

# Praising God for created bodies

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, thank you. Genesis 2 verse 7, just the end of the reading there, is the creation of the first human body, the first person.

It's such a beautiful, kind of weighty moment, don't you think? Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.

This morning is the first in a short topical series, three Sundays, thinking about the human body. We're going to think about God and our bodies. Our bodies are so basic to our lives. And so what an important thing to think about. What is it, this body of mine? What's it for? Where's it come from? What's it worth?

It's a super important thing to think about. All the more so because in the 21st century world, our relationships with our bodies are so kind of complicated, do you not think?

Our culture has such a tangled and split view of the human body. On the one hand, we seem to value a human body so highly.

[ 1 : 15 ] We're obsessed with diets and exercise and bodybuilding and cosmetics and plastic surgery and Botox and anti-aging treatment and so on.

The quest for physical beauty and fitness is all around us. Can't avoid it. Photoshopped images and Instagram poses and Love Island contestants with supposedly perfect human bodies that we should have, we could have, we must have.

In our culture, a bizarrely high view of the human body, obsessed with it, and at the same time maybe a painfully low view of the body, which sees this thing sometimes as just a kind of outer casing with the real you as what's inside.

Your inner feelings, your consciousness, that's who you really are, we're told. Which can make your body the bit on the outside, just kind of packaging really to the real you.

Like the cardboard box your Amazon delivery comes in. And so, just do what you want with your body. Use it, abuse it, mark it, recycle it, surgically change it if you like.

[ 2 : 34 ] It's just your body, nothing more than that. So, in our culture, a bizarrely high view of this and a painfully low view of this at the same time, what do we make of all that?

Talking about the body will take us to some really deep questions about what it means to be human. Body talk will be very personal for us, sensitive.

One or two of us might love our bodies. Many of us hate our bodies. All of us groan in our bodies. Talk about the body should be very practical for us as well.

How should we be, how should we live with these bodies of ours? So, it's three weeks on the body, sermons, midweek get-togethers, a chance to talk and discuss and pray together and help one another.

And maybe there'll be conversations that flow out of this as well. And as we do this, just for these three weeks, how brilliant that through the Bible, our God speaks truth to us about ourselves.

[ 3 : 41 ] A word from the outside. Clear truth. Sometimes clashing with the culture truth. Wonderful truth. About us and our bodies.

The Bible tells us. The Bible tells us to shape how we live and think as his creatures to his glory. That's the introduction.

That's what we're going to do. This morning, part one, we're going to think about praising God for our created bodies. Praising God for our created bodies.

Kate's just read from Genesis 1 and 2, which is the accounts of creation. Absolutely foundational for understanding our world and ourselves.

And there's three things I want to say this morning from Genesis and a few other bits about the Bible. Firstly, foundationally, we're going to spend most of our time here. We are bodied people. [ 4 : 38 ] Point one this morning. We are bodied people. That is, you and I are created by God with God-given good bodies.

In Genesis 1, the kind of large-scale, epic account of creation, God speaks and he makes and he forms and he fills this good creation of ours.

The sky and land and sea and plants and animals. And in Genesis 1, verse 27, at the climax of his creating work, God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. So within a physical creation, God created mankind. Physical people.

Male bodied and female bodied. And in Genesis 1, verse 31, God saw all that he had made and it was very good. It was good. Genesis 2 takes a second angle on creation.

[ 5 : 43 ] A kind of zoomed in, close-up, personal account of our beginnings. And verse 7 is the creation of the first human being. And if you've got Genesis 2 open, just look at it closely.

Let me read it again. Notice first, the man is made from the dust of the ground. And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living being. Notice first, the man is made from the dust of the ground. Because we're not spiritual floaty things.

So this physical, natural world, carbon and hydrogen and oxygen and atoms and molecules and the solid mud and ground we walk over. That's what we're made from.

We're solid and physical and earthy. Notice second, we don't appear by magic or by random chance.

[ 6 : 45 ] Rather, the Lord God formed a man. The Lord God, the personal sovereign creator of all. He formed a man from the dust.

Like a potter with clay. Creatively, deliberately, skillfully. He shaped the man from dust.

He fashioned his body with his hands, if you like. Which is saying the human body is no accident.

Our DNA, our organs, our limbs, our features are sculpted by him personally.

Until in verse 7, having formed the man, third thing, the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living being. One person says breathed here is warmly personal.

With the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss. We talk about giving someone the kiss of life, breathing life into someone. This is Genesis 2 verse 7.

[ 7 : 56 ] And the beginnings, the creation of humanity, bodied people, us. Compacted dust. Crafted bodies.

God's handiwork. God's handiwork. With his breath breathed into us. So that we stand or sit today alive. Which is good. It's good.

I say us. I say us. The creation of us. I say that because this description in Genesis 2 verse 7 of the first man.

It really is meant to shape how all of us as human beings view ourselves. Our bodies. Let me show you this.

Later in the Old Testament, a man called Job prays to God. He says, your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?

[ 8 : 50 ] Remember that you moulded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Do you see what he's saying? Like the first man, I was dust.

You moulded me. You hands shaped me. You made me. A bit differently, at the end of Ecclesiastes, the writer describes our dying as an undoing of Genesis 2 verse 7.

The dust returns to the ground where it came from. And the spirit, the breath, returns to the God who gave it. Describes our deaths like that.

Because all of us are dust formed with God's spirit breath given to us like the first man. And Paul will say in Acts chapter 17, God himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

And there's another Bible passage that captures so beautifully the creation of our God-given bodies. You might know it. It's from Psalm 139. It's a bit small on the screen.

[ 9 : 59 ] I hope you might be able to see it. Psalm 139 verses 13 to 18, where King David prays and praises his God for his created body. And there's echoes here of Job and Genesis 2.

It's a psalm. It's for us to pray for words. It's words for us to take on our lips. Could you say this? For you, Lord, created my inmost being.

You knit me together in my mother's womb. Sometimes when Meg and I are watching something on the TV, she does a bit of needlework in front of the telly.

And if she's not concentrating hard enough, it gets messed up. Every stitch takes care and attention. This knitting together. That's what God did in your mother's womb.

Knitting your body together. I praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

[11:03] When I was woven together. Kind of intricately embroidered in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, God. How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. Genesis 2 verse 7. All the way through the Bible. What should we say about this? We are bodied people. This body I have is created and God formed and God given.

And as part of God's creation is created very good. Okay, lots of Bible there. So what? So what? This is wonderful.

First off, we should accept our bodies as good gifts from the Lord. And we should thank him. Of course we live now, we'll discover this, talk about this more next week.

[12:13] We live now in a world with broken bodies. Because sin and shame mark us. And our bodies are diseased and decaying and disabled. And yet the body that we have is still created.

Still God given. Having a body is not bad. It's good. Must resent being physical.

God has designed us as bodied creatures to eat and drink and sleep and go to the toilet. God has formed us as male and female.

As sexual creatures. He's designed us. This is good. To go through puberty. To develop adult sexual characteristics. That's not bad. It's not dirty.

It's good. Sexual arousal and orgasms are good and God given. To have a body that works is not degrading.

[13:17] Nothing to be embarrassed about. That we have bodies and God given bodily functions. Do you believe that? And let me put it a bit more personally.

Your body is not disgusting. I wonder how you actually feel about yourself. Some people really hate their bodies.

You can't bear to look at yourself in the mirror. Sometimes that can be because of our experiences. And damage done by us. Or damage done to our bodies.

Which sticks to you. Sticks to your body. You can't get rid of it. But even if something terrible has happened and you bear the scars. Your body is still a good gift from God to you.

Sometimes we dislike our bodies because of stupidly high expectations. Do you know about that? It starts at such a young age that in the playground.

[14:18] Where they pick on the one thing about your body that's not normal. Normal they say. Your nose is too big. The mole on your face. The extra hair on your chin.

You're too fat. You're too short. You're too lanky. You're not meeting expectations. Shame on you. And then add to that so many images around the place of toned, fit, supposedly perfect skin and weight and teeth people on billboards and on social media.

And you feel that you don't or can't meet that standard. So you must diet harder. Or train harder. How am I looking? Until you end up feeling your body's rubbish.

Your body's an enemy. I hate it. But that's not how it is. It's not how it's meant to be. The whole kind of must look like Kim Kardashian.

Must bulk up like Daniel Craig. Body thing. It's just wrong. Genesis 2 verse 7. Psalm 139.

[15:20] Your body. Your body. With all its God made. Hand made quirks. Is his good gift to you.

You can stand in front of the mirror. With your Bible open at Psalm 139. And look at your God formed body. So complex.

So designed. So quirky. And you can say to your Lord. Maybe you'd like to do this later. You can stand in front of the mirror. And say this to your God. I praise you. Because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made.

Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. Or as someone once said. I'm me. And I'm good. Because God don't make junk. He don't.

So we should learn to thank him. For the body he's given us. And be a community of people. Who know that we have good God-given bodies.

[16:20] Two more implications of being bodied people. One. We're allowed to enjoy our bodies. I hope you know this. All the way through history. There have been people.

There have been religious people. Who have been against enjoying the body. In the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 4 verse 3. Paul mentions false teachers.

This is wrong. Who quote. Forbid people to marry. And order them to abstain from certain foods. Because marriage and sex is physical and dirty.

And you must stay away from this food. And that food. But Paul says here. That everything God created is good. And nothing is to be rejected.

If it's received with thanksgiving. So with your God-given body. You're to enjoy his good gifts. You can enjoy good food.

[17:14] You're to enjoy the feel of a spring breeze on your face. Or shuffling through dry leaves on an autumn day. Or the sound of the water and the glint of the sun.

As you stand in a stream fishing. Or whatever you do. Or the happy ache of your muscles. After you've worked on the allotment. Or a warm bath on a winter's morning.

Or sport. Or deepening sexual and emotional intimacy within marriage. Enjoy using our created bodies within his creation.

And thank him for this gift. Enjoy our bodies. And care for our bodies. In Ephesians chapter 5.

Paul is telling husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. And then he says this. Ephesians 5.29. After all, no one ever hated their own body. But they feed and care for their body.

[18:12] Just as Christ does the church. So knowing that this body of mine is a God-given good gift. I meant to care for it. You should eat enough food.

You should try and get enough sleep. You should take enough rest. Rather than thinking that you're some kind of super person. Who can keep going. I've taken a long time over this.

This is foundational to everything. You and I are bodied people. Dust-crafted bodies.

Handmade by God. With his breath in us. And that's a good question this morning. Will you believe that? About yourself. Okay.

Much more swiftly now. Just a couple of extra things to say. To round off this morning. Firstly, we're bodied people. Second, I hope this will make sense. We are joined up body and soul people.

[19:17] Let me say what I mean by this briefly. We'll come back to it through the series. Genesis 2 verse 7 and Psalm 139 are super clear about our bodies. Can't miss it.

We are formed from the dust of the ground. It's who we are. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. My bones, me.

Our bodies really are part and parcel of who we are. It's very, very important to say this. Because all through history and in our society today as well, there's a strain of thought that says, my body is not actually the real me.

But rather the real me. The heart of who I am as a person is found within. In my feelings, my mind, my heart.

The real me, some will say, is my spirit, my soul, the authentic me in here. And my body is just the bit on the outside.

[20:26] The packaging. Or even the prison for my soul. If you think like that, the body becomes very quickly downgraded.

Bad even. Bad even. And if your body doesn't satisfy you, or if your body doesn't fit with who you feel you are inside, then you'll chop your body, or change your body, to fit with the real inner you in here.

Which is why these days there are kids who take puberty blockers. And there are adults who have genitals removed or constructed. But what does the Bible say about this?

Bible says that as people, we are body and soul joined together. I forgot to put the verse on the screen here. In Matthew 10, 10, 28, Jesus is talking about not being afraid when people attack you for being a Christian.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[ 21 : 40 ] Jesus says we're soul and body. Or in another place, spirit and flesh. It's what makes us up as people.

That is, there's an inner non-physical reality to us as people, the soul. And there's an outer physical reality to us as people, the body.

But God did not create Adam's innards, his soul, the real Adam. And then look round for a temporary body container to put it in.

No, no, Adam has an animated body. That is, in the Bible, we're created people. We're body and soul united together people.

We're deeply connected. What's inside and outside. Body and soul joined up, given and good. We will come back to this. All sorts will flow from this biblical understanding.

[ 22 : 43 ] Like how our bodies and minds and emotions and spiritual life are deeply connected. It's why physical health and mental health are often tied together.

It's how when you're physically tired, you can have more spiritual doubts. The reason we're so tightly connected, that's why online digital relationships aren't enough for us as people.

Because we're not soul existing there people. We need physical touch. We need a handshake and a hug. And as people relating to people, we need to be present with each other.

All sorts will flow from this biblical understanding. And also how good it is to accept and rest in who I am, body and soul. All of who I am.

His choice and gift. To be explored further over the coming weeks. What we're talking about this morning, we're talking about our bodies. We're talking about how Genesis 1 and 2 and all that flows from it is so good.

[ 23 : 57 ] And stabilizing for us. He's sovereign and kind. He forms us, body and soul. There's nothing degrading or disgusting here, but good and given.

One, we're bodied people. Two, we are joined up body and soul people. And thirdly, finally for today, what this means is that we belong, body and soul, to our creator.

That is, this morning, as his creatures, with these handmade, God-given bodies and his breath in us, you and I are his.

We belong to him, body and soul. There's an American writer called Camille Paglia. Quote, Fate, not God, has given us this flesh.

We have absolute claim to our bodies and may do with them as we see fit. That's not true. You see, if these bodies are just an accident, if fate has given us these bodies, we can do whatever we want with them.

[ 25 : 09 ] Don't belong to anyone but us. I'll do what I want. But it's God who has given us this body. And he has his claims over us.

See, I belong, body and soul, to the one who has given me this flesh. Psalm 24, verse 1, says, The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.

You see, we are the Lord's. We belong to him. We are his because he's made us. In Psalm 119, last verse to look at, Psalm 119, verse 73 down the bottom, the psalmist prays, Your hands made me and formed me.

Give me understanding to learn your commands. Think over the next couple of weeks, we might learn this in Sunday. On a Sunday with the children. See what it says? Your hands made me and formed me.

I'm your handiwork. So, help me learn your commands. Help me live for you, body and soul, because I'm yours.

[ 26 : 31 ] You, my God, have absolute claim on me. You have an absolute claim over my body. And you, my good Lord, may command me as you see fit.

You are my loving creator. You are my rightful Lord. And as we'll go on to see in coming weeks, you are my God, our loving redeemer.

Because as the Bible story and history rolls on from creation, you know what happens. Sin enters our world. And as a human race, we fall.

And we now spend our days in created, God-given bodies, and yet at the same time, fallen, broken, scarred, dying bodies.

And this loving creator who has made us and formed us, he sends his son into the world to people with broken bodies.

[ 27 : 27 ] And he sends his son into the world as a loving redeemer. Jesus. Jesus. Who comes into the world bodily.

That he might die in the flesh for us and rise again bodily. And then send his Holy Spirit to dwell in my body.

Until one day he, the Lord Jesus, returns bodily. And I, in my body, will be raised from the dead and welcomed into a new creation.

Where I will live with my God with a restored resurrection body. This body transformed beyond anything I can imagine. I will live for him in my body perfectly for good.

Your hands made me and formed me. Give me understanding to learn your commands. With my body I thee honour my Lord. So with your God-given body today, this week.

[ 28 : 35 ] Well, will you thank God for it? And enjoy your body and take care of your body. And with your body, live for the one who made you and formed you. And let me lead us in a prayer.

Let's pray. We, all of us, were woven in the secret place.

You made us and formed us and moulded us. Our bodies are given by you. We belong to you, our God.

We praise and thank you. We ask that as your physical bodied creatures, you would help us to think rightly about ourselves and to think rightly about living for you.

Make us as those who belong to you, having been created. Make us those who belong to you, having been redeemed. Make us those who live for you and offer you our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to you.

[ 30 : 20 ] Because this is our spiritual act of worship. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.