

Being Human - Adult SS - Lesson 1: The Image of God

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Preacher: Andrew Kueh

[0 : 00] Welcome. Grab a handout. Handout pens and Bibles are at the back.

! I didn't bring a flyer with me. If you've seen the flyer, we've planned out the adults under school for the whole year, and so we've got six different topics we'll be looking at, and so it's divided into half terms, so three terms with two half terms in each. We've got six different topics, and I hope to follow this lesson plan. The individual title of each lesson might change, but each topic will be the same. And as you'll see, this series, this half term, is a series called Being Human, and we're going to look at what the Bible says about what it means to be human. We're going to be looking at what's called the doctrine of man, and this is quite possibly more relevant than ever. Every age has a doctrine or teaching that's really fought over, so in kind of the first few centuries, the big fight was over the doctrine of God and the doctrine of

Christ. Who is God? Who is Christ? In the 16th century, the doctrine that was fought over was justification, how we're made right with God. The 20th century, you could say that maybe it was the atonement, what happened on the cross. That was the thing that was fought over. And if you look around right now, it looks like the real fight is over the doctrine of man, isn't it? What it means to be human. If you saw my little video on the church email, I said the world and the church is really confused over what it means to be human right now. You can see this in how the church is responding and even caving into various views of marriage and sexuality and gender and desires and the value of human life. And so a clear biblical doctrine of man is the answer to all of that. It is so vital for us right now. And so my intention for this half term is this. I want us to get a vision of what the

Bible says about what it means to be human and for us to really grasp God's wonderful design for us. And today, I want us to see how God created us. And I want us to look at Genesis 1 to 3. That's the best place to start for this. It can't be overstated how important these chapters are.

Before we open up, let me pray and then we'll dive into Genesis. Lord God, we ask for your help today and this term. We ask for your mercy upon the church. And would you please help us as we consider what it means to be human? Please help us to think biblically. Help us to think rightly about this and in a way that honours you. And Lord, we pray that you would transform our minds and renew them. And would we know what a wonderful thing it is to be human. And Lord, we pray that our thinking would honour you today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[3 : 47] We're going to go to Genesis 1. And Genesis 1 is so important because it takes us back to our design. If I gave you just this invention and I plonked it on your lap and you'd never seen it before, you looked at it and you didn't know what it was or how it works or what it's for, where would you go to if you wanted to find out what that thing is for? Well, the best place to go is back to the factory, isn't it? Where it was made and you can look at the blueprints and you can speak to the inventor about how he made it and what he designed it for. Well, this thing called a human, if we want to figure out what it means to be human, we need to go back to the factory and look at the blueprints and speak to the inventor. And so we're going to go back to Genesis. And when we do, we see something obvious, but really important. And it's the first point I want us to see today. We are creatures. We are creatures. So let's open up Genesis 1. How does it all begin? Verse 1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, I won't make a 10-point sermon out of this, but I do want us to establish something important from this. From this verse, what do we see?

All things were created by God. So let's recall our diagram of the doctrine of God. This is God. And what's created by God? What's created by God? All things. All things are created by God.

So energy, atoms, earth, rocks, heaven, hell, angels, demons, animals, and humans. All things were created by God.

[5 : 58] So God, if you remember our doctrine of God, God is dependent on nothing, right? That's his aseity, if you remember that word. God is dependent on nothing. But think about all things now. So we're going to kind of bring our focus down here for a moment. Think about all things.

All things are utterly dependent on God. So look at Acts 17. I've written that out there for you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, aseity, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. In him we live and move and have our being.

So let me just focus specifically. All things, all humans are utterly in every single way dependent on God.

Without God, there's no existence. Without God, there's no humanity. Without God, there is no life or breath or anything. A fundamental thing about being human is we are creatures.

[7 : 18] And by creatures, I don't mean creepy, crawly, like wood lice. That's how we often use creatures. No, we are beings created by God, creatures. And so let's jump ahead to Genesis 2, 2 verse 7, to see what God made us from.

Genesis 2 verse 7. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. We are fundamentally dust. So 99% of the human body, this is apparently what Google says, 99% of the human body is basically six elements.

Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, calcium and phosphorus. So you break that down. What do you have? You basically have the same stuff as dust. Dirt from the ground.

So along with rocks and dirt and sand belongs us. We're all created, right? We all belong in this circle here. And so let's just draw some important conclusions to this point.

[8 : 30] So considering this, we need to realise creation isn't eternal. It has a beginning. So there are some theories out there that time is eternal.

And the universe came from the Big Bang, then expanded, then it's going to contract again. And then it's going to have another Big Bang. And there's going to be this endless eternal cycle. And that's just the way it's always been.

That's how people try to account for why is there something. That they just say it's always been. Time is eternal. But no, time has a beginning. Creation is created.

And another thing to see is we aren't independent creatures. We aren't beings who can make up our own lives or shape our own destiny or figure this world out by ourselves.

No, we are dependent in all of that. So being a creature means being utterly dependent on God for our life and breath and everything.

[9 : 31] What does Paul say? In him we live and move and have our being. And also, this all relates to identity as well, doesn't it? All this means whoever we are, our identity must be determined in relation to God.

If you take God out of the equation to figure out who we are, we're going to be lost. We cannot understand creation, history, the world, ourselves without God. It will be like having that random invention and not looking at the blueprint or going back to the factory or completely ignoring the inventor.

So we are creatures. But what is that? But what? Who are we then? Well, let's look at the rest of Genesis 1.

We don't have all the time in the world today. So I'm just going to briefly go through just the six days of creation. I just want us to highlight some things over these six days.

So the first day, I've got it in that little box and I've underlined the bits you really need to look at. The first day, and God said, let there be light.

[10 : 43] And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. That's how the first day ends. Then the second day, God said, let there be an expanse.

And God called the expanse heaven. And the third day, let the waters be gathered and dry land appear. And God saw that it was good. The fourth day, let there be light in the expanse.

This is the sun and the moon and the stars. And what do you say? And it was good. And then the fifth day, he starts to create living creatures.

Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures and let the birds fly above according to their kinds. And it was good. And then the sixth day, the final day, let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds.

And God saw that it was good. So up to this point, before we get to humans, humans are created just after this on the sixth day. Up to this point, before we get to humans, if you notice, there's been a pattern of how God has created things.

[11:52] So did you see these repeated words that I've underlined? Let, let, let, let there be light. Let the waters. Let the earth. Let the earth. And then what's repeated again?

It was good. Good, good, good, good, good. And then when God makes the living creatures, there's a phrase that's repeated three times.

They're all according to their kinds. According to their kinds. According to their kinds. But now, we come to the final thing that God creates. The creation of humans.

But the story in Genesis 1, it shifts here. And as you read it, things begin to slow and change. And there's something unique and different going on.

And I want you to see what's different. I want us to, to read together. We'll read together Genesis 1. And then I want us to break into discussion and kind of figure out some things. So first of all, I'll read Genesis 1 and then we'll break out.

[12:54] So Genesis 1, 26, 28, and then just verse 31 at the end. It's all in that little dash box for you on your, your handouts. 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.

And God saw everything that he had made. And behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Now, I want you to break out into groups and just note down what is unique about the creation of humans compared to the other days.

[14:05] And so I've got a few questions there for you to read. Break out into groups. I don't want you to necessarily draw any conclusions yet. Just try to maybe circle or underline things you see in the text that are unique about the creation of humans.

So break out into groups. I'll give you a few minutes to do that. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[16:20] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[18:50] Thank you.

Thank you.

And what is unique about God's response to humanity's creation? Let me pick on Moses. Very good.

Yeah.

He's a crown of creation.

[21:00] There's a discussion in the divine mind.

And do that.

It's an analogy.

We're the peak.

They have their own pattern.

[23:30] We're modelled after God.

Put on the new self.

And so that's the past.

Now, what do they mean, these three qualities? Well, knowledge means we are rational creatures. We're rational creatures. We can communicate with God and know God and know him in a way that animals can't.

So God is a speaking God, isn't he? And so we are speaking wordy creatures. So, yes, animals are in a way rational, aren't they?

[25 : 31] Yeah, animals can problem solve. But we need to think of knowledge in relation to God. Remember, everything's in relation to God. We are of an entirely different order to the animals.

Animals don't have the capacity to pray to God or to receive his law or to understand the gospel or to hear from him and understand him.

God knows himself and he knows his world. And we are his image. And so we can know God and know his world in a way that God does.

And so to be made in the image of God, it's to have this capacity for knowledge like God. We're rational creatures. And then there's righteousness and holiness, which means we are moral creatures.

So I'll speak more on this next week. But here's the heart of it. We are morally accountable to God in a way no other creature is. We have the ability to know God's law and obey it.

[26 : 43] So, yes, animals, you'll see that they have a code of ethics, don't they? You know, wolves have a hierarchy and there's a code of ethics within the pack. And they can show compassion.

But fundamentally, they don't relate to God's law like we do. We are morally accountable to God in a special, weighty way. We can know and wrestle with right and wrong.

His law is written on our hearts. We know when we break his law. We have consciences. And God cares about his law.

And as his image is, so do we. There's also a couple more things we could add. To be made in the image of God, it means we are relational creatures.

So look how God made us. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. This shows us that to be an image is to be, in essence, relational.

[27 : 50] We aren't designed to be in solitude. God is relational and loving from eternity. The Father loves the Son from eternity.

And so, as his image is, so are we. There's a book, and they turn it into a film called Into the Wild. I don't know if you've seen it.

It came out, I think, about 2007, around that time. And Into the Wild is based on a true story. It's about an American guy who tries to live in solitude and find happiness just on his own.

And so he escapes to Alaska and he lives in this abandoned little camper van that he finds, just in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by bears and nature and nobody nearby.

And he lives there for ages. And then he eventually dies on his own in the wilderness. No one knows he's there. But the whole time he keeps a diary. And so we know all that went on.

[28 : 52] And we've got this book and we've got the film because he kept this diary. And it's interesting. One of the last things he wrote in that diary before he died was this. These are his exact words.

Happiness only real when shared. He discovered something about being an image of God there, didn't he? We are fundamentally relational creatures.

We need to relate to each other and we need to relate to God. And so this is how every single human being is made. If you look at your blueprint, you are made to reflect God.

It's in your very nature. And we can't escape this. We are rational, moral, relational creatures. To be human, it's to be made in the image of God, in knowledge and righteousness and holiness.

Now, when sin enters, how well we reflect God, that dramatically changes. And we're going to see that in a few weeks. But we need to know we still remain an image of God.

[30 : 03] That's how we're designed. And so God has created us to be a reflection of him, but also a representative of him. And that's why we have dominion.

To be an image is to be a vice-regent. That's my next sub-point. We are vice-regents. Now, we don't often hear this word vice-regent, but I really like it. I think it captures it well.

So put this in your vocabulary. A vice-regent is someone who rules for someone. It's kind of like their understudy, like an underking. So God is king over all the earth, over heaven and earth, right?

He rules and controls and looks after the whole earth. But he's done something very special for us. He's created us to be under kings, vice-regents to rule for him on earth.

And that's what he's saying in Genesis 1.28. 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.

[31 : 10] Dominion is kingship. And then look at Genesis 2.15. This is what he says to Adam specifically in the garden. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

So God has entrusted the world to us. And we're to rule over and care for and use and cultivate all that he's given us.

And this is often called the cultural mandate. You might have heard this word, the cultural mandate. It just means it's God's mandate to man. It's this task.

Multiply over the earth and rule over it. And so in our very nature, we are designed to rule and care for this world. And this is a reason why something like animal abuse or seeing the beauty of creation being abused, that's why it can be so agonizing, can't it?

It goes against our nature. That's what you're feeling there. But this is also why science and technology is such a wonderful thing.

[32 : 24] It's a part of our dominion. Adam, he was meant to work and keep the garden. He was to be a farmer and a scientist and an engineer and an artist in the garden.

Dominion means harness the creation and cultivate it, not abuse it, but harness it and cultivate it.

And so give Adam, if the fall didn't happen, give Adam a few thousand years.

He could well have invented computers. Subduing the earth, filling the earth, that requires technology, doesn't it? That's ships and mining and smelting.

That's technology, isn't it? And this is also why we're creative. God is a creator. And as his image, as his images, we can't help but create as well.

So just think about what humanity has done since we've been created. The Mona Lisa.

Skyscrapers. iPhones. Jet planes.

[33 : 34] Extraordinary things. We are imaging God the creator as we design and invent and create. And if you yourself are an artist or a dancer or a singer or a writer, you know very well this compulsion to create, don't you?

You just think, I just need to paint. I just need to dance. Well, that's because you're made in the image of God. And so there is nothing else like humanity.

We are something special. And that is why God gives us such care and special attention and these special words in our creation.

Psalms 139 captures it well. Familiar verse. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. We are not just animals, not just a bag of cells.

We are made in the image of God. Which means something very important for today. It's going to be my final point today. This all means we have dignity.

[34 : 48] We have dignity. Being made, being an image of God, it means not just that we have a special task. But it means we are special.

We have infinite value. The human life is incredibly, immeasurably valuable. And this is why murder is such a horrific tragedy.

It's why we care about it so much and are angered by it so much. It's why civilizations across the millennia in all parts of the world, they all fundamentally, they're against murder now.

They may not always hold to it in the way that God wants to. But there is always that instinct, isn't there? We see someone squash an ant on the floor.

Doesn't really faze us, does it? But we see someone stab a teenager. We are outraged. Why?

Because that teenager is made in the image of God.

[35 : 54] They have infinite value. And the world can't account for this. Thankfully, the world knows that murder is bad, but they can't explain why.

But we have the true reason. This is why. We actually have dignity. And this really should shape how we view people with disability as well.

After the fall, the image of God has become marred with sin and illness. We don't reflect God as well as we could or should anymore.

But we are still the image of God. And so inherently, whoever you are, you still have dignity and worth. You are the crown of creation.

And so human value, it's not about usefulness or whether or not you're a financial burden. No, human value is found in that we are the image of God.

[36 : 58] And finally, this has massive relevance on how we view the unborn. Now, I know this is a big discussion and we can't get into all the details, but this is a critical thing that we must consider whenever we talk about this.

Every child in the womb is made in the image of God. With dignity and infinite value. That is a soul that will last forever.

One that relates to God and God has made them special to reflect and represent him. They are the crown of creation. And so it is not a light thing to destroy a crown.

And this is why Kirsten's work with Hope Pregnancy Centre is so important.

Sorry. And so, often as Christians, we can consider how bad humanity is.

[38 : 08] Because we're sinners, aren't we? We're fallen. And we're going to consider that in a few weeks. But I hope you can see today, actually, being a human is something really special.

There is nothing in the universe like this. Like us. We are incomparably unique. We are images of God. And where can we see this best?

Well, Christ is the true image of God. He's the perfect human. He is the one who truly reflects who God is. With true knowledge and righteousness and holiness.

Truly representing God as he rules over creation. And over the next few weeks, we're going to see, in our fallenness, Christ is restoring us into that image.

The gospel is not only about the forgiveness of sins. But it's about restoring us to what we should be. Restoring humanity to be the true image of God.

[39 : 17] That's what Christ is doing on earth. And that's what we will see in glory. And so, yes, on the one hand, we are creatures of the dust. But we are so, so much more.

And this should not make us arrogant. But this is deeply humbling, isn't it? The Lord God has made us for something great. We are made to image the righteous and holy God.

We've got a few minutes for questions. Thank you.