



# Shelby Christian Church

CORE 52: NEW LENS - OUR TRUE IDENTITY

GENESIS 1:26, EPHESIANS 1, PSALM 8:4-5, PSALM 139:13-14, HEBREWS 2:6-8 \* 8/31/2025

## MAIN POINT

We are created in God's image.

## INTRODUCTION

**Share an example of how individualistic our culture is. What are some of the potential pitfalls of seeking our identity from a purely individualized frame of mind?**

**What are some of your favorite hobbies? What are some ways we tend to let our hobbies, our jobs, or even activities that fill our days define us?**

Hobbies and activities often shape how we see ourselves. If you love running, you might call yourself a runner. If you spend a lot of time at the gym, you may even identify as a “gym rat.” Many of us also define ourselves by roles—dad, mom, accountant, cyclist, supervisor, or family taxi driver. Today, we’re taking a step back to the very beginning of creation to discover the true source of our identity—rooted in God, our Creator.

## UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 1:26

**How does knowing you are made in God’s image influence the way you view yourself? How does being created in God’s image reflect God’s character, creativity, and authority? How does reflecting on God’s image in humanity encourage humility, respect, and love for others?**

**Genesis 1:26 says humans are created to “rule over” the earth. What does responsible stewardship look like in today’s context?**

**In what ways can understanding your God-given purpose shape your daily decisions and priorities?**

Genesis 1:26 reveals that humans are uniquely created in the image and likeness of God. Unlike the rest of creation, we are made to reflect God’s character, creativity, and authority. This verse also shows that humanity has a purpose: to steward and care for the earth responsibly. Being made in God’s image gives our lives inherent value, dignity, and meaning.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 1

**Paul begins by praising God for every spiritual blessing in Christ. What blessings stand out to you in this passage?**

**How do adoption, redemption, and forgiveness (vv. 5–7) shape the way we understand our identity in Christ?**

**What does it mean that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14)? How does this give us assurance and hope?**

Ephesians 1 opens with praise to God for every spiritual blessing given to believers in Christ. Paul highlights that we were chosen before the foundation of the world, adopted as God’s children, redeemed through Christ’s blood, forgiven, and sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance. He then prays for the Ephesian believers to grow in their knowledge of God, to grasp the hope of their calling, the riches of their inheritance, and the greatness of God’s power—displayed in raising Christ from the dead and exalting Him as head over all things for the church.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 8:4-5**

**Why do you think David was amazed that God pays attention to humanity?**

**What does it mean that humans are made “a little lower than the heavenly beings”?**

**How does this passage shape the way you view human worth and dignity?**

In Psalm 8:4–5, David marvels at God’s care for humanity despite our smallness in the vastness of creation. Though seemingly insignificant, humans hold a place of great honor because God created them just below the heavenly beings and crowned them with glory and dignity. These verses highlight both our humility before God and the incredible value He has given us as His image-bearers.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 139:13-14**

**How does the picture of God “knitting” us together shape your view of His care and intentionality?**

**What do the words “fearfully and wonderfully made” communicate about human life? When do you most struggle to see yourself as “fearfully and wonderfully made”?**

**How does this passage challenge the way society often defines human value?**

In these verses, David marvels at God’s intimate involvement in creating him. He describes God as the One who carefully formed his inner being and skillfully “knitted” him together in his mother’s womb. Recognizing this, David bursts into praise, declaring that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made.” These verses highlight the dignity, value, and purpose of every human life, rooted in God’s intentional design and wonderful works.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 2:6-8**

**In what ways does Christ’s life, death, and resurrection fulfill the purpose and authority God intended for humanity? How does this passage shape the way you view your own dignity and value in God’s eyes?**

**How does knowing that Jesus shared in our humanity affect your relationship with Him?**

**What responsibilities come with being crowned with glory and honor, as human beings created in God’s image? How might we reflect Christ’s authority and glory in our daily lives?**

Hebrews 2:6–8 quotes Psalm 8 to highlight humanity’s intended dignity and authority. Humans were created “a little lower than the angels” and crowned with glory and honor, with all things under their feet. The passage emphasizes both our value and responsibility as God’s image-bearers. The author points to Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of this calling—He shared in humanity, experienced suffering, and was exalted, fully embodying the glory and authority God intended for humankind.

## APPLICATION

**Answer the question: "Who are you?" How much of your answer is about you as an individual, and how much is about the relationships that form you?**

**What are some things we could recognize and live out through our Christian community in the church? How could that change our experience with each other and with God?**

**What are some "normal" activities that reveal God's nature in us? Choose one that you will intentionally recognize as a spiritual activity for at least one day.**

**What one simple act could you practice this week to "rule" God's creation as His steward (manager) in this world.**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

### Genesis 1:26

“Let us make mankind in our image” - This verse emphasizes that humans are uniquely created to reflect God’s image (imago Dei). Unlike plants, animals, or the rest of creation, people bear God’s character, creativity, and moral capacity. The use of the plural “us” has been understood by Christians as a subtle reference to the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—working in unity in creation.

“In our likeness” - Being made in God’s likeness points to our ability to reflect His attributes, such as wisdom, love, justice, and creativity. While we are finite and imperfect, our design allows us to mirror God’s nature in our thoughts, relationships, and stewardship of creation.

Humanity’s Purpose: Stewardship and Dominion - God gives humanity authority to “rule over” creation, not as tyrants but as caretakers. This stewardship involves responsibility, creativity, and care for the earth and all living things. It highlights that human purpose is relational—toward God, toward others, and toward creation.

### Ephesians 1

verses 1-2 Paul opens with his usual greeting, reminding the Ephesian believers of their identity as saints and faithful in Christ. From the outset, he roots their identity in God’s grace and peace through Jesus.

verses 3–14 Paul bursts into praise, blessing God for the countless blessings believers have in Christ. These blessings include:

Election (v. 4): God chose believers before the creation of the world, showing His sovereign grace.

Adoption (vv. 5–6): Through Christ, we are welcomed into God’s family as sons and daughters.

Redemption and Forgiveness (vv. 7–8): Through Jesus’ blood, sin is forgiven, and freedom is given.

Revelation of God’s Plan (vv. 9–10): God’s eternal purpose is to unite all things under Christ.

Inheritance (vv. 11–12): Believers share in God’s promised inheritance, secured in Christ.

Seal of the Spirit (vv. 13–14): The Holy Spirit marks believers as God’s own and serves as a guarantee of our future inheritance.

This section emphasizes that salvation is entirely God’s work, rooted in His will and grace, to the praise of His glory.

verses 15–23 Paul gives thanks for the faith and love of the Ephesian believers and prays that they would grow in their knowledge of God. His prayer highlights three key areas:

Hope of His Calling (v. 18): The confident assurance believers have in Christ.

Riches of His Inheritance (v. 18): The glorious inheritance God shares with His people.

Greatness of His Power (vv. 19–20): The same resurrection power that raised Christ is at work in believers.

Paul concludes by exalting Christ as the risen and exalted Lord, seated at God’s right hand, far above all authority and power. Christ is the head of the church, which is His body—the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

## **Psalm 8:4–5**

verse 4 Humanity’s Smallness - David looks at the vast heavens—the moon and stars God set in place—and feels the weight of humanity’s smallness. He asks, “What is man that You are mindful of him?” The question expresses awe and humility. In light of the universe’s immensity, human beings seem insignificant. Yet God is not distant—He notices, cares for, and values us. This shows His personal, relational nature.

God’s Mindfulness and Care - The terms “mindful” and “care for” reveal God’s ongoing attention and compassion toward humanity. Unlike idols that cannot see or hear, the living God actively watches over His creation. His mindfulness is not abstract—it is tender, personal, and covenantal.

verse 5 Humanity’s Exalted Position - Despite human frailty, God has elevated people above the rest of creation. The phrase “a little lower than the heavenly beings” (translated as “angels,” “God,” or “heavenly beings” depending on versions) shows both humility and dignity. Humans are not divine, but we are uniquely exalted as God’s image-bearers, capable of knowing Him and exercising dominion under His authority.

Crowned with Glory and Honor- Being “crowned with glory and honor” points to the dignity and responsibility God has entrusted to humanity. Unlike animals, humans are made to reflect God’s character, creativity, and authority. This verse echoes Genesis 1:26–27, where God gave humanity dominion over creation. Our worth and honor do not come from achievement but from God’s design.

Christological Fulfillment- The New Testament (Hebrews 2:6–9) applies Psalm 8 to Jesus. While humanity has failed to fully live out this calling, Jesus, the Son of Man, perfectly fulfills it. He

humbled Himself, suffered, and was crowned with glory and honor through His resurrection and exaltation. Through Christ, believers share in this restored dignity and rule.

### **Psalm 139:13–14**

God's Intimate Involvement in Creation - David emphasizes that God is not a distant creator but personally involved in forming each person. The phrase "you formed my inward parts" points to God's detailed care in creating our inner being—our mind, heart, and physical body. God is portrayed as a master craftsman, intentionally designing every aspect of our existence.

"Knitted Me Together in My Mother's Womb" - The imagery of knitting conveys precision, intentionality, and care. This metaphor suggests that life is intricately and purposefully woven by God, even before birth. It underscores that every human life has value, dignity, and divine purpose from the very beginning.

The phrase "fearfully and wonderfully made" combines awe and reverence with marvel at God's work. "Fearfully" implies respect for the magnitude and care of God's craftsmanship, while "wonderfully" celebrates the uniqueness, beauty, and complexity of human life.

Praise as Response - David's immediate response to understanding God's work is praise: "I praise you...my soul knows it very well." Recognizing our intentional creation leads naturally to gratitude, worship, and affirmation of God's goodness.

### **Hebrews 2:6-8**

The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8 to emphasize the dignity and value of humanity. Psalm 8 marvels at God's care for humankind despite our seeming smallness. By bringing this into Hebrews, the writer connects the psalm to Christ and humanity's intended role.

Humans were created just below the angels, reflecting both humility and exalted status. This phrase acknowledges our finite nature but also our special position in God's creation. Humanity is not divine, but God entrusted us with a unique role and authority.

This crown symbolizes dignity, authority, and responsibility. Humans were meant to reflect God's character and exercise stewardship over creation. Glory and honor are God-given, not earned, underscoring that our worth comes from Him.

God intended humans to exercise dominion over creation. While humanity has often failed in this stewardship, the passage points toward Christ, who perfectly fulfills this role. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus restores human purpose and authority.

Hebrews applies these verses to Jesus, the ultimate "Son of Man." Though lower than the angels in His incarnation, He fully experienced humanity and suffering. God crowned Him with glory and honor through His resurrection and exaltation. Jesus embodies humanity's true calling and restores the dominion intended for humankind.