Whose Image Q&A Guide

Oct 20, 2026

About this guide: anyone is welcome to use this guide, including members of the Intercessor Church Community Groups. Read it before class or on your own so you come prepared and well versed in the passage. It follows the Discover section of the group outline, section by section. For each question it gathers what trusted commentaries and the ICCEC Catechism say, then adds a Summary that pulls it together and a Deep Dive with background and passages to read ahead of time.

How to read this guide: each question is labeled to match the outline, so A1 is the first question in section A, A2 is the second, and so on. The questions are written for this guide. Each one covers the same ground as the matching outline question and takes it a step further. The linked passage after each question is the one the outline points to, so you can click it and read it in class. Anything after the word "also" is a wider range or an extra passage this guide adds. Every line under Commentary and ICCEC Catechism is quoted word for word from the source named in parentheses after it. The **Summary** and **Deep Dive** under each question are written for this guide, drawing on those quotes and the other sources listed at the end. Scripture quoted in the summaries and deep dives is from the New King James Version, and Q-numbers are question numbers in the ICCEC Catechism.

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This guide follows the Intercessor Church Community Group outline "Rooted Together, Week 3: Whose Image."

A. Whose Image Is on the Coin? (Matthew 22:15-22)

A1. Why was the tax question a trap with no safe answer, and why did two rival groups team up to ask it? (Matthew 22:15-18)

Commentary

- "Their plotting led them to approach Jesus with flattery. They hoped He was insecure or foolish enough to be impressed by their hollow praise." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Matthew 22)
- "If He said that taxes should be paid, He could be accused of denying the sovereignty of God over Israel (making Himself unpopular with the Jewish people). If He said that taxes should not be paid, He made Himself an enemy of Rome." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Matthew 22)
- "The former opposed the Roman Empire and the latter actively worked with it, but their shared disdain for Jesus brought the two ideologically and politically opposed groups together." (Raj Nadella, Working Preacher on Matthew 22:15-22)
- "Therefore they sent both their own disciples, and Herod's soldiers, digging, as they thought, a precipice on either side, and in every direction setting the snare, so that, whatever He should say, they might lay hold of it" (John Chrysostom, Homily 70 on Matthew)

ICCEC Catechism

- "Because they could not execute him themselves, they presented Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, who then crucified Jesus under a false charge of insurrection" (Q-112)

Summary

The Pharisees and the Herodians normally disagreed about Rome. The Pharisees resented the occupation, and the Herodians backed the family of Herod, which depended on Rome. Only a shared dislike of Jesus could bring them together (Nadella). Their question left no safe answer. A yes would make Jesus look disloyal to God's people, and a no would make Him an enemy of Rome (Guzik). Like men digging a cliff on both sides of the road, they left Him no safe way through (Chrysostom). They opened with flattery, hoping praise would make Him careless. The trap came close to working: the leaders later took Jesus to Pilate, who crucified Him on a false charge of insurrection (Q-112).

Deep Dive

Matthew 22:15-22 is the Gospel reading for Proper 24, Year A (October 18, 2026). The word for "entangle" means to ensnare, much like our phrase "set a trap" (Ellicott). Luke says the questioners were "spies who pretended to be righteous" (Luke 20:20). The tax in question was the poll tax, a denarius per person paid directly to Rome (Ellicott). Paying it was "the most obvious sign of submission to Rome" (Carson, quoted by Guzik), and Judas of

Galilee and his followers had resisted it (Ellicott; Acts 5:37). The trap nearly worked later: at His trial the leaders accused Jesus of "forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar" (Luke 23:2), even though He had said the opposite.

Read before class: Matthew 22:15-22; Luke 20:19-26; Luke 23:1-5

A2. Jesus asks whose image is on the coin. How does that turn a question about money into a question about who we belong to? (Matthew 22:19-22)

Commentary

- "For this is not to give but to render, and this He shows both by the image, and by the superscription." (John Chrysostom, Homily 70 on Matthew)
- "Everyone has the image of God impressed upon them. This means that we belong to God, not to Caesar, or not even to ourselves." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Matthew 22)
- "The image of princes stamped on their coin denotes that temporal things belong all to their government. The image of God stamped on the soul denotes that all its faculties and powers belong to the Most High, and should be employed in his service." (Adam Clarke, as quoted in David Guzik, Enduring Word on Matthew 22)
- "Their having that coin about them, and using it, was proof that they themselves held it lawful to pay the tribute; and their pretensions, therefore, were mere hypocrisy." (Barnes' Notes on Matthew 22:19)
- "Paying taxes acknowledges Rome's political power but not its moral authority to rule. That moral authority belongs to God." (Raj Nadella, Working Preacher on Matthew 22:15-22)

ICCEC Catechism

- "It is forbidden to take anything that rightly belongs to someone else." (Q-315, on the eighth commandment, which lists avoiding taxes and cites Matthew 22:21)
- "In the first commandment God requires us to honor, obey, and worship God and Him alone, as Creator of heaven and earth." (Q-288)

Summary

Jesus answers with a question of His own. Whose image is on the coin? Caesar's. Then give it back to him. Jesus says "render," not "give": paying the tax is returning what already belongs to Caesar (Chrysostom). The questioners were carrying Caesar's coin themselves, which showed they already used his money (Barnes). But Jesus keeps going: "and to God the things that are God's." If Caesar's image marks the coin as his, then God's

image marks us as His. We belong to God, not to Caesar, and not even to ourselves (Guzik). We owe our honest dues to others (Q-315), and worship and obedience belong to God alone (Q-288).

Deep Dive

The denarius of that day carried the head of the emperor Tiberius and a Latin inscription calling him the son of the divine Augustus (Pulpit Commentary). Many Jews objected to images on coins, which is why the earlier Herods kept their own faces off theirs (Vincent). The word "render" is "the verb for paying a bill or settling a debt" (France, quoted by Guzik). The word Jesus uses for "image" also appears in the Greek translation of Genesis 1:27, so listeners could hear the echo: the coin bears Caesar's image, and we bear God's. Paul and Peter apply the first half: "Render therefore to all their due" (Romans 13:7) and "Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

Read before class: Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17

A3. God called Cyrus, a king who did not know Him, to carry out His plan. What does that teach us about how far any ruler's authority reaches, and who stands above it? (Isaiah 45:5; also verses 1-7)

Commentary

- "Even people who are strangers to the true God are sustained by him, and are unable to accomplish anything without his providential aid." (Barnes' Notes on Isaiah 45:5)
- "Cyrus didn't even know the LORD, yet God could anoint him, guide him, bless him, and use him." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Isaiah 45)
- "In all the changes of states and kingdoms, God works out the good of his church." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Isaiah 45)
- "In all questions of real or seeming collision between secular authority and spiritual freedom, the former claims obedience as a de facto ordinance of God up to the limit where it encroaches on the rights of conscience, and prevents men from worshipping and serving Him." (Ellicott's Commentary on Matthew 22:21)
- "But thou, when thou hearest, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's,' know that He is speaking only of those things, which are no detriment to godliness" (John Chrysostom, Homily 70 on Matthew)

ICCEC Catechism

- "Divine providence is the constant purpose of the almighty power, wisdom, and goodness of God, by which He preserves the being and faculties of all His creatures and creation, directs them to good ends, and assists all that is good." (Q-62)
- "Because Jesus obediently fulfilled and completed the work of the Father on earth, He has now been given all authority both on earth and in heaven." (Q-124)

Summary

God called Cyrus by name and used him to free His people, even though Cyrus did not know Him (Isaiah 45:4-5). God could anoint, guide, bless, and use a king who did not know Him (Guzik), and no ruler accomplishes anything without God's providential aid (Barnes). So every earthly ruler has real authority, but it is borrowed and limited. Government deserves obedience until it tries to stop people from worshiping and serving God, which is the same line Jesus drew (Ellicott). What we render to Caesar must never harm godliness (Chrysostom). God's providence directs all creatures to good ends (Q-62), and Jesus holds all authority in heaven and on earth (Q-124).

Deep Dive

Isaiah 45:1-7 is the Old Testament reading paired with this Gospel. Isaiah calls Cyrus the LORD's "anointed," the same word as Messiah, used here and nowhere else for a foreign king (Ellicott). Isaiah spoke these words more than one hundred and fifty years before Cyrus took Babylon (Barnes). History matches the prophecy: "the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia" to send the exiles home (Ezra 1:1). Proverbs states the principle: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD" (Proverbs 21:1). This Sunday's psalm answers with worship: "Give to the LORD the glory due His name" (Psalm 96:8).

Read before class: Isaiah 45:1-7; Ezra 1:1-4; Psalm 96

B. We Bear God's Image (Genesis 1:27)

B1. If every person carries God's image, what does that say about the worth of people the world tends to overlook: the very young and the very old, the poor, the disabled, or someone who has failed badly? (Genesis 1:27)

Commentary

- "This means human life has intrinsic value, quite apart from the 'quality of life' experienced by any individual, because human life is made in the image of God." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Genesis 1)

- "He is, in fact, the most perfect work of the creative energy, and differs from the animals not only in degree, but in kind, though possessing, in common with them, an organised body." (Ellicott's Commentary on Genesis 1:27)
- "Man was made last of all the creatures: this was both an honour and a favour to him." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Genesis 1)

ICCEC Catechism

- "Humanity was created in the image of God, that is, male and female. The image of God means that men and women have intelligence, choice, ethical sense, creativity, reasoning capacity and relationships: we were made to be loved and to love God and each other." (Q-76)
- "The sixth commandment informs us that all life is sacred from conception to natural death because all life is created by God and reflects His image and being." (Q-308)

Summary

Genesis 1:27 gives every person the same starting point: made in God's image. That worth does not come from health, money, ability, or success, so it cannot be lost when those things are. Human life has intrinsic value "quite apart from the 'quality of life'" anyone experiences (Guzik). Humanity is the most perfect work of creation, different from the animals in kind and not only in degree (Ellicott). The image includes our minds, choices, conscience, creativity, and relationships, and we were made to be loved and to love (Q-76). All life is sacred from conception to natural death because all life reflects God's image (Q-308).

Deep Dive

Genesis 1:27 uses the word "created" three times, a note of emphasis and joy at the high point of creation (Ellicott, Pulpit Commentary). Genesis 5:1 repeats that God made man "in the likeness of God," and after the flood God forbids murder "For in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). The image did not disappear when sin entered the world. David marvels at the same truth: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Psalm 8 adds that God has "crowned him with glory and honor." Because the image belongs to every person, no one's worth depends on what they can do or what others think of them.

Read before class: Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 8; Psalm 139:13-16

B2. God made us in His image and gave us care of His world. What does it look like to reflect His character and represent His good rule at home, at work, and in how we treat what He made? (Genesis 1:27; also verses 26 and 28)

Commentary

- "The human body is after God's image only as being the means whereby man attains to dominion: for dominion is God's attribute, inasmuch as He is sole Lord." (Ellicott's Commentary on Genesis 1:26)
- "In this sense, it is sin if man does not use this dominion responsibly, in the sense of a proper regard for stewardship on this earth." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Genesis 1)
- "It means humans possess spirituality: man is made for communion with God." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Genesis 1)
- "Man, when he was made, was to glorify the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Genesis 1)

ICCEC Catechism

- "God created man so that he should know God, be loved by God, love and glorify God, and live in joy with Him forever." (Q-79)
- "Purity of heart is when by grace we have become open to the work of the Holy Spirit who forms our lives into the image and likeness of Christ, so that we perceive the world as God sees it." (Q-273)

Summary

This is an application question. God gave the people made in His image the care of His world (Genesis 1:28). The image goes together with that rule, since dominion belongs first to God (Ellicott). Misusing that trust is sin, and we were made above all for communion with God (Guzik). Everyday examples: parents who lead with patience and fairness, workers who are honest when no one is checking, neighbors who make peace, and people who care for what God made instead of wasting it. God made us to know Him, love Him, and glorify Him (Q-79), and the Spirit forms us into the image of Christ so we see the world as God sees it (Q-273).

Deep Dive

In Genesis 1:26 the image and the call to "have dominion" come together. The image is tied to rule because dominion is God's own attribute, "inasmuch as He is sole Lord" (Ellicott). So reflecting God's character and representing His rule are two sides of one calling. Psalm 8 says the same: God has "made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands."

Dominion is a stewardship to use responsibly, not a license to exploit (Guzik). Ruling well in the Bible looks like Jesus, who used His authority to serve. That calling reaches the kitchen table, the job site, the checkout line, and the way we use what God has entrusted to us.

Read before class: Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 8; Mark 10:42-45

B3. Think of the person you find hardest to love. What changes when you remember that God's image is on them, and on you, before anything else is true of either of you?

Commentary

- "While many will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle than most men act by." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Matthew 5)
- "It is impossible to love the conduct of a person who curses and reviles us, who injures our person or property, or who violates all the laws of God; but, though we may hate his conduct, and suffer keenly when we are affected by it, yet we may still wish well to the person" (Barnes' Notes on Matthew 5:44)
- "As we bless God, we ought with the same organ to bless those who are like him." (Barnes' Notes on James 3:9)

ICCEC Catechism

- "It is to see others no longer from a human point of view, but rather to see them as those created in his image." (Q-270)
- "They are people who have sinned against us in mind, body, or estate, and have not respected us as God's fellow-creatures made in His image." (Q-242)

Summary

This is an application question. When someone is hard to love, it is easy to see only what they have done. Remembering God's image on them does not excuse what they did, but it changes how we treat them. We may hate what someone does and still wish them well (Barnes). Christians are called to return good for evil (Matthew Henry). The same truth applies to how we see ourselves. Our worth comes from God's image, not from how others treat us. Mercy means seeing others "as those created in his image" (Q-270), and people who wrong us have failed to respect us as God's fellow creatures (Q-242).

Deep Dive

Jesus said, "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you" (Matthew 5:44). Approving someone's conduct is different from wishing them well (Barnes). We are not asked to approve what was wrong, but we are asked to want their good. In Matthew 22 Jesus knew the questioners were hypocrites and said so, yet He still answered them with truth that could have saved them. James makes the same connection between God's image and how we treat people: it makes no sense to bless God and curse those "made in the similitude of God" (James 3:9).

Read before class: Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:17-21; James 3:9-10

C. Bring God Your Whole Life

C1. Looks, a job title, a relationship, the approval of others: what do people lean on to answer the question "Who am I?", and why do those answers feel so convincing?

Commentary

- "Against whom shall we prepare to contend first, against those that are vainglorious of money, or those of dress, or those of places of power, or those of sciences, or those of art, or those of their person, or those of beauty" (John Chrysostom, Homily 71 on Matthew)
- "For no one do the multitude hate so much, as those that want the glory they have to bestow." (John Chrysostom, Homily 71 on Matthew)
- "We can tell how men look, but God can tell what they are. He judges of men by the heart." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on 1 Samuel 16)
- "Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing; in which it has pleasure and confidence above other things." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Matthew 6)

ICCEC Catechism

- "We disobey the first commandment by the idolatry of putting any person, place, or thing before God." (Q-289)
- "We are all sinners because our human nature is prone to choose selfish exaltation, powers and pleasures rather than God's will of love for Himself and for each other." (Q-100)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers people give: how they look, what they own, their job title or success, a relationship, their children's achievements, being liked or followed online, and even being known as a good church member. Centuries ago the list was much the same: money, clothes, positions of power, learning, skill, and beauty (Chrysostom). These answers feel convincing because they can be seen and measured, and other people praise them. But we can see how people look, while God sees what they are (Matthew Henry). Putting any person, place, or thing before God is idolatry (Q-289), and our nature pulls us toward selfish exaltation, power, and pleasure (Q-100).

Deep Dive

When Samuel looked at Jesse's sons, God told him, "man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). The hunger for human praise is "vainglory," and it takes many forms, from money and clothes to beauty and learning (Chrysostom, preaching in the great city of Antioch). Paul had an impressive religious resume and counted it as loss: "I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). Romans 12:2 warns against being "conformed to this world," which means copying the fleeting fashions of the time instead of being transformed from within (Ellicott).

Read before class: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Philippians 3:4-11; Romans 12:1-2

C2. When a job ends, a relationship breaks, health fades, or the praise stops, what does that loss reveal about where we had built our identity? (also Matthew 6:19-21)

Commentary

- "In heaven nothing corrupts; nothing terminates; no enemies plunder or destroy." (Barnes' Notes on Matthew 6:20)
- "To regulate the heart, it is therefore important that the treasure, or object of attachment, should be right." (Barnes' Notes on Matthew 6:21)
- "Take heed of forming plans for happiness, as though it lay in the things of this world, which soon pass away." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Romans 12)
- "These then, as much as thou pursuest them, so much do they turn away from thee; but God, if thou seek the glory that cometh from Him, so much the more both draws thee unto Himself, and commends thee" (John Chrysostom, Homily 71 on Matthew)

ICCEC Catechism

- "God's provision is our daily bread because all that we have and will have comes from His hand." (Q-239)

- "It is a Christian's trust in the Word of God in circumstances where others would give up in despair." (Q-150)

Summary

This is an application question. When something we built our identity on is taken away, the loss often hurts more than we expected, and that pain shows how much weight we had put on it. Jesus said treasures on earth are open to moth, rust, and thieves, and that our hearts follow our treasure (Matthew 6:19-21). Nothing in heaven decays or ends (Barnes). The more we chase human praise, the more it slips away, while God draws near to those who seek His approval (Chrysostom). Everything we have comes from God's hand (Q-239), and faith trusts God where others would give up in despair (Q-150).

Deep Dive

Jesus' warning about treasure fits this question: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). The heart naturally follows its treasure, so the treasure has to be right (Barnes). Paul lost his status, reputation, and comfort, and still wrote that he counted them "as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8). Losses can be one of the ways God shows us what we were leaning on. The good news is that the image of God and our place in His family are the one part of our identity that no job, illness, breakup, or criticism can take away.

Read before class: Matthew 6:19-34; Philippians 3:7-14; Psalm 73:25-26

C3. Caesar could claim a coin, but God claims the person who bears His image. What part of your life have you kept outside His claim, and what would handing it over look like this week? (Matthew 22:21)

Commentary

- "Let us render ourselves; all we are, all we have, all we can do: and after all, what return is it for such very rich receivings?" (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Romans 12)
- "That they should give their hearts, lives, property, and influence all to God, as his due." (Barnes' Notes on Matthew 22:21)
- "For it is possible both to fulfill to men their claims and to give unto God the things that are due to God from us." (John Chrysostom, Homily 70 on Matthew)

ICCEC Catechism

- "We must 'give up' (surrender ownership) of all our possessions, including time, money, relationships and resources." (Q-323)

- "To be 'poor in spirit' is to have a spiritual conviction of complete surrender to God; claiming nothing of our own, except what God bestows upon us." (Q-257)

Summary

This is an application question. Areas people often hold back: a relationship, money, plans for the future, a habit, time, a grudge, or a hidden part of life no one sees. A comment on Romans 12 uses the same word Jesus used: "Let us render ourselves; all we are, all we have, all we can do" (Matthew Henry). Our hearts, lives, property, and influence all belong to "the things that are God's" (Barnes). This does not mean neglecting our duties to others (Chrysostom). We can meet those and still give God everything. Handing something over can start small: naming it in prayer, telling a trusted friend, or making one concrete change this week. Discipleship means surrendering ownership of time, money, relationships, and resources (Q-323).

Deep Dive

Paul calls believers to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1). He also says, "you are not your own? For you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Jesus' words in Matthew 22:21 do not split life into a part for Caesar and a part for God. Caesar's claim is limited to what bears his stamp, and God's claim reaches everything that bears His. This Sunday's psalm shows the response: "Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts" (Psalm 96:8). Surrender is not losing ourselves. Paul says, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Read before class: Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 2:20

D. Sin Distorts but Christ Renews

D1. James says the same mouth blesses God and curses people made in His likeness. Why is tearing someone down with our words a way of dishonoring God, and where are we most tempted to do it? (James 3:9; also verse 10)

Commentary

- "The 'likeness of God' assuredly remains in the most abandoned and fallen; and to curse it is to invoke the wrath of its Creator." (Ellicott's Commentary on James 3:9)
- "There is an absurdity in cursing men who are thus made, like what there would be in both blessing and cursing the Creator himself." (Barnes' Notes on James 3:9)

- "Our speech should be consistently glorifying to God. We shouldn't use one vocabulary or one tone of speaking at church and a different one at home or on the job." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on James 3)
- "Pious and edifying language is the genuine produce of a sanctified heart" (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on James 3)

ICCEC Catechism

- "Our sins are called trespasses because sin is not only transgression against God's law for us (by commission or omission). It is also a personal insult to God's majesty, love and kindness to us, and also to the image of God in our neighbor." (Q-241)

Summary

Every person we speak about still bears God's likeness, so cutting words never stay only between us and that person. The likeness of God remains even in the most fallen (Ellicott), and it is absurd to bless the Creator and curse what He made (Barnes). Our speech should not change between church, home, and work (Guzik). Common places we slip: gossip, sarcasm, insults in traffic, harsh words online, and how we talk about family when they are not in the room. Edifying speech comes from a heart God has changed (Matthew Henry). Every sin is also an insult to the image of God in our neighbor (Q-241).

Deep Dive

James 3:9-10 says, "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so." Jesus explains why our words matter so much: "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). Peter's tongue confessed Jesus as the Messiah and later denied Him with curses, a picture of how one person can do both (Guzik). Genesis 9:6 gives God's image as the reason murder is so serious: "For in the image of God He made man." Words do not shed blood, but James treats careless speech as an attack on the same image.

Read before class: James 3:1-12; Matthew 12:33-37; Genesis 9:6

D2. Paul says the new self is being renewed "according to the image of Him who created him." What does he tell us to take off, and how does Christ restore the image that sin has damaged? (Colossians 3:9-10; also verse 8)

Commentary

- "Paul is clearly alluding to Genesis 1:27, where it is said that God created Adam in His own image." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Colossians 3)

- "This work of the new creation not only deals with the old man and gives us the new man patterned after Jesus Christ; it also breaks down the barriers that separate people in society." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Colossians 3)
- "But how is this image of God upon man defaced! May the Lord renew it upon our souls by his grace!" (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Genesis 1)
- "The renewed man acts upon new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on 2 Corinthians 5)

ICCEC Catechism

- "As a result of man's fall from God into sin (Genesis 3) the image of God in man has been perverted and distorted but not lost, so all humanity longs for relationship with his Creator and other humans." (Q-76)
- "Because our fallen human nature is to choose rebellion and disobedience, our human nature must be saved from its sin, the world and the devil and become a new creation in Christ Jesus." (Q-102)

Summary

Paul tells believers to take off anger, malice, filthy language, and lying, and to put on "the new man," which is "renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:8-10). Paul is pointing back to Genesis 1:27, and this renewal also breaks down barriers between people (Guzik). Sin has defaced God's image, and only God's grace can renew it (Matthew Henry). Sin has "perverted and distorted" the image of God in us "but not lost" it (Q-76), and in Christ our nature becomes a new creation (Q-102). Christ does not just cover the damage. He restores the likeness.

Deep Dive

Paul's language is about clothing: "put off the old man" and "put on the new man" (Colossians 3:9-10). The phrase was commonly used for changing clothes (Guzik). The list of what to take off is mostly about speech: "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language," and lying (Colossians 3:8-9). Paul describes the same renewal elsewhere as a process: we "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). In Ephesians the new man is "created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Renewal is God's work in us, and it grows over time.

Read before class: Colossians 3:1-17; Ephesians 4:20-32; 2 Corinthians 3:18

D3. How can we take our sin seriously and still refuse the lie that we are worthless or too far gone? What is the difference between godly sorrow and self-condemnation? (also Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

Commentary

- "Believers may be chastened of the Lord, but will not be condemned with the world." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Romans 8)
- "Its function is to pardon; the function of the law is to condemn." (Barnes' Notes on Romans 8:1)
- "There is a great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort, and the sorrow of the world." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on 2 Corinthians 7)
- "Pardon in the Scriptures, always supposes that there is confession, and there is no promise that it will be imparted unless a full acknowledgment has been made." (Barnes' Notes on 1 John 1:9)

ICCEC Catechism

- "We can be forgiven through the mediation of Jesus Christ as we confess our sins to God and to one another." (Q-243)
- "Hence, the penitent who receives the forgiveness of Christ and his Church is restored to righteousness and fellowship within the Body of Christ." (Q-187)
- "restored to the dignity of life that God has intended for all humanity" (Q-269, on those who hunger and thirst after righteousness)

Summary

Godly sorrow admits the wrong and turns back to God. Self-condemnation decides we are worthless and that nothing can change. Paul says the first leads to repentance and salvation, while the sorrow of the world leads to death (2 Corinthians 7:10). Believers may be corrected by God but will not be condemned (Matthew Henry). The gospel's purpose is to pardon, while the law's is to condemn (Barnes). Repentance still matters: in Scripture, forgiveness always comes with confession (Barnes). The cure has two sides: we are forgiven through Christ as we confess to God and to one another (Q-243), and the penitent is restored to righteousness and fellowship in the Body of Christ (Q-187).

Deep Dive

The prodigal son came home saying, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son," but his father ran to him while he "was still a great way off" and gave him the best robe and a ring (Luke 15:20-22). The son's repentance was real, yet the father did not let him stay a hired

servant. Romans 8:1 sets the frame: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." David described what hiding sin did to him, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old," and what confession brought: "You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:3, 5). John promises the same: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).

Read before class: Luke 15:11-24; Psalm 32; Romans 8:1-4

E. God's Love Takes Shape in Community (Genesis 2:18; 1 John 4:12)

E1. Why is "I'm fine" such an easy answer, even among believers, and what does hiding cost us and the people around us?

Commentary

- "The sense is, that every man has special temptations and easily besetting sins, which constitute a heavy burden. We should aid each other in regard to these, and help one another to overcome them." (Barnes' Notes on Galatians 6:2)
- "They should not be cast off to a cold and heartless world; a world rejoicing over their fall, and ready to brand them as hypocrites." (Barnes' Notes on Galatians 6:2)
- "The better we know our own hearts and ways, the less shall we despise others, and the more be disposed to help them under infirmities and afflictions." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Galatians 6)
- "In a day of affliction nothing is more seasonable than prayer. The spirit is then most humble, and the heart is broken and tender." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on James 5)

ICCEC Catechism

- "As God is Father, so we are his children, and our relationship with each other is as brothers and sisters." (Q-224)

Summary

This is an application question. Reasons people often give: fear of being judged or gossiped about, not wanting to be a burden, pride, not trusting the group yet, or being taught to keep problems private. Hiding costs us the prayer and help we need, and it keeps others from obeying "Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2). Every believer carries struggles that should not be faced alone, and a church should never treat

strugglers coldly (Barnes). The more we know our own hearts, the less we will look down on others (Matthew Henry). God's children relate to one another as brothers and sisters (Q-224).

Deep Dive

Hiding is as old as the garden. After the fall, Adam said, "I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). God's first words to him were a question meant to draw him out: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). Scripture gives the church the opposite habit: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Paul pictures the church sharing the weight: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Honesty does not mean telling everyone everything, but it does mean letting someone in.

Read before class: Genesis 3:8-13; James 5:13-16; Galatians 6:1-5

E2. "No one has seen God at any time." Who has made God's love visible to you through forgiveness, kindness, or faithfulness, and what did they actually do? (1 John 4:12)

Commentary

- "But the greatest evidence of God's presence and work is love. Where God is present and working, there will be love." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on 1 John 4)
- "We cannot become acquainted with him by sight, but we may by love." (Barnes' Notes on 1 John 4:12)
- "He that does not love the image of God in his people, has no saving knowledge of God." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on 1 John 4)
- "Faith works by love; it shows itself in love to God, and love to our neighbour." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 1)

ICCEC Catechism

- "To be merciful is to love and forgive others as we have been forgiven and loved by Christ Jesus." (Q-270)
- "The Church is a divinely instituted community of believers united by faith in Jesus Christ, and by the love and law of God." (Q-160)

Summary

This is an application question. People often name a parent or grandparent who prayed for them, a friend who forgave them, someone who sat with them in grief, a stranger's kindness, or a mentor who stayed faithful for years. John's point is that God, whom no one has seen, becomes visible through that kind of love (1 John 4:12). Love is the greatest evidence that God is present and working (Guzik). We cannot know God by sight, but we may by love (Barnes). Mercy means loving and forgiving others as Christ has loved and forgiven us (Q-270), and the Church is a community united by faith and by the love of God (Q-160).

Deep Dive

John says, "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). The word "perfected" carries the sense of mature or complete (Guzik). Jesus said this would be the church's identifying mark: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Before class, think of one specific person and one specific thing they did. Naming it may also help you answer F2.

Read before class: 1 John 4:7-21; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-16

E3. God said it is not good for us to be alone. What habits would make our group a safe place to be honest and to be prayed for? (Genesis 2:18)

Commentary

- "He is formed to be social, to hold converse, not only with his superior, but also with his equal." (Barnes' Notes on Genesis 2:18)
- "From God are all our helpers." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Genesis 2)
- "We should help him to take up his load of infirmities, and sustain him by our counsels, our exhortations, and our prayers." (Barnes' Notes on Galatians 6:2)

ICCEC Catechism

- "Praying to God for our neighbor and others." (Q-272, from the spiritual works of mercy)
- "The ninth commandment forbids: 1. lying 2. hurting someone's reputation 3. unjust criticism 4. gossip 5. insults 6. violating entrusted confidences" (Q-318)

Summary

This is an application question. Habits that help: keeping what is shared in confidence, listening without fixing or judging, leaders going first in being honest, praying right away rather than only promising to pray, following up during the week, and being patient with people who are not ready to share. God made us to talk with equals as well as with Him (Barnes), and every helper we have comes from God (Matthew Henry). We help one another through "our counsels, our exhortations, and our prayers" (Barnes). Praying for our neighbor is one of the works of mercy (Q-272), and gossip and violating confidences are sins against the ninth commandment (Q-318).

Deep Dive

The first thing God called "not good" in creation was being alone: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Hebrews gives a group like ours its purpose: "let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:24-25). Proverbs names the trust that makes honesty possible: "he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter" (Proverbs 11:13). Trust grows slowly, through many small moments where what was shared stayed safe and someone followed up.

Read before class: Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 10:23-25; Proverbs 11:13

F. Help Someone Remember Whose They Are

F1. Paul wants our words to "impart grace to the hearers." What turns ordinary words into a gift, and what kinds of words quietly tear people down? (Ephesians 4:29)

Commentary

- "The new man knows how to watch his tongue, speaking only what is good for necessary edification, desiring to impart grace to all who hear him." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on Ephesians 4)
- "the word 'good' may be taken for gracious and full of sympathy, noting by the quick insight of love what each man's need is, and hastening to speak accordingly, so as to 'give grace' or blessing to meet that peculiar need." (Ellicott's Commentary on Ephesians 4:29)
- "The corrupt word is forbidden, not because it defiles the speaker's own soul, and is an offence in the pure eyes of God, but because it is a sin against others, pulling down instead of building them up, and aggravating, instead of supplying, their moral defects."

(Ellicott's Commentary on Ephesians 4:29)

- "It is the duty of Christians to seek, by the blessing of God, to bring persons to think seriously, and to encourage and warn believers by their conversation." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Ephesians 4)

ICCEC Catechism

- "The gifts of the Spirit are given to build up the Church as a whole, and as a witness or confirming sign to the world of the gospel." (Q-159)

Summary

This is an application question. A good word notices what a person actually needs and speaks to that need (Ellicott). A renewed person learns to watch the tongue and speak to build up (Guzik). Words that give grace are usually specific, honest, well timed, and aimed at the other person's good. Words that quietly tear down include sarcasm, constant correction, comparison, faint praise, and jokes at someone's expense. A corrupt word is wrong not only because it stains the speaker, but because it pulls others down instead of building them up (Ellicott). The Spirit's gifts are given to build up the Church as a whole (Q-159).

Deep Dive

The word Paul uses for "corrupt" means rotten, like spoiled fruit (Ellicott, Barnes). The goal of our words, instead, is "what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29). Proverbs shows how much one word can do: "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad" (Proverbs 12:25). Paul tells a young church to keep doing this for each other: "comfort each other and edify one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Edify means to build up, like building a house.

Read before class: Ephesians 4:25-32; Proverbs 12:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11

F2. Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians' "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope." Where do you see that same kind of evidence of God at work in someone in our group? (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

Commentary

- "Despite the problems, Paul was so grateful to God for the Thessalonians because there was an undeniable work of the Holy Spirit and a marvelous change in their lives." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on 1 Thessalonians 1)
- "Paul's gratitude didn't come because the Thessalonian Christians were morally impeccable." (David Guzik, Enduring Word on 1 Thessalonians 1)

- "Works of faith are those to which faith prompts, and which show that there is faith in the heart." (Barnes' Notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:3)
- "'labour of love' is similarly equivalent to 'loving labour,' laborious toil undertaken for love's sake, and done in the spirit of love" (Ellicott's Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 1:3)

ICCEC Catechism

- "The chief fruit is love, without which the others cannot exist." (Q-158)
- "The fruit of the Spirit reflects the holiness of God in our lives." (Q-159)

Summary

This is an application question. Paul did not thank God for the Thessalonians because they were perfect. Paul later had to correct them, yet he could see an undeniable work of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Guzik). So we are not looking for a flawless person. We are looking for evidence of God: faith that acts, love that works hard, and hope that endures. Works of faith are the deeds that show faith is in the heart (Barnes), and a labor of love is hard work done for love's sake (Ellicott). Love is the chief fruit of the Spirit (Q-158), and that fruit reflects the holiness of God in our lives (Q-159).

Deep Dive

1 Thessalonians 1 is this week's epistle reading. It is likely Paul's earliest letter (Ellicott), and already he names faith, love, and hope, the same three he later says will last (1 Corinthians 13:13). The word for "labor" means toil that is strenuous and sweat-producing (Hiebert, cited by Guzik). Paul did not offer vague praise. He named what he had seen and thanked God for it, which is a good pattern for blessing someone.

Read before class: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 13:13

F3. The men who tried to trap Jesus opened with praise. What separates an honest blessing from flattery or a vague compliment? (Matthew 22:16; also 1 Thessalonians 2:5)

Commentary

- "The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger." (Barnes' Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:5)

- "One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery" (Barnes' Notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:5)
- "Flatterers put men off their guard, which betrays them into foolish conduct." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Proverbs 29)
- "Here is a fair glove, drawn upon a foul hand." (John Trapp, as quoted in David Guzik, Enduring Word on Matthew 22)
- "And yet their words were full of much respect, for they both called Him Master, and bore witness to His truth, and that He was no respecter of persons; but being God, He was deceived by none of these things." (John Chrysostom, Homily 70 on Matthew)

ICCEC Catechism

- "By the ninth commandment we are commanded to speak the truth in all things, especially in what concerns the good name and honor of others." (Q-317)

Summary

The men who came to trap Jesus praised Him first (Matthew 22:16). Their words were true, but their motive was not, and Jesus was not fooled by any of it (Chrysostom). Flattery praises in order to get something, while a blessing praises in order to give something. Paul refused the language of flattery, never praising people for looks, money, or talent while hiding the truth they needed (Barnes). Flattery lowers a person's guard (Matthew Henry). An honest blessing is specific, true, and points to God's work rather than to talent or looks. We are called to speak the truth, especially about the good name and honor of others (Q-317).

Deep Dive

The questioners told Jesus, "Teacher, we know that You are true" (Matthew 22:16), which was true, but they said it to trap Him. Proverbs warns, "A man who flatters his neighbor Spreads a net for his feet" (Proverbs 29:5), and elsewhere it says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6). Paul could tell the Thessalonians, "neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know" (1 Thessalonians 2:5). The Greek word for flattery there appears nowhere else in the New Testament (Barnes). The difference is motive. Flattery serves the speaker, and a blessing serves the hearer and gives glory to God.

Read before class: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Proverbs 27:5-6; Proverbs 29:5

Sources

Source	Where to find it
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Raj Nadella, Working Preacher on Matthew 22:15-22	Working Preacher
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Ellicott, Barnes, Vincent's Word Studies, and the Pulpit Commentary on Matthew 22	22:15, 22:17, 22:19, 22:20, 22:21
Matthew Henry, Ellicott, Barnes, and the Pulpit Commentary on other verses	Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:18, 1 Samuel 16:7, Proverbs 29:5, Isaiah 45:1, Isaiah 45:5, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 6:21, Romans 8:1, Romans 12:1, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:29, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:5, James 3:9, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9, 1 John 4:12
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