



## Part 3: *Enter the Humans...*

**Bible Reading:** [Genesis 1:26 – 2:3](#)

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### PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

We continue in our 6-part series, exploring the first three chapters of the Book of [Genesis](#). Today we are thinking about **humanity** being made in God's image, and the special place our species has in God's plans. It is an opportunity to take a deep look at what it means to be human, and our relationship with the world around us. Please continue to pray for your group as we explore this together.

### PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

We are going to be discussing the arrival of human beings to the creation story, starting at [Genesis 1:26](#). It came quite late in the week (or, if you prefer, late in the evolving story of our beginnings); after all the other animals; after the earth is filled with all good things. God says: “**Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...**”. At the end, God said that it was **VERY** good ([verse 31](#)).

It is perhaps strange in the creation story that God seems to speak in dialogue, in conversation; God has a **communal** dimension, which might strike Christians as an early hint at the Trinity: “Let **us** make humankind in **our** image, according to **our** likeness...” ([verse 26](#)). So, uniquely, set apart out of all of creation, human beings are made with the purpose of **reflecting God**. This is probably not a physical representation (like a statue) but more of a deeper reflection of God's character, relationship, and dominion.

*What does it mean for you to be made ‘in the image of God’? How do we reflect God's qualities and characteristics? Can you see God's image in other people? Do you recognise it in yourself?*

### STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Relational God,  
As we pray together, we see in one another your own reflection;  
As we look around this room (or our church), we see different images of your face:  
female and male, older and young, and everything in between.  
each holding unique viewpoints and experience, to add to the richness of the humanity we share.  
We are greatly blessed, for you are here!  
Forgive us, we pray, when your reflection in us grows dim.  
Forgive us when we forget our primary calling as your people.  
Enable us, by your grace and our encouragement of each other, to shine a little brighter today.  
We pray in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### FINDING OUR ROOTS – some starter questions to explore in small groups

*What were your reflections on being made in God's image? (If you're happy to share with the group.)*  
*When do you find it hard to see others as being God's image-bearers? What does this say about human rights, dignity, and respect? When do we treat others as ‘less than human’?*  
*How can the image of God be broken in us? And how might it be restored?*

## READING THE SCRIPTURES – with background information and reflections

Read together the Bible passages: **Genesis 1:26 – 2:3**

**REFLECTION:** It is perhaps interesting that the word for ‘God’ used in this chapter is **NOT** the personal name **Yahweh** (‘the LORD’), known only to the Hebrew people at the time, but rather the word is **Elohim**. This is a much more general word for the divine, giving a much wider scope. The Creator God is indeed the God of **all**. The image of God should therefore be sought and found in the face of **every** human being.

### DIGGING DEEPER – some questions for you to consider in your group:

Humans are made in the image of God, **both male and female** (verse 27). This gives a problem to any who would claim that God is exclusively male! As a society today, we are becoming more aware of a spectrum of genders and sexes between male and female. *As we marvel at the diversity of the creation being celebrated in Genesis 1, when we talk about sex and gender, do we need to be more careful not to limit God’s creative power to a simple binary (either-or) state of affairs?*

When we read about the **dominion** which humankind is granted (verses 26 and 28), we can reflect on how that has worked out in human civilization. *Can you think of examples of when we have used our power for the good of society, and when it has been used for greed, violence and acquisition?*

The shocking environmental misuse of the world in the last 200 years, worsening with a rapidly expanding population, only suggests that we have gravely misinterpreted these verses. (We have ‘**plundered and poisoned**’ as Graham Kendrick puts it in the hymn ‘*Beauty for Brokenness*’.) *And yet, how does God exercise dominion? What words could be helpful alternatives to ‘dominion’?*

Notice the **provision of God** (verses 29-30): that the trees and plants are for the benefit of all living things (and there is no mention of eating meat or destroying each other!). *How can we be more mindful and thankful of God’s provision of the food we eat, and those who produce it?*

**The Sabbath** is the day of rest first observed in **Genesis 2:2-3**, and this was to become the pattern for God’s people, expressed strongly in the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20:8-11**). *How has our society (and world) today lost a sense of Sabbath? Could recapturing this sense of weekly rest (and letting the earth rest) be a key to both mental and environmental recovery?*

*If one of the God-like characteristics we have is to be **creative or inventive**, how has humankind used this for good, or for evil? How can we, as a church, harness creativity for God’s purposes?*

St Paul once wrote that **Jesus ‘is the image of the invisible God’** (**Colossians 1:15-20**). *How can reflecting on the life of the Son of God help us to see more clearly the imprint our lives could make, and the image we should try to reflect?*

### PRAYING AND WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Share a time of prayer together. Allow space for group members to offer their own prayers. Give thanks for the gifts we are given, made in God’s image: for creativity, invention and design, for care and nurture, compassion and justice. Perhaps take the opportunity to pray for human beings to understand the responsibility God gives us in caring for one another and looking after the world. **Hymns** to sing or use as prayers include: *Singing the Faith* **608, 615, 727, 729 and 801** (**Psalms 8**). Share **The Lord’s Prayer** together.

### WHEN YOU’RE AT HOME...

Think about how you spend your Sabbath. *What do you do to make it special? How do you try to rest and recharge for one day every week? If you work on a Sunday, do you find another day?*

### JUNIOR GOOD SOIL – ideas for children and young people

Read the last part of the story (**Gen 1:26 – 2:3**). Humans are made in the image of God! *What does that mean? Draw a poster with the outline of a human being*, and fill it with words or pictures showing ways we DO reflect God (and maybe some of the ways we DON’T). Or complete your ‘**7 days of creation**’ picture.