will tell me.)

From there, Lore Ferguson, one of our single women here, a brilliant writer, a godly woman... She just got back from out of town. I asked her how her trip was. I wasn't terrified. "Here's a woman. If I have a conversation with a woman, I'm going to fall into adultery." No, she's a sister. She's not an object for my pleasure. She has a soul. She loves the Lord. She's brilliant. "How was vacation?"

I don't call up any of them and go, "Hey, I'm just working through something. Can we get together and have a drink and let me talk about some issues Lauren and I are having?" That's idiocy. That's not what I'm talking about. If I have issues with Lauren, I talk with Lauren about them. Wow. If that's going to go badly, if that's a land mine, then I land with my accountability group and go, "Help me navigate this. I don't know how to navigate this with Lauren."

I don't ever talk about any issues I'm having in my marriage with another woman. Come on. If you're doing that, you're fishing. Give me a break. You're fishing. "Yeah, I mean, she just doesn't... We used to be good friends. Now I just feel all alone." You're fishing, and you're shameful and evil, and you're trying to take what's not yours, and you're marring the image of God by treating another human being as though they are soulless and are there simply for your pleasure. It's shameful and deplorable. But oh, if we understood the image of God. Can you imagine? Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for our sameness. There will be differences, and we'll get to that, but for today I thank you for what we share in common. I thank you that we are brothers and sisters by your design. I pray for those in this room who are caught in patterns where they do mar your image, where they do belittle your image, where they do, with glad-heartedness, consume and treat others with reproach. I pray that we'd be quick to grab what is dark and drag it into the light.

For those in this room today who live duplicitous lives, who are here today affirming that we're made in the image of God and living in such a way where they show they don't really believe it and don't really buy it and ultimately feel like they are the god who is able to consume and take what they want and devour what they want and hurt whoever they want, I pray for a deep level of conviction and grief to befall their souls. I pray, Holy Spirit, that on top of that brokenness and grief you might lavish your grace and forgiveness. Help us repent, help us confess, and help us heal. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.