

who am i?

module

4

Consider

The Story so Far...

In the previous module, we saw that it all began when the eternal, personal God made everything there is as a perfect paradise.

Continuing the Story...

What does it mean to be human? Do we matter? Are we significant? In this module, we explore these questions from the Bible's perspective in Genesis 1 and 2.

Day One: Made?

In a piece of Hebrew poetry, King David asked God this question: “what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?” (Psalm 8:4). Three thousand years later and that ancient question is still the BIG one – only, these days, everyone is asking it in a more personal, and possibly more urgent, way...

Who am I? What does it mean to be a human being? Why am I here? Does God even care?

Everyone asks these questions... because they are the ultimate questions of life. The Bible’s answers to these questions surface as it tells us the story of Adam and Eve. The Genesis story says that we humans are unique. Special, in fact. Special enough:

- For God to give us this magnificent planet as our home!
- For Genesis 1 and 2 to spend more time talking about us than about any other part of creation – no exceptions!
- For God to talk differently about us – not the usual “let there be” but, instead, “let us make mankind...” See how the language changes and the mood alters? The air is electric. The words are charged! It’s just so deliberate and intentional and different.
- To celebrate with a poem! Did you see it? Probably not, because it’s kind of hidden. Hebrew poetry doesn’t rhyme like ours. But tucked away in Genesis chapter 1, verse 27, there’s a short poem celebrating the creation of humans. As fantastic as this planet is... only people move God to write a poem!

What if God’s trying to tell us that we’re more special than we ever suspected we were – and more loved than we ever dreamed we could be?

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1:26–28.

How special are humans?

Day Two: Spitting Image?

The English language has some funny phrases. For instance, when a child looks and acts just like their father or mother, we say that they're "the spitting image" of them. Doesn't sound too pleasant, does it? But "spitting image" is a short version of the original saying which was "spit and image" – which means that you are both the stuff that your parents are made of (the spit) and you look like them, too (the image). Some think the saying originally just had the spit without the image: "You are the very spit of your father"; meaning... he might just have spat you out.

And here's the Bible telling us we're made in God's image! True, we have a lot in common with the animal world. In fact, Genesis indicates that there are at least seven direct comparisons that can be made between humans and animals. But there's one big difference: we humans are made so much like God, that we are said to be 'in his image'. In any language, that spells S-I-G-N-I-F-I-C-A-N-T. So walk tall today – you are an image-bearer!

Animals	Humans
CREATED ON DAY 6 Genesis 1:24–29	CREATED ON DAY 6 Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7–25
FORMED FROM DUST Genesis 2:19	FORMED FROM DUST Genesis 2:7
LIVING CREATURES Genesis 1:24; 2:19; 9:10, 16	LIVING CREATURES Genesis 2:7; 9:16
BREATH OF LIFE Genesis 1:30; 6:17	BREATH OF LIFE Genesis 2:7
MALE AND FEMALE Genesis 6:19; 7:2–3	MALE AND FEMALE Genesis 1:27
BLESSED Genesis 1:22	BLESSED Genesis 1:28
TOLD TO INCREASE Genesis 1:22; 8:17	TOLD TO INCREASE Genesis 1:28
GREEN PLANTS FOR FOOD Genesis 1:30	SEED BEARING PLANTS FOR FOOD Genesis 1:29
	IMAGE OF GOD Genesis 1:26–27

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1:27; 2:7, 19–23.

How were animals and humans created in the same way? How were they created differently?

Day Three: Personally Speaking...

I love those beautiful clear summer days... blue skies... birds singing... the sea sparkling as though it's made of sequins – all nature seems to be laughing in the sunshine. And we whisper to ourselves, “It's so good to be alive”.

It's fantastic to know we exist, to know how we feel, to know our own thoughts. As far as we know, animals are not running around saying, “It's so good to be alive”. They're conscious... but not self-conscious. I don't think a pig is conscious that it's a pig – as distinct from, say, a field mouse. The pig is not aware of its ‘pigness’, nor can it explain it. It doesn't have a clue what it's here for. Thankfully it doesn't understand ‘bacon’ and ‘pork chop’! It has no ambition to be anything because it has no sense of ‘self’. But we do. We can say “I'm so disappointed in myself” or “I've made good progress today”. Unlike the pig, we can evaluate ourselves – and that makes us different.

Typically, we're free, too – we can decide where we live and who with. We can choose friends. We can pick what foods we feel like eating. Animals don't have that freedom. Basically they're creatures of habit, bound by instinct. They roam but they don't plan holidays. So... we can have animals as pets but we can't have them as partners – because they're not persons (Genesis 2:20).

Did you notice how Genesis refers to God as a personal spiritual being? All the way through, it uses personal pronouns like ‘he’, ‘him’ and ‘his’. And, because God is a personal being, we can connect with him.

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 2:15–18, 22–23.

What do you notice about the relationships between Adam, Eve and God?

Day Four: More Differences...

Dr Robert Sapolsky is a brilliant primatologist who studied baboons in Africa for more than 30 years! He's no Christian – in fact, he calls himself a “strident atheist”. He's Professor of Biological Sciences at Stanford University, California. In 2009 he gave a talk on 'The Uniqueness of Humans'. He drew some very real comparisons between animals and humans, showing just how close they are. However, he then went on to show the very real differences. His point? There's a thick line to be drawn between animals and humans. Genesis says the difference lies in the fact that we humans have been made in the image of God.

We know animals aren't stupid – humans just think in a different way to that of animals. We love to investigate and compare things – to think about how things relate and connect. And we have an 'ache to create'. Animals create, too: beavers build dams; moles and meerkats dig burrows; birds and gorillas make nests – but always to the same old specifications. Why? These animals function out of instinct. But we love to think, reason, invent, improve and develop things.

And we love to talk! Dr Sapolsky says it's our use of language that really sets us apart. We use words to express our thoughts, share our opinions, plans, dreams and feelings. Animals communicate too but in a much less sophisticated way. Their sounds and noises aren't speech... just like a baby's whimper or squeal isn't speech. Eventually the baby will talk... but animals won't. We use complex language because our brains are wired to think about so many more things than animals do. And that's because we're in a different category. We're 'image-bearers'.

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 2:15–20, 23.

What difference in language and communication do you notice between God, humans and animals?

Day Five: The Biggest Difference...

Perhaps the biggest difference between animals and human beings is that we are here to make a difference – a big difference! That’s the way we’ve been made... and, according to Genesis, that’s our agenda. Here it is:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful... 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”. (Genesis 1:28)

These words must have ‘struck a chord’ with King David, one of Israel’s greatest kings. Compared to the vastness of the universe, humans look so insignificant. The truth is, we have a significance out of all proportion to our size! The Genesis story had left David dumbfounded:

You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. (Psalm 8:5)

How had God crowned humans with glory and honour?

You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet. (Psalm 8:6)

It sounds a bit outrageous but we’re here to be ‘movers and shakers’. Seriously! We are the Creator’s managers! This planet has been placed in our hands! There’s not one part of it that doesn’t belong to us. But that doesn’t mean it’s open slather to rape and pillage the earth for our own selfish ends. We’re accountable to the Creator – to care for the world, develop it and shape it, in keeping with his values. As ‘image-bearers’, we’re here to make a difference – is this happening?

Explore the Bible

Read Genesis 1:26, 28; 2:15, 19–20.

What role was given to humans but not to animals?

Explore

Discussion starter

Q – If you were to hold a party to celebrate being human, what two things would you celebrate?

Q – What were some of the highlights from the readings?

Reading

Read Genesis 2:4–24.

Volunteers may like to read out loud a part or all of this story.

Q – What can you find in this story that makes humans special?

Q – Why do you think God created human life?

View

Video episode 4 – who am i?

Seven things God tells us about ourselves:

1. Humans were made therefore, we are significant.
 2. Humans were made therefore, we are unique in the way we were:
 - Made to things
 - Made to about things
 - Made to people more than things
 - Made to do the thing.
 3. Humans are passionately by God... so we are incredibly valuable.
-

Discuss

Questions I have

module 4

For more information...
See www.longstoryshort.co/who-am-i

