

## Session 6 – Humans, Created for Relationship (Anthropology)

### Session Outline

1. Intro
2. Focus 1: The Creation of Man
3. Focus 2: God's Relationship with Man
4. Focus 3: It was very good
  - a. Detail 1: God blessed them
  - b. Detail 2: God said to them
  - c. Detail 3: God saw that it was very good

**Say** In our time together now, we will look at what the Bible describes as the pinnacle of His creation: humans. We will see that God created humans, and that He did this specifically to relate with us.

**Ask** Consider for a moment the fact that you exist. What aspect of your physical existence is most amazing to you, and why? *(Responses will vary. You may need to give an example such as: Maybe you're amazed at how you began, a single cell with chromosomes from your biological father and biological mother, and from that cell, you became a fully functioning being with highly specialized systems that cooperate and function. Maybe it is one of the systems itself that most amazes you...your nervous system, your circulatory system, your skeletal system, your respiratory system, your digestive system...these are all amazing at how they operate so well without you ever conscientiously thinking about it. Or maybe it's an organ that most bewilders you...your eyes, your ears, your heart, your brain, or even something simple like your tear ducts or nasal hairs. It's all truly remarkable!)*

**Say** Whether it is the marvelous cell or the amazing complexity of the human body (or some component between the two extremes), it can be objectively observed that our existence is awe-inspiring. While a prevailing explanation attributes human existence as the result of natural, evolutionary processes occurring over billions of years, the Bible explicitly reveals a different explanation for the origin of human beings:

### **Focus 1: The Creation of Man**

**Read** *When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there **was no man to work the ground**, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then **the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*** (Genesis 2:5-7 ESV)

**Say** This passage is full of details that could fairly demand our attention, but for the purpose of our conversation, we are looking at two important details, and focusing closely on the second detail, in particular.

*Detail 1:* In this passage, God reveals that there is a time in the order of His creation where humans did not exist.

This explanation is given in the context of the detail revealing that there was not yet any growth of “bush of the field” nor “small plant of the field.” These two types of plants are categorically understood to be wild bushes/shrubs and cultivatable grains, respectively. The absence of this plant life is explained, respectively, by a lack of rain and the lack of a man to work the land.

*Detail 2:* This passage also reveals that God Himself is the creator of humans, explaining how He formed the first man and brought him to life. (**re-read** verse 7)

**Ask** What stands out to you in this passage, particularly in verse 7? (*answers will vary*)

**Say** A few things stand out about God's creation of man. To explore this, we need to look at another passage in Genesis 1, which gives greater insight: (*see call out box, read through it together*)

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 ESV)*

#### **Distinctions of God's Creation of Man**

- *God created man differently than how He created the rest of creation.* He spoke the rest of creation into existence ("Let there be...[vv. 3, 6, 14], but formed man from the dirt of the ground ["Let us make...[26]).
- *God made man with a unique content in being.* Whereas the animals came from the land, humans were uniquely made in the image of God, after His likeness (more about this to come).
- *God gave man life differently than how He created him.* He formed man from the dust of the ground, but God Himself breathed life into man's body.
- *God gave created man a unique consequence of his being created.* As God's unique image-bearer, man was given exclusive dominion over the other created beings, and of the earth itself.

**Ask**

- What are some of your thoughts, feelings, or reactions to God's unique creation of man? (*Answers may vary*)
- What questions arise because of these passages? (*Answers may vary, but could include questions regarding what it means to reflect God's glory, what "dominion" over creation means, whether humans still have this dominion, and others*)

#### **Focus #2: God's Relationship with Man**

**Say** These passages make clear that man's existence is explained explicitly in the Bible as the result of God's intentional creation. That intentionality is revealed in the responsibilities assigned to man – "working" the ground (Genesis 2:5) and "ruling" over the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26). **It is important to understand, though, that more important than *what* humans do (our responsibilities to God) because of being created by God, is *how* humans are to do it, as an expression of the *content* of being created by God (by being able to relate with God).** (*re-read so the importance of this is re-enforced*)

Historically, there has been broad discussion of what the Bible means that humanity has been made *in the image* of God, *after His likeness*. For man to be created in God's image means that humans are originally and created to uniquely reflect God's righteousness (see Ecclesiastes 7:29; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24). Our best appreciation of what it means to be in the image of God is found in considering the person of Jesus, of whom the Scripture says:

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature... (Hebrews, 1:3 ESV)*

**Ask** How do you see Jesus being the image of God? (Perfectly reflecting God's holiness and righteousness)? *Answers may include: Jesus was sinless, Jesus glorified the Father in everything He did, and Jesus was in perfect unity with the Father.*

The language of Genesis 1:26-27 demonstrates divine deliberation amongst the Trinity, that the triune Godhead was in complete unity in the creation of man. This unity is the expression of the Trinity's *perfect relationality*. For humans to be made "after His likeness" is an extension of that perfect relationality. **Humans were created in their original design to relate perfectly with God.** As the beings uniquely blessed in this way, humans would be able to fulfill their responsibilities perfectly (as God's appointed authorities over creation).

**Ask**

- How do you think *relating with God* is different than *reporting to God*? *Answers may include: Reporting to God is not relational, it is transactional (or formal, or some other description that demonstrates a lack of relationship). Relating with God, on the other hand is intimate, personal, and individualized to each person.*
- What would you imagine it would look like to relate perfectly with God? *Relating perfectly with God includes a clear sense of security in that relationship, an apt and accurate knowledge of God and of self, of being confident in approaching God and freedom to communicate with God openly and comprehensively.*

### Focus #3: It was Very Good

Let's look around and notice some of the good things that God has created that you enjoy as you go through life.

**Ask**

- What are some things that God has created that you find yourself regularly appreciating? *(Responses will vary, but may include the weather, different landscapes, pets, human relationships, nature activities, etc.)*
- What are some things in God's creation that we need but tend to overlook? *(Responses will vary but may include the air needed to breathe, livable temperatures, the water/oxygen/nitrogen cycles, food, etc.)*

**Say** It's easy to see how well suited we are for this world that God has created. The Bible affirms that God gave humans authority over His creation, so they could fill it and exercise dominion over it: **(Read or have a volunteer read)** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:28-31, ESV)*

**Ask** What stands out to you in this passage? *(Answers will vary but should restate the details of this passage).*

**Say** Of all these details, it is important to notice three that help frame the setting in which the first people existed.

### Detail 1: God blessed them

The first detail is found in verse 28, where it says that God blessed them. God's blessing is His enablement and empowerment for the humans to be successful in reproducing (and thus, be obedient to His command). Not only did God reveal His purpose for them to reproduce, but He also perfectly made them able to successfully be able to do it.

### Detail 2: God said to them...

The second detail is easily missed but is so important! It is that "God said to them." This reveals that God related personally with the first humans. He spoke to them and they heard him and understood him. In giving them the capacity to hear, understand and *do* what God commands, they demonstrate their experience of relating with Him.

### Detail 3: God saw that it was very good

God reviewed all that He had created, and all that He instructed, and pronounced it "very good." This means it was perfect in its creation, absent of any evil. It was the manifestation of His ideal, perfectly suited to operate as it was designed, to accomplish its declared purpose.

**Say** Let's give attention to one more important passage with additional details that are given in the chapter 2 recapitulation (summary retelling) of the chapter 1 account: **(Read or have a volunteer read)**

*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." (Genesis 2:15-17 ESV)*

**Ask** What stands out to you? *(Answers will vary but should reflect the details of the passage).*

**Say** With this passage, we see that God continues to demonstrate His goodness and His relationality with man. He demonstrates His generosity to and His protection over man. With the introduction of these two fruit-bearing trees, we see evidence of God's respect for His creation because with these instructions, humans now have the capacity to choose to trust, believe, and obey God or not.

**Say** In Review, the Scriptures assert that humans were created by God, in His image and after His likeness. Man is not the product of evolution or the result of cosmic coincidences. He was purposefully made to relate with God.

**Ask** What has been significant to you or has challenged you from what we've discussed? *(answers will vary)*

**Say** Yet, we don't have to look beyond our own individual experiences to know that the intention of our perfect relationship with God is not something any of us enjoy, at least by default. The next time we meet, we will explore the next essential, which explains how everything went wrong.

*Close in prayer with and for one another, making sure to attend to the needs of your group, planning for serving together, or other details relevant to the group. Confirm your next time and location to meet.*