

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 4, Image of God in Humans Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 4, Image of God in Humans, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on humanity and sin, specifically **session four on the image of God in humans**, explores historical and biblical perspectives on this concept. The discussion encompasses the **substantive view** emphasizing human makeup like rationality, the **functional view** highlighting roles such as dominion, and the **relational view** focusing on love and connection. Peterson examines the creation account in Genesis, noting humanity as the pinnacle, and considers the impact of the fall on God's image in humanity, referencing both Old and New Testaments, including the idea of its restoration in Christ and ultimate perfection. He also touches on practical implications, such as human dignity and the wrongness of sin.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Humanity and Sin).



Peterson_HumSin_Session04.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 4, Image of God in Humans

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on the Image of God in Humans

Overview: This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 4 of his teaching on the Doctrines of Humanity and Sin, focusing specifically on the concept of the "image of God" in humans. Peterson explores historical theological views, biblical perspectives (primarily from Genesis), the impact of the fall, and the restoration of the image in Christ.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Historical Theological Views of the Image of God:

Peterson begins by outlining three primary historical views on what the "image of God" (Imago Dei) entails:

- **Substantive (or Structural) View:** This view, predominant for a long time and exemplified by Thomas Aquinas, posits that the image of God is something inherent in the very makeup or structure of human beings. The primary focus is not the physical body but the spiritual structure, with **rationality** being a key component. Peterson notes, "the image of God is something in the very makeup of human beings... the outstanding example was rationality. God made Adam and Eve with cognition, able to know his thoughts after him, and able to do his will... supremely, it was thought the image of God is found in human reason."
- **Functional View:** This view, more recent (20th century), emphasizes the **function** or roles that God created humans to perform, particularly **exercising dominion** over creation as God's vice-regents. Leonard Verdun is mentioned as an example. Peterson states, "the seat of the image is not in human rationality... but rather in our function, in what God made us to do. And paramount, it is claimed, in the Genesis witness is exercising dominion."
- **Relational View:** This view, gaining popularity in the mid-20th century (with Emil Brunner as an example), emphasizes **relationships**, particularly love towards God, neighbor, and creation, as the essence of the image. Peterson quotes, "the image is found not in our structure, not even in our roles, but primarily in our relationships. The main relationship would be love toward God, toward the creation, and toward our fellow human beings."

Peterson concludes that there is truth in all three views and that historical theology provides valuable background for understanding the biblical perspective. He asks rhetorically, "Would we really be better off not to know of structural, relational, and functional views? I don't think so."

2. Biblical Perspective on the Image of God (Old Testament - Genesis):

Peterson then turns to the Old Testament, primarily Genesis 1:26-28, to examine the creation of humanity in God's image. Key points include:

- **The Fact of Creation in God's Image:** Genesis 1:26-27 states, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." This act is presented as the **crowning act of God's creation**, supported by several points including the narrative order, God's "very good" pronouncement, the granting of dominion, the personal nature of the creation ("Let us make"), and the unique designation of humans being made in God's image.
- **Meaning of "Image" and "Likeness":** Peterson notes that the Hebrew words for "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*) are **synonymous**, despite some historical interpretations attempting to differentiate them (referencing Irenaeus).
- **Dominion as a Consequence or Component:** While Leonard Verduyn argues that dominion *is* the image, Peterson contends that there is at least a **relation** between the two. He suggests that humanity's role as "dominion havers" and stewards over creation is a result of being made in God's image: "One could say that man's role over the rest of the creation is a result of his being made in the image of God. One might go so far as to say that the *imago dei*... involves man's having dominion." He emphasizes that God, as the great Lord, made humanity "Lord, small I, over the other creatures." This has implications for human justice and ecological responsibility.
- **Image Retained After the Fall (Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9):** Peterson highlights Genesis 9:6, where God's image in humanity is given as the reason for capital punishment: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." This indicates that even fallen human beings **retain** the image of God, though it is marred. James 3:9 echoes this, speaking of cursing "men who have been made in God's likeness." Peterson strongly disagrees with the idea that the image was "totally effaced" by the fall, using the analogy of defacing a masterpiece like the Mona Lisa or the Pieta: "It would be like taking terrible ugly paint and splashing it on the Mona Lisa or taking

a sledgehammer to the Pieta or some beautiful sculpture. It was horrible. One of the things that make human sin, even our sin, so ugly is that."

- **Male and Female Created in God's Image:** Genesis 1:27 states that God created them "male and female" in his image, signifying the **equality of man and woman before God**. While acknowledging male headship in the family, Peterson rejects interpretations that would deny the image of God to women.
- **Sexuality and Procreation as Part of God's Blessing:** Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply," indicates that sexuality and procreation are part of God's blessing and supports the normativity of male/female sexual relations. Peterson explicitly states, "Homosexuality is contrary to the creation ordinance of God."

3. Restoration of the Image in Christ (New Testament - Colossians and Ephesians):

Peterson briefly introduces the New Testament doctrine of the **restoration of the image of God in Jesus Christ**.

- **The Need for Restoration:** The fact that the image needs to be restored implies that the fall affected and tarnished it.
- **Pauline Texts:** Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24 speak of putting off the old self and putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator (Colossians) and created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians). Peterson reasons that if the recreation of the image includes knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, then the original image must have included these aspects as well: "If the recreation of the image includes knowledge, Colossians 3, righteousness, and true holiness, Ephesians 4, then the original image must have included the same things. I think it's very sound reasoning."
- **Progressive Restoration:** The restoration of the image in believers is not instantaneous but a lifelong process of growth in Christ. "In Christ, in union with him, God progressively restores the image of a believer."

4. Redemptive-Historical View of the Image:

Peterson references Anthony Hoekema's redemptive-historical view, which outlines four stages of the image:

- **Original Image:** Possessed by Adam and Eve before the fall, true but not incapable of being tarnished.

- **Marred Image:** The state of humanity after the fall, where the image is tarnished but not lost.
- **Restored Image:** The progressive renewal of the image in believers through Christ.
- **Perfected Image:** Awaiting the eschaton, to be fully realized with the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body. Peterson notes that even the original image was not "perfected" in the sense of being incapable of sin.

5. Christ as the Image of God:

Peterson mentions that Christ is the true image of God, a crucial aspect often overlooked. Looking at Jesus helps us understand and confirm aspects of the image in humanity.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of the image of God in humans, drawing from historical theology and key biblical passages. He emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the image, acknowledging elements of structure, function, and relationship. Crucially, he highlights the enduring nature of the image even after the fall and the promise of its restoration and ultimate perfection in Christ. He underscores the profound implications of being made in God's image for how we view ourselves and treat others.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 4, Image of God in Humans

Study Guide: The Image of God in Humans

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **Historical Views of the Image of God:** Understand the three main historical perspectives:
- **Substantive/Structural View:** Focuses on something inherent in human beings' makeup, primarily rationality and the capacity for spiritual understanding. Key figure: Thomas Aquinas.
- **Functional View:** Emphasizes what God made humans to do, particularly exercising dominion over creation as God's vice-regents. Key figure: Leonard Verduin.
- **Relational View:** Highlights the importance of relationships, especially love for God, others, and creation, as the core of the image. Key figure: Emil Brunner.
- **Biblical Basis of the Image of God:** Examine the key Old Testament passages:
- **Genesis 1:26-28:** Creation of humanity (male and female) in God's image and likeness, granting them dominion. Understand the significance of this as the crowning act of creation.
- **Genesis 5:1-2 & 9:6:** Retention of the image of God even after the Fall, serving as the basis for the sanctity of human life and capital punishment.
- **James 3:9:** Reinforces the idea that even fallen individuals bear God's likeness, highlighting the severity of cursing others.
- **Impact of the Fall on the Image:** Recognize that while the image is retained after the Fall, it is marred and tarnished by sin.
- **Restoration of the Image in Christ:** Understand the Pauline teaching in Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24 regarding the renewal of the image through faith in Christ, involving knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. This restoration is a progressive, lifelong process.
- **Christ as the Image of God:** Recognize the significance of Jesus Christ as the true and ultimate image of God.

- **Redemptive-Historical View of the Image:** Comprehend Hoekema's four stages: the original unmarred image, the marred image after the Fall, the gradually restored image in Christ, and the perfected image at the eschaton (including bodily resurrection).
- **Implications of the Image of God:** Consider the ethical and theological implications of humans being created in God's image, such as the value of human life, the basis for justice, and our responsibility towards creation.

Quiz:

1. Describe the central tenet of the substantive (or structural) view of the image of God and provide an example of a human attribute emphasized by this view.
2. According to the functional view, where is the image of God primarily located, and what specific role is often highlighted by proponents of this view based on Genesis 1?
3. Explain the relational view of the image of God, identifying the key aspect emphasized and the primary types of relationships considered essential.
4. What is the significance of Genesis 1:26-27 regarding the creation of humanity, and what is presented as the crowning act of God's creation in this passage?
5. How does Genesis 9:6 contribute to our understanding of the image of God after the Fall, and what theological concept does this verse help to support?
6. According to the lecture, how did the Fall affect the image of God in humanity? Was it completely lost, and what analogy is used to illustrate its condition?
7. Summarize the Pauline teaching on the restoration of the image of God as found in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4, mentioning the key aspects involved in this renewal.
8. Explain the concept of a "redemptive-historical" view of the image of God, outlining the four main stages as presented by Hoekema.
9. Why is the fact that humans are made in God's image significant when considering ethical treatment of other human beings, as highlighted in the discussion of James 3:9?
10. How will the image of God be ultimately perfected, according to the lecture, and what role does the resurrection of the body play in this perfection?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The substantive view posits that the image of God is something inherent in the very makeup or structure of human beings, not merely their function or relationships. A key example is human rationality, the capacity to think, know God, and understand His will.
2. The functional view emphasizes that the image of God is found in what God made humans to do, their roles and functions. Paramount in this view, drawing from Genesis, is the role of exercising dominion over the rest of creation as God's vice-regents.
3. The relational view emphasizes that the essence of the image of God lies primarily in our relationships, particularly love for God, fellow human beings, and the creation. It suggests that our capacity for these loving relationships reflects God's image.
4. Genesis 1:26-27 describes the creation of both male and female in God's image and after His likeness, presented as a unique and deliberate act of God. This is substantiated by several factors, including its placement as the culmination of the creation narrative.
5. Genesis 9:6 teaches that even after the flood and the Fall, humanity still bears the image of God. This fact is given as the justification for capital punishment for those who shed human blood, highlighting the inherent value and sanctity of human life.
6. The Fall marred and tarnished the image of God in humanity, but it did not totally eliminate it. This is likened to taking ugly paint and splashing it on the Mona Lisa or damaging a beautiful sculpture, indicating a defacement of something still inherently valuable.
7. Pauline teaching in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4 speaks of the restoration of the image of God in believers through Christ. This renewal involves putting off the old self and putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.
8. The redemptive-historical view of the image of God outlines four stages: the original, unmarred image in Adam and Eve; the tarnished image after the Fall; the progressively restored image in believers through Christ; and the perfected image at Christ's return and the resurrection.

9. Because human beings are made in God's image, every individual possesses inherent dignity and worth. Therefore, cursing or mistreating another person is seen as a direct affront to God, as they are His image bearers.
10. The image of God will be ultimately perfected at the eschaton, with the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body. This perfected state will be incapable of being tarnished, unlike the original image before the Fall, and will include a bodily aspect.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Compare and contrast the substantive, functional, and relational views of the image of God. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective, referencing the provided source material.
2. Analyze the impact of the Fall on the image of God in humanity, drawing on both Old and New Testament insights from the lecture. How is the retention of the image after the Fall significant for Christian theology and ethics?
3. Discuss the Pauline doctrine of the restoration of the image of God in Christ. What are the key components of this restoration, according to Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4, and how does this process unfold in the life of a believer?
4. Explain the concept of a redemptive-historical understanding of the image of God, as presented by Hoekema. How do the different stages of the image (original, marred, restored, perfected) contribute to a comprehensive theological anthropology?
5. Explore the practical implications of the doctrine of the image of God for how Christians should view themselves, treat others, and engage with the created world. Support your arguments with insights from the lecture.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Substantive/Structural View:** The theological perspective that the image of God is located in the inherent makeup or nature of human beings, often emphasizing rationality and spiritual capacities.
- **Functional View:** The theological perspective that the image of God is primarily manifested in what humans were created to do, particularly their role in exercising dominion over creation.
- **Relational View:** The theological perspective that the image of God is fundamentally about the capacity for and reality of relationships, especially love for God, others, and creation.
- **Imago Dei:** A Latin term meaning "image of God," used theologically to refer to the ways in which humanity reflects God's likeness.
- **Dominion:** The authority and responsibility given to humanity by God to rule over and care for the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26-28).
- **Fall:** The biblical account of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, resulting in sin entering the world and affecting all of creation, including the marring of the image of God in humanity.
- **Restoration (of the Image):** The process, initiated by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, by which the image of God in believers is progressively renewed and conformed to the likeness of Christ.
- **Eschaton:** The theological term for the end times, including the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final consummation of God's kingdom.
- **Redemptive-Historical View:** An approach to theology that understands God's plan of salvation as unfolding progressively throughout history, with distinct stages.
- **Trinity:** The Christian doctrine that God is one being in three co-equal and co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 4, Image of God in Humans, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Image of God in Humanity

1. What are the primary historical views regarding the image of God in humans, and what distinguishes them?

Historically, there have been three predominant views on the image of God:

- **Substantive (or Structural) View:** This view, prominent for a long time and exemplified by Thomas Aquinas, posits that the image of God is something inherent in the very makeup or structure of human beings. While not primarily focused on the physical body, it emphasizes a spiritual structure, particularly rationality and the capacity for cognition, enabling humans to know God, understand His will, and use their minds for spiritual purposes.
- **Functional View:** This more recent (20th century) view emphasizes that the image of God is found in what God made humans to do, their function or roles. Paramount among these functions is exercising dominion over creation as God's vice-regents, reflecting God's own Lordship.
- **Relational View:** This view, gaining popularity in the mid-20th century with figures like Emil Brunner, suggests that the essence of the image lies not in our inherent qualities or functions, but primarily in our relationships – our capacity for love and communion with God, with fellow human beings, and even with the created world.

Dr. Peterson suggests that there is truth in all three of these historical perspectives.

2. What does the Old Testament, particularly Genesis 1:26-28 and 9:6, reveal about humanity being created in God's image?

Genesis 1:26-27 presents the creation of humanity (male and female) as the crowning act of God's creation, distinguished by God's personal involvement ("Let us make") and the unique designation of being made "in our image, after our likeness." While the exact nature of this image is not explicitly detailed, it is linked to the mandate to have dominion over creation. Genesis 9:6, spoken after the flood, states that even fallen humanity retains God's image, providing the basis for the sanctity of human life and the rationale for capital punishment for murder. This implies a substantive aspect to the image that persists despite sin.

3. How has sin affected the image of God in humanity according to the sources?

The sources indicate that the fall of humanity into sin has significantly marred and tarnished the image of God. While the image is not entirely effaced or lost (as evidenced by Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9), it is no longer in its original, untainted state. Sin has distorted humanity's ability to perfectly reflect God's nature, impacting our cognitive, moral, and relational capacities. This tarnishing necessitates the restoration of the image.

4. What is the New Testament perspective on the image of God, particularly in relation to Jesus Christ and the process of restoration?

The New Testament, particularly in Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24, speaks of the restoration of the image of God in believers through Christ. This restoration involves being renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, suggesting that these aspects were part of the original image. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is presented as the true image of God. Believers, through union with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, progressively have this image restored within them throughout their lives, a process of spiritual growth and transformation into Christ's likeness.

5. What are the redemptive-historical stages of the image of God as outlined in the material?

The material outlines four redemptive-historical stages of the image of God:

- **The Original Image:** Created in Adam and Eve, it was the true, untarnished image of God, though not yet perfected in the sense of being incapable of being marred.
- **The Marred Image:** After the fall, the image was tarnished and distorted by sin, but not entirely lost.
- **The Restored Image:** Through grace and faith in Jesus Christ, believers undergo a lifelong process of having the image progressively restored within them.
- **The Perfected Image:** This final stage will be realized at Christ's return and the resurrection of the body, where the image will be perfected and incapable of being tarnished.

6. How does the concept of dominion relate to the image of God in humans?

The concept of dominion, as seen in Genesis 1:26-28, has been a key aspect of the functional view of the image of God. God gave Adam and Eve the role of ruling over creation as His representatives. While the source argues that the image of God does not solely consist of having dominion, it acknowledges a significant relationship between the two. Being made in God's image equips humanity for this role of stewardship and authority over the rest of creation, reflecting God's own Lordship.

7. Does the Bible indicate that all humans, even after the fall and regardless of their moral state, still bear the image of God?

Yes, the Bible, particularly Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9, indicates that all human beings, even after the fall and despite their sinfulness, still bear the image of God in some sense. This is presented as the reason for the inherent dignity and sanctity of human life, and why acts of violence against others are so grievous. Even individuals displaying extreme hatred and wickedness are still recognized as bearing God's image, highlighting the tragedy of sin's distortion.

8. What are the implications of understanding humanity as bearing the image of God for our relationships and responsibilities?

Understanding that humanity bears the image of God has profound implications for how we view and treat others, as well as our responsibilities toward the created world. It underscores the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, regardless of their background or behavior. This should lead to a high view of human justice and a deep concern for our fellow humans. Furthermore, recognizing God as the ultimate Lord and ourselves as image-bearers with a mandate for dominion implies a responsibility for stewardship and care of God's creation, prompting ecological concern and a commitment to using our cognitive and other abilities in ways that honor God.