

Session 2: What Makes Humans Unique?

Session Goals

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because humans are created in God's image, we are made to receive his love and have a relationship with him.

Head Change: To know that God desires a relationship with us.

Heart Change: To feel a sense of wonder that God loves us.

Life Change: To accept God's love even when we do not feel worthy of it.

Session's Question and Answer

What makes humans unique?

Humans, unlike every other living creature, are created in God's image and meant to be in a loving relationship with him.

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

Review Last Session

In our last session, we explored who God is, his majesty, holiness, creativity, and love for all that he has made. We touched briefly on God as Trinity—three Persons but one divine essence. Before diving into today’s session, let’s discuss the Deeper Walk exercises you chose. **Which one did you pick? How did it go?**

OPEN

What skill or quality are you known for in your family or friend group?

Do you juggle, sing, or draw? Maybe you are the star athlete or best cook. Proving ourselves to be unique from others in some big or small way can bring feelings of pride and satisfaction. But beyond special talents, our very existence as humans is cause for great joy and amazement. In our session today, Francis will examine what makes humans unique—and what God made us for. Turns out we have nothing to prove.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis Chan’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

How does being made in God’s image enable us to have a relationship with him?

Why did God send the Son to suffer on our behalf?

Show Session 2: *What Makes Humans Unique?* (12 minutes).

Francis walked us through the creation story to set up this session about humans. Genesis 1 shows us a pattern for how God created the universe, Earth, and all that inhabit it and judged it to be “good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). After creating the first humans, he saw that his whole creation was “very good indeed” (1:31). Read Genesis 1:26–31. **How are humans different from other creatures? What does this passage reveal about God’s purpose and plan for humans?**

The Old Testament was written to ancient Israelites, who saw their pagan neighbors create objects in the likeness of birds and animals. The pagans believed that those carved images, called idols, represented their gods because the gods' spirits inhabited them. When the Israelites read Genesis 1:27—"Let us make man in our own image, according to our likeness"—they understood that God had made humans to be physical representatives of God on earth. Being God's image is a quality innate to all human beings. We often see it written in Latin: *imago Dei*.

In verse 27, God declared both men and women as made in his image. Being made in his image is part of our identity, an innate aspect of who we are. We cannot lose his image or have it only in part. No matter how sinful we may become or what abilities we may lose, our identity as image-bearers never changes. **How does knowing you were created in God's image affect the way you think about yourself? About God? About other people? What happens when we do not see others as made in God's image?**

We do not always live according to our identity. Instead of treating people with honor and dignity, we sometimes mistreat others and ourselves. When people are different from us in culture, race, gender, looks, likes and dislikes—anything, it seems—we are tempted to see them as “less than.” But God would have us remember that he values each person equally. **What can you do to show people who differ from you that they are worthy of dignity and respect because they are made in God's image?**

God made us for a relationship with him. Read Genesis 2:15–18; 3:8–9. God spoke with the first man and woman and interacted with them in the garden. They related with him personally, a habit that continued through future generations. **How do you respond to the concept that God desires your attention and wants you to know him intimately? In what ways does being loved by your creator impact how you see your own worth?**

To help you remember your value to God, see Practice 1 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

In Genesis 1:28–30, God explained his purpose for creating us—we are set apart from the rest of creation to steward it on God’s behalf. As his representatives, doing his will on Earth, we are called to cultivate and care for the ground, the animals, the waters, and one another so that all can flourish. The ways in which we steward the world will differ greatly—he has given us all a variety of creative talents and gifts. **To what extent have you thought of creativity and work as part of God’s purpose for your life? In what ways are you helping make something flourish?**

For an exercise that encourages you to appreciate the way God made you unique, see Practice 2 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

Francis said, “Maybe the most beautiful thing about being a human—we are capable of receiving love from God.” Read 1 John 4:7–8. Our capacity to receive and give love—with God and one another—comes from our creator, because God is love. **In what ways have you struggled to receive God’s love? What difference has knowing he loves you made in your life?**

To help you process the idea of being made to receive God's love, see Practice 3 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

[illegible]

If God made us able to receive his love, then we must remember that he made all people with the same ability. He loves them as he loves us. **How could our relationship with God be affected when we refuse to love those whom he loves?**

Francis referenced the love shown by the three persons of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Spirit—to talk about what it means to enjoy a relationship with God. The word “Trinity” isn’t used in the Bible, but we see references to the three persons of the Trinity throughout Scripture. Read Romans 5:1–8. This passage shows us three things about the Trinity and our loving relationship with God. First, we have peace with God (the Father) and access to him through Christ (the Son) who died for us (v. 1–2). In a sign of his love for us, God sent Christ, initiating the process of restoring us to full relationship with him (v. 8). **When is it tempting to think you have to make the first move with God to be at peace with him? How does it affect your view of his love to know he has made a way for you to return to him, even before you wanted to?**

Second, faith in Jesus results in a restored relationship between us and God. [Note: We will address much more about Jesus in future sessions.] Jesus, though perfect, died on behalf of ungodly humanity (v. 6), proving his love for us. We don’t have to wonder if God will love us in our imperfection. He’s already shown us how much he does. **When do you feel most tempted to think God doesn’t love you? What does it look like to fight against the tendency to doubt his love?**

Sharing from his own experience as an abandoned child, Francis acknowledged that many of us have difficulty believing that God

loves us perfectly because of our backgrounds, human relationships, and experiences. **In what ways have relationships and experiences in your past shaped the way you see God and formed your understanding of how God feels about you?**

Third, when we put our faith in Christ, God pours out his love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). He not only rescues us from the penalty of sin but also empowers us to live in a godly manner, to become more like Christ. The Spirit's presence with us comes out of God's great love for us. **In what ways has the Spirit's presence helped you experience God's love? What evidence have you seen of the Spirit's work in your growth as a Christian?**

We were made to receive God's love and love him back. Read John 15:12–17. God desires a close, loving relationship with us, his image-bearers who were created for intimacy with him. Being made for friendship with God is a beautiful mystery. **In what ways does your relationship with God resemble your relationships with your friends? What characteristics make it different from human friendships?**

Jesus said that those who love him keep his word. As true friends of God, we bear his image by loving others well because Jesus's great desire is for all to know that he loves them. With the Spirit's power, we become his tangible arms of comfort, hands of service, and feet bringing good news. **What are your favorite ways to share the love of God with others? In which ways are you best suited to help those who need to know God loves them?**

[illegible]

Humans are unique among all other creatures because God made us in his image to receive his love and enjoy relationship with him. He doesn't just put up with us; he loves us so much that Jesus sacrificed himself on our behalf, taking the penalty for our sin. He invites us to receive his love and to bask in his presence as his Spirit dwells with us forever. We can set aside our feelings of inadequacy. No longer do we have to believe we are less-than. Made in God's image, we are born with significance and dignity, and we can step out with confidence, knowing that he loves us.

Humans, unlike every other living creature, are created in God's image and meant to be in a loving relationship with him.

This section is designed to help you practice different ways to interact with God and reflect on what you've learned in this session. Pick at least one activity to try before the next session.

To remind yourself that God designed you with care and purpose, add the text of Genesis 1:27 to your phone background or post it in a notecard on your mirror to help you memorize it: “So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.”

Think of a person you struggle to like or get along with and pray for God to give you a right perspective on that person. Pray for their needs and for your relationship to improve—even flourish. Ask the Lord to show you what kindness you can do for this fellow image-bearer.

Write your thoughts about Francis's statement, "Maybe the most beautiful thing about being a human—we are capable of receiving love from God." How do his words connect with how you have understood your humanity? In what ways have you received his love?

Talk with your small group, close friends, or family about the value we each have because we are God's image-bearers. What does it look like to show dignity to people who are different from us or with whom we conflict? What can you do to show one another respect in the coming days?

This image shows a vertical rectangular sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it is resting on a surface.

RightNow Media Presents
What Is a Christian? STUDY GUIDE

Copyright © 2024 RightNow
by RightNow Ministries

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except where noted on handouts and in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Written by Kelley Mathews.

Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Doctrinal Statement can be found at rightnow.org.

For information, write:

Permissions
RightNow Ministries
6300 Henneman Way
McKinney, Texas 75070

RightNow Ministries is a non-profit ministry.

Published by RightNow Ministries.