IMAGO DEI

IMAGE OF GOD

A Sermon Guide for Pastors

Seeing Every Person as Made in the Image of God



HILC
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IMAGO DEI / IMAGE OF GOD

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Key Texts

Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 9:6; Psalm 139:14; James 3:9; Luke 10:27

SERMON TITLE OPTIONS

- Imago Dei
- Made in the Image of God
- Seeing People the Way God Sees Them
- The Image We Must Not Ignore
- Dignity, Neighbor Love, and the Heart of God

MAIN IDEA

Every human being carries God given dignity because every person is made in the image of God. The Church must therefore reject hatred, resist antisemitism, honor the dignity of Jewish neighbors, and learn to see every person through the eyes of the Creator.

PASTORAL NOTE

Pastoral Note

This guide is designed to help pastors preach with biblical clarity, theological conviction, and pastoral compassion. The doctrine of the image of God is not an abstract idea. It is a biblical foundation for how believers see people, speak about people, and respond to hatred in the world around them.

Where appropriate, pastors are encouraged to include a brief personal or local story that helps the congregation see Jewish people not only as people connected to biblical history or current events, but as neighbors, families, students, colleagues, and friends.

If possible, pastors should draw from a real experience, such as a relationship with a Jewish neighbor or rabbi, a conversation with a Jewish friend or colleague, a visit to a synagogue, a campus concern, a local community partnership, or a story shared with permission.

INTRODUCTION (PREACHER SETUP)

We are living in a time when people are often reduced to labels.

Political labels.

Religious labels.

Ethnic labels.

National labels.

Online labels.

But before any person is a headline, a category, a debate, or a disagreement, that person is a human being made in the image of God.

The Church cannot afford to see people through the lens of anger, fear, suspicion, or cultural pressure.

We must see people the way Scripture teaches us to see them.

Made by God.

Known by God.

Valued by God.

Accountable to God.

And worthy of dignity because they bear His image.

Story Note for Pastors:

This is a good place to briefly introduce the human side of the message. Pastors may want to mention that Jewish people are not merely part of biblical history or distant international events. They are neighbors today. They are families gathering for Shabbat, children attending school, students walking across campus, people entering synagogues for worship, and communities who may be carrying very real concern in this moment.

POINT 1: EVERY PERSON CARRIES GOD GIVEN DIGNITY

> **Genesis 1:27 NKJV**
>
> "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Teaching Emphasis:

- The image of God is the foundation of human dignity.
- Dignity is not earned by status, intelligence, agreement, usefulness, nationality, ethnicity, or political opinion.
- Human value begins with creation, not culture.
- Every person carries worth because every person was made by God and for God.

> **Preaching Line:**
>
> Before you know someone's story, opinion, background, or belief, you already know this: they were made in the image of God.

Story Note for Pastors:

This is a strong place to name the ordinary humanity of people the congregation may only think about from a distance. Mention a Jewish father taking his children to synagogue, a Jewish grandmother preparing a holiday meal, a student on campus trying to feel safe, or a business owner in the community who simply wants to live, worship, and raise a family in peace.

Application:

- Teach your church to begin with dignity before disagreement.
- Challenge believers to examine how they speak about people they do not understand.
- Encourage the congregation to see Jewish neighbors as people, not abstractions.
- Call the Church to reject any view of humanity that treats people as disposable.

POINT 2: THE IMAGE OF GOD MUST RESHAPE HOW WE SPEAK

> **James 3:9 NKJV**
>
> "With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God."

Teaching Emphasis:

- Our words reveal whether we truly believe people bear God's image.
- The tongue can worship God and wound people if it is not submitted to God.
- Christians must not repeat careless stereotypes, cruel jokes, conspiracies, or accusations about Jewish people or any group of people.
- Speech that dehumanizes people is incompatible with worship that honors God.

> **Preaching Line:**
>
> Any theology that allows us to bless God while cursing people made in His image has already lost the heart of God.

Story Note for Pastors:

This is a good place to speak directly about language. A passing comment, a repeated rumor, or a shared post can land on a Jewish family, student, or neighbor as fear, isolation, or threat. We may forget our words, but someone else may carry the weight of them.

Application:

- Call believers to repent of careless or harmful speech.
- Teach the congregation to refuse stereotypes and conspiracy driven accusations.
- Encourage people to ask, "Does this sentence honor the image of God in the person I am speaking about?"
- Challenge the church to model speech that is truthful, gracious, and courageous.

POINT 3: THE IMAGE OF GOD REQUIRES US TO RESIST HATRED

> **Genesis 9:6 NKJV**
>
> "For in the image of God He made man."

Teaching Emphasis:

- Hatred is not only a social problem. It is a spiritual problem.
- Antisemitism is a sin against people made in God's image and an offense before the God whose image they bear.
- The Church must never normalize hatred toward Jewish people through silence, indifference, mockery, or spiritual confusion.
- To honor the image of God is to resist anything that seeks to erase, mock, threaten, or dehumanize another person.

> **Preaching Line:**
>
> When hatred tries to make a person less than human, the Church must be the people who say, "No, they bear the image of God."

Story Note for Pastors:

This is the strongest place to include a brief example of how antisemitism affects an ordinary Jewish person.

Best option: use a real local or personal story with permission.

Possible general illustration if no local story is available:

Consider a Jewish student who used to wear a Star of David necklace openly, but now quietly tucks it under a shirt because conversations around them have become hostile. That student is not a statistic or a political argument. That student is someone's child, someone's friend, and someone made in the image of God.

Application:

- Call believers to reject antisemitism clearly and biblically.
- Encourage the church to notice when Jewish neighbors are afraid, isolated, or targeted.
- Teach that silence in the face of hatred can become permission for hatred to grow.
- Challenge the congregation to be people of courage, compassion, and truth.

POINT 4: THE IMAGE OF GOD MOVES US TOWARD NEIGHBOR LOVE

> **Luke 10:27 NKJV**
>
> "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Teaching Emphasis:

- Neighbor love is not sentimental. It is obedient.
- The image of God teaches us the value of the person. The command to love our neighbor teaches us our responsibility toward the person.
- The question is not only what we believe about human dignity. The question is how we live toward the people God has placed near us.
- Biblical love moves toward people with humility, truth, and compassion.

> **Preaching Line:**
>
> You cannot love God deeply while looking past the person He placed in front of you.

Story Note for Pastors:

This is a good place to ask the congregation to think locally. Who are the Jewish neighbors, rabbis, students, colleagues, families, synagogues, and community leaders near us? Have we ever asked how they are doing? Have we ever listened before assuming? Have we ever prayed for them by name?

Application:

- Encourage believers to build real relationships across the community.
- Invite the church to pray for Jewish neighbors and local synagogues.
- Challenge people to move beyond opinion into compassion and action.
- Teach that loving your neighbor begins with seeing your neighbor.

STORIES TO SHARE

Pastors are encouraged to include one brief personal story or local example in the sermon.

The story should help the congregation see Jewish people as ordinary neighbors, families, students, worshipers, and community members.

Recommended story sources:

- A personal relationship with a Jewish neighbor, rabbi, colleague, or community leader.
- A conversation with a Jewish friend about what this moment feels like for their family.
- A local example involving a synagogue, school, campus, workplace, or community concern.
- A personal experience from visiting Israel or meeting Jewish families connected to the land and people.
- A story from a Jewish family, student, or friend shared with permission.

Story guidelines:

- Keep it brief.
- Keep it human.
- Avoid exaggeration.
- Avoid partisan language.
- Do not speak for the Jewish community.
- Use real stories with permission whenever possible.
- If using a general illustration, introduce it as an example, not as a verified personal account.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do I truly see every person as made in the image of God?
- Have I allowed labels, politics, fear, or frustration to weaken my compassion?
- Have I repeated stereotypes, jokes, rumors, or accusations that dishonor Jewish people or any group of people?
- Who are the Jewish people in our community, and have I ever asked how they are doing?
- Does my speech reflect the dignity of the people God created?
- How can I love my neighbor in a way that is specific, practical, and faithful to Scripture?

CLOSING CHALLENGE

The doctrine of the image of God must not remain a sentence in a theology book.

It must shape the way we see.

It must govern the way we speak.

It must correct the way we respond.

It must move us toward the people God loves.

The Church cannot follow Jesus and dehumanize people.

We cannot worship the Creator while dishonoring those made in His image.

We must be people who see clearly, speak carefully, love courageously, and stand faithfully.

ALTAR / RESPONSE MOMENT (OPTIONAL)

- Invite the congregation to repent for careless speech, indifference, or hatred.
- Pray for God to give the Church His eyes for people.
- Pray for Jewish neighbors, local synagogues, students, and families.
- Invite people to commit to being witnesses of dignity, truth, and neighbor love.

FINAL DECLARATION (READ TOGETHER)

We believe every person is made in the image of God.

We will honor the dignity of every life.

We will reject hatred and resist antisemitism.

We will speak with truth and compassion.

We will love our neighbors as ourselves.

We will see people the way God sees them.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE NOTICE

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