

Title: Welcome to Life  
Date: July 31, 2022  
Subject: Human life is important to God.  
Scripture: Genesis 1:26-31

Here are some of the things you would have heard this past week at our VBS or by way of review for those who were present. Monday focused on the beginning of life, being made in God's image. Tuesday was the wonder of life, being made with amazing design, fearfully and wonderfully made. Wednesday: the value of life. Every person is made with worth and is a priceless treasure. Thursday: the eternal life for which we're made, a relationship with God who loves us so much he sent his only Son to die for us. And then Friday: we were created on purpose for a purpose. The entire week was all about returning to the value God places on life. Since he does, we're to do the same.

This morning we're going to focus on the theme of why human life is valuable and important to God. We'll begin with the first book of the Bible and the first chapter where we find a record of God creating.

Read Genesis 1:26 – 31.

#### I. First contact

The first contact humans had with God was in the Garden of Eden, a place of perfection. However, it wasn't the first contact God had with people. Sound confusing? Here's the basis for this.

Since God is eternal and possesses all knowledge, we understand God had the plan to create human beings prior to their existence. Scripture informs us: "For he (God the Father) chose us in him (the Lord Jesus Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:4, 5). If we were chosen and predestined, then God had to think of humans before they came into being.

The importance of humanity is pointed out by several things.

A. There is the order of creation. People were the last of God's creation. It certainly wasn't a case of "last but not least" as God "saved the best for last."

On day one of Creation, God created light. That would be incredibly spectacular because there had never been light and all of a sudden there was light. As we continue through the creation week, we witness more and more of God's astounding creativity. When we arrive at day 6, the land creatures came into being.

But God's work wasn't done. He had one more bit of creating to do -- creating the first man and woman. More details are provided about the creation of man than about the other parts of creation. For everything except humans, God simply spoke, and whatever he wanted to come into existence, came into existence, whether it was the sun, moon and stars, the waters teeming with living creatures, birds flying above the earth or the land animals. One moment the skies were empty and the next there were cardinals and eagles

and blue jays and hummingbirds. One moment there weren't any land animals and the next there were cows and dogs and koalas.

But man. . . that's a different story. READ Genesis 2:7.

Another Scripture picks up the theme. It describes all people as the work of the Father's hands (Isaiah 64:8). While Scripture talks about God making, creating and forming other things as well, it's more of a hands-off approach. With man, the creation moment is more intimate, more personal. It's that of a potter bending over his wheel, laboring to shape whatever he's making. The Lord gets close up, stoops down. Animals had the breath of life in them from God simply speaking, but with man, God breathed into human nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. God's fingerprints are all over the creation of people.

The second way the uniqueness of people is shown is the position given to humanity. They were placed over all the rest of creation as supervisors, managers, God's servants. The first job Adam received was to work in the Garden of Eden and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). In addition, the Lord gave Adam naming rights of all the creatures. How did Adam know what to call the animals? God gave him the ability so he could call a platypus a platypus and a dingo a dingo.

In another Scripture we're told "You (God) made him (referring to people) a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; You put everything under his feet; All flocks and herds, and beasts of the field, birds of the air and fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:5 - 8). Humanity is given the superior position, the position of authority.

The most important way that we see God uniquely cares for humans is he made them in his image. This means we resemble God. It's not so much of an outward thing. It's more of the qualities and characteristics God shares with people.

One is intellectual capacity and the ability to apply that knowledge. It's used reading a book, inventing a game, coloring a picture, figuring out a way to produce a product, pondering what happens to us when we die. Animals don't have the ability to write poetry. You might be one of those who says that no person knows how to write poetry either because you really don't like poetry. The idea is lightning bugs will never flip through the air too form words to compose it's Shakespearean type sonnet. your goldfish won't invent a new form of musical instrument.

Some people have the incredible ability to know scads of sports stats like the winners of every World Series and the scores of the games or minute details of every president of the United States or can memorize vast amounts of Scripture. Some people claim to have photographic memory, but most scientists who've studied the supposed phenomena, say it's just that, a supposed phenomena. They doubt there is actually such a thing as photographic memory. They said the claimants might have a really, really, really, really, good memory but don't truly remember everything. They pointed to the winner of a memory Olympics but needed to keep Post-It notes on their refrigerator to remember what were supposed to do during the day.

God knows everything whether it's all 173 million items of the Library of Congress, the number of stars and sand as well as the daily details of our lives. He has all knowledge.

There are the moral and emotional aspects which often involve the exercise of the will. We have the ability to know right from wrong, to separate good from evil. This doesn't mean we always exercise our will properly. Sometimes emotions cloud our decision making. Sometimes we make bad choices but if there's a sense of guilt, it's an indication of being made in God's moral image.

One of the animal pals for VBS was the dingo. Pictures of the little dingoes were so adorable. They looked so cuddly. But I wouldn't want to be anywhere near a pack of adult dingoes. They attack and devour their prey without thinking something was wrong with them, that they shouldn't have done such a horrible thing as to kill something else and they needed to pray to God, hoping he would forgive them. They have no regret or guilt.

God is different from humans and animals. He flawlessly exercises his will. He never chooses to do anything wrong. He is perfect in every aspect of his being. He has never done anything to mar it.

One of the first thing most people think about God when it comes to describing his character is his love. Almost everyone would agree that he is love. The Bible declares "God is love." People count on is the fact that God is love. Unfortunately, many have a misunderstanding of how God applies his love. They feel that God will love and accept everyone except for mass murderers and a few other reprehensible types. He'll overlook any faults "normal" people have. They forget about his justice.

God shares the attribute of love with people so they have the capacity to love and care for others. We can receive love from God and people. We can show love to God and people. Sometimes people come across as a prickly cactus but they still have the ability to love and be loved.

We've been created to be eternal. People came into being and will last forever. There is no end to our existence. It will be in one of two places – heaven or hell.

God is different. He has always been. He never came into being. He has been forever in the past and will be forever in the future. If you're looking for something to do this afternoon, use some of the brain power the Lord gave you and contemplate that part of God's character.

The uniqueness of how the Lord made humans should inspire in us awe and wonder. The memory verse for day 2 of VBS was "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; My soul knows it very well" (Psalm 139: 14).

Attached to the Information Center is a series of seven posters depicting how we are fearfully and wonderfully made. It shows the progression of a human life from the moment of conception to being ready for birth. If you haven't checked it out, it's well worth taking time to do so.

David Schneider co-taught the oldest class. He stressed that fearfully means spectacularly, awesomely. He had them do an activity which demonstrate the uniqueness of how God has created each human being. The students were to write down a string of random letters stretching across the width of an 8 1/2 inch piece of

paper. Then he asked them to see if anybody had the same letters. None of them did. One boy just put all zeros to fill the entire piece of paper. He was proud of the fact his was unique. They were all unique patterns. That was the point -- each human being is incredibly unique because of our DNA.

There are other factors that show the uniqueness of each individual person. Most think of fingerprints. No two are alike. There's also voice patterns, toes and toe prints, lips, teeth, the iris of the eye, the outer ear with its complex geometric features of ridges and furrows, the way we walk, the way we sit, our body scent, skull shape, fingernail patterns, pores on our noses and tongue print. How would you like to have use some of those for identification?

We come to the most important factor that demonstrates how God values human life and distinguishes it from all other life.

## II. God's salvation mission.

Thursday of VBS was the designated day in the curriculum that emphasized the truth people are made for relationship with God. People can have eternal life and live with him forever. This teaching also was worked in on other days and in other ways.

The memory verse for the day was John 11:25. READ John 11:25, 26.

There are two key insights about life. The first is Jesus establishes himself as the life. It is one of his "I AM" statements. He declares, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus spoke these words to Martha who was mourning the death of her brother. It was not merely some meager attempt to pacify her grief and assure things were going to be okay.

Jesus didn't mean he is alive, fully alive, filled with vibrancy, the life of the party. He is the life. Jesus had not yet died but was speaking as if he had died and already resurrected himself from the dead. He's saying he is the embodiment of all it means to be alive. It is everything that is the opposite of death. Scripture tells us, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). Life came from God. Life means having a connection with God.

The teaching about life is critical to the book of John. The fourth verse of the book states, "In him, the Word (who is Jesus Christ the Son of God) was life" (John 1:4).

The second part of John 1:4 provides the second insight about life: "and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Jesus Christ had life in himself. He came to give life to people. Now, people already had physical life, so that can't be it. It has to speak of another dimension, about spiritual life, about the ability to have eternal life because a person is in a right relationship with God.

The verse that quickly comes to many minds is John 3:16. We had our group, the oldest group, the platypuses, say it and repeat it louder. We've done a similar thing here in that we've had the church family quote this majestic verse. It slides easily off the tips of our tongues.

But there's much more in the Bible about life than this one verse. As I mentioned not that long ago, the teaching about life runs throughout the book of John. It's like the Heavenly Father wants people to

comprehend something he has to say. The teaching began early in the book as I've already read John 1:4. And we heard Jesus' reassurance to Martha about how she and anyone could experience eternal life.

We're going to have some church family participation at this point to see some of the other places where life is presented. I'm going to ask for readers to volunteer on the spot. We're in the book of John, so you'll need to turn there if you haven't already. I'll mention the reference and then somebody read it for us.

We'll begin near the familiar verse of John 3:16. Sometimes we don't even notice what's in the verses around it let alone be able to quote them.

Someone read John 3:14, 15.

Stay in the same chapter as next up is John 3:36.

Move ahead in the book but don't go too far, just to the next chapter where Jesus has the conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well. John 4:13, 14.

To the next chapter. John 5:21 and 24.

And the next chapter John 6:35 and 40.

Don't worry. We're not gonna keep going chapter by chapter. We're going to skip. . . a chapter. 8:12.

Skip another chapter. John 10:10.

Better put the pedal to the metal and move on little more quickly to another familiar verse. John 14:6.

There are many more we could find. I'll leave that to you to research and look for yourselves. Let's cut to the chase, toward the end of the book where we have a summary of what Jesus did. John 20:30, 31.

God did none of this for any other part of creation. Jesus didn't go through the agony and sacrifice of the cross to provide salvation for wallabies or coral. He didn't rise from the dead for kangaroos. God did what he did for people. From the moment he knit each person together in their mother's womb, he saw them as a person for whom Jesus would die and rise. As a result, they would be able to receive eternal life if they place their trust in what God was doing.

All people need to come to him. All people need to hear what he offers so they can be found in the Book of Life where the Lord records the names of people who will live with him forever in heaven.

Pepper Martin, the hero of the 1931 World Series in what one manager described as "the greatest individual performance in the history of the World Series" (John McGraw). Martin was asked, "What is your chief ambition?" He answered, "My chief ambition is to go to heaven!" His questioner dismissively chuckled, "You want to play harp, eh?" "Mister," said Martin, "I don't think that's funny. People don't want to be ignoble, I guess, but they surely are so without thinking. If there is anything foolish in reading the Bible every day and believing its contents; if there's anything funny about wanting to enter heaven when you leave this life, then I'm afraid that life in this world is not worth living" (Knight, p. 282).