



## IDENTITY- Image of God

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### BIG IDEA – What does it mean to be human?

**scripture focus - [Genesis 1:26-27](#)** 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.”

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In the 60's & 70's it was common to hear people seeking to “**find**” themselves. It was a journey to discover who you are and why you exist on this planet. This was coupled with the rise of the “Self-Help” ideology; a self-directed **improvement of oneself—economically, physically, intellectually, or emotionally**. These ideologies launched a massive industry ranging from programs, books and experiences, eventually becoming an estimated [\\$11 billion dollars in 2008](#). People are still searching either find themselves, fix themselves or seek an identity that feels right to them. God speaks about our identity in a completely different way. Where do **you** find your identity?

A [28 year old blogger](#) writes an article **addressing the millennial's search for meaning**. Jessica writes “How to Actually ‘Find Yourself.’” She spent a one year trip around the world trying to answer that question. In the end she writes, “So how do you do it?” She pulls a quote from Thomas Szasz, “The self is not something one finds, it is something one creates.” **Interesting Thomas – so interesting!**

#### What does it mean to be human?

There is a very old story written in the 1800's which set the philosophical, yet-to-be Sci-Fi world on fire with a woman publishing a book. Her name was [Mary Shelley](#), a young, radical, determined woman who took to the fancies of ghost stories. Mary, having a happy but difficult childhood and family situation was drawn to darkness. One summer at 18 years old she was challenged by a much

older group of writers to write her own story. **Mary wrote about a doctor who believed he could re-animate someone from the dead. This doctor's name was Dr. Frankenstein.** Mary wrote about Dr. Frankenstein's obsession and pursuit to recreating a human being from previously used parts of other humans. **When the lightning struck and brought the creature back to life, in Mary Shelley's novel, the reader was aghast.** It was terrifying and gripping to find out what this creature could do. Frankenstein, although he was technically alive, had no soul, eventually he murdered Dr. Frankenstein's wife, assistant, then took the life of his own creator. **When we try to define or determine our own (or others) humanity, we end up creating our own Frankenstein.**

**What does it mean to be human? And, who gets to determine the purpose for our well-defined souls?**

## ONLY GOD

[Genesis 1:26-27](#) Then God said, "Let us **make human beings in our image, to be like us.** They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." **So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**

**As humans, we are exclusively different than all other creatures.**

**Several verses before (Genesis 1:3-25) start with the powerful words, "God said..."**

God said ('ě ·lō ·hîm way ·yō ·mer, amar: to utter, say).

**God spoke:**

- And **light existed out of nothing.**
- And a **divide separated sea from sky.** And the water (qavah: wait) or collected.
- And **vegetation, fruit and trees** (min: kind, species) according to their own kind.
- And in the (raqia: expanse) let (maor: a luminary) **light appear, one smaller one to govern the night, and a larger one to govern the day.**
- And **living creatures** (chay: age, ne ·pěš: living being) **in the waters and the sky.** Even great sea creatures (tannin: serpent, dragon, sea monster), all according to their kind (lə ·mî ·nê ·hem).
- And **every sort of animal** (chay, ne ·pěš – living being) beast (wə ·hay tōw), creeping things (wā re ·meś), cattle (bə ·hê ·māh) all according to their kind (lə ·mî ·nāh).

But in verse 26 God said something different.

**God said let us make...** (na ·'ă ·śeh). Let us **make mankind** (adam: man, mankind) **in our image** (bə ·şal ·mê ·nū, tselem).

**All the other things God created; He spoke into existence. Then when it comes to humans, God fashions, makes us. As humans, we are exclusively different than all other creatures.**

**Genesis 1:26 uses two words: image and likeness.** The Hebrew context is important. **Sélem: image, statue, idol** and **Demút: shape, statue, something like, or likeness**.

- 1. Substantive: We contain God's attributes.** Relational attributes: God is triune, we are male and female. We are relational in our human nature. We have to manage.
- 2. Functional: We act as God does.** "The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God." Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology.

**Grudem's five aspects of humanity: moral, spiritual, mental, relational, and physical.**

**We are LIKE God, but NOT God.**

**Our soul is crafted after God, so we have:**

- **Reason, free-will, and self-consciousness**
- Also, in God's likeness, **we have moral powers, capacity to do right or wrong, good or evil. But lastly, we have...**
- **Dominion, the authority and responsibility over the rest of creation.**

**Our identity, found in the likeness of God, will focus on both "word and deed"**

**The Apostle Paul handily tells us in Colossians 3:17, And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.**

**So, what does it mean to be human?**

**The Word of God tells us that we were all created on purpose for a purpose. We were created in God's image and charged with the role of caring for the rest of creation.**

The Bible sets the tone for who we are, what we were created for, and why we exist. **It declares that our identity as human beings has a massive impact on how we think of and treat ourselves, others, and the whole of creation.**

**How we see ourselves effects our perspective towards God, others, and the rest of creation.**

**And we are responsible to God, to others, and to creation.**

**The Psalms reminds us of our person, our place, and our purpose:**

### **[Psalms 8:3-8](#)**

'When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers— the moon and the stars you set in place— **what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority— the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. '**

**Steve Bang Lee – agreement on application of humanity. Many believe we need to look within ourselves to find our mean and define our own dignity. Who defines personhood? Who decides the way we are responsible to the vulnerable is often left to political and powerful people.**

**You are more than simply the sum of your parts.  
You are not merely a highly evolved mammal.  
You are not just a collection of atoms.  
You are not just what others see  
or the combinations of others' verdicts on you.**

**You are made in the image of God: crowned, the psalmist writes,  
"with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5).**

**- Daniel Darling, [The Dignity Revolution](#)**

A well-known question was asked years ago: **What is the chief end of man?**  
**Answered in the [Westminster Catechism](#), written in 1646 and 1647.**

**Q: WHAT IS THE CHIEF END OF MAN?**

**A: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.**

**Here are two ends of life specified.1: The glorifying of God.2: The enjoying of God.**

[1 Peter 4:1-4](#), [1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#), [Philippians 1:9-11](#), [Psalms. 73:25-28](#), [Psalms 29:2](#)

When we beg, borrow, or steal identity characteristics from others, **we end up looking more like a creature rather than God. When we try to build our own identity by looking inside ourselves or looking at whatever our culture decides is valuable, we may end up creating a hideous monster.**

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## NOTES

### Scriptures

[Genesis 1:26-27](#) 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."

#### **Colossians 3:17**

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

#### **Romans 8:26-30**

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. **For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.**

#### [Psalms 8:1-9](#)

'O Lord , our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. **When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers— the moon and the stars you set in place— what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority— the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals,**

**the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents.** O Lord , our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

## Inés Franklin writes:

We live in a society that claims to uphold the dignity of every person—a culture that says we are born with inherent value, rights, and worth. But without a biblical foundation, we are unable to understand what it means to be human, or to explain why this aspiration of honoring humanity is right, or to find agreement on how to apply this perspective consistently toward every person.

Many today believe we must look within ourselves to define our own reality, to make our own meaning, and discover our own dignity. Also, the question of who defines personhood or who decides the ways in which we are responsible to the vulnerable is often left to people who already have cultural or political power.

As such, human self-interest and power dynamics create an environment that sometimes celebrates life but often discounts the value of others. We see this tension unfold in wide-ranging debates over how we treat and care for unborn children, people with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, minority ethnic groups, people at the end of life, or people in poverty.

Our society reflects various opinions on the value of human life. There has yet to be a worldwide consensus across cultures, or even in our own communities, on how humans, animals, and the rest of creation should coexist, or why some lives seem to be valued more than others. We also struggle with how to maintain our humanity in the face of technological advances that tend to dehumanize us.

When we humans take on the role of establishing the value of human existence and the hierarchy between humans, animals, and the rest of creation, we often make a mess. The ethics of human dignity become riddled with circular logic, self-preservation agendas, unending disagreement, and divergent outcomes. Human value then varies from person to person, culture to culture, or philosophy to philosophy.

Apart from of a biblical view of humanity, we tend to either elevate humanity to the highest levels, making ourselves out to be gods, or we demote humanity to nothing, as if we are merely dust. Non-biblical human identity is either demoralizingly low or blasphemously high, and apart from God's perspective, human flourishing is impossible. Without a connection to God, there is simply no basis for human dignity.