The Hebrew slave who lived in Egypt about 3,500 years ago was considered to be the property of Pharaoh. Most all Egyptians disliked that slave because of his involvement with livestock (read Genesis 46:34). He was forced to work from sunrise to sunset, building the great Egyptian store-cities and monuments. The only one this slave knew who was considered to be like a god was Pharaoh, who supposedly was the living form of the Sun god, named Ra. Pharaoh was also considered the only person who bore “the image of God.” The Egyptian canal digger and the businessman, the taskmaster and the Hebrew slave, were all thought to be of lower value because they did not bear God’s image (or so they had been told). The phrase, “the image of God,” was never applied to the common person in Egypt, nor anywhere else in the ancient world. The rulers of empires were the only ones referred to as “images” of their gods.

What a joy it must have been for a former slave in Egypt to find out that he was created in God’s image. How pleased the Gentile convert must have been when he learned that he was as much an image-bearer as any king. Outside the Bible, archaeologists and historians have never found where average people were said to have been created in the “image” of a god. In the time of Moses, God revealed to the Israelites that the first humans—Adam and Eve—were indeed created in His likeness. ‘God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, 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’ (Genesis 1:26-27).

God has honored mankind by equipping him with certain qualities that make him different from every other living creature on the Earth. In this issue of Discovery, we will look at some of those qualities, and explain more fully what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God.
The Bible plainly teaches that humans are made in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). But there are certain things that does not mean. First, it does not mean that we, like God, are divine and should be worshipped. In Acts 14:8-18, the story is told of people at Lystra who tried to worship Paul and Barnabas. But Christ’s two disciples said: “We also are men with the same nature as you” (14:14). Men are not God.

Second, the phrase “image of God” does not refer to the fact that man has a body, form, or shape like God. Animals have bodies; yet they are not said to have been created in God’s image. The phrase “image of God” does not mean that since man has two eyes, two ears, two arms, and two legs, then so must God. God is not something of a physical nature “like unto gold, or silver, or stone” (Acts 17:29). God is spirit (John 4:24), and as such is invisible (Deuteronomy 4:15-16; John 1:18). Since it is the case that a spirit “does not have flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39; cf. Matthew 16:17), clearly, then, man does not bear the image of God in his physical form.

Third, the image of God has nothing to do with the gender distinction between men and women. A sexual distinction is present in certain animals and plants, yet they never are referred to as having been made in God’s image or likeness. Plus, spirits do not have a gender (Matthew 22:30), so this cannot be what the Bible means when it says that people are created in the image and likeness of God.

Finally, the image of God is not man’s dominion over the animals around him. Yes, man controls the animal kingdom because he possesses the image of God, but not because his authority over animals is the image of God.

When the Bible says that God created man in His image, it simply means that man reflects his Creator in those capacities and capabilities that separate him from the rest of the Creation. In other words, man is completely different from the animals and plants. He is a “special” creation. Man’s decency, uniqueness, meaning, and worth, all rest on his being made “in the image of God.” Humans are who they are—and are set apart from all the rest of the Creation—because they alone were made in God’s likeness. What an amazing thought!
Dear Digger Doug,

Is it true that chimpanzees are 99% human?

Dear reader,

For many years, evolutionists claimed that chimpanzees and humans were so similar that they could be considered “kissing cousins.” Those same evolutionists were quick to point out that the DNA (the genetic material inside a living cell) in humans was almost an identical match to the DNA found in monkeys. In fact, up until 2002, almost any textbook you opened, reported that humans and chimpanzees were 99% genetically similar. But today, scientists are finding more and more differences in DNA from humans and apes. For instance, a 2002 research study showed that human DNA was about 4-5% different from chimpanzees—and that number will probably continue to grow as we learn all of the details about human DNA.

Does it make sense that humans share so much DNA with chimpanzees and apes (as well as many other animals)? Well, consider that both humans and chimps are mammals, and possess the same type of internal organs. Humans and chimps both eat fruits and vegetables, which means their mouths and digestive systems have to share some similar characteristics. Both humans and chimps get sensory information from their eyes, ears, noses, and fingers. So yes, it would make sense that their DNA has a lot of similarities. But so do many other animals—like moles, for instance! This explains why humans and moles also share a great deal of DNA!

However, there is also a great deal of difference between chimps and humans. Have you ever heard a chimpanzee talk, sing a song, or write a poem? Do chimpanzees build large buildings or computers? Do chimpanzees wear clothes and tennis shoes? Both humans and chimpanzees have hair, but chimps have it all over their bodies. Also, the skin of chimpanzees comes in only one color, while human skin color comes in a wide variety of yellows, browns, whites, and reds. And how many chimpanzees do you know that worship God?

The truth is, if we took all of the DNA from every cell, and then compared the DNA in monkeys and humans, the 4-5% difference in DNA would represent approximately 200 million differences in your body, compared to that of an ape! To help make this number understandable, consider the fact that if evolutionists had to pay you one penny for every one of those differences, you would walk away with $2,000,000. Given those proportions, 4-5% does not appear so small, does it? Man is the only creature that is made in the image and likeness of God. Chimpanzees are simply animals whose bodies share some similarities with man’s body.
After reading in the Creation account that God created both “male and female” in His image, some people have concluded that God was talking only about Adam and Eve. Supposedly, since their creation, no one has been made in God’s image. Also, because Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, many people claim that Adam and Eve’s sin destroyed their likeness with God. These people teach that no one since Adam and Eve has been made in God’s image. The truth is, however, other Bible passages prove that all humans are still made in the likeness of God. Genesis 1:26-27 referred not only to Adam and Eve, but to all mankind in general.

The events recorded in Genesis 9 occurred hundreds of years after the Creation. Yet, in verse 6 of that chapter, God stated: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.” Man was still spoken of as being created in God’s image, long after Adam and Eve’s creation and death. Moses, who wrote a few thousand years after the creation of man, said that the reason it is wrong to murder another human is because the victim is someone who is created in the image of God. If, in the days of Moses, man no longer bore the image of God, Genesis 9:6 would have been meaningless to the Israelites (and is worthless for man today).

In the New Testament, James wrote: “But the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God” (3:8-9, ASV, emp. added). The meaning of this phrase is that humans in the past have been made according to the likeness of God and they are still made in His likeness. For this reason, it is wrong to worship God and curse men with the same tongue.

Although sin is destructive to man and repulsive to God, the Bible does not teach that the “image of God” was destroyed by sin’s entrance into the world. Rather, modern man is still made in God’s image. How thrilling and humbling it is to know that all people are made with certain qualities that liken us to our Creator.