

# Being Human - Adult SS - Lesson 2: Covenantal Creatures

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome everyone. Grab a Bible. You'll need Bibles today. Hand out pen.

Welcome. Hand out pen and Bible all at the back. Good to see everyone on this gloomy morning. Thank you. If you're new to Adult Sunday School, welcome. We're on our second session of being human.

We're figuring out this term, what it means to be human. What does the Bible teach us about being human? I'll do a bit of a recap, but let me pray first. Lord God, we know that we are wonderfully and fearfully made by you, that you are our wise creator, and that we are not mere animals, but we are something far greater.

And Lord, would you help us to know who we are, to give us clarity in that, and to get a vision of how wonderfully and wise you have made us.

[ 1 : 42 ] And would we know that our lives are made for you. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. So let's do a quick recap. So last week we saw that we are creatures. Human beings are creatures.

We're fundamentally made out of dust. So we are entirely dependent on God for everything, life and breath and everything. But also, we are more than just creatures.

We are made and designed very different to every other creature. We are the final, the climax of creation, made with extra thought and care.

We are, how do we summarise it, we are the crown of creation. And we're made, not according to our own kind, like the other creatures. You know, they were made after their own kind, after their own kind, according to their own kind.

But we are made according to another kind. We're made according to God. We're made in his image, in his likeness. We reflect and represent God. And how do we do that? Well, we reflect him in that we are made in knowledge and righteousness and holiness.

[ 2 : 50 ] So to be an image means we are rational creatures made in knowledge. We can know God and his law and his world in a way that animals can't. And to be an image means we are moral creatures.

We are made in righteousness and holiness. We can know good and we can know God's law and love God. We have consciences and we're specially accountable to God like no other creature.

And we also saw that to be an image is to be either male or female. Relationality is built into who we are. We are relational creatures. And also an image, as images, we represent God.

God is king over all the earth, isn't he? But we are under kings, vice regents. We rule on his behalf. So in Genesis 1, we see that we've been given dominion over creation.

We are to care for, nurture, control, cultivate, harness and multiply over the earth. Make this our home. And so we are unique and special creatures.

[ 3 : 54 ] And all this means that we have dignity, don't we? We aren't just bags of cells. We aren't just advanced apes. No, human life is infinitely valuable.

And that's what it means to be human. We are images of God. But now this week, I want us to go into detail about one aspect of what it means to be an image.

I want us to dive into the idea that we are moral creatures. Because, yes, we are creatures with the ability to know good and bad and understand God's holiness and we have a conscience.

But actually, it means a lot more than that. To be human means we have a specific, special and unique responsibility to God.

Unique only to us. We exist in a special and particular moral relation to God. And what is that?

[ 4 : 52 ] Well, as we venture further into Genesis, as we will do today, we will see that as the story unfolds, yes, we are moral creatures.

But we are also covenantal creatures. And this is the first point to this. The first thing I want us to see today. We are covenantal creatures. Handouts are at the back if you want to follow along. So if you were here last year for my Two Giants Sunday school, I want us to revisit some of what we learned about Adam. And I want us to see something new about it. So look at Genesis 1.26. I've got all these verses written out for you. Look at God's design for man. Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish, 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 what are we designed for? We are designed to rule over the earth, aren't we? We are vice regents. That's what we learned last week. So we are made to rule over creation, right?

[ 6 : 03 ] That's all of creation. But then in Genesis 2.7-8, we zoom in onto day six, kind of when we get to chapter two and Adam's created, we actually go back in time and go back into day six, right?

And we zoom in on when God created the first man, Adam, and Genesis 2.7-8. Then the Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Look at 2.15. Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

So we are designed to rule over the whole earth, but where is Adam put when he's made? He's put in one area called Eden, and in that area, a garden.

So how is Adam made? There's an area, I'm just going to draw right at the top there. There's an area called Eden, and in that area, God plants a garden, and he puts Adam.

[ 7 : 18 ] In that garden, right? So when Adam is created, he's not yet ruling over the whole earth, is he?

God has given him a small portion to rule over. We should make us think here, huh, something isn't complete yet.

There's more to come for Adam. He's yet to rule over the whole earth. And there's something else that should make us think more is to come. Look what's in the garden, Genesis 2.9.

There's the tree of life, which suggests that there's more life to be had for Adam. Right? He's got life. He's alive. But there's the tree of life.

There's more life to be had. And in fact, if we skip to the end of the Bible, Revelation 22, we see in the new creation, when Christ returns and sin is no more, and we all live in glory, at that point, we see the tree of life again.

[ 8 : 22 ] And it says, I've written it down there for you, it says, the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. So the tree of life in this garden is not just a tree that gives general life.

It is a tree that gives eternal life. It brings everlasting glory. Eternal life was possible for Adam. Glory. And so when we say that there was more to come for Adam, we mean he was to rule over the whole creation.

We mean that he was to get eternal life. We mean, in summing up, glory.

Right? And also, if you know the creation story well, we know that in Genesis 3, we see that God walked in the garden with Adam, didn't he?

The intention was always for God to dwell with man. That's how things were created. And so the plan was God to dwell with man. He was in the garden with Adam, but eventually all creation.

[ 9 : 33 ] And so we could actually add another one here. I'm going to add another one. Presence. Meaning God's presence. So this is the goal of humanity here.

A people, a united humanity, made in the image of God, reflecting God's glory, in a place, the whole earth, in God's presence. Knowing him and enjoying him forever.

But how is Adam going to get to this? Well, look at Genesis 2, 15 to 17. I've got it written there for you. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. A choice, a test, is set before Adam here.

[10:36] There is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God says, you cannot eat of it. This is God's command to Adam. This is God's law in the garden. And if Adam disobeys God, what will happen?

He says, you will surely die. So here, here's death. Here's a broken, death-filled world. And how will that happen? Well, it's all hinging on what he does with this tree. So if he disobeys, disobey, there's death.

You shall surely die. And so it's implied, well, if you don't eat, if Adam is obedient to God in this, what will he get? Life.

It is by obeying God and not eating of this tree that Adam will get all of this. Eternal life, glory. So how do you get that?

[11:45] You obey. You obey in this situation. So this is a test. Adam was given a test. Or another way to put it is, Adam was put on probation.

So if you've ever had a job or you've heard of getting a job, you can get probation when you first start a job. Usually like the first three months of probation or something like that.

It's like a trial period. A testing period. And so if you pass, your job is secured. You're in. Well, Adam is on probation here in the garden.

And what I want to see here, that this whole arrangement, how Adam was created instantly, this whole arrangement, this setup, this is called a covenant.

And a covenant, it just means contract. So God relates to man through a covenant through this setup. And man relates to God through a covenant through this setup.

[12:46] And so, how can we picture this? So here's God.

Here's God. Here's man. And how does God relate to man? Here's man. through covenant.

So God writes man through a covenant. And this, just think how man is made here. Just think that this is a wonderful, remarkable thing.

God says to Adam, and he says this to no other creature, God says to Adam, you are a creature special to me. A moral creature, specially accountable to me.

And so you get to know me and know my law and obey it and enjoy it. And you get to live your life, not making things up by yourself, but you get to live your life trusting me.

[13:56] But the God of all goodness, you get to rely on me and I'm going to be your source of life. And so your heart, how you're made, your heart is designed to love me.

And you are designed to know my love. And I've made you so that you and I can dwell on this earth together forever.

And God has done all this through a covenant. And specifically what's happening in the garden is called the covenant of works. Because all this hinged upon Adam's work of obedience.

And this is how the Westminster Confession summarizes it. So look at 7.1. So the confession over this next year, the confession is always going to be our guide in all of this.

So 7.1. The distance between God and the creature is so great that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward.

[15:01] But by some voluntary condescension coming down of God on God's part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenants.

Okay, well, what about this covenant in the garden? Well, 7.2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

And so, if I had a flip board, that would be a lot easier. But I hope you see how that applies. And so just a side note at this point, but before we go any further.

Just a side note. Notice in all this that there's no sin in Adam here at this point, is there? Adam wasn't made a sinner. Adam could have obeyed and done all this.

He was made in knowledge and righteousness and holiness. And so, to be truly human actually means to have no sin.

[16:06] We often now think that to be human is to be a sinner, don't we? Because sin has become the norm, right? But actually, no. Look how we're made.

Sin is not the norm. Sin is an abnormality. Sin is an abnormality. Being truly human means being sinless.

And so, this is our blueprint. This is how we are meant to be. So, that's a side note. But the key thing to see here is that God has not come to humanity and relating to humanity and created humanity.

He's not done all this in a vague way. Not just a general relationship. God didn't think, okay, huh. Let's make man really special and rational and moral.

But now, off they go. Do what you like. No. How has God made us? What is in our very blueprint? In our very blueprint, we are designed to know his law and obey his law and live our lives trusting God. [ 17 : 24 ] And as with all obedience, that means we are designed to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And we're designed to be with God, walk with him, dwell with him and love him and enjoy him.

Eternal life with God. That's what we're made for. And so, how can we sum all that up? We're made to worship God. And so, we are no ordinary creature.

We have a special existence. We are to live all our life knowing God and delighting in him, knowing his law and obeying his law and walking with him and loving him and worshipping him.

That's what we're designed for. In short, we are made for God. We are made for God. And so, being a covenantal creature is not just one way God's just telling us stuff to do.

No. God reveals himself to us and we are intent to relate to God. Hopefully, you can see these two arrows here. There you go.

[ 18 : 47 ] And we are to relate to God. And how are we to relate to God? But we are to be morally accountable to him. We're moral creatures, right? We are... That means we are to know his law.

We are to obey his law. What else does it mean? It means we're to live lives of faith, trusting in him. Listening to his word. We're to love and enjoy and dwell with him. And in short, we are to worship him.

All in covenant. In our very essence, down to our core, this is who we are. We are covenantal creatures. We are covenantal creatures.

And it's in covenant with God. This is where we find our purpose and our happiness and our fulfillment.

[ 19 : 52 ] This is how we flourish as human beings. So, a car is made for the road, not for the water, isn't it?

So, you take the car off the road and drive it into water. It's ruined, isn't it? But you put it on what it's made for.

You put it on the roads and you could say the car flourishes, doesn't it? But that's where it's meant to be. Well, we are made for God. And we only flourish.

We are only truly human when we are with God like this. And if we go any other way, what's going to happen?

We're going to get ruined. And so, by design, every single human being relates to God in this way. Through a covenant.

[ 20 : 50 ] It is impossible. It is impossible not to be a covenantal human being. Now, we must say, if a human being is not in Christ, they're going to relate to God through the covenant made with Adam, which means that they're going to be covenant breakers.

They're going to be cursed in the eyes of God. Or if you're a Christian, you're going to relate to God through another covenant, through the covenant of grace, because you're in Christ. And so, in Christ, we are covenant keepers in God's eyes.

If you want more of that, come back next year. We'll do two giants again. But either way, right? Either way, you are a covenantal creature. Whoever you are, you are designed to know, obey, love, and dwell with God.

So, we all have something built into us, into the core of our being, down to our very soul. We have something built into us.

We are made to be with God. And so, no human is truly an individual on their own walking this planet.

[ 22 : 00 ] We are, by nature, covenantal creatures. We are hardwired, hardwired with this connection with God. Every human being has inside them a pattern, an instinct, a God-shaped hole that needs to be connected to God.

Which is to say, we are religious creatures. We are religious creatures. And this is my second point today, if you're following along.



But number four, where are they going? So that exchange, I think, is fascinating for evangelism. Yeah, yes. Yeah, that's really good to highlight. So it's a suppression issue.  
[ 32 : 15 ] But there's an exchange in there. So what do we do instead of worshipping God? What? Verse 23, 25. We worship the creation instead. We can't help but worship.

We do something, right? And so we choose to worship the creation instead. Yeah, there's an exchange. How about looking at Romans 2, 14 and 15.

What do we all know naturally? Alana. Did you get that? You know the law?

You know what's right and wrong? Yes. Yeah, yeah. We, by nature, know the law. So even though no one's ever been told the Ten Commandments, we have the law written on our heart.

It's there deep down. We know what God requires of us. We know what is right and wrong. We know God is there. We know he's holy. And so, is it possible to be a true atheist?

[ 33 : 18 ] Hands up. Did anyone have any interesting discussions on that? Hands up. Elliot. No. Why not?

Why not? God has shown us to us, and by nature, we... We can't say anyone has not known about it.

It's powerful decisions. Right, right, yeah. So it's kind of, yeah, a bit of a slippery question. Well, what do you mean by atheist, and is it subjective or object?

Yeah. But, I mean, if you take it in the sense of, does anyone truly not know God? No. Is it possible to be a human and not relate to God in some way?

Is it possible to not know God? What does Romans 1 say? No. Even the hardest unbeliever, deep down, knows God.

[ 34 : 22 ] They cannot escape his reality. And why? Because we are covenantal creatures by design. Which means we are religious by design.

And so, did you notice, when we suppress the truth about God, Paul doesn't say we stop worshipping entirely, do we? No, he says we just start worshipping something else.

There's an exchange. We start worshipping the creation. So look at verse 25. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

We are so hardwired to worship God, we find it impossible to not worship something. This is why, after the fall, and humanity turns from God, suppresses the truth, and you let humanity grow and spread across the world and do their own thing for thousands of years.

But what do you find humanity doing across the world? You find us worshipping. So look at the Mayan temples. Look at the countless statues and shrines and sacred places.

[ 35 : 38 ] Think of Zeus and the Greek gods, the Roman gods, the Norse gods, the Egyptian gods, the Hindu gods. Think of all the countless religions in every country of the world across all time.

If we don't worship the true and living gods, we can't help but worship something else instead.

Why? Because we are hardwired to be religious creatures. And so if we're built with this arrow inside of us, and we're built for it to point to God, we can't get rid of this arrow, you could say, this religious impulse in us.

And so if we don't point it to God, what do we find ourselves doing? We start pointing to the creation.

There you go, that's meant to be a golden calf, as you can tell. There you go. It needs to point somewhere else. And so in sin, we just point it down to the creation.

[ 36 : 52 ] We worship and serve the creature rather than the creator. And this goes even for the most secular atheists out there who would say, no, I am entirely non-religious.

Because actually, when you examine their hearts and their life, they do treat something like God. And we find actually, it's usually ourselves.

So if you were to actually really deeply ask them, and they were to honestly answer, and you ask them, and they ask themselves, who am I morally accountable to?

Who tells me what to do? The answer is, well, me. Who defines the law? Who defines right and wrong? Ultimately, it comes down to me.

Who do I follow and obey? Well, it's really me. How do I find enjoyment? It's when life is all about me. And so what do I really love?

[ 37 : 53 ] Me. And so in all of humanity, hardwired into us, we all have this deep down knowledge that God is there. We have ingrained in our hearts a sense of his law.

Our consciences can't escape the holiness of God. And we're built to worship him. And so we all have this compulsion to worship.

We all have this sense, this deep down feeling that God is there. And this feeling is often called the sense of divinity. Or in Latin, it's called the *sensus divinitatis*, if you want to be fancy.

And the theologian, French theologian, called John Calvin, he moved to Geneva and did a lot of his ministry in Switzerland. John Calvin, he kind of coined this term, the sense of divinity.

And so here's a big quote from him. I don't often like quotes, and I certainly don't like longer quotes, but I couldn't help. It's too good. So this is John Calvin talking about this this sense of divinity inside of us.

[ 38 : 57 ] So and there's a little picture for you as well. That's what he looked like. So let's read this. There is no nation so barbarous, no race so wild that it does not have a heartfelt impression that there is a God.

And those who in other areas of their life seem scarcely to differ from brute beasts. Nevertheless, preserve some seed of religion.

So rooted is this universal concept in every mind and so firmly fixed in every heart. Therefore, since from the beginning of the world, no country, town or even household has managed to do without religion.

There we have a tacit admission of a demonstration that in that in the heart of every human being is stamped a feeling for divinity.

*Sensus divinitatis*. So because he, man, humanity would rather honor wood and stone than be reckoned to have no God at all.

[ 39 : 59 ] We can clearly see how strong is this perception of divine majesty. We can less easily wipe it from his man can less easily wipe it from his mind than he can deny his own natural inclinations.

What is Calvin saying here? We are covenantal religious creatures. We cannot escape that sense of God because who are we made for?

We're made for God. And this is why when you speak to your non-Christian friends about God, they may say something like, well, I don't believe in God, but I feel like something is out there.

Or I want there to be a God. Or they'll say, I'm spiritual. I know that there is some higher power out there. And stuff like that is common to hear.

I'm sure we've all heard stuff like that. And the fact that we've all heard something like that, that's no coincidence. That is because we are covenantal creatures.

[ 41 : 05 ] And what they're feeling, that feeling is the sense of divinity beating inside of them. Or you may see your friends or family or colleagues or maybe even in yourself, you see them looking for this happiness or fulfillment or meaning or purpose in life.

And so what do they do? They dive into relationships or their career or drugs. And they try to find fulfillment in all of that. And it's kind of like an itch they're trying to scratch, isn't it?

But all this stuff, it never satisfies. Well, this is why. It's the sense of divinity pressing in on them, causing that itch.

They are made for God and they will only find happiness with him. Because we are covenantal religious creatures. And so what does humanity need?

What do we need to satisfy that deep down longing? What will make us truly happy? What will make us truly human? We need to know God and we need to worship him.

[ 42 : 21 ] This is the only state that we will be satisfied in and truly flourish as humans. And so what does Christ come to do? He's come to remake us into the true image of God.

Take us out of our sin and radically remake us into how we should be. He's come to make us truly human. And so he calls us to worship.

Look at John 4. I've got it there for you. The words of Jesus. The hour is coming and is now here. When the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. This is the glory of the gospel. In his grace God is bringing us back to himself.

Bringing us back into covenant. So that we can know him. And enjoy him. And worship him. And it's when we're worshipping him.

[ 43 : 23 ] Praying to him. Bowing before him. Praising him. Receiving his word. Being with him at his table. Enjoying him in his presence. It's then.

That we find ourselves doing exactly what we're made for. And it's then. That we are most truly human. I'm going to pause there.

We've got 35 seconds for questions. Yeah, Finchow.

I know this is a very big question. Speak up, Gerard. I know this is a very big question. Yeah. I kind of wanted to ask. What are the practices? How does this press up into way and way it is?

Understanding that we are covenantal leaders. So the covenant is where they're from. What does that actually mean?

[ 44 : 22 ] Yes. First thing I'll do is plug. Some is for a few half terms time. I think in the spring term. We're going to do something about apologetics.

Which basically takes this. And says, okay, how do we interact with unbelief now? If this is the case. How do we interact with unbelief? So that's the first thing. Come back with apologetics. Second thing is.

I'd say this. It helps us understand the state of humanity and sin. I don't know if this is exactly what you're getting at. There are lots of avenues to go down.

It helps us understand humanity. This is why humanity is guilty and condemned. Because we are by nature connected to God.

We have a responsibility to Him. And so people often ask, well, what about that tribe out there that's never heard of God? Never heard of the gospel?

[ 45 : 17 ] Never, you know. No, you know. No, you know. Yet you're saying that they're guilty before God. And we say, yeah, because they're made with Him. They really do know Him.

And it's enough to be condemned. So that's one aspect to take. And the third is, we'll unpick this more in apologetics, but it helps us understand what's going on in the people around this exchange. As Rico points out, they're finding fulfillment in something else. They're trying to have this covenant, this religious relationship with something else because they're compelled to be.

And this will help us in our evangelism and in our apologetics to realize that if you're really looking for something, and what that is, that's the sense of divinity that just points somewhere else.

So let me show you something even better than what we're looking for. This is what you've been looking for the whole time. And that's what we find in the gospel. It's an alternative if you belong in.

[ 46 : 22 ] Is that what you're after? Or is that why you're not? I guess I was looking at how does that flag in. Just ordinarily. In conversation, do you mean? No, no, no.

We're very different. We're in a personal life. In a ordinary personal life. We're in a personal life.

We're in a way to do that. Yeah. It shapes everything. It means every waking moment, every sleeping moment, we are designed for God.

We're made for God. We have on the day. Whether in private and secret, we're still in a relationship with God. And it really shapes our view of Sunday as well.

What are we made for? What really makes us true people? It's coming here and worshipping God. But that should really help us understand the importance of what we're doing every Sunday.

But I mean, we chat the days about the other implications. Yeah. Go first. Because what you've been pointing out in this conversation essentially is giving us the blueprint for how do we actually flourish as God's image bearers.

[ 47 : 35 ] And so you've been pointing out for us all the ways in which God wants us to be living the most fulfilled life in relationship to him. And so maybe that's another angle of addressing how it kind of rubs up against how we, logistically speaking, live our lives through these things that you've been pointing out.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It helps us to understand sin. Sin says what real fulfillment is if you do this out there. And it's a lie. No, no.

True fulfillment is with God. This is the better way. This is the better way. Absolutely. Yeah. Let me close and pray. And then we'll be questions after. Lord, we praise and we thank you that you have made us for yourself.

That we are made to know you and love you and worship you. Help us to understand that and appreciate that. We thank that you've called us back to yourself. That the Lord Jesus is calling us to worship.

To, to, to, to what we're truly made for. So we thank that, that today we worship you. That we can, that we're doing the thing that makes us truly human. And we, we pray that we will live that out.

[ 48 : 53 ] And that we will love and worship you today. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen.