



# Family Bible Lessons

## Biblical Themes Lesson 1: Image of God

### Welcome to Family Bible Lessons!

Our desire is that each family member will grow in both their understanding of the Bible and their excitement to read more and more of it for yourselves. We will be looking at a different Biblical Theme in each of our lessons this year.

### What Is a Theme?

One of the most famous film score composers is John Williams. Chances are you have probably watched a movie for which he wrote the music. Arguably, his most memorable music is Star Wars. Even people who don't watch those movies recognize the music that blasts from the symphony at the beginning of a Star Wars movie. That song piece is called "Main Title" or "Main Theme." It doesn't just play at the beginning of the movie. It pops up here and there throughout the movie, and it pops up in every Star Wars movie. Why did John Williams do that? Because these movies aren't just random things; there's a story that is tying all of them together, and in that way so does the music. There's a theme that gives it more meaning.

That's also what is happening with the Bible. There is a storyline that is tying the whole Bible together from beginning to end. All along the way as we read it, there are themes that pop up. These themes help us see how the story made up of all these different books and genres all come together. When we see Biblical Themes and follow them, the Bible will mean more to us, excite us to read it, and ultimately make us excited about following Jesus.

### What Is a Biblical Theme?

That's a good question. There isn't any set of rules that makes one thing a Biblical Theme and another thing just an idea or repeated word in the Bible. But generally speaking, there are a few things that can make up a Biblical Theme:

1. The theme gets started very early in the Bible, often in the first pages. Someone once said that Genesis 1-3 is like a training manual on how to read the whole Bible. So many themes find their beginning here. "In the beginning," right?
2. The theme gets repeated either by a direct quote, an idea, or a familiar story. It's amazing how often someone in the Bible goes through or does the exact same thing as someone else.
3. The theme will find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. If the story of the Bible is leading us to Jesus, then we will see the themes in the Old Testament carry out in him as well.

### Video: Image of God

Watch *Image of God* (5 minutes) - <https://youtu.be/YbipxLDtY8c>

Well, that was fun! BibleProject did a great job making that video with all these different characters and examples. But they also did a great job giving us our first Biblical Theme to consider. Let's jump into the Bible to see how it plays out.

## **Beginning of the Theme**

Read Genesis 1:26-28 (ESV):

*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. 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."*

Genesis 1 is such a masterpiece of beauty as God creates and orders the skies, the land, and the seas. But this isn't the only creation story being told in the ancient world. Israel's neighbors like Canaan and Babylon had creation stories, too. But theirs were violent and usually involved humans being created as slaves to the gods. The creation story of Genesis is much different. Instead of making slaves, God creates humans and sets them apart over the rest of his creation. They bear his image, and he invites them to rule the earth on his behalf. This God blesses them as his image bearers.

We might think of ruling in a negative way, like someone powerful just having his way over people who are weaker. But the picture we get in Genesis, as the video showed, is ruling as a means of creating life and making creation more beautiful. The garden God gave Adam and Eve to rule and work was a life-giving gift.

Humans were always supposed to be God's partners and image bearers over this beautiful creation. But something went wrong.

## **Humans Ruling on their own Terms**

We read in Genesis 3 that a mysterious snake in rebellion against God tempts Adam and Eve with eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had given a command that they were trust him for that wisdom and not eat it. The snake sells them on the idea that if they eat of that tree, they would be like God. What's the problem with that? Genesis 1 tells us they already were like God! They were his image bearers. But the idea of deciding how to rule on their own terms sounded too good to ignore. They chose the fruit instead of the God who made them. In that moment, they stopped reflecting God's image. They sinned.

## **What Happens When Humans Stop Reflecting God's Image**

There are so many stories in the Bible that show what happens as a result of this terrible decision. When humans rule on their own terms instead of reflecting God's image to each other, they end up destroying each other. Just one chapter after Adam and Eve's decision, we find the first murder in the Bible.

All through the Old Testament, all kinds of people failed at being God's image bearers, even ones that tried to be. Abraham was chosen by God to have a family that would be a blessing to all the nations. But he didn't always trust God's way or God's timing. Moses was chosen by God to lead his people out of slavery and into the Promised Land. Moses pled for mercy from God for his people time and time again. But Moses himself failed to enter the Promised Land because he got frustrated with the people, spoke rashly, and disobeyed

God's command. David was chosen by God to be king over Israel. David led his people well and established Jerusalem as the city where God would dwell and be worshipped in his temple. But David had a man murdered so he could have his wife.

Each of these humans and more did really awesome things that make us think, "Yes, this is what it looks like to reflect God's image as humans." But in the end, they made the same decision that Adam and Eve made. When we read these stories, we are left thinking, "We need someone who can truly reflect God's image to us. We need a new Adam. We need a new Abraham. We need a new Moses. We need a new David. We need a new kind of human who follows God perfectly and rules with his kind of selfless love."

Enter Jesus.

*If your family needs a break, this might be a good stopping point.*

### **Jesus, the New Human**

Read John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16-18 (ESV)

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

What John has written here is brilliant. Do you see how he set up this theme? He starts with "In the beginning," the same start as Genesis 1. Just like Genesis 1, a light shines in the darkness. But this light is a person. This person becomes a human like Adam and comes to earth. John says, "We have seen his glory." In other words, this new human is showing us what God looks like. He is bearing his image. His name is Jesus. John makes the claim that those who receive Jesus will become children of God. Children are image bearers of their parents – either by their looks, their words, their actions, or mixture of all of them. Jesus has made it possible for humans to be image bearers of God again. But it won't be like in the Garden when Adam and Eve wanted their own way. This would be God's work. John finishes the beautiful opening to his Gospel account with Jesus being the perfect image bearer of God – He is the only one who has made God truly known.

John's Gospel shows that Jesus was bringing God's kingdom to earth. He wanted people to become new humans who would rule as God intended. What did that rule look like? Unlike all the earthly rulers who made themselves powerful, Jesus ruled by serving. Ultimately, he ruled by laying down his life for sinners; the sign that hung on his cross with him called him a king. But he rose again 3 days later: still very much human but also a completely new human, a new creation. He said that all who choose to follow him will be made a new human as well.

As Colossians 1:15-20 tells us: *Jesus is the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

## Response

There's a lot to take in here and we just barely scratched the surface of how the theme of Image of God plays out in the Bible. But what do you need to know and act on from this lesson?

1. You were created by God to be his image bearer. You were made to shine his light, goodness, and love to all other humans.
2. You have failed to be that image bearer. Just like Adam and Eve, you have made the decision to do what you think is right in your own eyes. You have not loved God as you should, nor have you loved others as he has loved them.
3. Only Jesus can make you a new human and God's true image bearer again. Jesus called all people to repent from sin, turn to him, and follow him. He is calling you to do that. It means you have to lay down your crown and give up ruling your way. But Jesus is able to crown you with God's glory and love, to make you more than you could ever be yourself. Will you trust in Jesus to make you God's image bearer?

## Review Questions with Your Family

*These are designed to help children ages 8-18 to review before taking their individual Google quizzes.*

1. What will we be looking at in each of our lessons this year? *Biblical Themes*
2. Someone once said that \_\_\_\_\_ is like a training manual for how to read the whole Bible. *Genesis 1-3*
3. A biblical theme will find its ultimate fulfillment in \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus*
4. What is the Hebrew word for *image*? *Tselem*
5. According to the video, why were people not supposed to make images of God? *Because God has already made images of himself*
6. According to the video, what does ruling look like in Genesis 1-2? *Gardening*
7. In Genesis 3, what animal lures Adam and Eve to rebel against God? *A snake*
8. Which human in the Old Testament did God choose to be king over Israel? *David*
9. In John 1, "the Word" is a reference to \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus*

10. How did Jesus rule in the New Testament? *By serving*

11. When Jesus rose again from the dead, he arose as a \_\_\_\_\_. *New Human*

### **Praying the Scriptures**

One of the joys of reading the Bible is praying its words back to its Author. We encourage you to read the Bible passage below and make it your prayer.

Read Psalm 8 (ESV):

*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Prayer:

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*We see how majestic your name is everywhere we look. Your glory is all over the place. What blows our minds the most is that you made us to bear your image, to wear your glory. We have sinned and failed to show your glory and love to others. Turn our hearts to your perfect image bearer Jesus Christ. Make us in His image. Help us to once again show you to the world. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Amen.*

### **Google Quiz**

- Children in your family who are ages 8-18 can now take their Google quiz for this lesson.
- Parents, you should receive an email when each child completes their quiz, so you know it has been completed.
- Take the Google Quiz: <https://forms.gle/pSnhVy8S7GtA2W5y9>