

# PROTECT AND SERVE

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## GENESIS 1:27; 9:1-7

1:27 So **A** God created man in his own image; he created him in the **B** image of God; he created them **C** male and female.

9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. **2** The **D** fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed **E** under your authority. **3** Every creature that lives and moves will be **F** food for you; as I gave the green plants, **G** I have given you everything. **4** However, you must not eat meat with its **H** lifeblood in it. **5** And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood; I will require it from **I** any animal and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person’s life. **6** Whoever sheds human blood, **J** by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image. **7** But you, be fruitful and multiply; **K** spread out over the earth and multiply on it.”

## MATTHEW 5:21-22

5:21 You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **L** Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. **22** But **M** I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever **N** insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, **O** ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- A** “God spoke” (The Message); knowing God as Creator is fundamental to having a biblical view of Him, human beings, and life itself.
- B** All human beings are meant to reflect the reality and character of God. Only Jesus “is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). One day, those who have a saving relationship with Christ will be transformed into His image (1 John 3:2).
- C** Men and women are equally made in God’s image.
- D** There is no mention of the animals’ “fear and terror” in the similar blessing given to Adam and Eve before sin entered the world (Gen. 1:28).
- E** “In your power” (NLT); “into your hand” (NKJV)
- F** Another addition to the pronouncement made to Adam and Eve before the fall and the flood (Gen. 1:29-30); here animals became fair game for food.
- G** God initiated the change in relationship between humans and animals after the fall and the flood.
- H** This prohibition later became a part of the Levitical Law (Lev. 17:10-13).
- I** Even animals were to be put to death if they killed a human being (Ex. 21:28).
- J** In the Old Testament, there is no debate about the legitimacy of capital punishment.
- K** “Repopulate the earth” (NLT); “so that your descendants will live all over the earth” (GNT)
- L** The sixth of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:13)
- M** Jesus rightly claims authority to teach the true meaning and application of God’s Word.
- N** “Good-for-nothing” (NASB); “idiot” (NLT)
- O** There are times when pointing out actions that would define a person as a fool are appropriate and helpful (Prov. 1:7; Luke 12:20), but they should never be mean-spirited or include name-calling.

### »» 1. IN HIS IMAGE (Gen. 1:27)

- God created humans in His image. No other creature carries that distinction.
- Explain that various ideas exist for what is meant by being made in the image of God.
- The image of God distinguishes human beings as created to relate personally with God.

### »» 2. TO BE PROTECTED (Gen. 9:1-7)

- After the flood, God established a covenant with Noah that included a command to protect human life by requiring the life of any creature who murders a human.
- Emphasize that the protecting of human life is based on humans' being created in the image of God.
- Scripture authorizes the death penalty, though some insist that the New Testament's emphasis on grace supersedes it.
- Stress the value and importance of each person to God.
- Avoid implying that Scripture justifies taking violent action against those involved in an abortion.

### »» 3. IN ACTION AND ATTITUDE (Matt. 5:21-22)

- Jesus emphasized that while the law prohibited murder, He expects His followers to go further—to show actions and attitudes that value other people.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

**God created humanity in His image, giving human life sacred value.**

- Believers are to affirm the value of every person as being created in God's image.
- Believers are to protect human life, advocating for those who cannot speak for themselves.
- Believers are to demonstrate that they value everyone by showing respect to all people.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What determines a possession's value? What determines a person's value?

- We determine possessions worth based on the value we place on them whether monetary, trade, sentimental, or personal.
- To the world, people's value might lie in their contributions, talents, intelligence, skills, or outward appearance.
- God values a person based solely on the fact that humans are His creation.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE GENESIS 1:27

### What is unique about humans as opposed to all other creatures of the earth?

- Humans are created in the image of God. Other creatures lack this distinction.
- While not God, humans have the capacity to mimic attributes of God such as love, forgiveness, using complex thought, and placing others' interests before their own.
- Humans also possess the ability to have a personal relationship with God.
- Even though everyone falls short of this ideal, God desires that we treat everyone according to the truth that he or she is "made in God's likeness" (Jas. 3:9).

### What is distinctive about how God categorizes humans in this passage?

- While all humans are created in God's image, He provides a distinction between male and female humans.
- Men and women are of equal worth in God's sight, yet God created them to be distinctly different.

## GENESIS 9:1-7

### What authority did God give Noah upon leaving the ark and starting over with humanity?

- God gave Noah and his sons authority over all living creatures. God said that all creatures would fear humans.
- In contrast to God's specific instructions to Adam and Eve about what plants to eat, God gave Noah and his sons full authority to eat all living creatures and plants.

### How do the instructions God gave Noah compare to the instructions He gave Adam in the garden (Gen. 1:28-31)?

- God told Noah and his sons to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. He also told them to be in authority over all living creatures.
- God warned them against eating live animals, and that they should protect human life by requiring the life of any creature that murders a human.

- While Christians differ on the use of the death penalty, the emphasis God gave to Noah was that human life is valuable, and other humans should protect it.

### How can we see value in all people—even those we disagree with or whom we've been hurt by?

- Human lives are valuable because they are created in the image of God.
- God cares for each individual life, so humans should care for all people as well.
- God especially wants us to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves (see Prov. 31:8-9).

## MATTHEW 5:21-22

### How did Jesus' teaching affect what people believed about the law?

- His listeners were focused on the law. So they thought they only had to avoid murder to obey the law.
- Jesus took the law a step further by saying people should avoid hating others as well.

### What is the significance of Jesus equating hatred with murder?

- Jesus emphasized the heart over the law. He said those who had hatred in their hearts toward their brothers would also be subject to judgment.
- Valuing a person's life begins with the way that we treat others.
- Even if we avoid murder, showing hatred to others—whether individuals or ethnic groups—doesn't display value toward them. Quite the opposite, we show people don't have value when we fail to treat them as we would want to be treated.

## SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

### In what practical, specific ways can we show others that we value them as God values them?

- Write down two or three names of people and one way in which you want to demonstrate their importance to you this week.
- **Personal Challenge:** Pray as a group for God's help and guidance in showing value to others as He values them.



# OBJECT LESSON

## A BOX OF COLORFUL MARKERS

Show the markers for everyone to view. Ask: *What comes to your mind each time you see multiple colors together? Stress that often we are compelled to think of rainbows. Ask: What emotions do you experience when you witness a rainbow?*

Remind the group that the rainbow served as a covenant between God and Noah that God wouldn't destroy every living creature on earth again. The rainbow reminds us that we're valuable to God and worthy of His protection.

Ask: *How does each color included in this box add value to the marker set? In what ways can we show value for human life? How does God expect us to protect fellow humans? Connect to today's Scripture: Humans are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). We have characteristics of God that set us apart from other living creatures. We have the capacity to exhibit love, forgiveness, patience, kindness, and mercy toward others. As humans, we have a responsibility to show value to others as God values them.*

Direct a volunteer to read Matthew 5:21-22. Ask: *In what ways do we fail to value others? What would be different about the world*



*if everyone on the planet truly lived by this teaching of Jesus?* Explain that Jesus encouraged His followers to go above and beyond just avoiding the actual taking of life to instead giving life in the way we treat others.

Close in prayer. Thank God for His gift of human life. Ask the Lord to help you show value to others in all you say and do this week.



## DIG DEEPER

### BLESSED TO BE FRUITFUL

In Genesis 9:1, God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." This echoes a passage from the story of Adam and Eve, "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.'" (Gen. 1:28). Most blessings in the Bible are followed by a pronouncement about the future of the one being blessed, such as the blessing of Isaac upon Jacob (Gen. 27:27-40), or Jacob blessing his sons before he died (Gen. 49:1-28). Sometimes the blessing called attention to the current favored state of the person being addressed (Gen. 24:35) or contained a prayer that a person or group would be blessed (Ps. 115:15).

The blessings in Genesis 1:28 and 9:1 were unique in that the blessing was followed by a command. God blessed them and then commanded them to "be fruitful." In these passages, the blessing of God was experienced in being fruitful. It is one of the primary ways God wants to bless all of humanity. There are other types of blessings from God (Ps. 115:13), and there are many ways to be fruitful (John 15:5,8). But we should always uphold the biblical perspective on children: each one is a blessing from God. As the psalmist said, "Children are a gift from the LORD" (Ps. 127:3, NLT).

The blessing on having children was given to Adam and Eve before sin ever entered the world. It was repeated to Noah and his family after the wickedness of the world reached a peak and was destroyed in God's judgment through a flood. It applies to all of humanity who fills the whole earth. The wickedness of the world did not change God's mind about the blessedness of having children. One writer, commenting on God's covenant with Noah, summed up God's Word on the matter very well:

In the midst of tragedy and in the aftermath of disaster, people ask, "Is life still worth living? Should we bring children into a world of distorted values, violence, poverty, hunger, nuclear threat, sexual abuse, and drug addiction?" The answer is stated firmly. Twice. God repeated the mandate to human beings to "be fruitful and multiply" (9:1,7).<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not we have children and whether we become parents through biological means or adoption, we all carry God-given roles to help the generations after us grow up in the knowledge of and faith in God. Each child is a blessing and should be treated as such.

1. *Biblical Illustrator*, Fall 1987 (Nashville, TN: LifeWay, 1993), 61.