

Discover the surprising power of the G.O.S.P.E.L. story—explained as an acrostic by Pastor D. A. Horton. The gospel message is powerful, theological, and surprisingly simple to comprehend. *Are You Good With God?* explains giant truths so people from every background can understand.

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Then God said, "Let us
make man in our image,
after our likeness. And
let them have dominion
over the fish of the sea
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the livestock and over

all the earth and over
every creeping thing
that creeps on the
earth." So God created
man in his own image,
in the image of God he
created him; male and
female he created them.

GENESIS 1:26-27

GOD'S DESIGN

God's story opens by framing how He designed creation. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We can't overlook some truths in this statement. First, the Bible is not a book that is begging the reader to believe God exists. Second Timothy 3:16–17 says God is the one who revealed His story as recorded in the Bible, the fact that the Bible exists. This fact should lead readers to believe God exists. When I send my wife a text message, I don't have to prove to her that I exist. The fact I texted her is evidence enough that I'm alive and communicating to her through my text message. The Bible is similar to Him texting us, sharing with us insights about His story.

The idea that God does not exist is a modern phenomenon that has only been popular a couple hundred years. Throughout human history cultures, ethnicities, and people groups all over the world had a belief in one or many supreme beings

who ruled over them. This truth is supported by Ecclesiastes 3:11: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” Solomon, the writer of this passage, says God has put in every heart a desire to understand what our existence and work means. We know there is something and/or someone beyond us who is eternal. In our life, we strive to please the One who is eternal and gives us meaning for living—this someone is God.

The prophet Jeremiah testified that “the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King” (Jeremiah 10:10). The Psalms declare that “his understanding is beyond measure” (Psalm 147:5). But because of our sin, instead of pursuing the only True and Living God who cannot be fully understood, we often create gods that we can understand and even control. When these false gods no longer quench our quest for the eternal, there are times we conclude an eternal God must not exist. However, we must realize that we’re arrogant to come to such a conclusion without exhaustively (or totally) examining all the evidence. It is impossible for one human mind to possess all the knowledge that has ever existed, is existing, and will exist in the future. No one person can say they have examined

all of knowledge in order to then determine no god exists. A total embrace of all knowledge will always be outside of the grasp of humans. When people say there is no god, they have simply stopped being diligent in their research, rather than accepting God's claim as being full of truth.

Romans 1:18–23 informs us how God's existence is made evident every time we connect with the nature that He created. One way to understand this natural evidence of God's existence is to look at the clothes we wear, the shoes we put on, and even the electronic devices we use regularly. Before we purchased them, they were an idea in someone's mind. This idea was shared, and a design was created. The design was given a brand, mass produced, and then sold to consumers. Every design has a designer. Nature is no different, and God's story reveals Him to be the designer of all of creation.

Another evidence is the idea of morality, what is right and wrong. Our society gives an inconsistent definition of right and wrong. Often people think they have the right to determine what is right and wrong for themselves. This leads us to believe that everyone has the right to claim what is true to them. And where there is disagreement, no one is either right or wrong, because it's "their truth" they are believing.


This confusion grows out of an idea that says there is no such thing as an absolute truth. Some say truth is fluid and changes because it's subjective, in contrast to being concrete, objective, and eternally stable. But if truth is always changing, and this is what prevents it from being absolute, then the very claim "there is no such thing as absolute truth" has defeated itself because it can't be true. If this statement is not true, then it reveals truth is objective not subjective. If truth then is objective, we can truly find an acceptable definition to the question of morality, which is "what is right and wrong?"

If humanity believes the lie that there is no objective standard for defining right and wrong, then working toward any form of justice makes no sense. Also, if there is no god, and we are truly in a process of human evolution, then why should humanity help any victims of abuse, displaced populations due to the horrors of genocide and war, or feed the hungry? If there is no god, then why are we fighting against nature's way of removing the weak so the strong will be those who survive?

Humans work to help marginalized and vulnerable people because we truly realize we have compassion and empathy. These characteristics came from somewhere, which we'll identify in a moment. As we look back to the issue of morality,

God's story unpacks how there is both absolute truth and a concrete definition of right and wrong. Since God is the source of righteousness, we should read His story to see what He classifies as right and wrong behaviors. Every human being has been given the ability to determine right from wrong because we are all equally made in God's image.

GOD'S IMAGE

- 
- Genesis 1:26–27
 - Every human bears “God’s image”

**GOD'S
IMAGE**

The gospel theme is first introduced to readers in Genesis 1:26–27: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

It's important we start any conversation about the gospel with God's creation of humanity. God's story reveals early on how He made every man and woman in His image. There are a couple of truths we need to identify here as it relates to God's design.

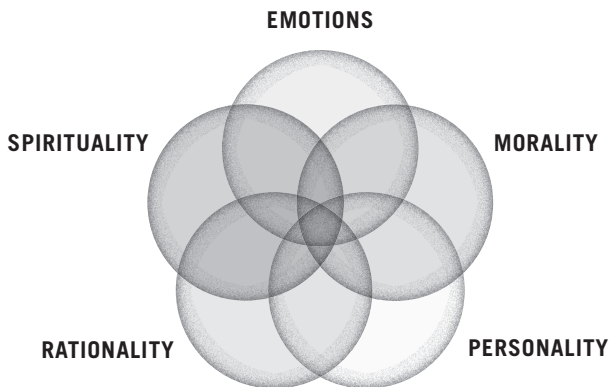
First, there is one human race. The idea of there being many races on planet earth is something not found in God's story—it is a human idea that traces back to the colonization of the Americas.² Within our one human race are numerous beautiful ethnicities, giving distinction among civilizations, languages, and people groups around the world. God's story traces the ancestral roots of our one human race back to one common set of parents, Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:20 and Acts 17:23–26). The gospel confronts classism, racism, sexism, and xenophobia head-on by showing an equality among the entire human race. All these vices exist because sinful human beings, who were in positions of decision-making, showed partiality (or favoritism) to others like them, and built walls of segregation among humans. All this was done outside of God's design for humanity.

Second, humans have unique characteristics. Being created in God's image does not mean humans are part God and part human. Neither does it mean we will become equal with God as

we progress over time. Since John 4:24 says God is spirit, and since a spirit is immaterial, then being made in the image of God requires us to understand the uniqueness of humanity when compared to every other type of God's creation. We discover our uniqueness when we list the immaterial characteristics (or attributes) that God shared with humans alone. Here are some examples of the characteristics He shared with us:

- **Emotions**—Through God's story He reveals emotional expressions that we as humans also express. Such emotions as anger (Psalm 106:40), compassion (Exodus 33:19), grief (Isaiah 63:10), hate (Psalm 5:5), joy (Nehemiah 8:10), and of course love (Psalm 136).
- **Morality**—The ability to determine what is right and wrong.
- **Personality**—The ability to express individuality through behavior.
- **Rationality**—The ability to assess and process information.
- **Spirituality**—The ability for our soul to exist. Genesis 2:7 says, "then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” God breathed a singular breath into the first human He created, described by the Hebrew phrase *of life*, a plural word meaning Adam was brought to life both physically and spiritually. The soul of every human continues to live after physical death takes place (see Luke 16:19–31).



By giving humanity these attributes, God equipped Adam and Eve to walk in obedience, multiply the human race, and creatively manage nature. Here’s a flashback to Genesis 2. The setting is in the garden of Eden, before God created Eve. In Genesis 2:15–17 God made a covenant with Adam saying that if he obeyed God by managing

the Garden of Eden and eating from every tree in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, then Adam could keep living in the garden. However, if Adam disobeyed God's covenant by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Adam would die.

Then comes the first time in God's story that He said something was not good—man was alone. As the man was naming every animal, he noticed that each animal he named had an equal mate of its kind. Adam realized he didn't have an equal mate who shared his humanity. Genesis 2:21–22 says, “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.” The rib's position amplifies God's design for closeness, cooperation, and intimacy between man and woman.

For the next part of the story, cue up the Etta James classic, “At Last,” where “my lonely days are over and life is like a song.”

When the man woke up, God presented the woman to him, and he rejoiced. He finally found the equal mate he was looking for! What we witness here is God's design for the covenant of marriage. For humanity to flourish and walk in

obedience to the covenant God made with Adam, he and his bride were to work together for the rest of their lives. We see God intended for marriage to be between one man and one woman, resulting in a lifetime of teamwork as they walk in obedience to God.

OPEN FELLOWSHIP

OPEN FELLOWSHIP

- Genesis 1–2
At one point in human history there was no abuse, addictions, broken families, depression, suicide, or death.

At this point in human history, God enjoyed open fellowship with the entire human race—Adam and Eve. It's important to understand that there was no animosity, distrust, or hostility between God and humanity, and the same was true of the relationship between Adam and Eve. Take a minute to consider Genesis 2:24–25: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked

and were not ashamed.” Moses wrote this passage about Israel’s wandering in the wilderness before entering the promised land. He introduced Israel to the high priority of the marriage relationship. At the same time, Moses shed light on the fact that both Adam and Eve were naked, and they had no shame. This phrase is not talking about the lack of insecurity regarding our personal physique. Rather, it is platforming how Adam and Eve had no fear of being exposed, because neither of them were living a secret life.

In this time of human history there was no such thing as baby-momma or baby-daddy drama. Adam wasn’t sliding into anyone’s direct messages, and Eve wasn’t up late at night on Tinder. During this time there was no such thing as abuse or molestation. There were no addictions or chemical dependencies. No broken families, and fatherlessness didn’t exist. No one had ever committed suicide, no one turned to self-mutilation, and no one had ever experienced death. God’s design for His creation did not include any of these realities that are in our world today. So what happened?

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