Review:
Did you gain any insights as you read through Luke 13-24?

Are there any questions with regard to God’s holiness, justice, love, or sovereignty that have been raised in your mind as a result of last week’s study?

If God is complete in every way, perfect in every way, why do you think he would choose to create a people like us?

What do you think is the main reason for which God created us?

Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)

37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'
38 This is the first and greatest commandment.
39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Purpose 1: TO BE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND HIS FAMILY

Did God create us simply to serve him? Is that the extent of it?
We tend to think that “God is most concerned with how I live”.
We think God will primarily judge us on the basis of what we do.
This is not true. We will be judged with regard to how we have loved him.

Why do you think loving God is the greatest commandment?
Compare to our own children: Do we want children just so they can serve us and do more things around the house? Why do we tend to want to have children?
We desire to express love in intimate community, because God is that way! Remember, we are created in his likeness! We reflect God’s character as we rule on his behalf. Because God is relational, we are relational. Because God is community oriented, we are community oriented.
Family is the most intimate form of community.
Do we want our children to obey us? Yes, but which would you prefer—children who simply obey because they have to, are forced to, and will get a consequence if they don’t? Or, would you prefer to have children who do what you ask simply because they love you?

**What is God more interested in, our service or our love?**
The truth is, if we love God, that will in fact influence how we serve him.

**What then, from God’s perspective, is the greatest evil we could ever commit?**
Our greatest evil act would be to not love God with all our heart, soul, and mind.

**How is “not loving God” more vile than murder, rape, genocide, etc.?**
To not love God is to turn away from your very reason for existence.
To not love God is to actually work in opposition to his purpose in creating you and it is also embracing the very same evil that he must judge.

We have a sinful tendency to invert (or reverse) these two commands. When people talk about whether or not they are a “good person”, it always refers to how they have historically interacted with other people. It rarely reflects on their relationship with God.

When we place loving others above loving God we have actually embraced humanism. Humanists believe that your relationship with your fellow man should play a more important (higher) role than your relationship with God.

If we love God first and foremost, he will give us a greater capacity to love others.
If we love others more than God, then we will not be able to love them with the capacity or fullness of God’s love. This will cause our love to become very self-serving.

**Which father can love his children more?**
a) A father who is limited by his own needs for respect and acceptance or b) A father who has experienced God’s unconditional love and is allowing that love to flow through him to his children?

**In the following verse, what is the basis for not being accepted into Heaven?**

*Mathematics 7:22-23 (NIV)*

22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

To “know” in the Bible does not simply mean to “know about” something. It means to know through experience and intimately (i.e. Adam “knew” Eve and as a result had a baby named Cain). Jesus is not saying he didn’t know “about” the people. He is saying that he was never invited into an intimate relationship in their life where they knew each other both, in a personal and in a spiritual way. That is the deciding factor in who goes to heaven.
It’s not what you do – it’s who you know!

What point are the following verses trying to stress?

**Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)**
The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

**Psalm 37:4 (NIV)**
Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

**Romans 5:8 (NIV)**
But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**
For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

How do you feel when you hear how much God loves you and only wants the best for you?

How could trusting these verses make a practical difference in your life?

What does the following verse indicate about our second purpose?

**Genesis 1:26-28 (NIV)**

26 Then God said, "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." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

**Purpose 2: TO REPRESENT GOD**
The very first statement about mankind in the Bible is that we were made in the “image and likeness” of God. What do you think that means?

In olden days, kings would sometimes set up a monument in a conquered land saying, “this is my image/likeness”. The monument didn’t necessarily look like the king – so what do you think the point was in leaving it there?

It was a physical reminder to the nation that even though the king wasn’t visibly present, he still ruled in that land. Every time the people passed the monument they would be reminded of that fact and be motivated to live accordingly under his rule.

People will often refer to personality traits or other characteristics to explain the image concept. While these are somewhat valid, it would be better to have them look at the context of the Genesis passage.

God is looking for someone who can rule the earth on his behalf and to care for this creation in a manner reflective of his holy and creative character. As a people who are made in the image of God, we are God’s visible representatives on earth. Instead of simply creating a stone monument, God created a living, walking, talking image to represent him. Every time we look at another person we are to be reminded that God exists and rules over creation. **How do you think God might feel about how we are representing him today?**

**Why does God say in the Ten Commandments that we are not to make an image of him?**

*Exodus 20:4 (NASB)*

> You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

God has already established his image – Us! To create another image is to discredit the image God has already created and to severely limit the picture God wanted to present. He didn’t want a rock or piece of wood to represent him. He wanted you, a living being who was indwelt and led by his Holy Spirit, who represents his holiness, justice, love and creativity. How can we compare a person to a hand-crafted rock?

When we create another image to represent God, we devalue ourselves and the role God called us to perform (live out). It is no wonder then, that we have a world filled with people who are walking through life plagued by low self-esteem. In fact, it is because we have forgotten who we are.

"**As no coin is so small that it cannot bear the image of the emperor, so no man is so humble that he cannot bear God's image...**"  Soren Kierkegaard writing on Radical Discipleship
What do you think are some implications of having been given this incredible responsibility?

We should consciously choose to represent God in everything we do:

- To model his holiness, justice, love, and creativity in everything we do and say.
- To care for creation on his behalf and in his way.
- To respect others as God’s representative – even if they are not acting like it.
- To respect life because it is God’s creation, God’s design, and God’s picture for us.

There are many implications – enjoy the ones they come up with.

Summary: As God’s Image we are his Representatives on earth, caring for creation on his behalf.

God created us for two purposes:

a) To enjoy RELATIONSHIP with him and his family

b) To REPRESENT him in this world

How might understanding these purposes make a practical difference in how we live our lives this next week?

Note:

*Genesis 1:31 (NIV)*

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

If God made us to be in Relationship with him and to Represent his rule in this world, then by nature we must have been created PERFECT and HOLY. Obviously something changed since the beginning of creation and now. We will explore this over the next few weeks.

**HOME STUDY:**

Read: Acts: Chapters 1-14

The book of Acts is Luke’s sequel to his gospel account. He continues the story of the early church after Jesus’ ascension into heaven. The Holy Spirit is now given to all believers and Luke records how God is at work to take the good news of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem, to Judea, then to neighbouring Samaria, and then over all the earth.