

Student choices and lifestyle

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[0 : 00] So I'm going to dodge around a little bit as to where to stand but what I'd like us to look at this evening is under the heading starting as a student last time we looked at what it what it what does it involve and this time I'd like us to look at the question is it worth doing is it worth being a student from a Christian point of view or is it pointless?

Is it a waste of time? Is it rather indulgent? Indulgent in the sense that you're just doing something for yourself which is a bit sort of selfish.

Is being a student actually second best to being a missionary or working with the homeless or something like that or is being a student a snare and a distraction to faith so that would be putting rather negative spin on being a student so that's what I'd like us to look at.

Last time we looked at what does it involve. Do you remember what we talked about last time?

These are all the things that we said being a student involved in terms of things that changed.

So we said your change of home, a new independence, change from parental care to being much more free, probably a change of food so you might have to learn to cook, a change of health so people get fresh as flu apparently when they start in a new regime with new people around them.

[1 : 43] A challenge to character. Perhaps a change in possibilities of leisure activity. We talked about money. We talked about money. We talked about money. Having to make money work within the constraints of a budget.

Managing money. Perhaps being in debt. Well I think almost certainly being in debt. Then we talked about social issues.

Making new friends. Perhaps losing old friends. Perhaps facing loneliness. And then we thought about the intellectual change that you have to use your mind.

The idea of being a student is, so one presumes, to learn and to take responsibility for learning. And we said that there's a change of geography so you're in a new place to get to know.

Big change in terms of time and time management. So having to manage sleep. What time you go to bed. Which you might not realise this but there is a correlation between the time you go to bed and the time you are capable of getting up.

[2 : 54] So if you need to be up early you actually have to go to bed early. I don't know whether I'm just pointing out the obvious. Maybe not. Decision making. You actually have to make decisions.

And for international students, all sorts of things on top of that to get used to. Like the currency.

Trying to work out whether things are cheap or expensive.

Doing little sums in your head. What is normal in terms of food. So some of our American friends, three or four years ago, were unsure of the correct way to eat Weetabix.

And they didn't know that you had to put milk with it. Think of that. And then maybe even just very basically language. Being able to cope with a different language.

So those are the things that we thought of last time. And maybe that makes some sort of sense.

And there's a little bit of a background for what we're going to look at this time.

[3 : 59] So let's come back to this. And we'll pray. Lord help us as we think about your world.

And about what we're called to be. Whether we are younger or older. Help us to learn from you. And to learn how to live in this world for you.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. So my basic idea, my thesis this evening, is that the Christian view has this sort of motif to it.

That the world that we live in is created. That the world that we live in experienced a fall.

Through humankind, through our first parents and specifically our first father Adam. That what Christ came to do is to bring redemption. So we live in an age of redemption.

[5 : 14] And that we are headed towards a final recreation of all things. So I'm not going to stop to bring scripture, sentences, verses from the Bible to show that.

I'm just going to assert that that's the case. And if you're unsure whether that's true or not, we probably need to have a different discussion. But I'm going to assume that that's the case. Let me just draw this out a little bit and say creation.

The fact that this world's created means that it has purpose. It is made teleologically. It is made for a purpose. That it is made with certain order in it.

Certain patterns of existence. Certain patterns in the natural order. And certain patterns particularly in the order of human, of the human race.

It's, if it's created, it has value. In the Bible that we read, God made everything and he said it was good. So he looked at created things.

[6 : 27] Said this is good. Cabbages are good. Giraffes are good. Sunsets are good. Rivers are good. All those sorts of things are good.

And not only is there a value, but there is a meaning. It's not, so if something's created, it isn't valueless and meaningless.

It has a value and a meaning. Creation was made with physicality. And creation was made with all those things in the presence of God.

So there was no distinction between, if you like, spirituality and physicality.

The created world was what God intended it to be. And he says this is all good. This is all as I want it. So that's what applies to creation.

[7 : 26] Let's just think of what then this says about the fall. So the fall through Adam's sin brings about an undoing of many, but not all, many of the things in creation.

So instead of a purpose we get distortion. Instead of order there comes into the world disorder.

Things that were supposed to fit together neatly and run smoothly no longer do so.

Instead of the value, and this isn't an exact opposite, but they're entered into the world shame. And it would be interesting to explore the meaning of shame.

But you notice in the reading that the man and his wife were naked and they felt no shame. But after the fall, the experience and the reality of shame enters.

Where there had been meaning and value, there now enters frustration. A sense of what the Bible, the old translation would call vanity.

[8 : 37] Meaning not conceitedness, but a certain emptiness. The Apostle Paul says that creation was subject to frustration or vanity.

And that has come in through the fall. I've put there sin. Sin has entered. So the Bible says that this created world is intimately linked with the moral world of humankind.

And when sin entered the moral world of humankind, this affected the whole of creation. And instead of the presence of God, the world we now live in experiences something of estrangement from God.

So the presence of God does not fill and consciously, visibly permeate everything. God is still there. But there is a sense of estrangement.

And in the Bible, it's put in this fashion of the garden and Adam and Eve being kicked out of the garden. So they are at a distance from God. Now, if we come to redemption, I would like to assert that what we see in redemption is creation restored.

[9 : 59] Or beginning to be restored. And what we are looking forward to in the final end is creation fulfilled. And we could talk about that because the New Testament talks about Christians and how to live as Christians.

And I would contend that his guiding principle is what was creation intended for. That Christians go back to that and seek to live as in the order and pattern of creation.

And looking ahead into the future, what God has in store, although Christians rather loosely talk about heaven and hell.

I mean, that's a fair enough dichotomy. But heaven is a very, to say that Christians are aiming for heaven is rather loosely putting it.

Because we are not aiming to waft around in clouds, if that's what heaven means. We're aiming for a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth.

[11 : 14] So just as Christ was raised physically, that is the first fruits, that's the beginning, that's the prototype of the new humanity. So there will be a resurrection world, a new world in which, so

we presume, the presence of God will once again permeate and energize and amazingly fill the whole world that human beings have to live in.

I put here a little conundrum. This being the case, spirituality is what? How would we summarize, what would be a way of summarizing what in this period of time, spirituality is?

So I'm not going to answer that. I'll leave that there. I think I can leave that on the screen for you to think about. So that's where we're going to go this evening. We're going to think about those things. Does that make sense so far?

Right. So let's come down here. And what did I do with my Bible? So let's look then at this beautiful picture, which we can work on together.

I'd like us, so bearing in mind that creation sets the pattern that Christians are now called to follow in a, in a, we are restored to, to carry on where Adam sort of left off.

[12:57] Can you see the picture? Not quite. Okay. This is my picture of Genesis 2.

Trees. An area, which I'm intending to be the garden.

So if you look in chapter two, verse eight, now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden. So the whole world wasn't a garden, but there was a specific area which was the garden. And in it are trees. And there's Adam. And I've got four blue lines. Any suggestion of what the blue lines are? Rivers.

Rivers, yes. We could name them, couldn't we? One of them is the Pishon. Am I right? What's the next one?

[13:54] The Gihon. Then Tigris. And then Euphrates. Now we still have those two rivers.

They run through Iraq, I think, don't they? Not sure about what the identity of those is. Seeing as the rivers run out, that's what it says, I presume that the garden is situated on high land.

That would make sense for the rivers running out. That's what rivers do. And I'd like us, if we can, to work together on what sort of world Adam was put in.

And what sort of life God intended him to live. And I would like to answer these questions later. If Adam was here, which university courses could he reasonably do?

And what should he look out for? Which courses? Which courses? What caveats or constraints? Caveats meaning what should he be aware of? And constraints meaning what should he consider a boundary that he shouldn't cross?

[15:06] Okay, that's what we're going to do this evening. So, let's do this here. So I put a line covering all the trees and then one arrow for a particular thing in the wood.

Anybody like to suggest? Is that my battery? How could we label then these bits here?

Any suggestions? Have a look at the text. I'm thinking of verses 16 and 17. Okay, all of the trees. And what does he say you can do with all of the trees? Eat. Okay, there's a freedom to eat from all of the trees. So I'm going to put the word freedom there. So a freedom to eat from all of the trees. Except one. So there's one there. And which tree is that that he's not supposed to eat from? The tree of knowledge of...

[16:21] Tree of knowledge of good and evil. Okay, so there's one tree which he is not to eat of. So he's got a large amount of freedom, but there's one constraint.

And this tree, my personal way of explaining it would be to say, it's the tree, when you eat this, you can decide what is right and wrong.

You don't have to wait for God to tell you, when you've eaten this, you can decide it for yourself. I think that's what it means by knowing good and evil. It's a sort of deciding knowledge, but I think anyway.

So there he is with the trees. Who would that be? I think that's Adam. You probably recognised him. So that's Adam.

Now then, these are a little bit more demanding questions. So I'd like to think, what is his identity?

[17:21] Excuse me. What is his task? What resources and help are mentioned? And what freedom and limitations does he have?

Okay, so what do we say? Who is he? What are we told about his identity? Okay, hang on. Let me just, let me go through the questions again.

So that's, who is he? What's his identity? What is his task? What resources can help him? Does he just do this on his own? Is there anything else mentioned there?

And what freedom does he have? And what limits are there, if any? Okay, so those are the questions. We can do them in any order. Probably best if you sort of stick up a hand a little bit, so

that we're not all speaking at once.

Yes, sir. Thank you. He's the first gardener. So where shall I put that on there? I think tasks is good. So a gardener.

[18:24] So I'm just going to go straight over the page.

So if that's the case, if there was a gardening course, he could do, he could study gardening. Horticulture. Anybody here ever studied horticulture?

Yeah. Yeah, you did that, didn't you? Very, very Adamic. Okay. So he was a gardener.

Could we? Right. Good answer. Thank you very much. Let's go a little bit further. Mark. Yeah, he's a man. Yeah, he's a man. Okay. He's actually the man, because Adam...

Yeah. Man. Okay, so Maria is saying, made in the image of God. Where do you get that from? Where do we get that from?

[19:27] 1, 26, 27. The man is in the image of God.

In the image of God. In the image of God. Now, are any of the... Anything else created, any of the animals or anything else said to be in the image of God?

No. No. Woman is as well, yes. So, I'm going to put male and female, put an M and an F there. Male and female in the image of God.

This is a unique thing about humankind. Made in the image of God. And that's a huge statement to make. It's a very strong thing for Christians to understand.

Why do we care about street drinkers? Why don't we just have a cull? Answer, because street drinkers are made in the image of God.

[20:44] Why do we care about children that are born perhaps not with the same capacities as other children? Answer, because the human beings are made in the image of God.

Why do we care about older people when they are no longer productive and perhaps need a lot of attention? Answer, because they are made in the image of God.

There's a huge value and preciousness of people for this simple but profound reason. When you look at a human being and observe a human being, you see something reflecting who God himself is.

Now, that's a deep mystery. But this is said right at the beginning of the Bible and is very, very important. So, his identity is made in the image of God.

For example, God keeps on speaking. He says, let there be light and things like that. And human beings characteristically speak.

[21:54] Which is what I'm doing at the moment. And you're listening. If we were meerkats, I would go like that.

And that's as far as our communication would go. And you might go like that as well. But only human beings conduct themselves by speech.

And this, I think, would be a very simple example of part of what it is to be in the image of God. God is a speaking God. We are speaking people. Okay. So, man is in the image of God.

Anybody else like to give any other thoughts on any of those in any order? Okay. Thank you very much. He rules. Could you give us a verse for that, please? 26. 1-26. 2-28.

Thank you. Let us make man in our image and in our likeness. Let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, over all the creatures that move along the ground.

[23:09] And where else did you say? 28. Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

So, he's a ruler. So, I'm going to put that there. Ruler. He's not an absolute ruler because God is the top ruler, but he's a sort of second tier ruler.

Under God's rule, human beings are told to rule this whole, whatever you call it, ecosphere. All the things that live and move and multiply on earth.

So, he's a ruler. And one of the other suggestions about image is that when a global ruler wanted to emphasize that he ruled, so when Nebuchadnezzar wanted to emphasize that he ruled in the plains of Dura, he set up an image of himself and said, you know, my authority is somehow channeled through this image.

And here's another thought about humankind, that God's rule is sort of channeled through human beings who are his image here on earth. I remember when I first started teaching, I wondered

whether I should have a badge to say that I was a Christian or put some Christian sign upon the room that I was teaching in.

[24 : 48] And I, at that time, read a book on man, the image of God. And in the book it said, how is God's presence shown in any particular place?

How is God's presence shown in any particular place? Through people. Because people are the image of God. And it came to me, well it struck me, that if God's presence was going to be shown in that room where I was doing teaching, it had to be through me.

I couldn't duck out and put a motto on the wall and point people to that. They had to be able to look at me and see through me, hopefully, to see something of who God is.

So, okay, ruler, thank you very much. Let's carry on. So we've got identity, tasks. Can I put ruler here as well? Okay, any more answers?

Yes. Okay, verse 20. Tell us what happened. Well, he does, doesn't he? So he's not just a gardener.

[25 : 54] He also gives names to the livestock. So this is a task that he does. He names the animals. And what would you, what did you say that that was being?

I think you called it zoology. Zoology. Zoology is the science of living creatures, giving them names, seeing which ones are like which other ones, looking at their habits and things like that.

So he names the animals. So I think he could do a zoology course, couldn't he? Like that, an L there? Okay, so we've got him signing up for horticulture and for zoology.

I think he could do management course. Oh, right. Okay, so if he's a ruler, do you think he needs to do a management course? Because ruling involves keeping records of things and making sure people get memos and things like that.

So perhaps he could do management. Okay, let's go a little bit further.

[27 : 12] So he names the animals. How would he remember the names that he's given them? He could write them down.

He might have had a perfect memory, yes. But if somebody else came along and said, what did you call that? He might say, look it up on the list.

What's it like? It's got fawn, sort of fur, big whiskers, I don't know, whatever it is like that. I sort of wonder whether he would do writing, whether that might be part of what he should sign up to do. I'll put that in there. Just... And of course, somebody wrote this down, didn't they? At some point, somebody wrote this down.

Can we go any further? He's called to a proprietor and a spouse.

[28 : 17] Yes, he is. He's to be a husband... Okay, he's to be a husband and a father.

And that's actually quite an important part of the last section there about woman. I notice that the first recorded poem, which is what it is, if your Bible shows it as a poem, that would be correct.

The first recorded poem is from a man who, for the first time, claps eyes on this woman. I'm going to sign him up for a poetry course.

Sing is going to be a husband and a father. Yes, yes. I'm going to sign him up for a parenting course. Or a teaching course.

Shall I sign him up for child psychology as well? Child psychology was probably a lot simpler before the fall, but not non-existent.

[29 : 44] Let's... I mean, all other things being equal. Yeah. Okay, shall we... Any other answers to these questions? Yes. The resources and the help.

Do you notice that in verse 18, God says, It is not good for the man to be alone. And loneliness is not a good thing. And the particular answer in this case was a helper suitable for him.

Now, bear in mind, this is saying, there is Adam. He's got all that, all this for him here. But he's not actually completely equipped for this task. There are things that he cannot cope with.

There are things that he can't do as they should be done. In verse 18, he needs some help. And this is the point where all the animals come.

So all the characteristics of the animals are investigated. These are animals... Here's an animal that's very tall. Here's an animal that's very strong. Here's an animal that makes a loud noise.

[30 : 52] Here's an animal that can dig holes in the ground. But having seen all the capacities that animals have, there is no suitable helper for Adam.

All these qualities are not enough to help him. So the Lord takes something out of Adam. It says a rib.

I don't think that's necessarily a medically precise term. A side of man. And forms this side into a living person. And brings this sort of side of Adam back to him.

And this is the point to which he says, this is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. You shall be called woman for she shall be taken out of man. And he says for that reason, there's a sort of magnetism that men and women like to click back together, having been taken apart, click back together.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother, be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. So the help, in this case, is woman.

[32 : 02] So this is saying that, it's not saying that the man is totally incompetent, so please don't hear me to say that. But it's saying that there's things that men can't do in this whole task without woman.

In particular, of course, producing children. Very difficult to do that. Otherwise, but I think it's larger than that. It's saying that this whole venture needs what woman can bring to it.

And man is limited without woman. There are things that a woman can see that a man can't see.

There are things that a woman can say that a man can't say.

There are things that a woman can bring to a situation that a man can't bring to a situation. So he needs woman. Thank you very much. Any other answers to these questions?

I wonder whether as part of identity, he seems like he's a recipient of an abundance of things.

[33 : 14] Like, for instance, even in 29, I think that God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant in the face of the whole earth. They will be yours for food.

And obviously, he's given the body and then given woman. I think identity. So if I put recipient of some things.

Yeah. so I've written there recipient of abundant gifts I think you've put your finger on an important point there because as well as all these things which says I give you we've got the idea of God blessed them and said to them be fruitful and increase so there's a sense in which this whole thing is under a huge blessing that God isn't being grumpy about this but he's totally for all these things that humankind has before it or them thank you very much for that well that's helpful isn't it

I put creation's bounty how about that as resources yes well that's I think that's thank you very much for pointing that out so it says in verse 12 so it's described the rivers and the rivers flow through such and such a place there's gold an aromatic resin and onyx onyx being one of these semi-precious stones now interestingly that combination is also found in the temple and in the tabernacle so gold things are covered with gold and the aromatic smelly things were found in the temple and onyx was one of the precious stones that was found on the high priest's regalia so there's certainly an echo there of the sort of like if you like the holiness of this place but

I think Steve's got a good point here so how does anybody know that there's gold there well yes okay so who's going to do the digging Adam so he's got to do he's got to do digging he's got to find out what you do with gold what makes gold gold he's going to be a metallurgist I'm sorry you said that because I can't spell metallurgist I'm going to put metals there we could try signing him up for a metallurgy course here shall we metallurgy and I think we'll sign him up for chemistry because he was going to need to know whether gold reacts with things jewellery jewellery what did you say Chris mining mining we're going to do mining and it's going to be safe

[37 : 22] I think he needs to do a civil engineering course as well and if he's going to have other people helping him do the civil engineering he better have a management course and he better do health and safety although I don't know whether health and safety would have been an issue before the fall but let's let's be on the safe side oh thank you very much these rivers so he could do something to do with boating how would he know do you notice that something's east it does say east so if he's going to know what east and west and north and south are he needs to do a bit of geography doesn't he yeah I need to do some mapping what's it do you call it mapping or is there another cartography thank you he can't do mapping without trigonometry things like that so sign him up for trigonometry trigonometry and if he's going to do all this is he going to do all this calculation by hand

I mean he might do well yes in the fullness of time he might he might want to do a numerical computational course yeah I'm going to go way ahead and say I think he might he might want to do a computing course actually of course Paddy's doing computing that's quite a long list of things that he could be doing yes he hasn't got anywhere to live at the moment so he might want to put this large family which at the moment as things are as things are before the fall we would imagine there's no particular constraint children that he has so he's got to put them somewhere so he might

want to well he might want to design some houses so he might want to do an architecture course architecture architecture architecture architecture you might want to do a building course which would involve plumbing and electricity you have to invent electricity first but he could be an electrician yep

I think interior design might be useful because he wants to know what to put in that house interior design interestingly he wouldn't have had to do linguistics or he wouldn't have had to do translation because at this point there's no different languages but he might have had to invent more language so perhaps he should do linguistics there's quite a lot of things there does anybody want to add anything more to that yes his wife particularly has an aesthetic sense how do you spell it like that a e because she looks at the fruit a little bit later and she says she sees that it's pleasing to the eye so there is a an aesthetic sense things that are beautiful and I realize it's a temptation but at that point it isn't a sin so there's an aesthetic sense so I think I'm going to sign him up for an art course I don't put course art yep cooking cooking would be useful wouldn't it cooking and knowing the right sorts of things to cook so I'm going to put him down for nutrition as well and that might lead us to the what was there halfway down at one point which was what caveats and constraints we can bring this in very easily for the cooking there is going to be a constraint on the university of eden cooking course could be that but I was saying one explicit one that we've already mentioned not the knowledge of the tree of good and evil so whatever fruit that is you don't cook that you don't eat that so there are constraints there are constraints well that's quite a big list and what haven't we yet done we've done his identity we've done his task we've done the resources and help does anybody want to say anything about freedom and limits are there no limits are there some limits what would guide him yet it's not to eat of this of this tree we could perhaps even make it a little bit more of a general statement how would he know what his freedom and limits were yeah because he's told isn't he the freedom and limits are as told by God and in particular by his word or by his words and so oh I'm squeaking aren't I above all the the particular thing that

God says is you can have freedom of all this but there's just one thing I don't want you to from this tree I think the principle is the same for us today although the content of what God says is enlarged all these areas of study are meant to be under the constraint of sorry that's got lost let's see if I can make it clearer by using this different pen all of this all of that there is to be under the word of God and of course that's where the problem can arise because secular education says well we want to study anything we want to take it anywhere it goes we don't really care about any higher authority that's a big difference isn't it the

[44 : 54] Christian would say I'm free to study all of these as long as it comes under the authority and the control of Jesus Christ does that make sense right that is what I wanted us to look at and does anybody like to suggest what a definition of spirituality might be on the basis of what we've been looking at I had two words one beginning with T and one beginning with H and you can think about that while I'm looking for my pens true I was going to put human ness human ness that what God calls us to is true human ness true human ness being truly what human beings ought to be which is quite a thought a ending a ending a ending

Thank you.