

Form ReForm Transform Series 9/10/17 File: Genesis 1:26-31 Title: Formed in God's Image

Dear Friends in Christ, may you leave this morning knowing that you are formed in the image of God. Amen!

If you want to get a young person going just say to them, "Wow, you look and/or act just like your mother, or just like you're father". The responses usually range from the "gag me" response to an eye roll. Because there's a period of time where the last person they want to be like is their mother or father. It's pretty amazing when you think about it whether it's body type, mannerisms, or the way a person walks or talks or some quirky things--some things we just don't get to choose—we're just formed that way.

And sometimes you reach a point where you start saying stuff to your kids that your parents said to you that you swore you'd never say. My youngest son Eli gave me permission to tell you this story. This past summer he worked at a day camp in Brooklyn Park. One day I called him and asked how it was going and he said "I was really embarrassed today" and I thought to myself oh no, what happened. He said "I was embarrassed because my inner you came out---we were doing a bunch of games and some little kid accused me of being unfair and I told him "Life's not fair get used to it". I guess he'd heard that a few times over the

years from one of his parents. We both laughed about it and after I hung up the phone I went “YEAH” at least something sunk in. I hope a few other things have sunk in as well.

While it’s not true for every child for lots of reasons a lot of people at some point come to figure out that being like mom or dad isn’t quite as bad as they thought. There’s some stuff that’s formed in us by that genetic code we just don’t have control over.

We’re also formed by people in our lives. That’s why parents are always concerned about whom their kids are hanging around with—an old wise saying says “Show me who you hang around with and I’ll show you your future”.

Most could tell of a teacher or two or grandparent or boss who were influential in their lives. Even organizations---whether a school, a business or church or whatever has a culture that helps “form” what happens in it. So yeah there’s a lot that goes into forming who we are, there’s genetics, the people we hang around with, other influential people and even the organizations we’re a part of.

As we head into this fall our theme for the year is Form—ReForm---TransForm. And it’s really important because the Bible has some really important stuff to say about how we are Formed. And they’re not just nice platitudes for

refrigerator magnets they are Biblical truths that when fully digested can make a real difference in our lives.

So we begin today at the beginning of The Bible where it says in Genesis 1: 26-27 “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

It’s really important to notice that if you go through Genesis 1-2 and read the creation accounts that at the end of each day after God created stuff the Bible says “and it was good.” But of all the things God created---only men and women were created in God’s image. We are reminded of this truth again in Genesis 5:1 “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them.”

C.S. Lewis said “You don’t have a soul, you are a soul, you have a body.” Just like your body has a genetic code called DNA you who are a soul also have a spiritual DNA, and that DNA is “Being formed in the image of God.” When God created you in his image the Lord went ALL IN on you. not 80 percent, not 90 percent but all in.

It's pretty clear when you look at humanity that even though we are made in the image of God we are not God—though jokingly that might be news to someone you know. Also when you look at humanity and the horrible stuff we are capable of doing to ourselves and each other some might say just because humans are messed up that means God is messed up and why should I believe in a God like that. Well just because we don't always reflect being made in the image of God doesn't mean God is messed up.

The Bible recognizes the reality that even though we are created in the image of God we don't always reflect that—there's the whole account of Adam and Eve and sin entering the world. James 3:9-10 underscores this when it says *“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.”*

Martin Luther talked about it this way when he said we are simultaneously saint and sinner. In other words yes we are created in the image of God, created to reflect the goodness of God but at the same time there is this other side of our nature—the sinful side that is curved in on itself—the side that doesn't reflect the image of God to say the least. So we have both going on at once.

So it's really important to hang onto the fact that we are formed in the image of God. Why? Because we are tempted to judge people and make assumptions about them based on our own standards. It's so easy to judge the worth and value of people based on certain criteria like intelligence, or looks or job title. Some who consider themselves Christians might think that others are either expendable, unimportant or unlovable based on their own criteria. Instead, knowing we are formed in the image of God also means that others are formed in the image of God as well. Yes they may have their issues, their problems, they too are formed by genetics and the people they hang around with but they too are formed in the image of God.

Hopefully we're encouraged when we talk about how God loves us and should be excited and profoundly grateful that God extends to us personally God's mercy and love and forgiveness, but it also means that that other person who we might judge is also a beloved child of God. Imagine for a moment, that kid at school, that coworker, that politician, that in-law, that neighbor--whoever it may be that just gets in your craw-if you remembered they were formed in the image of God? It is true they may not extend that back to you but you can't control how they see you or others, only the way you see them. So to know that all of us are formed in the image of God is really critical.

Imagine if we got that right how that might transform a relationship. Instead of waiting for the other person to recognize that in us if we saw it in them first?

Talk about transformational.

But it does beg the question how do we continue to remind ourselves that we are formed in the image of God because it's not always the foremost thought in our head is it? Well, think of it this way—kids will spend more time in school in about a week and a half or two than they will in Sunday School or Confirmation during the course of the year. And just like they're learning stuff at school and it's an important factor in forming them. Their time here in Sunday School or Confirmation---We can call it faith formation is really important. It's way more than just checking a religious box. It's a huge part in "forming" who they become. Because it underscores and reaffirms for them in so many different ways that they are a child of God.

And it's not just kids, it's adults too. This Biblical truth that you are formed in the image of God isn't likely to be reinforced at work, may not be reinforced at home and yet regular worship, Bible reading and devotions are some of the few places that this Biblical truth is going to be reinforced in your life.

Acknowledging our spiritual DNA that we are formed in the image of God is way more than just looking for the good in ourselves and others and it's WAY

MORE than just a way to feel good about ourselves. It's about identifying with God and understanding that because of God's grace our capacity can become a possibility.

That because we are created in God's image we have the capacity to offer grace and mercy to others, the same kind we'd like them to offer us. That because of God's grace we have the same kind of capacity for compassion and forgiveness that Jesus did. It doesn't always mean we always agree with the other person or approve of their behavior but it can mean when we look through all of the differences we truly do see them as a child of God.

Yeah, there's a lot of stuff that goes into forming who we are but understanding the Biblical truth that we are formed in the image of God goes a long way toward putting us on the right path in life. I invite you to take a moment to turn to the person next to you and say to them (NAME) you are formed in the image of God and are worthy of being loved. I know it might be a little scary depending who you're sitting next to but go ahead and give it a try.....In Jesus name Amen!

Let us pray...

