



Restoring the Image

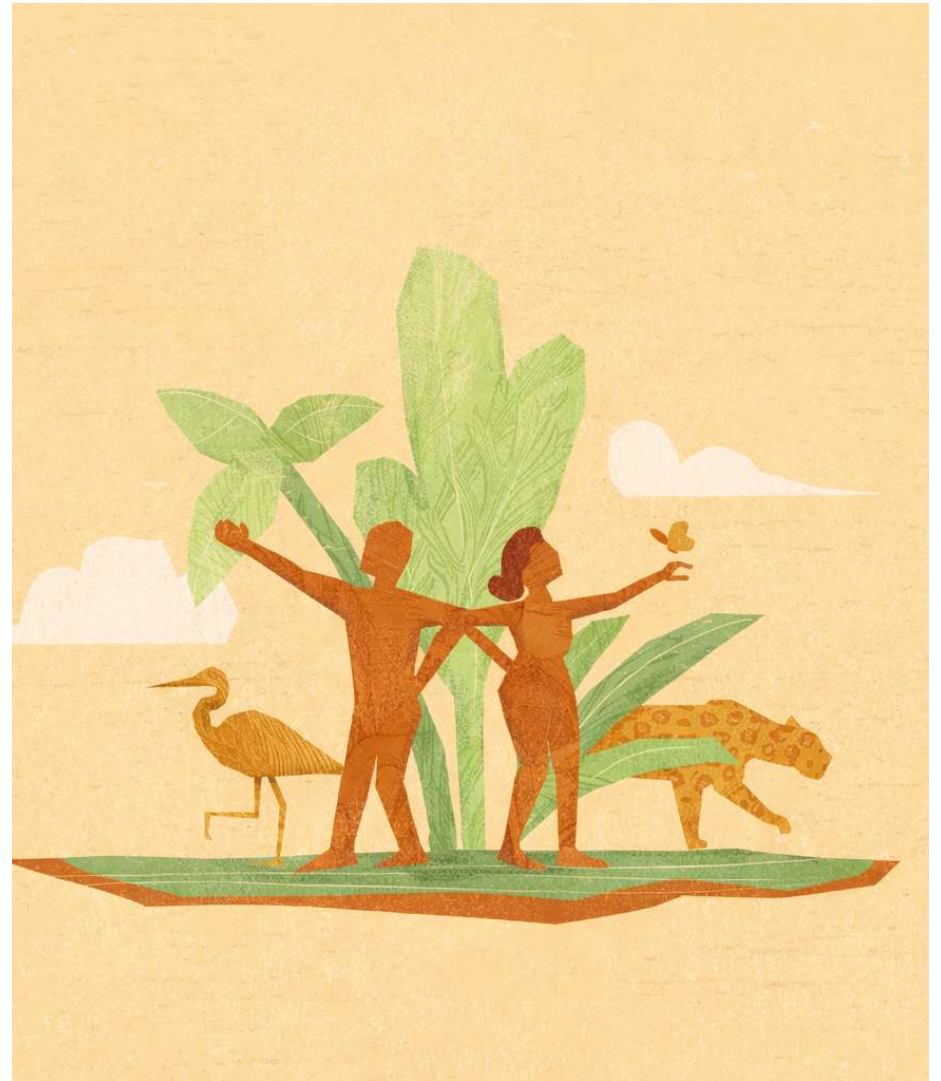
Faith and the Renewal of Gender Relationships

Gen 1:26-28 (ESV)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."



The Question beneath the Crisis

What does it mean to be human?

Genesis answers that question before it answers anything else.

"So God created humankind in his image... male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

If we misunderstand this verse, we risk misunderstanding everything about gender, power, and violence.

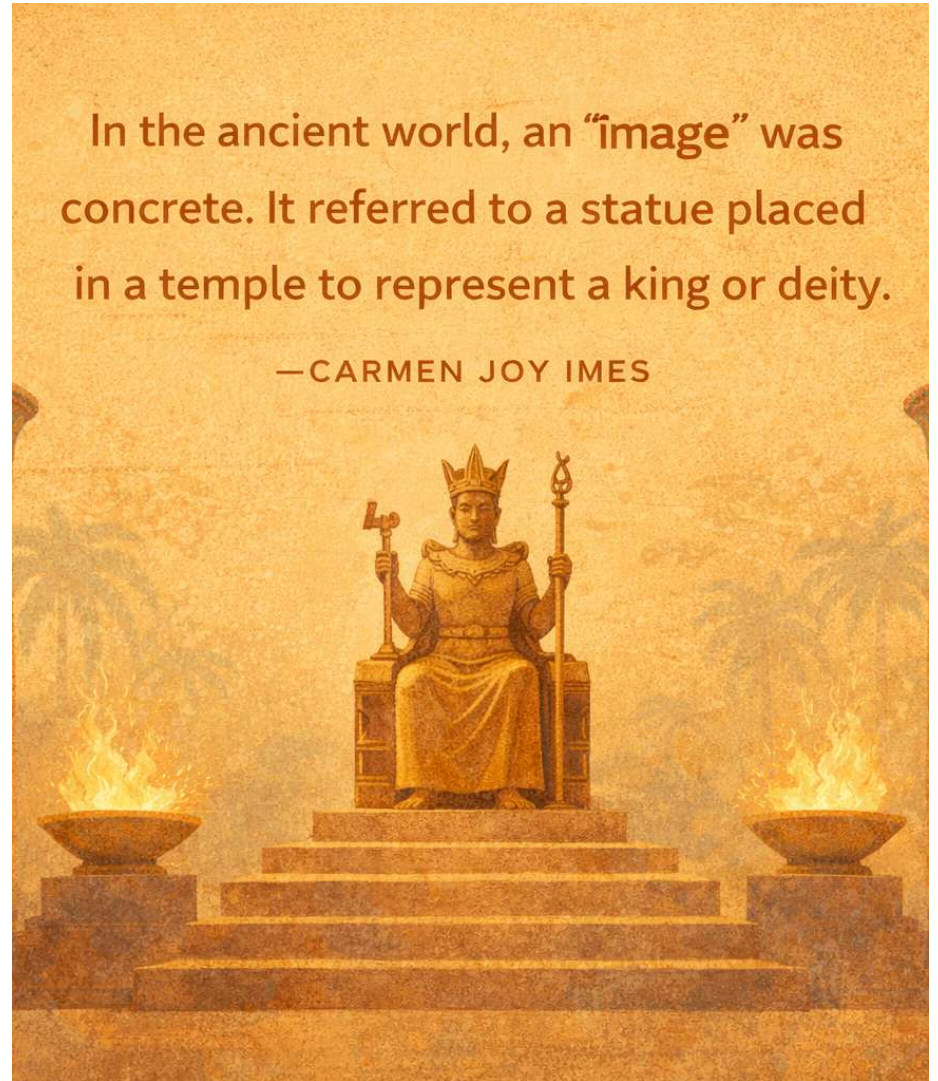


The Image Is Identity — Not Achievement

- God places us in creation as His representatives
- This is not something we earn – it is who we are
- After the fall, we continue to bear His image (James 3:9)
- However, the image is distorted and in need of recovery

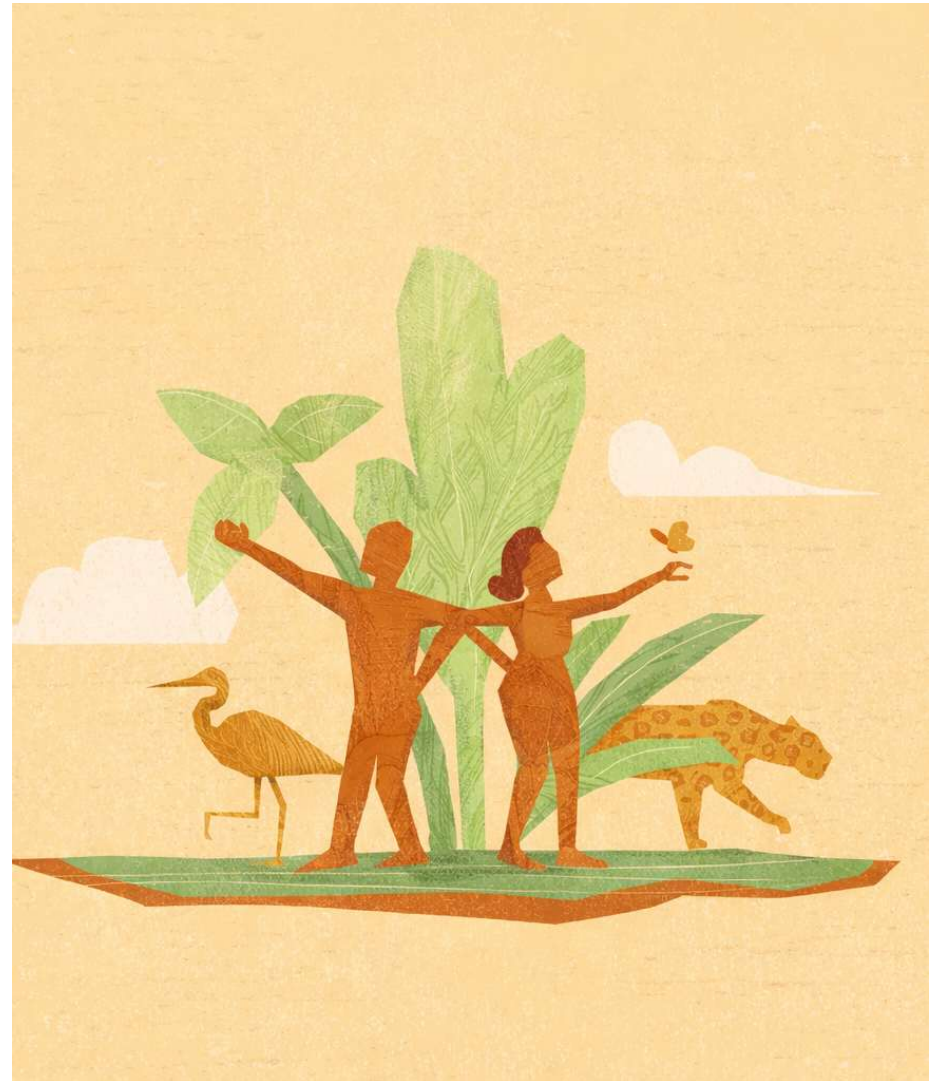
In the ancient world, an “image” was concrete. It referred to a statue placed in a temple to represent a king or deity.

—CARMEN JOY IMES



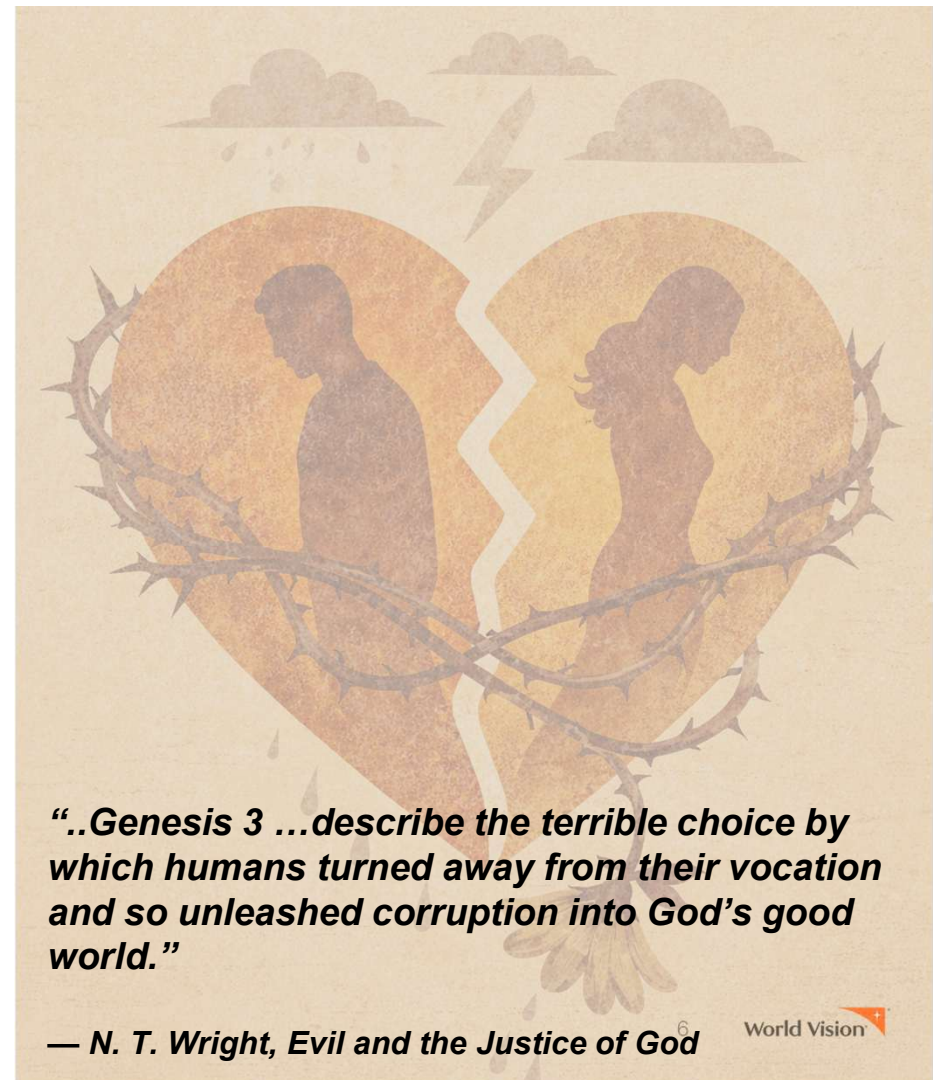
Shared Vocation: Before Sin, There Was No Hierarchy

- In Genesis, ALL humans bear the image of God
- We are commissioned, we are called to rule creation
- Neither rules the other



What Genesis 3 Introduces

- Genesis 3 fractures trust.
Introduces
 - Struggle for control
 - Domination
 - Possession
- SGBV is
 - A distorted identity and vocation
 - Misuse of delegated authority
 - Theological misrepresentation



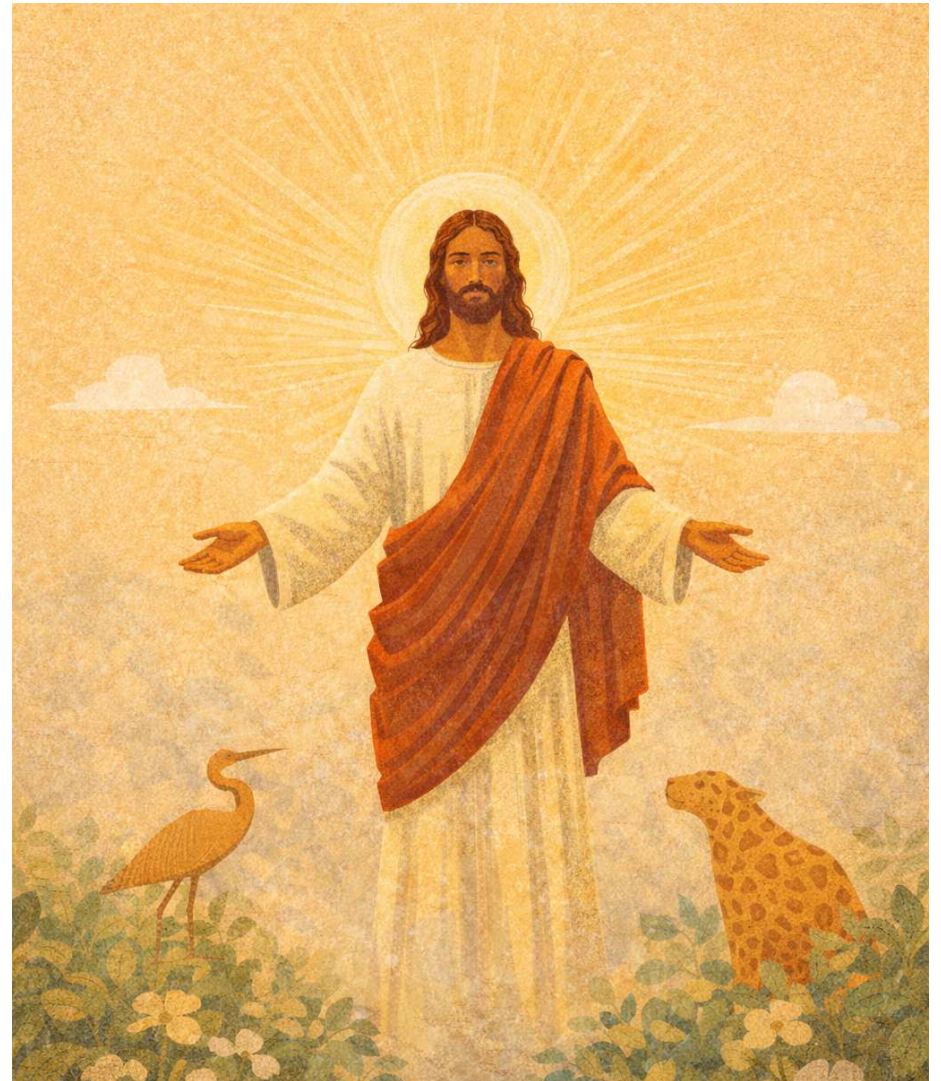
Christ As True Image

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Col 1:15, ESV)

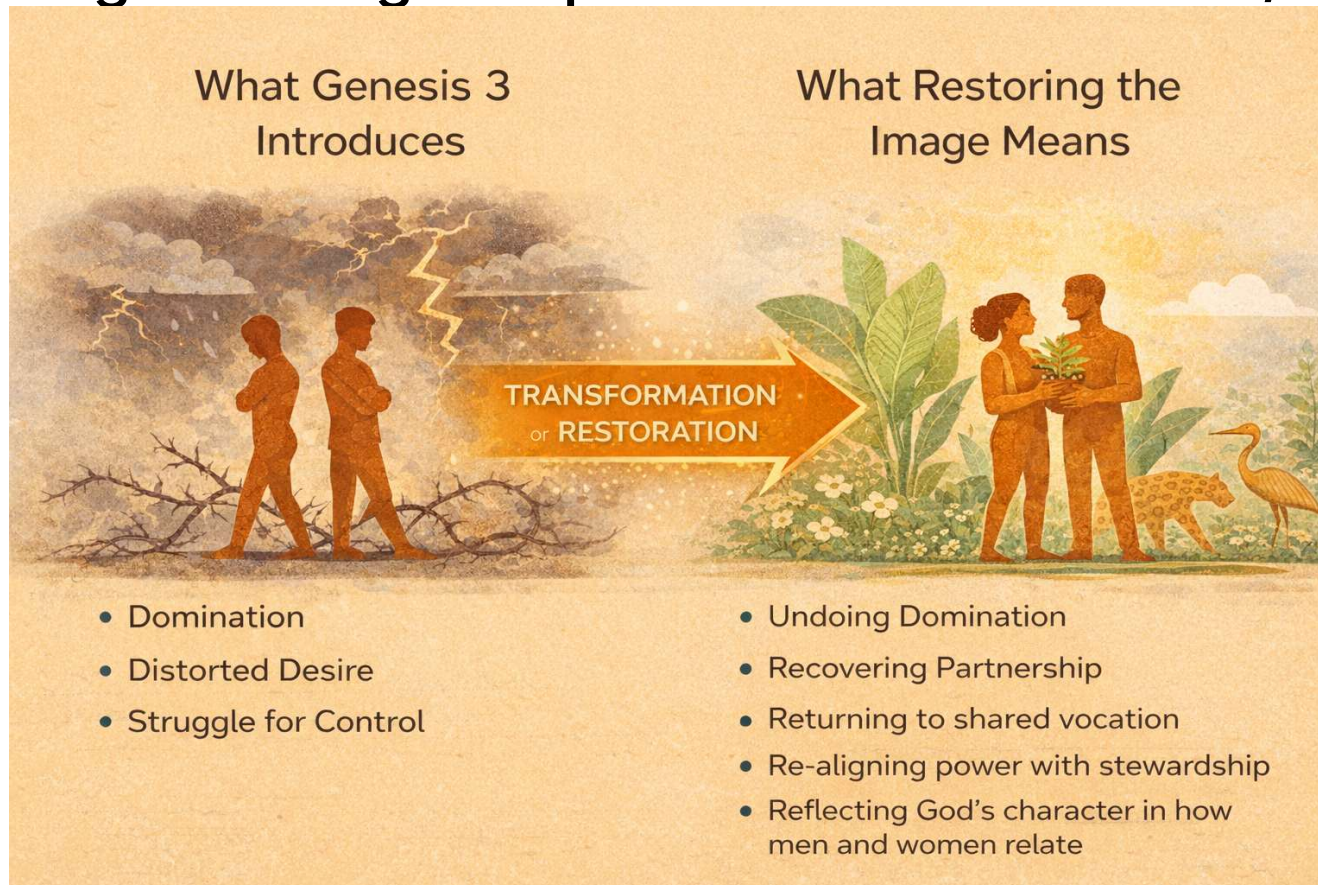
Jesus:

- Does not dominate women.
- Does not silence their voices.
- Receives their testimony.
- Restores their dignity.
- Uses authority to protect the vulnerable

Restoring the image, then, is becoming Christlike in how we relate (Rom 8:29)



Restoring the Image: Implications for Gender R/ships



What about Paul?

- “I do not permit a woman to teach...” (1 Timothy 2:12)
- “Women should remain silent in the churches.” (1 Corinthians 14:34)

Paul’s letters are pastoral letters to address specific cultural crises

In Ephesus – false teaching was spreading

In Corinth – worship was disorderly. chaotic

Paul was seeking order, not a statement about worth or hierarchy

Women in the Bible and their vocation

Phoebe — called a *diakonos* and entrusted with delivering Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 16:2)

Junia — described as "outstanding among the apostles." (Romans 16:7)

Priscilla — teaching Apollos, a learned man. (Acts 18:24–26)

Mary Magdalene — First Witness of resurrection (John 20:16–18)

Deborah — Judge and prophet (Judges 4–5).

Huldah — Prophet consulted by King Josiah (2 Kings 22)

Miriam — Prophet and leader in Israel's exodus

Esther — Political courage to save her people.

The Faith Communities' Responsibility

"Where the church fails to embody justice in its own life, it risks reinforcing the very systems of exclusion it seeks to challenge."

— Dr. Nadine Bower du Toit, *The Church as a Community of Care* (2012)

If faith communities misread Scripture and promote hierarchy, they risk perpetuating harm.

If faith leaders remain silent in the face of SGBV, they risk misrepresenting the God whose image they bear.

But faith leaders are uniquely positioned to reverse this.

- They interpret Scripture publicly.
- They shape moral imagination.
- They influence cultural norms.
- They have moral and spiritual authority, hence the influence.

Prayer

Merciful God,

We lift before You all women and girls who suffer from violence, those whose bodies and spirits have been wounded, and those who live in fear, silence, or shame.

Surround them with Your healing love, and give them courage to reclaim their lives.

We pray for justice and compassion - that hearts may turn from cruelty to kindness, and that leaders, communities, and families will stand together to protect the vulnerable.

Empower us to speak out against abuse, to comfort those in pain, and to build a world where every woman and girl can live in safety, dignity, and peace.

Through Your grace, may love triumph over violence, and hope rise stronger than fear.

Amen.