

Are People Created by God or Evolved by Nature?

- Go to Genesis 1. And if you don't know the Bible, just open it. Page one nailed it. That's exactly where we find ourselves, really quick and simple. And today we're gonna look at a really important question, highly debatable, are people created by God or evolved by nature? I tend to be a Bible teacher, go through books of the Bible. Been doing this for 25 years. Every once in a while, you hit a section of the Bible that feels like a stiff headwind, or you're running in water up to your neck. This is that text. This is going to be for all of you. Some things that are gonna be a little difficult, little controversial. And I'm just asking you, think about it, stick with me, work through it. And as we consider what Genesis has to say, let me bring you up to speed. So last week we looked at God made the heavens and the earth and prepared it for human life. How many of you are parents and you've got kids? Right? Before your first baby comes, what do you gotta change at your house?

- [Woman] Everything.

- Everything, yeah. As soon as you realize a baby's coming out, "We need a nursery, we need a bassinet, we need a car seat, we need to get rid of everything sharp, we need to cover all the light outlets, we need to prepare this environment for this child." God is like a father, he's like a parent, preparing the human environment of earth for the coming of our first parents, Adam and Eve. So what we looked at last week, God made the world, got it ready. This week, we're gonna look at how God created human life. And he put it on this planet. Now in saying this, most of us grew up in a world where we were just sort of inundated or indoctrinated with a teaching of atheistic evolution, naturalism. And that is, that there is no God beyond this world, that all we have is the physical world. There's no spiritual element or aspect. We don't have a soul. There is no God. And all we have is what we see. This contradicts the teaching of the Bible. So let me give a few preliminary points. Number one, there is a conflict between Christianity and naturalistic atheistic evolution. There just is. You can believe that God worked through the evolutionary process and love the Lord. But what we're talking about is, the inability or unwillingness to recognize that there is anything beyond the physical role that we see. The Bible assumes that there is God and angels and we have a soul. And in addition to the world that we see, there is a world that only God sees. And we are a part of that world as well. Number two, the Bible is mainly a theological book about our relationship with God. It doesn't give us all of the scientific details that we might want to know. Galileo, who was a Christian, says it this way, "The Holy Ghost intended to teach us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." And then number three, the Bible tells us very quickly that God made the heavens and the earth. And then it's like the camera pans in, to the first man and the first woman. As we read about creation, it's only a couple of pages, and we may have a lot of questions and they're not all answered, because God's focus is on us having a relationship with him. However, Christians can, and should be actively involved in science. And there is no conflict between good science and being a good Christian. This is because God made the world in an orderly way with what we would call natural laws. So there is consistency which allows scientific experimentation. So for example, water boiled at a temperature yesterday, it'll boil at the same temperature today

and the same temperature tomorrow. It allows scientific experimentation, because of the constant consistency of God's faithfulness in and through creation. And if you are one who likes medicine, you're studying in the realm of the hard sciences, you're a university student, you're an engineer, praise God, you're loving and worshiping God with all your mind. And you're not alone. There are other Christians that do the same. I'll give you two examples. One is, Hugh Ross. He's got a PhD in astronomy. He found God through a telescope. At the age of 17, he was the youngest director of observations at Vancouver's Royal Astronomical Society. So he takes the telescope and he's looking at the world that God made. And he came to faith in Jesus Christ and belief in the Bible. What he says is, "The more you investigate the great planet and that which is beyond it, the greatness of God becomes self-evident." There's another man named Francis Collins. He met God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, not just through a telescope, but through a microscope. And he was head of the Human Genome Project, studying our genetic predisposition. He is now the National Institute for health director. So pray for him. He's working with Fauci on the virus. I mean, if you think you got a bad job, you're doing great. I am glad I don't have that job. But he was studying creation and he was studying the human genome, and he came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and belief in the Bible through a microscope. And he tells his story in a book called "The Language of God." And it's how he met Jesus, studying the human genome. And he says this, "When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we humans were coming. There are 15 constants, the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and weak, nuclear forces, et cetera, that have precise values. If one of these constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it, matter would not have been able to coalesce. There would have been no galaxies, stars, planets or people." What he says is as a scientist, just looking at the statistical probability of human life, being able to exist in an environment, it is requiring an acknowledgement that God architected the world and the body and he brought us together to live in this environment. That being said, what we're gonna look at in Genesis 1 is the Bible's ancient recording three and a half thousand years ago of the beginnings of human history. And so the first thing we learned is, God made us. Genesis 1:26, "Then God said..." So our God speaks. And we love that about our God. And he's gonna speak to you today. "Let us..." Notice the plural language, "Make man or mankind," humanity, "in our..." plural language, "image after our likeness and let them have dominion..." That is rulership and authority, "Over the fish of the seas, the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the ground." So the first thing we learn is, God made us. God made you. You're not an accident. You're not a mistake. You're not the result of chance. You're the handiwork of God. And when we see one another, we should see one another in this way, we live in such a day where, there's so little regard for human beings. And the way we speak to and treat one another, it can be really horrifying. Those are people that God made. And if God made them, they have dignity, value, and worth. And if he made them in his image and likeness, then we should treat them with some sort of dignity, value, and worth. Because if they mattered to him, they should matter to us. You matter. And God made you, and God knows you, and God loves you. And what it says here is that, God made you, and the God here is the Trinity. This is the beginning of our understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. In Genesis, there are beliefs,

doctrines, that are introduced in bud form, and then they blossom throughout the Bible. Hear when it says, "Let us..." Plural, "Make God in..." "Make man," rather, "in our image and our likeness," it's plural. And this is the Trinity, God the father, God the son, God the Spirit. And so some religions teach there's one God, some teach there are multiple gods. Only Christianity says there is one God who is a community of three persons. And they live in loving relationship. And some would say, "God made us because he was lonely." God was not lonely. The father, Son, and Spirit, they were doing just fine until we showed up. And actually we made their life a lot more complicated. And so it's God who makes us. But what we see here is God is relational. This plural language of us and our, God made us in his image and likeness in part for relationship and God speaks, and he made us to hear from him and to speak to him and have relationship with him. Now, the big idea here is this, that we didn't make God. Christianity says that God made us us. Atheism says that we made God. And so Ludwig Feuerbach in the 19th century, he said that, "God is not a person, but it's a concept that human beings made." In addition, Karl Marx said that, "Politically we made God so that the state can control people." Sigmund Freud said, "Psychologically, we created God because of deep brokenness." And Friedrich Nietzsche, the atheist, said that, "We created God philosophically as a crutch." What's interesting is, Nietzsche went insane at the end of his life. Some would argue a little bit before that maybe, but when he lost his mind, it was his Christian mother who cared for him, and tended to him, because she believed the teachings of the Bible. The point is this, we didn't make God, God made us. God is not a concept that we created. God is a living, personal, loving being and he made us to have relationship with him. When it says that he created us, this is where we get what you studied in school. And it was called anthropology. How many of you took an anthropology class in school, maybe high school or college? Anthropology is the study of human life. And it is how we live life and how we understand our identity. And today, a lot is said about our identity and the truth is this, you don't know what to do until you know who you are. Once you know who you are, you know what to do. And identity is trying to figure out, "Who am I?" And what we come up with is, sadly, understanding ourselves in reference to ourselves, not a reference to God. So how many of you have heard of self-esteem, self-image, self-love, and self-help? And the point is, you don't know who God is. And if you don't know who God is, you don't know who you are. Until you know who God is, you don't know who you are. Here's what it taught us in Genesis 1, "In the beginning, God, and then us." So the point is this, first you gotta figure out who God is. And once you know who God is, then you can figure out who you are. Until you know who God is, you don't even know who you are. And what we're left with is just trying to understand ourselves in light of ourselves, not understanding ourselves in light of who our God is. And so what it says here is that, God exists and he is the uncaused cause, he is the eternal creator, and that there are plants and animals that are beneath us, lower creation that we have dominion over. He's gonna tell us in a moment to subdue or to rule over lower creation. Well, God is up here, lower creation is down here, we're in the middle. That's our place. This is understanding where we belong. The same root word for human is also the same root word for humility. The key to being a good human is having the humility to know your place. And what happens is, if we don't understand who God is and who we are, we make one of two errors. Sometimes we'll pull ourselves up as if we're God. We'll move up. This happens in new age or new spirituality. This happens as well with certain cults, like Mormonism, where the goal is to

become a God and get your own planet. That's the goal. You're like, you're God or your God like. And for those of you who aren't religious, sometimes we function as if we're God by just saying, "There's no authority over me, no one and nothing can tell me what to do. I report to no one, I answer to no one, I'm accountable to no one." This is how I lived before I met Jesus. I wasn't necessarily a religious or a spiritual person, but I wasn't gonna let anybody tell me what to do. I was just gonna function as the highest authority or to use the language of the Bible, the God of my own life. The other option is if we don't know our place between God and animals and plants, then we push ourselves down, and we see ourselves as just highly evolved animals. We're just lucky enough to have a thumb. That's just us. We're just an animal lucky with a thumb, that's me. And this is the view of radical environmentalism. This is the view of pantheism, panentheism. And the head of the people for the Ethical Treatment of Animals said some years ago, "A pig is a dog as a rat is a boy." And what it's saying is, all life is at the same level and there is no superiority of human life over animal life. What that means is, if you're driving down the road and you can't veer off the road, but there's a pig or a dog or a rat and a boy, and you have to decide which one to hit. It doesn't really matter because they're all equal. The truth is, we're made in the image and likeness of God. No one and nothing else has made the image likes of God. It doesn't say that plants or animals are made in the image and likeness of God. And furthermore, God speaks over them, but he doesn't speak to them, because they can't have the same kind of relationship with him that we do. Human life is distinct. Human life is sacred. Human life is unique. And we are not gods and we're not animals. We are image bearers of God, given dominion over animals. And what we get out of this is something that the theologians, they like Latin, but they'll call it the Imago Dei. That is that, we're made in the image and likeness of God. This is foundational to understanding your identity. Because again, if your identity is achieved by you, you are going to have an identity crisis. And what generally happens, our identity is established not by God creating us, but by us performing in life, give you an example. So if your identity is, "I'm successful." That works until? You fail. And just so you know, you will. And if your identity is, "I'm healthy," you're gonna have an identity crisis when you get sick, and you will. If your identity is, "I'm a parent," eventually your children will leave. They should. The hope and the goal is that one day they get their own address and they get off of your payroll. That's the goal, amen? And what happens then is, if your whole identity is, "I'm a parent." When your kids leave, you have an identity crisis, "Oh, who am I? Why do I exist?" And this is where you start meddling in your kid's life and over parenting. And demanding that they give you grandchildren so that you can go back to your old identity of taking care of little people. And what happens is people have these identity crises because their identity is not received, it's achieved. And once it's achieved, it can be lost. So I'll give you an example. I'm made in the image and likeness of God. So my identity is, "I'm a Christian, God made me, Jesus saved me, I'm a Christian, that's me." Now, I became a Christian when I was in college. So at that time I was a Christian college student, and then I graduated, and then I was a Christian graduate. And I was single when I met Jesus and I was a Christian single person. And then I married my wife, Grace, and then I was a Christian husband. And then we had kids and then I was a Christian father. And then I became a pastor, I was a Christian pastor. Our kids are starting to launch and leave. And so now we're at that season where we're launching them. And eventually our home will just be Grace and I, which is great. Cause I like grace, but pray for her. And what will

happen is, my roles will change, but not my identity. My identity is secure, whatever my role might be. And so the point is this, you need to know that you are made by God, in his image and likeness, and that is unchanging. And as your roles change, you don't need to have an identity crisis because your identity is fixed and constant. Now, when it comes to being made in the image and likeness of God, the big idea is this. That ultimately, the only way we really understand what it means to live a life that images God is to look to Jesus Christ, and by image, it's the same language here of mirror or reflect. How many of you got up this morning looked in the mirror? Okay, we're not gonna ask if that was a good or a bad experience. But what happened was... It was bad for me. I was like, "Oh, this is an old guy right here. And he looks tired, cause he's old and tired." So I'm looking in the mirror and the mirror has one job. What is it? Accurately reflect what's in front of it. You and I, we were made to mirror. We're made to image or reflect or mirror God. And we are sinners, and so we fail to do this, but Jesus Christ did this perfectly. I'll give you an example from scripture. 2nd Corinthians 4:4, "Christ is the image..." It's using the language of Genesis, "He is the image of God." Give you another one, Colossians 1:15, speaking of Jesus, "He is the image of the invisible God." So people are like, "Well God, the Father is invisible. We don't see him, what's he like?" We'll look at Jesus. And Jesus perfectly reflects the love, the goodness, the grace, the mercy, the truthfulness, the courage of God the Father. And then lastly, in John 14:9 Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." So here's the big idea. When you look at Jesus, you're seeing the reflection, perfectly of the God of the universe. And God tells us not to make graven images, because we are His image bearers. God doesn't want us to make images that are supposed to denote him. We are to live lives that accurately reflect him. So it's like, well, as Christians we're to love people, like, why do you love? Well, cause God loves. "Will you forgive me? Why'd you forgive me?" Well, cause God's the God who forgives. "Well, you were generous to me, why were you generous to me?" Cause my God is a giver, not a taker. "Will you serve me? Why did you serve?" Cause my God is humble and he serves. The hope is that, the character of God would be seen in the children of God. Now, as we get into this, some of you asked, "This is very theoretical. Pastor Mark, what does this matter? How could you make this practical?" Let me make this really practical. So there's a psychiatrist to the stars. His name is Dr. Drew. Dr. Drew Pinsky. You've probably seen him on TV or heard him on the radio. And he's kind of the celebrity go-to-self-help guru for the stars. That's his thing. And he has television shows and he has a radio show. And he's brought into a lot of talk shows and he's considered an expert. Now, at least when I talked to him in years past, he was not a Christian. I don't know where he's at with the Lord Jesus today, but I got to co-host his radio show one time. "Loveline with Dr. Drew." Usually Adam Carolla, the comedian, would co-host and he was busy, so I flew down to LA. And it wasn't awkward at all. Me and the non-Christian guy taking intimacy calls from total strangers around the country, live on air. This is great. I wish I could do that every day. And then Grace and I later, we got to be on his television show, talking about gender and marriage issues there in. Well, we were having a conversation. I can't remember if it was television or radio offline. We're just talking. And he started talking about something that absolutely reminded me of this section of Genesis. And he wrote a book on it, called "The Mirror Effect." And what he talks about is that, people are made to mirror, that we're all looking up to someone to show us how to live. And we will call these people our idols. It's the language of the Bible as idolatry. We even have a show

called "American Idol," and people will even say, "You're my idol," or "You're my hero." And the result is, that celebrities will model behavior that then their fans and followers will mirror. We call these influencers. These are people that we want to wear what they're wearing. We want to drink what they're drinking. We want to drive what they're driving. We want to go on vacation where they're vacationing. And the point is, that celebrities will model behavior and then their followers will mirror it. And so to become a celebrity, you need to say, or do something really outlandish. You can't just be normal. You can't just be, "Yeah, I got up today and I read Leviticus and took out the trash and prayed for my enemies." Nobody's gonna follow you, that's not interesting. You need to say, or do something really extreme outlandish, your behavior, your character needs to be an outlier. The problem is, as soon as you model that behavior, then others will mirror it. They'll do exactly what you're doing. And now you're no longer interesting. So you have one of two choices. You just fade into obscurity, or you reinvent yourself, getting more extreme and outlandish. Have you seen this on social media? Every day, it seems like we go a little further. And the question is, "When does it stop?" It never does. And so the point then becomes, as the followers are mirroring the behavior of the celebrity, things get more extreme, more outlandish, more unhealthy, more destructive. And the point is, there's only one person that we are supposed to mirror. And that is God. And if you don't follow, mirror, God, you will follow, mirror, someone else. And it'll lead to destruction, not to life. And it is breaking people. And I thought it was really interesting, because Dr. Drew is not a Christian, but he came to this conclusion, dealing with celebrities and celebrity culture, that everyone is looking for someone to mirror. Who do you look up to? Who do you want to be like? Who do you live for the approval of? If you could trade places with anyone, who would that be? For we who are Christians, we are to reflect image, the character of God. And what that allows us to do, that allows us to love people, that allows us to be healthy, that allows us to have grace for people, because what happens in a celebrity culture, you idolize... And then Jonathan Edwards, he's the greatest theologian in the history of our country. Eventually you demonize. Because all of us are like, "You're amazing, you're gonna fix my life. You're gonna make my life worth living. I just wanna be like you." And then over time we realize they're just human beings. How many of you have thought someone was awesome until you got to know them? We call this dating. You meet someone and then you're like, "You know what? You're human. You have faults and flaws and failures and quirks and oddities and shortcomings and insecurities." And this is what happens, we have this celebrity culture of idolized demonize, "Up you go, we all worship you. Now we're disappointed, we all destroy you." And it's just the sickness in our culture. The question is, "When does it stop?" It doesn't. Unless people start imaging God. And then what we can do is, we can treat others the way that God treats us. You're a sinner, so am I. Jesus forgives me, I forgive you. Jesus helps me, I help you. Jesus endures with me, I endure with you. The only way to have a healthy image of yourself and relationship with others, is to understand that you're made in the image and likeness of God. And to have Jesus Christ be the one that you're seeking to reflect through the totality of your life. So God made us... Now we're gonna get controversial. And I'll be honest, I'm tired. I was up late, spiritual attack. Just weirdness when you teach this stuff, it's just bizarre. But this next section, it's... If I'm still on Facebook in 10 minutes, it's a miracle. All right, here's what we're gonna do. God made us what? Male and female. Not chips and salsa, not peanut butter and jelly. Male and female. Genesis 1:27, here's

craziness. So God created man or mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

- [Congregation] Male and female.

- Oh, you said it, not me. "Male and female, He created them." So God not only made us, he made us with fixed binary, gender categories. "Pastor Mark, you can't say that." I'm just reading ancient texts, okay? So this is absolutely under assault in our culture, absolutely under assault in our culture. And what it is, it's the word versus the world. So there are three things, there's sex, gender, and sexuality. Sex is your biological, physiological creation. Gender is how you see yourself. And then sexuality is who you are, or what you're attracted to. So in the word, in the Bible, we're gonna get into this in the ensuing weeks with marriage and sex and all of that. Sex is fixed and binary, male, female. You've got two categories. Gender is fixed in binary. Men are masculine, women are feminine. And then sexuality is fixed. It's for marriage between one man and one woman. Now, we've already obliterated the male female, and we will obliterate the one-on-one. I'm telling you, polygamy is going to be legalized in our lifetime. In the world, we see that sex is fluid on an intersect spectrum. So this is where we get LGBTQ... It just keeps going. At some point, we're just gonna sing the whole alphabet song. ABC... Cause they just keep adding. But this is where this comes from. It's no, no, no, we have another category. And then gender is fluid on a spectrum. So maybe, I'm a man who feels like a woman or I'm a woman who feels like a man, or somewhere on that continuum. And this is unfixed. And so maybe this week, I feel like this and next week I feel like that. And then sexuality is fluid on an unfixed spectrum, who or what I'm attracted to, has nothing to do with my biological sex. Now, all right, let me get into this or not. All right, so next verse. No, I'll get into this. Let me start by putting my pastor hat on and saying that, oftentimes people who are confused in these areas, it's for some really painful reasons. Sometimes it's trauma. If you're sexually assaulted or abused, it is very confusing how you view your body, and attraction and sexuality. Let's say, I've met a lot of people for example, their dad used his strength to harm and not to heal. He was an overbearing domineering, mean-spirited violent man. Now, if all you've seen is male strength used to protect and defend, you love masculine strength. If you've seen it to abuse and break, you're scared of it. It's uncomfortable. It's frightening. As well, some of the reason that confusion happens is, we live in a culture of absolute brainwashing. I mean, sex education starts in some states in kindergarten. I just got a friend of mine, sent me the curriculum that they're kindergartener has brought home. And it was on sexuality... Let me just tell you this, six year olds aren't sexual, unless they're being groomed for abuse. And so at the end of the day, the brainwashing starts very, very young, and there's lots of cultural pressure. And there's a lot of pressure that's imposed through media and social media and education. And what's really interesting is, that a lot of people who don't have children want to raise our children and tell them about sexuality. And ultimately, as Christians, we know that that is something that they need to learn in the context of marriage, in the context of God's word. My question is always, "When did the state decide how to raise my child?" I mean, ultimately the Bible says that, that's my responsibility. In addition, one of the reasons that people really struggle with this confusion, and I'll just say it, it's pornography. If you live in the sick world of pornography. And I know it is...

See, when I grew up, that was verbal process for me. When I grew up, you had to go look for it, now you gotta fight against it, it's looking for you. Technology is just horrifying with it's constant onslaught of sickness for your soul. And if you live in that world and you're consuming this sickness, you lose any sense of healthy boundaries, marriage, or sane behavior. And so, all of a sudden it can lead to lots of confusion. Now, that being said, the Bible is clear that we are made male and female in the image and likeness of God. And what people will say is they'll say, "Well, Pastor Mark, you need to love people." I do love people. And I believe the most loving thing is to say, "The God who made you knows what's best for you." In addition, I believe it is very unloving to look at people in their teens and twenties and say, "You need to start taking pills to change your hormones. And you need to undergo surgery that cannot be reversed, and you need to alter the future of your life for decades." How many of you made bad decisions in your teens and 20s? How many of you made choices in your teens and 20s that you later regretted? One people undergo irreversible medical procedures. Oftentimes, what they don't tell you is that, in their 30s and 40s, people return to their biological God-given sex of creation. But if we have altogether re-hardwired them, we have taken that freedom and choice from them. And that's not loving. It leads to lots of difficulties, emotionally, and mentally. And that being said, look at it from God's perspective. So let me just... We always see it from our perspective, just look at it from God's perspective. So God made us male and female in his image and likeness. He told us what to do and not do. We chose to sin against him, and do exactly what he told us not to do. And as a result, we have sinned against God. So then God sends his son, Jesus Christ. The Creator enters into creation, and he literally undergoes physical pain, and shedding of blood, to atone for our sin, and to fix the mess we've made. And then some people will look at God and say, "Actually, I've not sinned against you. You've sinned against me. You made me the wrong sex or gender. You failed me. You made a mistake. You have erred, you have sinned, God. I feel like I'm trapped in the wrong body. Therefore, to a tone for your sin, I will not accept the shedding of blood from your son, but I'll go under the knife and I'll shed my own blood to atone for your sin. And to fix the mess you've made." This is deeply, profoundly spiritual, and it's highly rebellious. And that being said, God made us male and female. Does the Bible speak to men and women? Yes. Like it says in 1st Corinthians, "Act like men..." Crazy, I know. Two things, I'm just gonna point out, there's men and they should act like it, okay? So does the Bible sometimes speak to men and women categorically? Yeah. Does the Bible sometimes speak to husbands and wives? Yes. Does the Bible speak about raising sons and daughters? Answer? Yes. So if you disagree with this, your argument ultimately is between you and God. And I know some of you, "Pastor Mark, I disagree." And I would say, "So?" If you're in your 20s, right? You're like, "Well, I went to college." Well, great, there's a three and a half thousand year old book. This has worked for three and a half thousand years. You're in your 20s. You're posting on the internet, but you don't even pay for your internet. You're still at your parents' house. If you're gonna rebel against God, you should at least pay for your own internet to post your rebellion. And the point is this, if human history had operated as we do, that ultimately, we confuse gender. And if we get pregnant, we murder the child. Let me say this. We wouldn't be here. Because this pattern that God gives leads to human life and flourishing. And when you negate God's pattern, you eliminate population. Like one of the biggest problems we have right now, is that population is in decline and they're wondering how human life on the earth will continue. In recently, this was

said by Elon Musk and the Pope. Let me just tell you, when these guys are on the same team, it's obvious. And the point is, people aren't getting married and having children. And the result is that population is in decline and that doesn't lead to human life and flourishing. So the Bible speaks of male and female, but it says that men and women are equal, because they both bear the image and likeness of God. So you don't need to prove your equality, God made you equal. In addition, men and women are different. They're distinct. How many of you have noticed this? I live with Grace. I'm happy to report she's different than me. I'm very happy to report that. But it also says, "Not only are we made equal, we're made interdependent." We're better together. We're gonna learn, if you come back. I mean, if both of you come back, and we're gonna get into Genesis where it says, "It's not good to be alone." So God creates marriage and a man and a woman are different, but they work together like a left hand and a right hand. They work together and they're better together. Now, that being said, I'll ask you a question. It's not trick question. Am I a male or female?

- [Congregation] Male.

- So judging. You don't know my heart. You don't know how I feel. How do you know that I'm a male? "Oh, the beard and the Adam's apple would be indicators, clues." So if I go to college and I apply, and I have to fill out the forms and it's okay, "How do you identify?" I could say, "Identifies female." And they would say, "Okay." Then I go to the financial aid application. I was like, "I also feel native American." Am I allowed to check that box? No. Cause it'd be, "Hey, you're not native, but you..." "In my heart, I am. I felt native American since I was little. I love native American spirituality and customs and holidays." And, "Hey, you're being intolerant. You're being bigoted. You're being heteronormative. Is there a safe space where I could just process this? Maybe get a prescription and a hug. You know, I need to... This is very... This is abusive." They'd look at me and they'd say, "You're not native American." I would say, "Right, and I'm also not female." I'm Irish, by the way. O'Driscoll, we dropped the O. And at the end of the day, it's like, "I'm an Irish male." Those were chosen for me. Those can't be chosen by me. But we live in this day where there is much confusion and it is finding its way into women's sports. So let's talk about this. Or not. I mean, shots fired, okay, fine. I mean, like I told you, I'm already tired and I've had a long night. Just water. So have you seen this in women's sports? So women's sports have been fighting for a long time, to be able to have fair representation for women's sports. And the feminists have fought for a long time for women's sports. And now transgender advocates come along and they want biological males to compete in sports as females. So now, I mean... Now you've got the feminists and the transgender activists fighting. I'm like "Popcorn, please. I just wanna watch them, I'm not gonna get involved. Just gonna watch, this is gonna be interesting." And the big debate is, is this fair because it's obvious that, if you're born a biological male, you have a physical advantage. Just your bone structure, your muscle mass, your muscle memory. Even if later in life, you'd take hormone pills and you change some of the sequencing of your body. You're not changing creation. You're not. So Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner, cause you gotta do that at least once every time you're going through a book of the Bible. So Bruce Jenner was an Olympic athlete, very decorated, and then transitioned to Caitlyn Jenner, is how he would identify himself as a woman. And he's come out

and said that, "It is unfair for those who were born biological male to compete in female athletics, it's unfair." And it is.

- Amen.

- It is. I'll give you a horrific case study. One of the first sanctioned bouts of MMA, Mixed Martial Arts Cage Fighting, between a transgender male and a female. So now you've got someone who was born male, raised male, trained male, fighting a female, gave the woman a concussion and broke her skull. The question is, how is that progress? How is a man beating a woman and breaking her skull progress? It's not. I mean, the Bible tells us that women are physically weaker, so men need to use their strength to protect and defend them, not to attack and harm them. One of the first things that a good dad teaches his kids is, we don't hit girls. We don't. "You're a boy, that's a girl, we don't hit girls." Unless of course you go to college and get a degree. And then you can hit girls as a sense of enlightenment and progress. Which is insanity. And the point is this, that the God who made the world and made us in his image and likeness, male and female, he tells us how things operate, and the more that we walk away from his word and his natural laws, the more things don't work, and the more insane people become. Okay, I'll give you another example. So I recently... I bought a Ford Bronco, I got a Ford Bronco. It's an incredible vehicle. It's amazing. Some of you are very judgy. You're like, "Why'd you get Bronco?" Well, Revelation says that Jesus is riding back on a horse. So he's gonna be driving a Bronco, okay? And so I got the Bronco, but the point is, I don't know how to operate it. I've never driven one. And so Grace and I... I can't even get the lights on. I can't figure it out. I don't know what I'm doing. So I'm looking around the Bronco for the manual. And guess what? Little secret, they don't do manuals anymore. It's on your dash in your screen. That's what the kids told me. So my kids are like, "Dad, we don't kill trees for that anymore. You gotta just scroll through your dash." Okay. So I'm scrolling through. And what I find is, the manual was created by the engineer so that the operator knows how it's supposed to work. And if you do what it says, it actually works. That's how I got to church today, I did what it said. Now, what if I decided that I disagreed with the engineer and the operator's manual, and I was determined to do things differently than instructed. Let me give you an example. Let's say... So I read my manual on my dash and it said that I need to put fuel, gas in the tank. I wonder if I came to the conclusion, "That seems very binary, gas, or no gas, I would like to have a fuel spectrum. Furthermore, I don't wanna go to the gas station. I have a hose in my house." What if I decided, "You know? My Bronco is gonna run on water." And I took my hose and I put it in my tank and I fill it up with water and I tried to drive it. What would happen? Become a Jeep. So the gender stuff doesn't get you, but the Jeep stuff does. That's like, "What, man, he's crossed the line now." Wow, that's kind of shocking. I would've thought I got in trouble previously, the Jeep thing they're like, "We're out, that's it. Martha, get your bag, we're out. We're getting in our Jeep and going home." Okay so... Now, what would happen is, the vehicle doesn't care what I think. It was engineered, and I can either abide by the operator's manual or not, but it's not going to just for me. Okay? Let me say this, God made our planet. God made you. God made you male and female. When we operate according to his divine design, there's human life and flourishing. And when we don't, things break. So I could gas up my Bronco with water. I could seize it up. I could call myself a

victim. I could vote for someone to tax the rich and buy me another one. Or I could go to the gas station. And this sounds silly, but we call it America. And the point is this, God knows what's best for you. And when you disobey him, you hurt you. Some people say, "It's very unloving to see that. Look at our world. People are broken, people are angry, people are depressed, people are suicidal, people are raging. People don't know who God is, they don't know who they are. They don't know how God made them and their world. They don't operate within God's divine design and they're hurting themselves. And how is it not loving to say that's not best for you?" Well, here's what I want you to know about God. He is good and he blesses us. So we'll read this, Genesis 1:28-31, "And God blessed them." Gosh, that's the key to life right there. And God said... God speaks to us and said, "Be fruitful, multiply, have kids." Some people go like, "Oh my gosh, you're gonna have kids. You're gonna fill the earth." That's the order. That, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth." Okay, I was in line some years ago with five little kids. And there was some people in line with us at the grocery store and they were talking trash about our kids. Like, "Oh my gosh, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. 5 kids, they have five kids. That's a lot of kids, that's too many kids." I turned around, I was like, "Hey, they're little and their ears are little, but they're functional. They know what you're talking about." I said, "Do you have a problem?" He said, "Well, yeah, the planet has too many people." I was like, "Well, then you guys can go." "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it." That is, create culture, build cities, make businesses, harness the raw potential of the world that God made. It doesn't mean that we're bad stewards of the environment, but we are ones who are to subdue it, exercise dominion, because human life and flourishing matters to God. "And have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, he speaks, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit." So we ate berries and plants for the first 1600 years. We'll get to that in Genesis. "'You shall have them for food, and to every beast of the earth and every bird of the heavens and everything that creeps on the earth. Everything that has breath of life, I've given every green plant for food,' and it was so. And God saw that everything he had made, and behold, it was very good." Everything God made up until this point was good. Once God makes human life, He calls it very good. "There was evening and morning, the sixth day." So God completes his work on a Friday. And so what we see here is, ultimately that God is a God who is good and he likes to bless. This language of blessing, it appears about 400 times in your Bible, 80 times in Genesis. Genesis mentions God's blessing more than any other book of the Bible. His blessing includes his presence in Genesis children, possessions, long life, friends, and the ability to persevere and prevail through hardship. And let me say this, that ultimately, blessing in the original language means, life giving power. You know what? To live your life, you're gonna need God's power and God's blessing to get through your life. And in addition, you're gonna see children born, children are part of that blessing. Children are a blessing. Amen? Human life is unique and sacred, it is a blessing. And so, you know, when my five kids were growing up, I would look at them, and I literally would tell them this all the time, "Thank you for being my blessing." I want them to know that they are a blessing. See, we live in a world where it's like, children are an inconvenience, they're an expense, they're a liability to the environment. And also we can just terminate their life. And let me just say this. The leading cause of death last year was not COVID, it was abortion. Leading cause of death the year before was not COVID, it

was abortion. And what's so weird is we're like, "Human life is sacred, we need to do everything we can to save every life." Great, let's start with the most vulnerable and go from there. That at the end of the day, if you believe the Bible, you do believe that human life is sacred, and you believe that human life begins in our mother's womb, where we are fearfully and wonderfully made, by our creator who knows us and who calls us from our mother's womb. And when it's talking here about God's blessing, it's very interesting because, how many of you would like to be blessed? Anybody else with me? Like, "This sounds good, I'll take a blessing. Where I was going, I couldn't find one. Where do you get it?" What's really interesting is, God speaks, and then everything and everyone who obeys his word is blessed, and it's declared good or very good. The point of blessing is this. And this is the most important thing in your life. More important than your health, than your income, then your possessions, than your portfolio, is God's blessing. It's the most important thing you have. And that ultimately, you can have everything, but if God doesn't bless it, your life is painful, arduous, and sad. Whatever you have, if you're living under God's blessing, there is flourishing in your life. But the point is this, some people will ask, "Pastor Mark, who does God bless?" And what I would say is, "It's not who does God bless, it's where does God bless?" God blesses those who live in obedience to his word. And ultimately, God spoke, creation obeyed, it was good. God spoke over our first parents, they obeyed, it was very good. All there was was blessing until God's word was disobeyed. You're gonna see this in Genesis 3. Satan shows up, Adam and Eve, they disobeyed God's word. They do what God said don't do. And as a result, they weren't blessed, they brought a curse. The opposite of a blessing is a cursing. We now live in a cursed world because people don't obey God. And some people, it's just very interesting because, what people will do, they will say, "Well, I don't wanna do what God says, but I want God to bless me." Answer is, that's not how God works, because that would make God evil. That would make God rebellious. That would make God unholy. That would make God satan. If God blesses wrongdoing, then that means that God becomes wrong and a wrongdoer. So the point is this, if you wanna be blessed, obey God's word. And let me say this, we all disobey God's word. And the Bible has this word repentance, which is literally, "I'm gonna change my mind, behavior, and I'm gonna come under the authority of God's word. I'm gonna do what God said, cause I wanna live in the place that God blesses." Let me say this, in my life, Grace and I were talking about this late last night. I've been cursed a lot. I mean, I get cursed every day. People speaking evil and speaking ill, but here's what I can tell you. I've been blessed by God every day. There has not been a day in my Christian walk that wasn't a blessed day. My life is blessed. I actually love God, I like God. And every day that I'm living under the authority of God's word is a blessed day. Even if people curse or satan curses or the curse comes against me, God's blessing over me is more, more than sufficient to overcome whatever curses are against me. And I'll be honest with you, I really love you. That's why I'm here. And I opened the Bible cause I do care. And I'm talking about things that are probably not that popular, but they're in the book and we're gonna go through it. And what I'm telling you is, if at any point you disagree with God's word, you need to have a change of mind, heart and behavior, come under his word so that he can bless you. And I want you to be blessed. I want us all to be blessed. That being said, the first government is a man and a woman, a marriage, and a family. God starts with marriage, and then he's gonna add children. Out of that, come other governments like nations. The foundation to human life and flourishing

is God, and us living under the authority of God's word so that he can bless us. Living male and female, getting married, having children who live under the authority of God's word so that God can bless for generations. That's best case scenario. And ultimately, this is why there's constantly an attack on Christianity and marriage and gender and family and parenting and children. And I didn't have this in my notes, but we're in a wholesale global assault against the church being open, marriage being honored, sex only being honored within marriage, children being brought into the world. And if brought into the world, brought into the context of a family. And so you need to know as God's people, we're the weirdos. We're the outliers. We're the oddballs. We're the freaks. Like, I'm a total freak, right? Like, I'm a guy I was, am, and will be, married to a girl, crazy. We've been faithfully married on what will be 30 years this year. We have five kids. "Be fruitful, multiply," okay, we're in. Five kids that we raised to serve the Lord, to ideally save sex for marriage, get married, stay faithful to each other and make more people or total freaks. But that's what God says is his divine design. And if we live according to that, we're blessed and we are. And what I will tell you is, that the pressure from the world to... In some regards walk away from God's divine design is increasingly intense. In the world we live in, frankly, it's not working. Look at the world, does it feel blessed? I mean, right now is the big problem on planet earth, people are like, "I'm so blessed, I can't hardly handle it." No, it's all cursed. Because the more you walk away from God's architecting plan, the more you walk away from God's blessing. So that being said, God not only creates us and marriage and family, we'll get into that next week. He creates our environment and he sets our workweek, because God loves us and he wants us to be healthy. And so here's where we find the seven day week, Genesis 1:2-4, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished." That means everything. It's a , means everything. "And all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day," Saturday, "God finished his work he had done," and he what?

- Rested.

- He rested. Let me tell you this, if God takes a day off, you need a day off. "From all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day." See it takes a lot of faith to take a day off. Says, "You know what? Well, I'm not working, but God's still blessing. Even when I don't get things done, God is still going to get things done." Here's what I would tell you. I would rather have six days blessed by God than seven days not blessed by God to do my work. "And made it holy, set apart, unique, sacred, different, because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the heavens and earth." And so what God says here is this, that he sets a pattern for us, six days, he works seventh day, he rests, Sabbath day. You need to know that, again, people have tried to work against God's created order. Atheists in the French Revolution and in Russia tried to have something other than a seven day week, just sort of in protest to God, eight day week, 10 day week, guess what? It didn't work. They go back to a seven day week. Because, again, God uniquely designed us and our world and he knows what's best for us. And when we fight against it, eventually it breaks us. And so we have to accept his wisdom. Now that being said, some of you ask, "Pastor Mark, why do we have a two day weekend in America?" Well, couldn't decide between the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday and

the Christian Sabbath of Sunday Jesus' resurrection day, so we took both, but the plan of God is to work six days a week and rest the seventh, that is a grace. It's a grace for those who are poor, that otherwise would be forced to work. It's a grace for the land. It's a grace for the animals. It's a grace for everyone and everything." And it's hard to get in our English translation. But the original language here literally says, "That in six days, God breathed out, and on the seventh day, God breathed in." You need to recover, you need to rest. Ultimately, even people who don't know the Lord and don't believe the Bible, they use the saying, "I need a day off to catch my breath." You're like, "Yeah, cause that's how God made you." And if all you do is work, eventually you break yourself. So God wants you to work and he wants you to rest. Well, let me just close with a bit of a summation. What we're talking about here is, God creating us and our environment and our week and our sex and gender and sexuality. And what comes against this, are strong cultural forces of atheistic naturalistic evolution. Now, there are Christians who love the Lord and believe that God worked through a process of evolution. I'm not negating their love for Jesus. I'm saying, those who don't acknowledge that a Creator or is behind all of this. And what I would say, if you're still at a point where you're saying, "I'm not sure I believe this." Then let me just say, I love you, but the burden of proof is on you, cause for three and a half thousand years, this is what God's people have believed. And if you believe differently, it's some questions that you need to answer are, "How did nothing make everything? How did nothing make everything?" Here's another thing to ponder. How did chaos make order? Here's another one, how did everything get designed without a designer? How did impersonal matter create personal beings? And how did unintelligent matter create intelligent beings? See, at the end of the day, if you don't believe in the Bible, you're still operating according to faith, you're believing in someone or something, it's just not God. Let me say that the result of this as well is racism. We live in a day where it was like, "Everybody's equal." Why? "Well, because we want it to be." Why? Because God made us in his image and likeness, because there's one race called the human race. Because if we trace our ancestry, it all goes back to the same parents. If you believe in evolution that some people are animals and some... Rather than animals and there's people and then there is some intermittent step. Then at the end of the day, then those people are not equal. This is why Charles Darwin in his 1859 book, he gave this title, You've probably not heard the entirety of, "The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life." Christianity provides equality. Christianity provides dignity. Apart from that, there is no basis for it. Furthermore, if you don't believe that God made us male and female in his image and likeness, you are operating according to faith. And instead of trusting God, you are trusting a process. I'll give you an example. The astronomer Fred Hoyle, claimed that, "The probability of life arising on earth by purely natural means without special divine aid is less than the probability of a flight worthy Boeing 747 should be assembled by a hurricane roaring through a junk yard." He ran the statistical probability. Hurricane goes through a junk yard, there's a plane that flies. Same odds as just chance creating human life and flourishing. And it's ultimately biased. So Dr. George Wald, he was a professor of biology at Harvard University, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Biology, in an interview for "Scientific American." So it wasn't a bad day where he misspoke. This was an interview. He says, "When it comes to the origin of life, we have only two possibilities as to how life arose. One is spontaneous generation arising to evolution. The other

is a supernatural creative act of God. There is no third possibility. Spontaneous generation was scientifically disproved 100 years ago by Louis Pasteur, Spallanzani, Reddy, and others. That leads us scientifically to only one possible conclusion, that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God." It goes on to say, "I will not accept that philosophically, because I do not want to believe in God." This is what a fit looks like when you have a PhD. You're like, "Well, you know, God exists, but I don't want him to." Well, he does. He goes on to say, "Therefore, I choose to believe in that which I know is scientifically impossible, spontaneous generation arising from evolution." I appreciate his honesty. And the problem ultimately is this. And I know many of you are maybe not Christians yet. Let me just tell you how this plays itself out in your life. "So where do you come from?" Nowhere. "Who do you come from?" No one. "Why are you here?" No reason. "Well, when you die, where do you go?" Nowhere. "Well, what's the point of it all?" Nothing. The result is that, atheism, and the denial of a personal, loving Creator, God, who rewards us eternally, is ultimately despair that leads to suicide, statistically and historically. Because if it hurts so bad and it's for no reason, and I'm going nowhere to be rewarded, then when I hit my pain threshold, I end my life. Bertrand Russell, the atheist said, "Only on the firm foundation of the unyielding despair can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built." "See, Mr. Russell, okay, I wanna build my life. What do I start with?" "Unyielding despair. Just build your life on that." No, God made you in his image and likeness, begin your life on that. And I'll close with a quote from Richard Dawkins, the atheist, when he was asked of his view of reality, made him depressed, he said, "I don't feel depressed about it, but if somebody does, that's their problem." Thank you for the compassion. "Maybe the logic is deeply pessimistic." He says, "The universe is bleak, cold and empty." But so what? Well, it's also our home. So the reason God made us is to worship him. He is the creator. We were created to worship him. We're gonna worship him in a moment, but let me tell you about the storyline of the Bible. There is a God, there's one God, he's good, he's not bad. He's loving, he's kind, He blesses, he's generous, He's faithful and he's wise. He created you in his image and likeness. He bestowed particular dignity and value and worth on you. You're not an accident. You're divinely designed by a God who loves you. Furthermore, we sinned against this God, we rebelled against this God. We came out from authority and obedience to his word. And as a result, we went from him blessing us, to us bringing a curse. And here's the good news. The Creator entered into his creation. The one who made you came to save you and his name is Jesus Christ. And ultimately, he was different than us. And so we thought there was something wrong with him. The problem is, there's something wrong with us. Because he was different than us, we killed him, and he died because he loves you and he died to forgive you, and he died to redeem you, and he died to adopt you, he died to embrace you, he makes your life meaningful and valuable and purposeful. And I'm sorry for all the pain you've been through. And I'm sorry for the hardships you're in. And I'm sorry for the curse that we're all battling every single day. But the good news is, when you die, he's gonna be waiting for you. Not only did he create the heavens and the earth, he's creating a new heaven and a new earth. Not only did he take some time to prepare it for Adam and Eve, he's taking some time to prepare it for you. And he's gonna reward you for all that you've been through. He's gonna wipe every tear from your eyes, he's gonna heal all of your hurts. He's gonna lift the curse, and all you're going to experience blessing. And for all eternity, you're gonna breathe in and recover from this life. Father, God, we come to worship now, and

we ask that you would give us the Holy Spirit, so that we could live by your power, that we could live as worshipers of our creator, that we could do that for which we were created. And God, we just confess the world is very confused, And oftentimes, so are we, and the world is filled with a curse and we're always fighting against it. But God, we just thank you that not only are you creator, you entered into creation that you forgave sin, that you rose from death, that you conquer our greatest enemy, and you give us eternity. And Lord, I just ask that this would be a sacred moment for us to meet with you and that you would allow us to just breathe in, in a world that has, frankly, just exhausted us, so that we could live as worshipers in Jesus name. Amen.