



## Value: Reflecting on Our Image Leaders' Notes



### **Imagine!**

"Where did I come from Dad?" asked Adam

"I made you" replied his Father

"What did you make me from?" was the next question.

"Well, stuff," replied God, choosing not to launch enthusiastically into the world's first Chemistry lesson until his bright young son had built up a wider vocabulary. "Dust-like stuff," he clarified in an assuring tone.

"What do you mean 'stuff'?" inquired the young man.

Well physiologically most of your body is made up of water. This is mostly oxygen, along with some hydrogen. Then there is some carbon which is the basic unit for organic molecules plus some nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus. There's a nice little concoction of Copper, Zinc, Selenium, Molybdenum, Fluorine, Chlorine, Iodine, Manganese, Cobalt, and Iron (I had fun with that). Then there are small amounts of other chemicals such as..., he paused as Adam's eyes grew wider and wider.

"Oh I see!" responded Adam hesitantly, "You mean 'stuff!'"

Maybe I'll go and name a few more animals, he thought to himself. I'll leave the science nerd role to one of my kids. They're bound to understand it better than me!

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### **Dust and Breath**

We were made from the dust of the earth. Or to be more specific we are 65% oxygen, 18% carbon 10% hydrogen and so on.

To have put all that down in Genesis would have confused too many people for too long so 'dust' is a good generalization.

We were not made from gold dust – worth so much in the eyes of the world. Although to farmers who grow the food we all need to survive, good quality 'dust of the earth' would be of more value than gold dust.

So the value of 'dust' is a little hard to define but it is seen as something extremely common.

There was nothing common about what God did with it though. However he made the rest of the world, when it came to creating Man, the Bible gives the sense that it was

Most of the human body is made up of water - H<sub>2</sub>O. Therefore most of a human body's mass is oxygen. Carbon, the basic unit for organic molecules, comes in second:

1. Oxygen (65%)
2. Carbon (18%)
3. Hydrogen (10%)
4. Nitrogen (3%)
5. Calcium (1.5%)
6. Phosphorus (1.0%)

Then there is also a sprinkling of:

7. Potassium (0.35%)
8. Sulfur (0.25%)
9. Sodium (0.15%)
10. Magnesium (0.05%)
11. Copper, Zinc, Selenium, Molybdenum, Fluorine, Chlorine, Iodine, Manganese, Cobalt, Iron (0.70% in total)
12. Finally there are trace amounts of Lithium, Strontium, Aluminum, Silicon, Lead, Vanadium, Arsenic, and Bromine

up close and personal – hands on – planning and forming every minute physical detail. Man was to be the masterpiece\* of his creation, Ephesians 2:10, his most prized possession, James 1:18. For God said, “Let us make human beings **in our image and likeness**. And let them rule over ... the earth...” Genesis 1:26-27

*\*Although strictly speaking it is the restored version of Mankind that is God's masterpiece.*

How had he brought the animals to life? We don't know. But with man “He **breathed the breath of life** into the man's nose, and the man became a living person.” Genesis 2:7 NCV

In doing so God imprinted something of himself on Mankind. God was Adam's spiritual father as well as his creator. Adam was not God's son in that he shared all his powers and supernatural abilities because clearly he did not. Adam was going to have to prove himself before being entrusted with anything *remotely* like that. But he was a true reflection of God's character. Human nature and God's nature were one and the same. Adam and Eve were amazing – brilliant, beautiful, lovely people in every respect. In character they were much like Jesus. They were true representatives of God on earth as the Hebrew word for 'image' implies.

*“Bound into that phrase (image and likeness) is a primary idea that there is the possibility of relationship with the God who made us. This gives human beings immense value, dignity, significance and worth. In a real sense there are no ordinary people.” Steve Brady*

### ***Have we forgotten who we are?***

In **Ice Age 2: The Meltdown**, Ellie the mammoth has grown up with possums having lost her family when she was a baby. She therefore believes that she is a possum. When her new friend Manny is able to show her a pool where she sees a much truer reflection of herself she finally accepts that she is a mammoth. You can talk about the story even if you are not able to show a video clip.

Science fiction fans may like to mention the Dr Who story: The Empty Child and The Doctor Dances (Season 1, Episodes 9-10). In this story some alien nanobots<sup>2</sup> are trying to heal people but they are getting it wrong and mutating them instead, attaching gas masks to their faces. Only when the first child they helped is able to discover his true mother, is it possible for this curse to be lifted and everyone to be truly healed. *<sup>2</sup>tiny robots that currently only exist in fiction but research is ongoing*

Many people, even Christians, have lost sight of what it means to be made in the image of God. So what do we think it means? In what ways are we made in the image and likeness of God? We know that we inherited some of God's characteristics but which ones?

### ***The Image of God in Man***

What do we mean when we say that a son is the image of his father?

We usually mean that he **looks** like him.

We don't know much about what God looks like although there are some hints in the Bible. Some theologians think that the basic design for man's body could be based partly on Christ himself but other disagree.

*(See Berkhof Systematic Theology and Genesis 9:6)*

Much more important are the character traits and other features that Man shares with God.

➤ Take a moment to consider what you think these may be.

Of course God has a set of amazing features that we certainly do not and will never share.

Whilst it is difficult to know what man's capacity was before he broke away from God, we still retain enough of the original to distinguish us from every other creature.

**Consider the following:**

**Abilities:** Whatever grades we may get at school we are all gifted with a range of intelligences, which combined with imagination, creativity, initiative and freedom of choice gives us the potential to do all sort of things both good and bad.

**Personality:** Whilst our capacity to love is not as strong and as constant as God's, we can still love some people to the point where we are prepared to make huge sacrifices for them.

**Emotional beings:** We have a wide range of complex emotions including a sense of humour.

**Moral Nature:** Living a holy life came naturally to Adam. He instinctively knew right from wrong. *"The original condition of man was one of positive holiness, not a state of innocence or moral neutrality"* Berkhof . This puts the story of the Fall in a much worse light. When Man chose to disobey God, he understood what he was doing although he could not have foreseen the full implications and consequences of this. Although his moral nature was seriously damaged at this time, it was not destroyed. It is still a distinctive part of mankind. Even the most wicked people – such as King Manasseh and other such tyrants, retain some goodness within them and are redeemable. 2 Chronicles 33; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24

**Spiritual Beings:** Man is a spiritual being with a soul that can exist without a body. But he needs both to be complete and to enjoy life. Man cannot function properly without both. Believers will eventually have a physical body that is far superior to the one we have now. See 1 Timothy 6:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-54

***"We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us." The Book of Common Prayer***

We only have to look around us, and at ourselves if we are honest, to see that something went very wrong. As Galatians 5:19-21 says in the Message, "It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time..." (or in the NCV "The wrong things the sinful self does are clear...") Our image has become very distorted from the original.

Rather than read the whole of this passage with your group, ask them how they think that sentence could end. That will also make it easier to make it age appropriate.

- How much are we worth if we consider the amazing fact that we are made in the image of God?
- How much are we worth if we look at the way we have behaved and treated both God and each other?

Not only has our image become distorted but our way of evaluating ourselves is also distorted and seriously inaccurate.

What distinguishes Man from all other living creatures?  
How is he both similar to but different from God?  
Some groups may like to spend a session exploring this.  
There is an activity sheet to help you.

## Image

If you look in funfair mirrors you will see yourself in all sorts of weird shapes. Sometimes an image can become so distorted it can be difficult to see what the original looked like. In trying to see what we do or should look like we use a range of different types of mirrors.

**Mirrors** These are explored in detail in the other session on 'Value – Is My Self-Image Built on Sand?'

What mirrors do we often use – perhaps:

- The Mirror of Personal Appearance: we use other people as role models to show us how we should look. We feel torn between wanting to look like everyone else our age and wanting to be unique.
- The Mirror of Abilities and Skills: we value ourselves according to the skills which our society appears to elevate above others
- The Mirror of Popularity and Status: we allow our peers, who are struggling with life in the same way as us to randomly decide how much we are worth depending on what mood they are in at the time.
- The Mirror of Possessions: we believe that the more material possessions we own, the more we are worth.  
... And others no doubt

The world around us encourages us to look into such mirrors rather than looking to the one who can show us who we truly are. To discover our true value, we need to first ask WHO has the right to decide this. Is it our friends, parents, teachers or the One who created Mankind in the first place and who knew each of us before we were born - Psalm 139:15?

## What does the Bible say about our image and our value? [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

The Bible says both positive and negative things about our worth.

The numbering relates to how the verses appear in the PowerPoint.

1. Then God said, "Let us make human beings **in our image and likeness**. And let them rule over ... the earth..." Genesis 1:26-27 NCV
2. Then the LORD God took **dust** from the ground and formed a man from it. Genesis 2:7 NCV  
➤ How special is 'dust'?
3. He **breathed the breath of life** into the man's nose, and the man became a living person. Genesis 2:7 NCV
4. And we, out of all creation, became his **prized** possession. James 1:18 NLT  
... so we might be the **most important** of all the things he made. James 1:18 NCV
5. For we are **God's masterpiece** (handiwork/workmanship)... Ephesians 2:10 NLT
6. The Lord saw that the human beings on the earth were **very wicked** and that everything they thought about was evil. He was sorry he had made human beings on the earth and his heart was filled with pain. Genesis 6:5 NCV
7. The wrong things the sinful self does are clear:... Galatians 5 v.19-21 NCV  
It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time... Msg
8. All have turned away, they have together **become worthless**; there is no one who does good, not even one. Romans 3:12 NIV

9. There's nobody living right, not even one, nobody who knows the score, nobody alert for God.  
They've all taken the wrong turn; they've all wandered down blind alleys.  
No one's living right; I can't find a single one...  
Every word they speak is tinged with poison. They open their mouths and pollute the air.  
They race for the honor of sinner-of-the-year, litter the land with heartbreak and ruin,  
Don't know the first thing about living with others.  
They never give God the time of day. Romans 3:12 The Message
10. Because **you are precious to me**, because I give you honour and love you, Isaiah 43:4 NCV
11. Cos God's so **passionate about** the planet that he donates his one and only Son. Whoever invests their life in his Son doesn't die but gets given this limitless life. John 3:16 Street Bible
- "God loved the world so much that **he gave his one and only Son** so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. John 3:16 NCV
12. God shows his great love for us in this way: Christ died for us when we were still sinners. Romans 5: 7-8
13. You were bought, not with something that ruins like gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ...  
1 Peter 1:18-19 NCV
14. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:4-5 NLT
15. So all of us... can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And... he makes us more and more like him as we are changed<sup>2</sup> into his glorious image. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT
- <sup>2</sup> *Changed into the image of Jesus is more than returning back to the state Adam had. This is such a difficult but glorious theological point that even in Eden, Adam and Eve could not really imagine it. Pavel Hanes*

Other verses relevant to value are quoted at the end

### **Or to select just a few -**

The Positive verses about us include:

Genesis 1:27 + Genesis 2:7b + Romans 5:7-8 + 1 Peter 1:18-19

They show us to be totally priceless

The Negative verses about us include:

Genesis 2: 7a + Genesis 6: 5 + Romans 3:12 + Romans 3:23

They show us to be completely worthless

The 'Red Dwarf' episode 'Confidence and Paranoia' (series 1; episode 4) shows Lister's self-image jumping between 2 extremes. One moment he feels he is almost immortal and that he could conquer the world single-handed and the next he feels depressed and that no one has ever really loved him.

How much does our self-image does bounce up and down, alternating between positive and negative depending on our circumstances, our mood and our temperament?

### **What can happen when our self-esteem is too high?**

- Our focus is then on ourselves rather than on God and others.
- We become arrogant, conceited and self-righteous.
- We may also treat others with contempt, forgetting that their value before God is the same as ours.  
(Proverbs 27:21)

One of Aesop's fables tells of a flea riding on the back of a chariot as it raced around the stadium. As the dust arose, both from the pounding of the horses' hooves, and also from the turning of the wheels, the flea looked behind and exclaimed, "Oh what a mighty dust storm I have raised!"

This sense that we're the center of the universe—to freely and joyfully die to that has been a great grace.  
God is in charge, and our task is to work in cooperation.”

Richard Foster: Christianity Today interview

### **What can happen when our self-esteem is too low?**

- Negative self-esteem is damaging to our all-round health and well-being.
- We may feel inferior to others, inadequate, insignificant, useless, or even depressed.
- We may find it hard to believe the promises of God or to develop the gifts he has given us.

The fear of being nothing but a big zero can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It works like this: When it's time to go for a job interview your fear kicks in and you think, 'I'll never impress them, I'll look stupid. They'll ask me questions I can't answer.' A mouse in a lion's den has better odds of success. So you fail miserably, and descend yet another level into the basement of self-defeat.

Or consider the girl who's asked out on a date by a good looking guy. So good looking, that she wonders what he sees in her. She's sure that once he gets to know her, he will finish with her. So insecurity drives her to use the only tool she trusts, her body. She sleeps with him on the first date for fear there won't be a second, and she ends up feeling like the disposable woman she didn't want to become.

So when you get up each morning, look in the mirror and tell yourself,

***'I matter, because God loves me!'***

Word 4U 2Day, 7 Jun 2013 [www.ucb.co.uk](http://www.ucb.co.uk) Free issues are available for the UK and Republic of Ireland.

## ***The Mirror of Jesus***

To discover our true value we need to look at Jesus.

What do Christians see when looking at Jesus?

- We see the beauty of original Mankind, the sort of person/character we were created to be.
- We see the person we are not – he shows up our failings and worthlessness.
- We see someone who has suffered much and in many ways because he loves us. Genesis 6:5; Matthew 23:37; Isaiah 53
- We see the one who paid the price on the cross for us to be reborn into the image of God.
- We see the person we can become if we ask God to work at restoring us to be the person he created us to be – which is God's own plan for us. Jeremiah 29:11

## ***Conclusion/ Summary***

God our Creator and Father never forgot who we were. Like the father in 'Finding Nemo' he never lost hope of getting us back. It hurts to love people who reject you and mistreat you, but God has remained faithful over the centuries. There were times when he felt like giving up but he didn't (e.g. Exodus 32:7-10). His love for us always remained firm. It can be measured by the fact that Jesus was prepared to suffer so much so that he could regain the precious relationship that he had with Mankind at the time of creation.

It is an unchangeable fact that every child born has something of the image of God within them. It is far from a perfect image; it's very blurry in places. As we go through life, the choices we make affect whether that image improves in definition becoming clearer or whether it becomes so blurry it becomes unrecognisable. It's like a gold or silver hallmark – the fact that it is there even on an old tarnished item, makes it valuable. Giving it to a goldsmith to renew, means it can then look valuable again; its' true value can then shine out. The most important choice we can make is to humbly ask God to forgive our wrongdoing and give us a new life in Jesus. We can then work with him to become a truly amazing Child of God.

1. We are made in the image of God but we don't live up to that. We are both worthless and priceless. We need to keep these 2 facts in balance as far as possible.
2. Ultimately we are valuable because God has valued us and he does not change his mind.
3. The healthiest state for our self-image to be in is neutral, as Max Lucado points out in his story 'You Are Special' about the Wemmicks who stuck stars or dots on each other,
4. If we stay focused on Jesus rather than ourselves, our self-image should be nice and balanced. (Philippians 2:5-11).
5. If we allow God to work in our lives we will become more and more like the beautiful people we were created to be.
6. It would radically change our outlook of both ourselves and of others, if we were to fully grasp the implications of the truth that our original design was in the image of an Amazing God,
7. It's worth taking some time to reflect on this.



## Credits

Writer: © Brenda Lord

Theological consultant: Rev'd Professor Pavel Hanes

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## ***Bible translations used here and in the PowerPoints***

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### **NLT = New Living Translation**

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### **NIV = New International Version**

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### **Msg = The Message: Eugene Petersen**

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### **Street Bible (now called 'Word on the Street') Rob Lacey**

## Appendix

### ***Other Bible verses relevant to value***

- No one can buy back the life of another. No one can pay God for his own life, because the price of a life is high. No payment is ever enough. Psalm 49:7-8 NCV
- I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; Isaiah 49:16 NIV
- Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can die without your Father's knowing it. God even knows how many hairs are on your head. So don't be afraid. You are worth much more than many sparrows. Matthew 10:29-31 NCV
- You all were bought at a great price, so do not become slaves of people. 1 Corinthians 7:23 NCV
  - What does it mean by 'slaves of people'?
- Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glorious standard, Romans 3:23 NCV
- No one's innocent. We've all messed up and dropped well short of God's target for us. Romans 3:23 Street Bible
- God chose 'the foolish'... the weak... the unimportant...1 Corinthians 1:26-29
- You have begun to live the new life, in which you are being made new and are becoming like the One who made you. Colossians 3:10 NCV.

### ***Footnote: Other religions***

Most other religions, if any, do not have this idea of man being made in God's image but Acts 17:28 refers to the Greeks seeing man as the offspring of God in some way.

In the Egyptian creation myth, the god Ra created the world by the power of his word and then took on the shape of a man and ruled Egypt for thousands of years.