

## God and My Being (made in His image, for His Glory)

**Psalm 8:1, 3-4** O Lord, our Lord,  
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
 You have set your glory above the heavens.  
 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
 the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
 what is man that You are mindful of him,  
 and the son of man that You care for him?

There is a question in this ancient Psalm which has the possibility of two answers. However, the two possible answers are not compatible. Either one answer is correct, and the other one is false. Or the first answer is unreliable, which means the other answer one *must be* the case.

The question arises from verse 4, and it sounds simple: **WHAT IS MAN?** We might rephrase it this way, "**From where did human beings come, and so what?**" The two possible answers are as opposite as black vs. white, north vs. south, dark vs. light.

One answer: Man – human beings – are the current product of "naturalism," i.e., a mindless, natural universe of unguided physical forces that simply happened without any intelligent design nor intent. In other words, it's all a grand accident, including humanity. Hugh Ross explains:

*The late Stephen Jay Gould, in his work Wonderful Life (written 120 years after Darwin's Descent of Man) drove home naturalism's claim: Man's appearance, self-awareness, intellect, and moral sensibility are not the inevitable product of an evolutionary process that marched inexorably toward increasingly sophisticated organisms with advanced mental capacity. Rather, humanity is nothing more than "a thing so small in a vast universe, a wildly improbably evolutionary event," that it must be a quirk of fate.<sup>i</sup>*

What is Gould saying? When Voyager 1 took a picture of Earth from some 3.7 billion miles away, we saw ourselves (on Valentine's Day 1990) as a "small pale-blue dot," a small planet in the Milky Way galaxy that measures 120,000 light years across and consists of 200 billion stars...[The Milky Way itself but one small galaxy in a collection of 27 galaxies spanning 3 million light-years.]<sup>ii</sup>

Stephen Gould's argument produces one answer to the question. Man is the result of a historically contingent process that has "no mind, no direction, no tendency toward progressive advance." Rightly understood, in the larger picture of the cosmos, man is actually, totally insignificant. Put more bluntly...man is meaningless.

There is a second answer, but it is not true unless the 1<sup>st</sup> answer is false. If a mindless, unguided, wildly random, blind process is insufficient to explain who we are, then our 2<sup>nd</sup> answer is demanded. Man is here – humanity has flourished on this small, pale blue dot because it is a special planet that has been

intentionally, and uniquely outfitted for life. And thus because he/she were marvelously and meticulously created by a majestic and brilliant God.

This answer means that the words we find in Genesis 1 are not just Biblical, they are historical, and they are a description of reality.

**Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

*(please notice the wording! It means something! It speaks about a Divine orientation to what is the focus of God's creating intent.)*

**Gen 1:26** *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."*

**27** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

We are either nothing more than a cosmic, meaningless accident...or we are made in the image of God. I am what I believe about God.

For our purposes in this worship setting today, I'd like to unpack this key truth:

**No human person – male or female – can fully become what God created him/her to be (now, and forever) without being shaped by "creation truth"**

Without embracing and thus being shaped by – from the inside out – what I would call "creation truth" about God

So what does "creation-Scripture" (i.e., Genesis 1:26f and others like it) call us to believe about God, in order to rightly shape who we are?

**#1 It shapes us to know, and thus believe, that GOD has created everything, the expression of an eternally perfect plan.**

Ps. 18:30, 33:11, Is. 40:13-14, Eph. 1:11, Psalm 102/Hebrews 1

**Psalm 18:29-30** It is You who light my lamp;  
The Lord my God (en)lightens my darkness  
For by You I can run against a troop  
And by my God I can leap over a wall  
This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

**Psalm 33:10-11**

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing  
He frustrates the plans of the peoples.  
The counsel of the Lord stands forever  
The plans of His heart to all generations

**Isaiah 40:12-14** Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured

the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

As a young college student, I remember sitting in my first class in philosophy, only to have the professor begin the class by reading those verses. And then, this brilliant professor paused and worshipped the greatness of God...before we ever cracked open a humanly authored textbook.

**Ephesians 1:1,11** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will

With all due respect to the scholarly knowledge and learning and wisdom that may be represented in this room today, I challenge you to sit down this week with 2-3-4 others and meditate on these passages together. Think about the implications and truths imbedded in these words. It shapes us to understand that all of us – we all – are dependent and have been created by a God who is omnipotent and whose counsel and plans are both eternal and perfect. We can't become ALL that God intended without worship; without humbling acknowledging a God who has created and is working out a perfect plan.

**Psalm 102:25-28** Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.  
They will perish, but you will remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment.  
You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away,  
but you are the same, and your years have no end.  
The children of your servants shall dwell secure;  
their offspring shall be established before you.<sup>iii</sup>

**#2 It shapes us to believe GOD's creation was so crafted to vividly reveal and to eagerly invite us into the fellowship of His glory.**

Ps. 19:1, 71:8, Isaiah 43:6-7 45:18, 66:18, Rev. 4:11, 10:6, 21:1-6,22-25

One of the great truths of Scripture is the invitation extended to us to look at the heavens and to believe in and embrace the glory of God. Psalm 19:1 states "The heavens declare the glory of God," only to have David do with that display what God intended – Psalm 71:8, "My mouth is filled with Your praise and with your glory all the day." David takes the invitation! God invites us into the fellowship and joy of His glory. God declares

**Is. 43:6-7** I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar  
and my daughters from the end of the earth,  
everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

It shapes us to know, and it shapes us to believe, that this incredible God lays out His glory, not to show off,

but to invite us closer! He creates us to know Him. He has created us to delight in Him. He has created us to experience the joys and delights of a being whose love for us is relentless, and his invitation to know Him and discover Him never ceases.

**Isaiah 66:18** "For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. and they shall come and shall see my glory

When I (David Staff) was a middle school kid, one of my Sunday School teachers was a man named Lowell Vandervort. Lowell was an accomplished professional, the chief administrator of St. Luke's hospital in Milwaukee, WI, where heart transplant surgery was pioneered in the midwest (1968).<sup>iv</sup> Somehow, Lowell made time for a group of middle-school knuckle-heads like myself, faithfully –every week -- opening up the Scriptures. Lowell was one of those men who opened up for me the treasures of the Bible.

I've never forgotten the day Lowell and Dru invited all us goofy SS boys up to their incredible home in Milwaukee, a majestic townhome suite sitting atop a high-rise with a view of Milwaukee and Lake Michigan. I'd never been in such a beautiful place, nor served such a delightful meal. I can remember wondering, "What am I doing here? Why do I get to enjoy this? I'm just a kid!" Years later, Lowell and Dru invited Pamela and me to dinner at an exclusive downtown Milwaukee club. I was so uninitiated, I didn't even know enough to show up with a coat and tie for the setting. Lowell smiled and someone fetched a tie. Again, I thought, "What am I doing here...enjoying such things?"

My point? It humbles you; it shapes you and changes you when Someone who is brilliant and accomplished – more than you ever imagined – somehow wants your company, and delights in sharing with you all the joys that they have. **I am what I believe about God**...I am shaped by believing there is a God with a perfect plan...and that that same God has invited me into the fellowship of His glory. Thirdly...

### **#3 It shapes us to believe GOD created (and creates!) human beings, uniquely so, in His image.**

Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:6, Psalm 139, James 3:9

**Ps 139:13-14** (p.522) *For You formed my inward parts;  
You knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*

The image of God in every human being is the vivid likeness of God's eternally relational, moral, and rationally purposeful character imbedded in each uniquely created person.<sup>v</sup>

- a. To be made in God's image means you have real value
- b. To be made in God's image means you have dignity
- c. To be made in God's image means you have a solid foundation for ethics, morals, and values
- d. To be made in God's image means you have an innate orientation toward God
- e. To be made in God's image means your Creator God has a passion to recover you from sin

### **#4 It shapes us to believe that created in God's image and invited into His glory, I am accountable to God himself for my understanding of His revelation, and my relationship responses to Him.**

Romans 3:19, 14:12, Hebrews 4:13, 1 Peter 4:5

**Romans 3:19** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

**Romans 14:12** So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

**Hebrews 4:13** And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**1 Peter 4:3-5** For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. **4** With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; **5** but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

## CONCLUSION

One day, in a dialogue with students and faculty on a major university campus, Ravi Zacharias was asked

"What belongs to God? I think I know what Jesus would have said. *Whose image is on you? The image on the coin is Caesar's. Give to Caesar that which is Caesar's.* Whose image do you bear?

Did you know that the Judeo-Christian world view is the only world view that holds to that? That you are made in the image of God. The Muslim would consider that blasphemous. The Hindu will not accept that because the caste system is intrinsic to his/her faith where the every birth is a rebirth and an accretion of *karma* from the previous birth is now embodied in yours. Buddhism a variant of that, but the same idea.

When you and I are told that we are made in the image of God, the implication is very obvious. We are created with essential worth.<sup>vi</sup>

Here is the truth. I am what I believe about God. You and I live in a world where each day's news argues forcefully, once again, that God is a non-factor and we are nothing but animals. And so often, we act like it.

- Chicago shootings and brutality
- Children that die from neglect.
- Corporate greed that intentionally produces products that maim and kill.
- Anger and hatred and selfishness in divorce courtrooms.
- Read through your newspaper this week!

*If Stephen Gould is right, and this is all a meaningless, cosmic accident* than I am what I believe. Jill Carattini has said it,

*Acting on our own power and authority, independent of God, we merely expose our alienation from God and from our true selves. We fail to know what it means to be most fully human.*

But, there is another answer to David's Psalm 8 question.

*But united to Christ through faith we are united to another nature entirely. Writes one disciple, "[God] has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world."*(4)

*Christ came to unite humanity with God so that we can be truly human as he is human. This is far more hopeful news than many other worldviews and self-help plans impart. For if true humanity is a humanity fully united to its Creator, then the possibility is ours.*<sup>vii</sup>

Actually, the question that a star-gazing young David asks in Psalm 8 is more precisely this. "God, why do YOU think about man?" That is, God, as great as you are, and as vast is the unimaginable reaches of Your power in this awesome universe, why do YOU *even bother* with man? Why spend any of Your attention and resources and affection on him?"

God's Holy Spirit prompts David to ask that question in order to reveal a surprising answer. To remind us and blow us away with this: The most valuable part of God's creation is YOU. Is every individual, created-in-the-image-of-God person. *So valuable* – even when we have plunged ourselves in sin and rebellion and disregard of God – *so valuable* that God himself would come and die in shame to accomplish our rescue. *So valuable*, that God himself invites you into an eternity with him – through faith in Christ – that will make this life seem like nothing more than a child's first step.

**No human person – male or female – can fully become  
what God created him/her to be (now, and forever)  
without being shaped by "creation truth"**

I am what I believe about God.

Copyright 2017 © David A. Staff  
All rights reserved

---

<sup>i</sup> Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam? A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man* (NavPress, 2005, Reasons to Believe), 22-23.

<sup>ii</sup> Rana with Ross, 190-20. "Each galaxy includes an average of 100 billion stars, making a total of about 20 billion trillion stars. As an infinitesimal part of the universe, Earth's smallness seems incomprehensible. But there, in its midst, stands man."

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Hebrews 1:10-12 ESV

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.wisn.com/article/st-luke-s-hospital-s-medical-milestone-800-heart-transplants/6317177>

<sup>v</sup> David A. Staff's definition

<sup>vi</sup> Ravi Zacharias on the image of God, <http://rzim.org/just-a-thought-broadcasts/gods-image/>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://rzim.org/a-slice-of-infinity/the-image-of-true-humanity/> *While Christ is the one who makes our resurrection possible, the one who restores in us the image of God, the process of reviving is also something we actively take hold of as human beings united to the Son. In other words, to live as children made in God's image and united to Christ is not a static hope, but an active calling made possible by the One who mediates the very hope of what it means to be human*