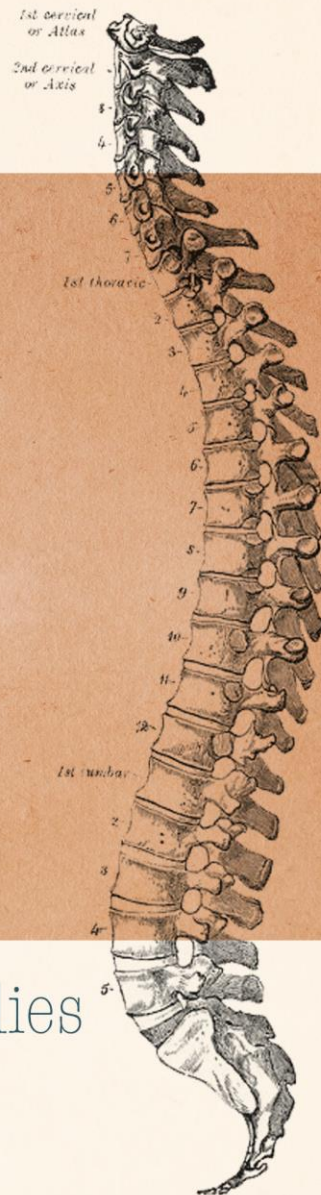


Being Human

Lifegroup Studies
Term 4



Name:

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About these studies

There are many pitfalls when dealing with a topical series. One approach is to look at every reference the Bible has to say on a particular topic, understand each of the references in their context and then summarise it to construct a comprehensive idea of the Bible's stance. The volume and complexity of these references would make this a time-consuming task to complete in a group setting. We do not have that sort of time when we meet.

Our approach in these studies is to look at selection of 2 or 3 key passages (with extra references you can dive into) to provide a glimpse into what the Bible says about various topics. While these passages won't provide exhaustive summaries, they serve as a starting point for more exploration.

To assist in our studies, there are various questions to help guide us along the way. These questions are there to help draw out what the text itself says. If you have trouble understanding the intent of the question, move on, or summarise the passage in your own words, with a focus on the topic at hand. Your time is better spent trying to understand the text of Scripture than the questions that are being asked.

Additionally, there are some extra readings and resources for those who want to dive a little deeper. All these resources are freely accessible online or in the Appendix.

About this series

In this series we are looking at what it means to be human, drawing from Scripture. Our primary focus lies in the first three chapters of Genesis, which lay the foundation for who we are under God and how that affects every area of being human.

However, we do not stop at Genesis, the Bible story continues. We will look at some wisdom literature from the Old Testament, as well as instructions from the New Testament. Each study aims to connect the dots from creation to redemption, which is why we so often conclude with Jesus. Jesus was the exemplary human being and the Saviour of this world. His earthly life not only shows how we ought to live but also redeemed humanity to be a new people group under his kingship.

We hope that this series will help further your thinking on what it means to be created in God's image, to be affected by original sin, and to be redeemed to be a new people group, living under our resurrection King, who is human. This new life under Jesus, affects our mind, body and soul, and so impacts everything we do as humans.

1. Created and Owned

Who am I? Why do I exist? What is the purpose of my life? These big questions are not unique to our age. Around 3,000 years ago David wrote Psalm 139 expressing how God knows people right to their inmost being. See how he describes our relationship to God:

Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV)

- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

1. How does the imagery used in this Psalm show humans value according to God?

2. What do you think “fearfully and wonderfully made” (v14) means?

3. What does this tell you about God's relationship towards humans?

Genesis 1-3 is key in understating who we are as humans. It touches on our image, work, gender and fall. We will keep coming back to this key area of the Bible in this series. For now, read the following with a focus on verse 26-27:

Genesis 1:24-31 (NIV)

²⁴ And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

4. What does this passage tell you about humans, their place in the world and their relationship to God?

5. There are many theories of what the image of God is. How might you begin to describe what the image of God is? What categories would you include and why?

Even though we will read next week that humanity has fallen, it is important to note that the image of God did not go away after sin, see Genesis 9:6 & James 3:9.

Later, Jesus came as a human. Whatever we think about humanity, we must always consider Jesus as revealed in the Bible, for He was fully human.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (NIV)

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

See also Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3

6. What does this New Testament passage say about Jesus Christ and what does this mean for us as humans and as Christians?

7. After looking at these passages, how might you now think about your value, identity and purpose as a human, what difference does this make in your life?

Further reading:

- Appendix A: Humanness by J. I. Packer
- The Doctrine of Humanity by Owen Strachan¹

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-doctrine-of-humanity/>

Prayer

Eternal God,

open our eyes to see your hand at work
in the splendour of creation

and in the beauty of human life.

Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us,
to share our blessings with our sisters and brothers,
and to experience the joy of life in your presence;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Notes

2. Broken and Defaced

Last week we saw that humans are created in the image of God and that we have a special relationship over creation as well as with God. However, looking around the world today we see that is not the case. The truth is we are broken and don't image God as we should. The Bible tells us why.

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-13 (NIV)

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

...

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

1. From this passage what do we see the humans doing in their action and response to God's law?
2. How did their disobedience affect their relationship with God and each other?
3. Can you see this pattern of behaviour play out today? Where and how?

The truth is that Adam and Eve were not the exception, but the model for the rest of humanity. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

With Jesus there are now two humanities at work with two representatives. There are those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ. Everyone is born under Adam (see also Psalm 51:3-5, Jeremiah 17:9) but some can be born again under Jesus.

Romans 5:12-19 (NIV)

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

4. Compare and contrast the two humanities in the passage, how are they similar and different?

5. Using the texts we've looked at today describe the state of the world and the good news of Jesus to rectify humanities problem.

Further reading:

- Appendix B: Original Sin by J. I. Packer

Prayer

O God,
the Redeemer of all who trust in you:
heed the cry of your people,
and deliver us from the bondage of sin,
that we may serve you in perfect freedom
and rejoice in your unfailing love;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Notes

3. Restorable

We saw last week that people broke God's commands. We are all disobedient which is bad news, but there is good news that despite our rebellion, God has planned and executed a way for us to be made right with Him.

Genesis 3:13-15 (NIV)

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

1. God promises to put enmity between the serpent and the woman's offspring. How does this passage reveal God's plan for redemption and the hope of ultimate victory over sin and evil through the "snake crusher"?
2. What does the mention of the "snake crusher" so early on in the story tell you about God's plan of redemption in Jesus, and how can that help you in your faith today?

We have seen that humanity has been created but rebelled, allowing sin to enter this world. But the story did not stop there.

Romans 8:18-25 (NIV)

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

3. How does this passage describe creation today? Why would it describe it that way? What words would you use?

4. From the passage, what is this hope that we are saved into? What are we waiting for?

Jesus offers us a whole new life, even with a new body. There are many ways to describe how Jesus accomplished this, but for now we will simply focus on the following passage:

Colossians 1:15-23 (NIV)

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

5. What do we learn about Jesus and His nature? What characteristics mentioned here are God's and what are humans?

6. Reconciliation is mentioned twice in this passage, in both instances how are we reconciled to God?

7. In your own words what is the Gospel?

8. Why was it important that God became a human? What does this tell you about God's care for humans?

Further reading:

- Appendix C: Incarnation by J. I. Packer
- The Athanasian Creed

Prayer

Almighty God,
who gave your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and to be born of the virgin Mary:
grant that we being born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit;
through the same our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit,
ever one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Notes

4. Sexual

As controversial as it may be today to say, it remains clear that humans are male or female. Today we will look at what this means for us as humans. In this study it is fundamental that we do not forget Genesis 1:26-27 where we saw that male and females are both created in God's image.

Genesis 2:15-25 (NIV)

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

1. What does this passage say about men and women, and their relationship together?
2. Verse 24 refers to the first marriage as parents (who do not exist at this time are mentioned) the woman is called a wife. What do verses 24-25 say about the nature of the relationship the man and his wife have, and the example it describes?

Every culture has had their own ideas about sex, often ignoring the fact that God created male and females for sex and encourages it. On one hand our culture is sex saturated, and on the other we do not talk about sex in general conversation. Song of Solomon is a book in the Bible celebrating the beauty of romantic love between a bride and bridegroom.

Song of Solomon 7-8:4 (NIV)

He...

7 How beautiful your sandaled feet,
O prince's daughter!

Your graceful legs are like jewels,
the work of an artist's hands.

² Your navel is a rounded goblet
that never lacks blended wine.

Your waist is a mound of wheat
encircled by lilies.

³ Your breasts are like two fawns,
like twin fawns of a gazelle.

⁴ Your neck is like an ivory tower.
Your eyes are the pools of Heshbon
by the gate of Bath Rabbim.

Your nose is like the tower of
Lebanon looking toward Damascus.

⁵ Your head crowns you like Mount
Carmel. Your hair is like royal
tapestry; the king is held captive by
its tresses.

⁶ How beautiful you are and how
pleasing, my love, with your delights!

⁷ Your stature is like that of the
palm, and your breasts like clusters
of fruit.

⁸ I said, "I will climb the palm tree;
I will take hold of its fruit."

May your breasts be like clusters of
grapes on the vine,

the fragrance of your breath like
apples,

⁹ and your mouth like the best
wine.

She

May the wine go straight to my
beloved, flowing gently over lips and
teeth.

¹⁰ I belong to my beloved, and his
desire is for me.

¹¹ Come, my beloved, let us go to the
countryside, let us spend the night in
the villages.

¹² Let us go early to the vineyards
to see if the vines have budded,
if their blossoms have opened,
and if the pomegranates are in
bloom—

there I will give you my love.

¹³ The mandrakes send out their
fragrance, and at our door is every
delicacy, both new and old, that I
have stored up for you, my beloved.

8 If only you were to me like a
brother, who was nursed at my
mother's breasts!

Then, if I found you outside, I would
kiss you, and no one would despise
me.

² I would lead you and bring you to
my mother's house—
she who has taught me.

I would give you spiced wine to
drink,
the nectar of my pomegranates.

³ His left arm is under my head
and his right arm embraces me.

⁴ Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge
you:

Do not arouse or awaken love
until it so desires.

3. This is ancient Hebrew poetry so some of the images may be lost on us today, but in general terms what do you think He and She are saying about each other?
4. How does a passage like this break stereotypes of prudish Christianity, compliment Genesis 1:25 and what does it say about this type of romantic attraction?
5. The last line is repeated three time in Song of Solomon (2:7, 3:5, 8:4), why might that be? What is it saying about this type of love?

Our world is broken in all areas, including sex. Our God is gracious in all areas, including sex. Eunuchs and single people were clearly welcomed into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 19:10-12, Acts 8:27-38, 1 Corinthians 7:1-9). In 1 Corinthians Paul writes to a progressive church which had a number of sexual issues (see 1 Corinthians 5).

1 Corinthians 6:8-11 (NIV)

⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. ⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This is not only something Paul has said, but Jesus also said a similar thing in Mark 7:20-23

6. From this list of sins, how much has society progressed? Why do you say what you say? What does this say about human nature?

7. What were the people in the church of Corinth and what are they now (v11)? How might this message bring hope to people today? In your own words how might you describe what this passage is saying?

8. Our world elevates sex to be one of the defining identities of who someone is. God made sex to be between a male and female in a marriage relationship. Some of us are married, some of us are not. How does this impact your life and your understanding of your own identity?

Further reading:

- Gender and Sexuality by Andrew T. Walker²
- Two influential and even controversial doctrinal statements about men, women and gender:
 - The Danvers Statement (1987)³
 - The Nashville Statement (2017)⁴

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/gender-and-sexuality/>

³ <https://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement>

⁴ <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement>

Prayer

Loving God,
you have made us in your own image,
creating us male and female,
and you have consecrated the covenant of marriage
so that in it is signified the spiritual marriage between Christ and his church:
pour out your grace upon all who are called to this holy state,
that, keeping their promised of faithfulness to each other,
they may reflect in their lives your love for us all;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Notes

5. Workers

We spend a lot of our time at work, paid or unpaid, in the office or in our homes, as we use effort from our mind or body to bring about order in our world. We will start from the beginning to see what the Bible has to say about work.

Genesis 1:27-2:3 (NIV)

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

1. How does the idea that God is a worker, affect your own thinking of work?
2. What did God task the man and the women to do (work)?
3. What might we learn about the importance of work and rest in this passage?

It wasn't long before sin was brought into the world. This affected the people's tasks and made them harder, see Genesis 3:16-21. This frustration may have hindered the tasks, and there are many pitfalls with work, but it can still be good in and of itself.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-6:2 (NIV)

¹⁸ This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot.

¹⁹ Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

6 I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: ² God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

See also Ecclesiastes 2:21-26, 1 Timothy 6:17-19

4. What does the teacher in this passage say about work? What good and bad things can come from work?
5. How can we strike a balance between pursuing our career ambitions and recognising the limits of human striving?

Work isn't simply a means to an end, the process itself can be worship.

Colossians 3:23-25 (NIV)

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

6. How might this passage shift your thinking about your current work?

7. How might you see your own work, paid or unpaid, as worship to God?
What do you think would please God in your current tasks?

8. There is much more that could be said on this topic, especially about doing good (see Eph 2:10, Titus 3:1, 8, 14). From this study, how might you define work and how might this change your way of thinking about the tasks you have to do each day?

Further reading

- Faith and Work by Luke Bobo⁵

Prayer

Generous God,
whose hand is open
to fill all things living with plenteousness:
make us ever thankful for your goodness,
and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give,
may be faithful stewards of your bounty;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

⁵ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/faith-and-work/>

Notes

6. Communal

God made us not to be alone, see Genesis 2:18. We are relational beings who do not flourish in isolation.

Proverbs 12:26, 22:24-25, 27:6, 9-10, 17 (NIV)

^{12:26} The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

...

^{22:24} Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered,

²⁵ or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.

...

^{27:6} Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

...

⁹ Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.

¹⁰ Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you—
better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away.

...

¹⁷ As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

1. What do these Proverbs tell us about the importance of friendship?
2. How might you use the principles here to help choose who your friends are?
3. Consider your own friendships, how might you enact some of these principles with your friends?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:

¹⁰ If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

4. How can we apply some of the principles in this passage to help build strong friendships?

5. Thinking about both wisdom passages and your faith in Jesus, how does that affect the way you approach and value your friendships, and how can you nurture these relationships to reflect these godly principles?

There are many “one another” passages in the New Testament, that speak about how we are to treat each other in community. Take 5 minutes and split into groups or individuals and pick a line to hear what different voices in the New Testament say about treating one another, summarise their thoughts into one or two sentences and then share with the group when the time is up.

John

I: John 13:14-17, 34-35; 2 John 5-6

II: 1 John 1:6-7, 3:11, 23-24, 4:7-12;

Paul

I: Romans 12:9-19, 13:8, 14:13; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11

II: Gal 5:13-15; Eph 4:2-6, 29-32; 5:18-20;

III: Phil 2:5-8; Col 3:13-17; 1 Thess 4:9-12, 5:8-11

James & Peter

James 4:11-12, 5:7-9; 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8-9; 4:8-10

Hebrews

Hebrews 3:12-14, 10:23-25, 13:1-3

6. Summary:

7. In thinking about friendship and the characteristics needed, can you think of any examples in Jesus' life where he exemplified these characteristics? How might the Gospel relate to friendship between each other and between us and God (see John 15:13)?

Further reading:

- A True Friend by Vaughan Roberts⁶ (an extract from his book, *True Friendship*)
- Friendship by Hugh Black⁷. This is an old book written 1898 that still has some helpful observations about friendship from the Bible.

Prayer

God of community,
whose call is more insistent than ties of family or blood:
may we so respect and love those whose lives are linked with ours
that we fail not in loyalty to you,
but make choices according to your will;
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

⁶ <https://www.evangelicalmagazine.com/article/a-true-friend/>

⁷ <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20861>

Notes

7. Ugly and Beautiful

Ever since the fall (see Genesis 3) humans have great capacity for doing good and unfortunately for also doing evil.

Split into three groups. Each group is to read a chapter about the life of Gideon. All groups are to answer the same question below.

Group 1 passage: Judges 6

Group 2 passage: Judges 7

Group 3 passage: Judges 8

1. Was Gideon faithful to God? Give moments in Gideon's life as examples.

We could have done this exercise with almost every major figure in the Bible. Abraham was faithful to God, but he also put his wife Sarah and the promises of God in harm's way. Moses spoke to God face to face, but also killed an Egyptian and had to flee. David was a man after God's own heart but took another man's wife and arranged for the man to be killed. Solomon was granted wisdom from God and built the temple, but had many wives and was led astray, etc...

2. In thinking about the lives of people we read in the Bible, what does it say about the complexity of our nature in our capacities of doing good and bad? Do you see evidence of this in your life or those around you?

Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

3. What is the Jeremiah passage trying to wrestle with, and how might you answer the question?

Paul writes about his own internal tension in his life in Romans.

Romans 7:14–25 (NIV)

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

4. How do these verses describe the struggle with sin many people face?

5. How can we rely on God's grace to overcome our sinful nature? See also Romans 3:23-24

In Christ we are not left to our own will, but with the help of the Holy Spirit we can change our behaviour and are encouraged to do so.

Ephesians 4:17–24 (NIV)

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost

all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

6. Paul talks about putting away the old self and putting on the new self (see also Colossians 3:1-14). What are these selves, and how can we do such a thing?

7. In thinking about your own conflicting words and actions in alignment to God's will, from this study, how might you counsel yourself? What might you say to someone who is feeling like their heart has lead them away from God? Use the prayer to below to confess your sin and trust in God's sure forgiveness.

Further reading:

- A Beginner's Guide to 'Free Will' by John Piper⁸

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
you have loved us with an everlasting love,
but we have broken your holy laws
and have left undone what we ought to have done.
We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.
For the sake of your Son who died for us,
forgive us, cleanse us, and change us
By your Holy Spirit
enable us to live for you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

⁸ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-beginners-guide-to-free-will>

Notes

8. Threatened

When sin entered this world so did death (see Gen 2:16-17; 3:19). Since then, humanity has been under threat from sin and death, which affects what we think and do.

1. What are your thoughts about death? Do you worry about death, in what areas does death concern you?

James 4:13-17 (NIV)

¹³ Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

2. How does James describe our lives and God’s will?
3. How does the brevity and uncertainty of life affect your plans and your perspective on what really matters?

The Bible is not silent about death. It was through Jesus’ death that we have life and hope for the future.

Hebrews 2:5-9, 14-18 (NIV)

⁵ It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?

⁷ You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor

⁸ and put everything under their feet.”

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

...

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

4. From this passage, what does it say about human’s place in God’s universe?

5. What does this passage say about Jesus’ and His death?

6. How might this passage help someone deal with their fear of death?

The Gospel message contains good news about death. There are many short passages that explain this message, you may want to pick your own. Below are two.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NIV)

²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

7. In your own words, what does the gospel message say about sin, death and Jesus?

8. What might you say to someone you know who isn't a Christian who is afraid of death? How would you go about having that conversation?

Further reading:

- Death and the Afterlife by Paul R. Williamson⁹

Prayer

Gracious God,
out of your love and mercy
you breathed into dust the breath of life,
creating us to serve you and one another:
call forth our penitence and acts of love,
and strengthen us to face our mortality,
so that we may look with confidence for your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

⁹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/death-and-the-afterlife/>

Notes

9. Future

Last week we considered death, but that is not the end of all things. The end of all things echoes the beginning.

Genesis 2:8-10 (NIV)

⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.

1. We will come back to this passage at the end, but for now just quickly note anything that appears in Eden.

Eden was a real physical place. When Jesus rose from the dead, He also had a real physical body. Paul writes below, explaining what sort of body we will get in the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24, 50-57 (NIV)

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

...

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. What do you think that Jesus being the firstfruits means?

3. Compare and contrast our current bodies with our new bodies. What sparks your imagination in this picture?

2 Peter 3:10-15 (NIV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

4. From this passage, what are we told about the future?

5. Given that we don’t know when the day of the Lord will come, how are we to live now?

The last chapters of the Bible tie back to the first few chapters. At the end, we have the image of the restoration of all things.

Revelation 21:1-8, 21:22-22:2 (NIV)

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘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.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

...

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

6. What similarities are there in the description of the new heavens and the new earth with Genesis 2:8-10? What differences are there?

7. How does this image of the future give us hope, comfort and assurance to a world that is broken?

8. How does verse 21:3 bring us back to the beginning of the Biblical story in Genesis before the Fall, and what does this say about the final restoration of people?

9. From this whole series, how might you describe the story of the Bible in relation to humans and God?

Further reading

- The Resurrection by Paul R. Williamson¹⁰

Prayer

God of all the living,
in the resurrection of Christ Jesus
you have given us the promise of life
which death itself cannot destroy:
in the strength of this unshakable promise,
give us a new heart to live, even now, as your new creation.
We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

¹⁰ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-resurrection/>

Notes

Appendix A: Humanness

God Made Human Beings in His Image

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

The statement at the start of the Bible (Gen. 1:26–27, echoed in 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9) that God made man in his own image, so that humans are like God as no other earthly creatures are, tells us that the special dignity of being human is that, as humans, we may reflect and reproduce at our own creaturely level the holy ways of God, and thus act as his direct representatives on earth. This is what humans are made to do, and in one sense we are human only to the extent that we are doing it.

The scope of God’s image in man is not defined in Genesis 1:26–27, but the context makes it clear. Genesis 1:1–25 sets forth God as personal, rational (having intelligence and will, able to form plans and execute them), creative, competent to control the world he has made, and morally admirable, in that all he creates is good. Plainly, God’s image will include all these qualities. Verses 28–30 show God blessing newly created humans (that must mean telling them their privilege and destiny) and setting them to rule creation as his representatives and deputies. The human capacity for communication and relationship with both God and other humans, and the God-given dominion over the lower creation (highlighted in Ps. 8 as the answer to the question, What is man?), thus appear as further facets of the image.

God’s image in man at Creation, then, consisted (a) in man’s being a “soul” or “spirit” (Gen. 2:7, where the NIV correctly says “living being”; Eccles. 12:7), that is, a personal, self-conscious, Godlike creature with a Godlike capacity for knowledge, thought, and action; (b) in man’s being morally upright, a quality lost at the Fall that is now being progressively restored in Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); (c) in man’s environmental dominion. Usually, and reasonably, it is added that (d) man’s God-given immortality and (e) the human body, through which we experience reality, express ourselves, and exercise our dominion, belong to the image too.

The body belongs to the image, not directly, since God, as we noted earlier, does not have one, but indirectly, inasmuch as the God-like activities of exercising dominion over the material creation and demonstrating affection to other rational beings make our embodiment necessary. There is no fully human life without a functioning body, whether here or hereafter. That truth, implicit in Genesis 1, was made explicit by the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ: as the true image of God in his humanity as well as in his divinity. The glorified Lord Jesus is embodied to all eternity, just as Christians will be.

The Fall diminished God’s image not only in Adam and Eve but in all their descendants, that is, the whole human race. We retain the image structurally, in the sense that our humanity is intact, but not functionally, for we are now sin’s slaves and unable to use our powers to mirror God’s holiness. Regeneration begins the process of restoring God’s moral image in our lives, but not till we are fully sanctified and glorified shall we reflect God perfectly in thought and action as mankind was made to do and as the incarnate Son of God in his humanity did and does (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29, 46; Rom. 6:4, 5, 10; 8:11).

Appendix B: Original Sin

Depravity Infects Everyone

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Psalm 51:5

Scripture diagnoses sin as a universal deformity of human nature, found at every point in every person (1 Kings 8:46; Rom. 3:9–23; 7:18; 1 John 1:8–10). Both Testaments have names for it that display its ethical character as rebellion against God’s rule, missing the mark God set us to aim at, transgressing God’s law, disobeying God’s directives, offending God’s purity by defiling oneself, and incurring guilt before God the Judge. This moral deformity is dynamic: sin stands revealed as an energy of irrational, negative, and rebellious reaction to God’s call and command, a spirit of fighting God in order to play God. The root of sin is pride and enmity against God, the spirit seen in Adam’s first transgression; and sinful acts always have behind them thoughts, motives, and desires that one way or another express the willful opposition of the fallen heart to God’s claims on our lives.

Sin may be comprehensively defined as lack of conformity to the law of God in act, habit, attitude, outlook, disposition, motivation, and mode of existence. Scriptures that illustrate different aspects of sin include Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 12:30–37; Mark 7:20–23; Romans 1:18–3:20; 7:7–25; 8:5–8; 14:23 (Luther said that Paul wrote Romans to “magnify sin”); Galatians 5:16–21; Ephesians 2:1–3; 4:17–19; Hebrews 3:12; James 2:10–11; 1 John 3:4; 5:17. *Flesh* in Paul usually means a human being driven by sinful desire; the NIV renders these instances of the word as “sinful nature.” The particular faults and vices (i.e., forms and expression of sin) that Scripture detects and denounces are too numerous to list here.

Original sin, meaning sin derived from our origin, is not a biblical phrase (Augustine coined it), but it is one that brings into fruitful focus the reality of sin in our spiritual system. The assertion of original sin means not that sin belongs to human nature as God made it (God made mankind upright, Eccles. 7:29), nor that sin is involved in the processes of reproduction and birth (the uncleanness connected with menstruation, semen, and childbirth in Leviticus 12 and 15 was typical and ceremonial only, not moral and real), but that (a) sinfulness marks everyone from birth, and is there in the form of a motivationally twisted heart, prior to any actual sins; (b) this inner sinfulness is the root and source of all actual sins; (c) it derives to us in a real though mysterious way from Adam, our first representative before God. The assertion of original sin makes the point that we are not sinners because we sin, but rather we sin because we are sinners, born with a nature enslaved to sin.

The phrase *total depravity* is commonly used to make explicit the implications of original sin. It signifies a corruption of our moral and spiritual nature that is total not in degree (for no one is as bad as he or she might be) but in extent. It declares that no part of us is untouched by sin, and therefore no action of ours is as good as it should be, and consequently nothing in us or about us ever appears meritorious in God’s eyes. We cannot earn God’s favor, no matter what we do; unless grace saves us, we are lost.

Total depravity entails total inability, that is, the state of not having it in oneself to respond to God and his Word in a sincere and wholehearted way (John 6:44; Rom. 8:7–8).

Paul calls this unresponsiveness of the fallen heart a state of death (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13), and the Westminster Confession says: “Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto” (IX. 3).

Appendix C: Incarnation

God Sent His Son, to Save Us

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Trinity and Incarnation belong together. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that the man Jesus is truly divine; that of the Incarnation declares that the divine Jesus is truly human. Together they proclaim the full reality of the Savior whom the New Testament sets forth, the Son who came from the Father’s side at the Father’s will to become the sinner’s substitute on the cross (Matt. 20:28; 26:36–46; John 1:29; 3:13–17; Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:19–21; 8:9; Phil. 2:5–8).

The moment of truth regarding the doctrine of the Trinity came at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), when the church countered the Arian idea that Jesus was God’s first and noblest creature by affirming that he was of the same “substance” or “essence” (i.e., the same existing entity) as the Father. Thus there is one God, not two; the distinction between Father and Son is within the divine unity, and the Son is God in the same sense as the Father is. In saying that Son and Father are “of one substance,” and that the Son is “begotten” (echoing “only-begotten,” John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, and NIV text notes) but “not made,” the Nicene Creed unequivocally recognized the deity of the man from Galilee.

A crucial event for the church’s confession of the doctrine of the Incarnation came at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), when the church countered both the Nestorian idea that Jesus was two personalities—the Son of God and a man—under one skin, and the Eutychian idea that Jesus’ divinity had swallowed up his humanity. Rejecting both, the council affirmed that Jesus is one divine-human person in two natures (i.e., with two sets of capacities for experience, expression, reaction, and action); and that the two natures are united in his personal being without mixture, confusion, separation, or division; and that each nature retained its own attributes. In other words, all the qualities and powers that are in us, as well as all the qualities and powers that are in God, were, are, and ever will be really and distinguishably present in the one person of the man from Galilee. Thus the Chalcedonian formula affirms the full humanity of the Lord from heaven in categorical terms.

The Incarnation, this mysterious miracle at the heart of historic Christianity, is central in the New Testament witness. That Jews should ever have come to such a belief is amazing. Eight of the nine New Testament writers, like Jesus’ original disciples, were Jews, drilled in the Jewish axiom that there is only one God and that no human is divine. They all teach, however, that Jesus is God’s Messiah, the Spirit-annointed son of David promised in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa. 11:1–5; *Christos*, “Christ,” is Greek for Messiah).

They all present him in a threefold role as teacher, sin-bearer, and ruler—prophet, priest, and king. And in other words, they all insist that Jesus the Messiah should be personally worshiped and trusted—which is to say that he is God no less than he is man. Observe how the four most masterful New Testament theologians (John, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, and Peter) speak to this.

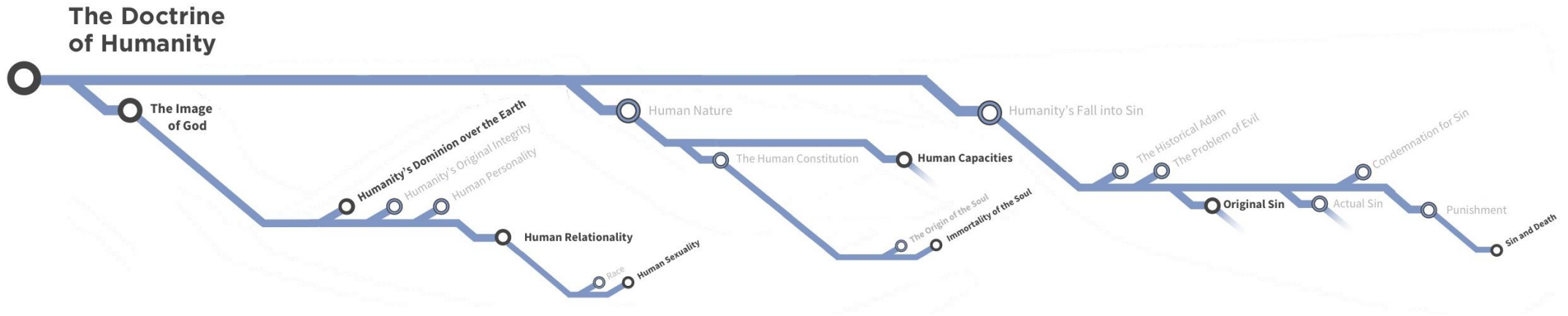
John’s Gospel frames its eyewitness narratives (John 1:14; 19:35; 21:24) with the declarations of its prologue (1:1–18): that Jesus is the eternal divine *Logos* (Word), agent of Creation and source of all life and light (vv. 1–5, 9), who through becoming “flesh” was revealed as Son of God and source of grace and truth, indeed as “God the only begotten” (vv. 14, 18; NIV text notes). The Gospel is punctuated with “I am” statements that have special significance because *I am* (Greek: *ego eimi*) was used to render God’s name in the Greek translation of Exodus 3:14; whenever John reports Jesus as saying *ego eimi*, a claim to deity is implicit. Examples of this are John 8:28, 58, and the seven declarations of his grace as (a) the Bread of Life, giving spiritual food (6:35, 48, 51); (b) the Light of the World, banishing darkness (8:12; 9:5); (c) the gate for the sheep, giving access to God (10:7, 9); (d) the Good Shepherd, protecting from peril (10:11, 14); (e) the Resurrection and Life, overcoming our death (11:25); (f) the Way, Truth, and Life, guiding to fellowship with the Father (14:6); (g) the true Vine, nurturing for fruitfulness (15:1, 5). Climactically, Thomas worships Jesus as “my Lord and my God” (20:28). Jesus then pronounces a blessing on all who share Thomas’s faith and John urges his readers to join their number (20:29–31).

Paul quotes from what seems to be a hymn that declares Jesus’ personal deity (Phil. 2:6); states that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col. 2:9; cf. 1:19); hails Jesus the Son as the Father’s image and as his agent in creating and upholding everything (Col. 1:15–17); declares him to be “Lord” (a title of kingship, with divine overtones), to whom one must pray for salvation according to the injunction to call on Yahweh in Joel 2:32 (Rom. 10:9–13); calls him “God over all” (Rom. 9:5) and “God and Savior” (Titus 2:13); and prays to him personally (2 Cor. 12:8–9), looking to him as a source of divine grace (2 Cor. 13:14). The testimony is explicit: faith in Jesus’ deity is basic to Paul’s theology and religion.

The writer to the Hebrews, purporting to expound the perfection of Christ’s high priesthood, starts by declaring the full deity and consequent unique dignity of the Son of God (Heb. 1:3, 6, 8–12), whose full humanity he then celebrates in chapter 2. The perfection, and indeed the very possibility, of the high priesthood that he describes Christ as fulfilling depends on the conjunction of an endless, unfailing divine life with a full human experience of temptation, pressure, and pain (Heb. 2:14–17; 4:14–5:2; 7:13–28; 12:2–3).

Not less significant is Peter’s use of Isaiah 8:12–13 (1 Pet. 3:14). He cites the Greek (Septuagint) version, urging the churches not to fear what others fear but to set apart the Lord as holy. But where the Septuagint text of Isaiah says, “Set apart the Lord himself,” Peter writes, “Set apart Christ as Lord” (1 Pet. 3:15). Peter would give the adoring fear due to the Almighty to Jesus of Nazareth, his Master and Lord.

The New Testament forbids worship of angels (Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8–9) but commands worship of Jesus and focuses consistently on the divine-human Savior and Lord as the proper object of faith, hope, and love here and now. Religion that lacks these emphases is not Christianity. Let there be no mistake about that!



The Doctrine of Humanity, or Christian anthropology is its own field of theology. To help orientate our series with some theological terms, below are the focus of each study. In the diagram above, the words in bold are the categories we have looked at in this booklet.

Created and Owned – The Image of God

Broken and Defaced – Original Sin

Restorable – (The Person and Work of Christ)

Sexual – Human Sexuality

Workers – Humanity's Dominion over the Earth

Communal – Human Relationality

Ugly & Beautiful – Human Capacities

Threatened – Sin and Death

Future – Immortality of the Soul

Books and References

References

Appendix A, B, C: Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Tyndale House.

Appendix D The Doctrine of Humanity image from: Ward, M., Parks, J., Ellis, B., & Hains, T., eds. (2018). *Lexham Survey of Theology*. Lexham Press.

All prayers from *A Prayer Book for Australia*.

Books to read:

Farris, J. R. (2020). *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine*. Baker Academic.

This engages with a fair bit of philosophy and gives a survey of different theories in various areas of contention in anthropology. Stresses that any robust theory of humans, needs to include the incarnation.

Strachan, O. (2019). *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind*. Mentor.

Start with this book. It is a simpler read than the above and perhaps more biblical. Covers issues of work, gender, race and technology, all pointing to a Biblical view of worship, which is really Christian living.

Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Tyndale House.

A short book that covers a lot. It explains different theological terms in a page or two. Worth having as a reference book for a topical series like this one.