

Biblical reflections on Masculinity: In Whose image are we created?

“So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

“God saw all that he had made, and it was good”. (Genesis 1:31a)

The Bible begins with two poetic and descriptive accounts of the creation story. The creation of humanity takes a key place in these narratives, with significant importance being given to the relationship between:

- man and woman
- humanity and the environment
- humanity and the Creator God.
- God and the environment.

As the story progresses, the relationship departs from the idyllic situation, as humanity strays away from the will of God.

What follows through the rest of the bible is the :

- enduring love and faithfulness of God
- progressive revelation of God to humanity
- tireless, God initiated process of redeeming the relationship between the Creator God and the created

As the culmination of this process of redemption of humanity’s relationship with God, we are shown the ‘way’ of the Saviour, with the birth, death and resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ.

As men, along with women, do we aspire to reclaim the image of God, after whom we were created? Or do we reflect only the flawed image of ‘fallen man’. What are the characters that come to our mind when we think of a *typical* man? What are the characters that come to our mind when we think of a person God wanted us to be and the one who reflects the image of God?

In search of such a person, I studied the Bible and church traditions. I compiled twenty one characteristics from the ‘fruit of the spirit’ (*Galatians 5: 22, 23*), the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5*) and the 7 cardinal virtues. Read them aloud. Pause after each characteristic. As a human being, try to imagine yourself, reflecting these characteristics.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, righteousness, justice, mercy, humility, surrender (to the will of God), chastity, empathy, compassion, charity, diligence, perseverance and moderation.

These are characteristics we can aspire to embody as both men and women. Yet, I could not divide them into masculine or feminine characteristics.

I was sad to realize how far I had strayed as a man from the image of God. But what shocked me more is that this was not the image of a man I had been striving to become!

I had a very flawed and warped vision of a man. A man who is powerful, controlling and one who gets his own way was my ideal man. What I sadly realized was that men through history have extrapolated our own flawed image, to our vision of God. In other words, we have cut God down to our limited vision of ‘self’. So not only are we ‘fallen’, but we project a ‘fallen God’!

Now I have redeemed my vision of the man I want to become. The test of my own image of humanity, is the quality of my relationship with men, women, the environment and with my God. It is a journey. But since I have a clearer idea of where I would like to go, I am more hopeful as a man.

Our brother who shares his story in the video is making such a journey in discovering how to live positively as a man. To be caring, loving and nurturing makes us better men. Breaking free from gender stereotypes in how we relate with others and how we share responsibilities and routines could enrich our lives and liberate us.

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