**Calvin and Hobbes** by Bill Watterson



"What Do You Think?"

A Biblical Perspective on the Mind

 *35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." – Matthew 22:35-40*

BEFORE WE BEGIN…

Welcome and thank you so much for participating in this Grace Life Bible study. Perhaps you are here because you simply want to grow in your understanding of God's Word and want to learn more about what the Bible has to say. Perhaps you are here because some friends asked you to walk through the study together. Maybe you are here because you had nothing better to do! Well, whatever the reason, I am thankful you are here and hope that this study will be helpful for you in your spiritual development.

Before we begin, I want you to consider a few things. Read the following passage several times and think through what you are reading. Then read through the questions that follow. These questions are intended to help guide your thinking. My hope is that you will be able to take away as much as possible from this study, but that will only be possible with the Lord's assistance and enablement. Hopefully it will benefit you in your own walk with God and in your ability to be a blessing to others in service. Please think through the questions and answer them honestly and thoughtfully before God after reading the Scripture passage.

Psalm 119:33-40

 33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.

 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

 35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

 37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

 38 Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.

 39 Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good.

 40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!

1. Why are you here at Bible study today?

2. Why do you think you should you be here?

3. Is there anywhere else you would rather be?

4. What might hinder you from being completely attentive and engaged in our study together?

5. How can you pray to focus your heart on our time together so that God can help you make the most of this time?

I. INTRODUCTION.

"What do you think?" It's a question that is asked of us often by our friends, family, and acquaintances. The relationships we enjoy provide numerous and various opportunities to give and receive counsel. Opinions are held on any number of subjects, sometimes strongly, and many are not shy about voicing those opinions with others.

But what guides our thinking? On what basis do we give counsel or hold opinions? Of course the standard obvious answer for believers is that the Bible is the authority that guides our thinking. While that answer is appropriate, it is not always true. There are many other authorities we turn to in our thinking and decision making. What makes this more troublesome is that oftentimes we do this without realizing what we are doing. It is thus important to identify what those other sources of authority are and to catch ourselves when we turn to them instead of the Lord. Once we have done this, we can evaluate how we ought to think differently according to the principles of God's Word.

The topic of this study may be one of the most practical issues in the Bible because everyone thinks and makes decisions. As we walk through this study, our desire is to understand the human mind the way God understands it through what He has revealed to us in Scripture. Not only may you be surprised at how much fine tuning your thinking requires, in some areas of life you may come to find that a major overhaul is necessary. If that is the case, don't get discouraged! The same is true for every believer, which is why a study like this is so important.

II. THE WAY IT USED TO BE (GENESIS 1).

When God first created the world and all it contains, everything He made was perfect and without sin. The world did not know conflict, famine, disease, evil, or disaster. Everything in creation existed in perfect harmony and for the ultimate purpose to obey God and bring Him glory (Rev. 4:11; cf. Rom. 1:20). On the sixth day of creation, God made Adam and Eve. In numerous ways they were the crowning point of God's creation. To sum up their uniqueness and value, the Bible says they were made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

Before Adam and Eve fell into sin, they enjoyed a perfect relationship with God. Every thought and action was in line with God's will. In the Garden of Eden, they walked with God, communed with God, and loved God with all their heart. One particular aspect of their relationship with God is that they walked in perfect obedience to God's commands.

With the effects of sin in our lives, it is difficult for us to grasp what this would have been like. In order to understand biblically how we ought to think and reason, it is helpful to consider the way things used to be before sin affected our being. Not only do the opening pages of Scripture teach us much about ourselves, they also reveal much about God and what He originally intended for us.

1. Read Genesis 1. With what words does almost every verse in the chapter begin? What does this communicate about what or who this chapter is really about?

2. In Romans 1:20, Paul writes that in creation God's invisible attributes are clearly perceived. What can we learn about who God is through the creation account of Genesis 1? Think not only of what the passage says but also to what it points. For example, consider the vastness of the universe or the intricacies of the human body. What does the creation account teach about:

a. The Glory of God (cf. Isa. 43:6-7; Col. 1:15)?

b. The Power of God (cf. Heb. 1:1-3)?

c. The Authority of God (cf. Rev. 4:11)?

d. The Wisdom of God (cf. Job 38:1-39:30)?

e. The Goodness of God (cf. Ps. 145:9; 1 Tim. 4:4)?

f. The Love of God (cf. Ps. 8:1-9)?

3. One of the purposes of Genesis 1 is to establish forever a distinction between God and men (cf. Job 9:32; Isa. 45:12, 18; Hos. 11:9). Read Genesis 1:1 and 1:26-30. What in these passages reveals this distinction?

4. Read Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25. When each day of creation was complete, what was God's conclusion about what had been made? What did God say after He created Adam and Eve (v. 31)?

**The Image of God**

1. The Genesis account teaches that God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27).

“26 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.’ 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.“

2. Two different words are used in Genesis 1:26-27 to describe man’s creation in the image of God – "image" and "likeness". The word for “image” in the Hebrew is *tselem* (Gen. 1:26, 27; cf. 9:6). Of the sixteen times this word is used in the Old Testament, five times it refers to man being created in the image of God. The word for “likeness” is *demuth* (Gen. 1:26). Seth was born in the likeness of Adam (Gen. 5:3).

Some of the early church fathers saw a distinction between the two terms “image” and “likeness,” and sought to explain their differences. Irenaeus and Tertullian believed that “image” referred to man’s body and “likeness” referred to man’s spiritual nature. Clement and Origen believed that “image” referred to all things that made man human, and “likeness” referred to the things that were not necessary to being a man that could be lost.

The Reformers did not see a difference in the terms “image” and “likeness.” Luther believed that the image of God was man’s original righteousness and so it was lost at the Fall. Calvin believed “the image included . . . both natural endowments and the spiritual qualities of original righteousness (knowledge, righteousness, and holiness). The whole image, according to Calvin, has been affected by the Fall, with only original righteousness being completely lost.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

There are five major views of the relationship between these two words.[[2]](#footnote-2)

a. The Roman Catholic view is that “image” refers to man’s structural being. This is what survived after the Fall. “Likeness” refers to man’s moral image, which was destroyed in the Fall.

b. “Image” is the more important word, but since man is not an exact copy of God the word “likeness” is also used. “Likeness” is more abstract than “image.”

c. “Likeness” is the more important word and is defined by “image.” This is because the Hebrew word for “likeness” is derived from the word for blood (*dām*).

d. The word “likeness” amplifies the word “image” and specifies its meaning.

e. The two words are completely interchangeable and mean the same thing.

In light of the interchanging of these terms in Genesis 5:3 as well as passages where either one is used or the other (Gen. 5:1; 9:6; Col. 3:10; James 3:9), it seems best to understand these terms to be synonymous.

3. Both genders, male and female, are said to be created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). This supports the idea that men and women are created equal in God’s eyes since they were both created equally in His image.

4. There are many aspects to what it means to be made in the image of God.[[3]](#footnote-3)

a. Moral Aspects. Men have the ability to make moral choices. They are given an inner sense of right and wrong.

Wayne Grudem: “When we act according to God’s moral standards, our likeness to God is reflected in behavior that is holy and righteous before him, but, by contrast, our unlikeness to God is reflected whenever we sin.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

b. Spiritual Aspects. Part of our nature is immaterial and so we are to grow in our spiritual lives. This sets us apart from the rest of creation in that we can develop a spiritual relationship with God. Once man was created, he became an immortal creature.

c. Mental Aspects. Men exhibit intelligence, will, and emotions. Men also demonstrate creativity, which reflects God’s creativity and separates us from the rest of creation.

d. Relational Aspects. Men can have relationships with God. Men can have relationships with each other (e.g. marriage reflects the headship and submission in the Godhead). Man was given dominion over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26).

e. Physical Aspects. Even though God does not have a physical body being spirit (John 4:24), there may be some aspect that our physical bodies are part of what it means to be made in God’s image. Men are able to see, hear, speak, and exercise strength, and these are things that God is said to do in Scripture even without a physical body.

f. Man’s original moral perfection (cf. Eph. 4:21-24; Col. 3:10).[[5]](#footnote-5) This aspect of the image of God was lost at the Fall. But it can be restored through salvation in Jesus Christ.

g. Insomuch as these aspects help us to see how we are like God and not like the rest of creation, these things contribute to the nature of what it means to be in the image of God.

Wayne Grudem: “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

5. In Genesis 1:26-27, it says that God created man in His own image. Is this something that we can lose (cf. Gen. 9:6; Matt. 22:15-22; 1 Cor. 11:8)?

6. What does it mean that as believers we are being conformed more and more into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10)?

**"How Great Thou Art"**

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder

Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,

Thy pow'r thro'out the universe displayed.

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;*

*How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee:*

*How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

When thro' the woods and forest glades I wander

And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,

When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,

And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,

Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,

That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,

He bled and died to take away my sin.

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation

And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!

Then I shall bow in humble adoration,

And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art.

Thoughts for Application:

1. What are some of the major lessons you learned about God from examining creation? Read Psalm 148:1-14. In light of who God is as our Creator, what should be your response (cf. Deut. 32:6)?

2. What was the nature of God's relationship with Adam and Eve before they fell into sin? How does it differ from your relationship with God today?

3. From Genesis 1, who determines what is good and even very good? In what way does this truth apply to you in your valuation of things?

4. The Scripture clearly teaches that you were created in the image of God. In your own words, what does this mean? Why is it important to understand that all people were created in God's image?

5. In what ways do we as humans bear God's image today? In what ways do we continue to grow in the image of God?

1. Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Victor P. Hamilton, “hm'D',” *TWOT*, 438. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 445-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 446. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 444-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 442. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)