



Genesis 1:26-2:3

PRAY

Who am I?

On BBC One several years ago there was a show called 'The Human Body' which gave a number of fascinating facts about our bodies. For example, did you know that your body contains enough water to fill a 10-gallon barrel, fat for 7 bars of soap, carbon for 7,000 pencils, phosphorus for 2,200 match heads and enough iron for a medium-sized nail? Did you know that the average human being spends 3.5 years eating, 2.5 years on the phone; that it sheds 19kg of dead skin and grows 2 yards of nasal hair? Now these facts are quite interesting to know, a bit disgusting when you think about having nose hair which is 2 yards long, but does that really tell me who I am?

A while back there was a controversial song that had the lyrics 'You and me baby ain't nothin' but mammals'. Is that who we are, a type of animal?

Who am I?

That's the question this section of Genesis answers. In the first section of Genesis 1 we are taught that God is the one and only God. All the other gods that people worship now, or back when Genesis was written in the time of Moses are things created by God. We also saw that God is the careful creator who created a blob of water and carefully sculpted it into a world which is good and ready for humans to live in and full of things for humans to enjoy.

Now that the creation is ready God sets about the task of creating humans. Something special is about to happen. This is going to be God's final act of creation, and we are taken into the presence of God to eavesdrop on what God is going to do next. Look at verse 26: *"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

I wonder whether you did this when you were younger, maybe you still do it now. When you get your dinner, do you save the part you like best till last? Like you might save your favourite food till last when eating your dinner, God saved the best bit of his creation till last when He was making the world.

People are the best bit of God's creation. We are not the result of some cosmic accident or the end of an evolutionary chain. We are special. Jose Mourinho the former manager of Chelsea in an interview once called himself "the special one". In a sense he was completely right. He, like every human who has ever lived is a special one created by God.

We can see that by the fact that more space is devoted to the creation of people than any other part of creation. And it was only after creating humans that God looked at all He had made and it was very good! But most importantly, it is because humans are created in the 'image of God'.

That's the first point on your handout. Humans are created in the 'image of God'.

1. Humans are created in the 'image of God' (1:26-31)

Look at verse 27: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"*.

We are more than the chemicals we are made of. We are more than another animal. That's not to say we're not similar to animals in certain ways. We were both created on Day 6. We have both been given the breath of life. We both are dependent on our creator for food. But we have the 'image of God' and animals don't which makes us radically different from them. This means that you are more important than your dog or rabbit or fish. You are important and special because you are created in the 'image of God'.

What does it mean to be created in the 'image of God'? There are three things I want us to note¹:

¹ Taken from 'God's Big Design' by Vaughan Roberts

- **We reflect God (v26)**

Firstly it means that we reflect God. Look at verse 26 again: "*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."*" As people look at us, they should see something of God. This doesn't mean that we look like God. The Bible tells us that 'God is spirit'. But in some way we do reflect God. The Bible never tells us exactly how we reflect God, but it could include knowing the difference between right and wrong or being able to relate to others in love.

- **We represent God (v26, 28)**

Secondly it means that we represent God. Look at second part of verse 26: "*...and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that moves along the ground.*" This command is repeated again in verse 28. Humans, both men and women were created to represent God by ruling over the earth, over all the animals on his behalf. It is a special task that God has given to us. In Genesis 2 we see Adam exercising this rule as he names all the animals; you don't find the animals naming the human 'Adam'. It's still true today; we can train dogs to find criminals, or sea lions to balance a ball on the tip of its nose.

If you go up to London you'll find there embassies for lots of different countries in the world. These embassies are to represent their country and its interests by following their rules. In a similar way we are to represent God in this world by ruling in a way that reflects God. Ruling the earth doesn't mean being a dictator like Hitler, it isn't domination. Rather it is being like a gentle, caring king that looks after his subjects. So we are to look after this world.

- **We can relate to God (v28)**

Then thirdly it means that we can relate to God. Look at verse 28: "*God blessed them and said to them..."*" God created human beings as persons, and after creating them the first thing he does is to speak to them. He gives them the instructions of ruling and filling the earth. He doesn't speak to the other things he has created because they would understand what He is saying. We can hear and understand and speak to God because God has created us to relate to Him.

It's amazing to think that God has chosen to relate to us in a way that he does not relate to the other things He has made. It's amazing to think that we can be addressed directly by our creator, which is what is happening now as we read the Bible. And when we pray, we are talking back to Him. A chimpanzee despite have 98.4% of the same genetic material can't read the Bible or pray, but we can. That is because we are made in the image of God.

Who am I?

I am someone who has been created in the image of God. What does that mean practically for us?

We are to look after the world we live in. Here is a reason why we shouldn't drop litter and why it's good to recycle things. Trying to save animals which are going extinct like those 'Saving Planet Earth' programme is part of ruling the world wisely. I'm not saying we should join Greenpeace or any other environmental groups, but we should recognise that God has given us this job of ruling his world and we should do what we can't to look after it.

We should also see other people as God sees them. Both the people we like and the people we don't. They have all been made in the image of God. They are all equal in the eyes of God, even if they seem weak or useless. This means that it is wrong to treat people badly if they're skin is a different colour, or they come from a different country, or they aren't as clever as us. It's wrong to think that men are better than women or vice versa. This also means murder, abortion on demand, and euthanasia is wrong, because it is treating someone who is special to God badly.

In 1960s America, many African-American people suffered terrible racist abuse. One African-American was encouraged by these words told to him: '*You have been made by God and God don't make no junk*'.

So the first point; humans are created in the image of God. The second point on your handout is that humans are created to rest with God.

2. Humans are created to rest with God (2:1-3)

Look at Genesis 2:2-3: "*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*"

On the seventh day God rested. This does mean that He went to sleep but rather now that His work of creation was finished, just the way He intended it to be, He sits back and enjoys and take great delight in what He had done.

God's rest is life as it's meant to be, with God's people living and representing God, in God's place under His rule and receiving His blessing. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. This means that people can now enjoy the blessings of God's rest, they can rest with God. We see this happen in Genesis 2 with Adam and Eve who are God's people, living and representing God in God's place the Garden of Eden, under His rule and receiving the blessing of being in relationship with Him.

Who am I?

I am someone who has been created in the 'image of God' and I am someone who has been created to rest with God, to live in God's world under His rule and enjoy the blessing of a relationship with Him.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sin entered the world the 'image of God' in humans became distorted and they were kicked out of the Garden of Eden and were no longer able to share in God's rest.

When we look at the world around we can see how the 'image of God' in humans has been distorted. The image is still there but it's like a scratched CD which doesn't do the job it was made to do.

Humans no longer reflect God. Rather than living to show how wonderful God is and for His glory they live to show how wonderful they are.

Humans no longer represent God by ruling over this world. We no longer look after it as we should. Adam once had authority over the animals as he named them, but this authority has gone. Now animals fight back and you get shows on TV called 'When animals attack!'

Humans no longer relate to God, in fact humans ignore God and live as if He doesn't exist. The relationship they once had with God in the beginning has been broken by sin and they no longer experience life as it should be, as it's meant to be.

If life is going to get back to what it's suppose to be, humans need to be transformed to what they were created to be. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to save us and make us into what we were meant to be.

Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, is the true image of God; He reflected God perfectly. He represented God perfectly. When He was on this earth He ruled over animals with complete control, we read of Jesus' control over a donkey when He rode into Jerusalem, how He prevented a cock from crowing until Peter denied Him three times, and how He made sure a coin was in the mouth of a fish. Jesus is the 'king of the jungle' (remember the kid's song). He relates to God perfectly. On one occasion Jesus says these words, "...no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Jesus is the true image of God.

Then on another occasion Jesus announced that He was Lord of the Sabbath. That meant that He was God and in charge God's rest. So when He said the words: "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" Jesus meant that if we come to Him, trusting that He can save us, which He did through His death and resurrection, the 'image of God' in us will be gradually renewed until Jesus returns when that process will be complete. Also that we can begin to enjoy God's rest now in part as our relationship with God is restored and fully in the new creation, where we will rule with Him and experience life completely restored as it's meant to be.

If you're not a Christian, the application is simple. Come to Jesus and accept the rest He offers. Trust that through His death and resurrection, the 'image of God' can be renewed in you, and that you can experience God's rest, life as God intended it to be in part, now, and have the hope of experiencing it fully when you die.

In Revelation 21 we have a picture of what life will be like for those who have accepted the rest offered by Jesus: "...I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away..." Isn't that something to look forward to?