Biblical Christians in Culture. *Looking at the world through the lens of The Word.*Discovering, applying biblical Truth,confronting untruth with Truth.

Ep. 5: Image is Everything

We are made in God’s image—the representation of God and God’s representative on Earth. We are co-workers with God. “Image” is what makes people, “people.”

*REPEATED THEMES 1. Belief affects behavior and behavior affects belief. 2. Everyone everywhere has assumptions, pre-thinking. 3. Christian thinking is molded by Scripture’s commands, principles, & doctrine 4. Everyone has “doctrine” that forms their thinking. 5. Doctrine influences living.*

Judging the External? *Shallow Hal, Gattaca* (genoism, extra handout), *Frankenstein,* body shaming, Ep. 3 “Nothing but Dirt,” choice is consequence, abortion (WaPo), health care, DEI.

Comparison with the ANE The difference between biblical vs. mythical views of humanity:

What makes people “people”? Scriptural conclusions about our personhood: what is most important? Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 8:5-8; 1 Samuel 16:7; James 1:27; James 3:9; 1 Peter 3:3-4

Why are people “special”? (1) we were given special consideration (Gen 1:26-27) 3x the word “created” for emphasis, 6th day pinnacle of creation; (2) we were given special attention (Gen 2:7) “God formed man from the ground,” “God breathed into man the breath of life”; (3) We were given special image: God’s stamp, a signet ring seal (Gen 1:26-27; 5:3; 9:6; Matt 20:20-21). We are God’s representation and representative. We are not “instinctive,” nor are we “wired.”

What is the consequence of a chance universe versus a designed universe model when it comes to the treatment of human beings in the following social issues: Abortion, Bullying in school, Freedom of Speech, Treatment of the poor, Racism, Euthanasia, Agism?

God’s Original Intention Genesis 1:26-27 “image of God” = a. Giftings, vocations, work—we do with what we’ve been given (Ex 29-32); b. Gender, Ethnicity, Class—we are all one (Gal 3.29; Eph 2.10-14); smash ‘glass ceilings’; equality, inseparable from liberty; spread wealth through opportunity

God-given inalienable rights are based on God’s image-bearing creatures: rights are given by God, to be protected by earthly authorities (Prov 28.12-16). Human rights produce human freedoms, creating an innovative climate for advancement, investment, entrepreneurs, and profit (Prov 28.28; 29.2, 4, 7). When a nation protects the freedoms of the common person, the society at large benefits: jobs are produced, the arts are funded, hospitals are built and communities flourish (Jer 29:5-7).

The results of Christian social ethics in society begin with First Testament teaching and should always produce (1) equality of commitment to all people being made in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27), (2) equitable rewards which benefit all people (Ps 107), (3) standards of justice applied to all (Is 58-59), and (4) a sense that preparation for the next life depends on how this life is lived (Ps 73).

**Questions: Where Do We Go from Here**

*Why is projecting a certain image so important in a visual culture?” If, as we discussed in lesson three, we are a result of a chance universe should we be surprised if the physical matters most? Why or why not? How do you feel when others judge you by your looks? How do you look at others? What is unique and special about being a human being? How should we treat people as “people” instead of “resources?” How do we remind ourselves that all artwork is a reflection of God’s image in us? Why is it important that we compare-contrast other views of humanity with the Hebraic-Christian perspective?*

**A Theological-Cultural Discussion of Science Fiction including *Gattaca* (1997)**

When I was a boy, I wanted to be an astronaut. My favorite TV program was “Lost in Space.” I remember fervently praying that I would be allowed to be someone who could travel to distant stars. [I became a theologian instead. Some may see a connection there. 😊] Coupled with my space odyssey, I read wild tales of mystery and suspense (think Bradbury, Serling, Asimov, and Hitchcock). My mind took me to places through my imagination. All I needed was the idea, the spark of interest, someone to tell me about possibilities, and I was off. *Gattaca* is about a not-too-distant-future of a boy who wanted to be something only he could dream about. This boy, Vincent, had his own dreams of space travel. It is a tale of intrigue, subterfuge, discrimination, and triumph. From this boy, now a man, I encourage a viewing.

Like many discrimination stories, a nameless, faceless autocracy has determined that gene manipulation is the only way to birth humans. Someone somewhere has decreed that genetic perfection is the only way to create a master-race. The less fortunate, the “In-Valid,” were given a slave position; one lower class serving those higher. And the way to know a “Valid” from an “In-Valid” is through human DNA. Every skin cell, every hair follicle, urine sample, every drop of blood served as one’s identity. The opening sequence of the film where skin and hair thud onto a table is all the viewer needs to understand the weight of each membrane. The perfect interview consisted of a “clean” DNA screening.

In an early scene a geneticist played by Blair Underwood explains to Vincent’s parents that they want a perfect brother for Vincent, a boy without genetic defect. Even though the parents argued to “leave something to chance” any possibilities of imperfection were eliminated from Vincent’s brother Anton: under a microscope. The first of three swim races display Anton’s superiority and initiates Vincent’s resolve to discover a way to overcome his crookedness. A quotation from Ecclesiastes (7:13) opens the movie encouraging the viewer to consider that what God has made crooked cannot be straightened. A second quote suggests that tampering with Mother Nature is something Mother would want us to do. But, to me, the quote that suggests the key to the movie is the original tagline, “There is no gene for the human spirit.” Overcoming a sterile, dystopian dictatorship will take more than the material world.

Here it is important to note Andrew Niccol’s movie themes. *Gattaca* was written and directed by Niccol. His writing tends toward science-fiction (*The Truman Show*, *Gattaca*, *S1m0ne, In Time, The Host, Anon*). In a 2018 interview, Niccol said, “There is an eye-of-God perspective that I am drawn to.” To his credit, Niccol seems attracted to questions of information gathering, surveillance, governmental controls, and anti-authority. Niccol strives against anonymity, artificiality, and the invasion of individual privacy. He cares for the intersection between humanity and technology. The power of futuristic genres is caution. The question of “What if?” is an important idea: this is what will happen if we continue down this road.

For me as a theologian, more than the material universe is necessary for one’s personality; there must be a Person who establishes personhood. To overcome “In-Valid” discrimination, there must be an external, eternal ethical code that gives the basis for acceptance no matter one’s genetic makeup. Concerns about discrimination are universal concerns, transcending time, and place. The viewer is encouraged to consider what it takes to overcome the impediments of a top-down autocracy. Vincent cannot accomplish his goals by himself. Several sympathetic individuals are necessary to complete his dreams. But the viewer is also encouraged to consider, “If all I am is my genetic code what is the origin of my spirit to overcome obstacles?” and “By what authority do I know discrimination to be wrong?” These and other questions should be asked by us all.