

A Little Lower Than Elohim

What if you have been living far below who you were actually made to be?

Not because you are a bad person. Not because God withheld something from you. But because nobody ever showed you how high God placed you in the original design. Because the story of who you were made to be got lost somewhere along the way — buried under bad teaching, false humility, and an enemy who has every reason to make sure you never find out.

This chapter is about the original design. Not the fall. Not the restoration. The original. Because you cannot understand what was lost until you understand what was there. And you cannot fully appreciate what Jesus restored until you understand the height from which humanity fell.



WHO ELOHIM IS

One of the primary names of God in the Hebrew Bible is Elohim. It is the name used in the very first verse of Scripture — “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” That word God is Elohim. The all-powerful Creator. The one who spoke light into existence, who separated the waters, who formed every living thing. The one who needs nothing, lacks nothing, and is answerable to no one.

This is the God who made you.

And David, in Psalm 8, writes something about mankind in relation to this God that should stop every reader in their tracks.

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.” — Psalm 8:4–6 NIV

There are two well-known translations of the Hebrew word in verse 5. Some translations render it “a little lower than the angels.” Others render it “a little lower than God” — a little lower than Elohim. Both translations have serious scholarship behind them and sincere believers on each side.

I personally believe the text is saying a little lower than God Himself. The word Elohim throughout Scripture refers to God — it is one of His primary names. And when I read this psalm in full, that translation carries the most weight for me.

But here is what I want you to see: it doesn’t change the point. Whether mankind was made a little lower than God or a little lower than the angels — what comes next is what

nobody disputes. Crowned with glory and honor. Made rulers over the works of God's hands. Everything put under their feet.

Whichever translation you hold, the original design was breathtaking.



GOD DIDN'T HAVE TO CREATE US

God didn't have to create us.

He didn't need someone to take care of the world He spoke into existence. He didn't need help keeping it together. The God who holds every atom in place, who sustains every living thing by the word of His power, who was complete and whole and overflowing with life before any of this existed — He was not lacking anything when He decided to make mankind.

So why did He?

Not out of need. Out of love. Out of a desire to share what He had — to bring into existence beings who could know Him, walk with Him, enjoy what He made alongside Him. The creation of mankind was not a practical decision. It was a relational one. And that changes everything about how we understand who we were made to be.



MADE WITH A PURPOSE

God did not place you in this world simply to live and die. He created mankind with a real purpose — a purpose that has never been revoked.

He created us to rule. Not in a prideful, self-serving way, but as His regents — His representatives — exercising authority over the creation He made. Dominion over the earth, over every living thing, over the works of His hands. This was not a small assignment. It was governmental authority over an entire realm, given by God to the beings He created to bear His image.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” — Genesis 1:26 NIV

But the dominion was never meant to be exercised alone or independently. A regent rules on behalf of someone else, in submission to someone else, accountable to someone else. The authority is real but it is derived — it comes from above. And it only functions rightly when the connection to the one who granted it stays intact.

The earth is the Lord's. But the governing of it He entrusted to us. Not as an afterthought. Not as a consolation prize. As a gift and an assignment, given to beings who bore His own image and carried His own breath.

“The heavens are the Lord’s heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man.” —
Psalm 115:16 ESV

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MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Of everything God created, only one thing was made in His image.

Not the mountains. Not the oceans. Not the stars. Not the angels. Only mankind. This is not a small detail. It is the most defining thing that can be said about a human being. Every person who has ever lived — every person you have ever passed on the street, every person who has ever frustrated you or inspired you or broken your heart — bears the image of the God who made the universe. That is what is walking around in every human body. The image of Elohim.

Then God did something incredible — He breathed into man.

“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.” — Genesis 2:7 NIV

Made with God’s own hands. Formed personally. And then the very breath of God breathed into him. The same God who spoke the universe into existence — who never needed to touch anything, who created everything else by speaking it into being — got close enough to breathe life into the one He made in His image.

That is not a distant God creating a distant creature. That is a Father breathing life into His child.

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THE TWO THINGS THAT WERE NEVER SEPARATE

Authority without fellowship with God produces pride. A person who carries real authority but is disconnected from the one who granted it will eventually start to believe the authority is their own. They will use it for themselves. They will protect it, hoard it, abuse it. This is the story of every corrupt ruler in history — real authority, wrong source.

Fellowship without walking in the authority God gave you produces passivity. A person who loves God but never understands the dominion they carry will spend their life being moved by circumstances rather than moving them. Sincere and warm in their love for God — and almost entirely ineffective in the world He placed them in to represent Him. God designed both together. The dominion flows from the relationship. The relationship expresses itself through the dominion. You rule well because you are walking with the one who gave you the authority to rule. And you walk closely with God because you understand that every step you take in this world is taken as His representative, carrying His image, exercising the authority He entrusted to you.

That was the original life. Rule and relationship. Authority and intimacy. The regent who was also a friend.

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MADE FOR FELLOWSHIP

In the beginning, God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden.

That one image — the Creator of the universe, walking in the cool of the day with the ones He had made — says more about what God was after than almost anything else in Scripture. He wasn't visiting. He wasn't inspecting. He was walking with them. Present. Close. In relationship.

Man had everything. Man needed nothing. The garden was perfect. The dominion was intact. The circuit between God and man was live and unbroken. And in the middle of all of it, God walked with His creation in the cool of the evening.

That is what God was after. Not servants who performed their duties correctly. Not creatures who managed the earth efficiently. Friendship. Closeness. The kind of relationship where the Creator and His image-bearers moved through the world together.

We were made to worship. Not as an obligation but as a natural overflow of knowing God. Worship was never meant to be something mankind scheduled into their week. It was meant to be the constant, natural response of beings who walked daily in the presence of the God who made them and loved them.

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” — Psalm 150:6 NIV

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THE ANGELS

Angels are ministers. Messengers. Guardians sent from God on our behalf. The writer of Hebrews is direct about this: they are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation. They take their orders from God — but their assignment is toward us.

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” — Hebrews 1:14 NIV

And Paul tells the Corinthians something that should reframe everything:

“Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!” — 1 Corinthians 6:3 NIV

We will judge angels. That is not a small statement. It means that in God's order, mankind — redeemed, restored, walking in what Christ purchased — stands in a position of authority that angels serve under. This is not arrogance. It is simply what the text says.

Does it feel arrogant to say out loud? Probably. And that feeling is worth paying attention to — because it tells us something about how we have been thinking. We have been conditioned to minimize ourselves in the name of humility. But true humility is not

thinking you are nothing. True humility is thinking accurately — seeing yourself exactly as God sees you, no higher and no lower. And God sees you as someone crowned with glory and honor, made to bear His image, with angels assigned to serve those who inherit what Christ purchased.



WHAT GOD'S HEART REVEALS

Think about what this original design tells us about who God is.

He didn't create beings to serve Him. He created beings to walk with Him. He didn't design mankind for usefulness. He designed mankind for relationship. The God who needed nothing — who was complete in Himself before any of this existed — chose to create beings He could love, walk with, share His world with, and give real authority to. Stop and think about what that means. This is the God who spoke light into existence. Who breathed the stars into place. Who holds the oceans in the hollow of His hand. The one who was before all things, who needs nothing, who lacks nothing, who is answerable to no one. The uncreated Creator of everything that has ever existed.

And He called us friends.

That He would call us friends is not a small thing. It is one of the most staggering statements in all of Scripture. The infinite choosing relationship with the finite. The uncreated pursuing friendship with the created. The King of the universe walking in the garden with the ones He made from the ground beneath His feet.

And this was not a one-time moment in the garden that sin permanently ended. Even after the fall, even through the brokenness, God kept reaching toward friendship with the ones He made.

He called Abraham His friend. Not His servant — though Abraham served Him faithfully. Not His subject — though Abraham obeyed Him completely. His friend. Isaiah records God saying it. James repeats it. The father of faith, the man through whom the entire redemption story would flow, was known to God as a friend.

Moses spoke with God face to face — as one speaks to a friend. The man who led Israel out of Egypt, who received the law on the mountain, who saw the glory of God pass before him — that man had conversations with God the way you have conversations with someone you actually know. Not formal. Not distant. Face to face.

God kept coming back to friendship. Even in a broken world. Even with broken people. Even when the circuit was severed and the full intimacy of the garden was no longer possible — He kept reaching toward it.

And then Jesus came. And He did not just restore what Adam had. He opened a door that made the friendship available to everyone. Not just the patriarchs. Not just the prophets. Everyone who comes to Him.

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” — John 15:14–15 NIV

Friends. That is what He was after from the beginning. That is what the garden was. And that is what the cross made possible for everyone.

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SAINTS, NOT SINNERS

Here is something that has troubled me about the way identity gets talked about in much of the church.

There seems to be a pattern — particularly in the American church — of identifying with the sinner. I understand where it comes from. Humility is right. Recognizing that we fall short of God’s glory is right. Confessing sin is right and good and necessary. A sinner coming humbly before God is a beautiful thing.

But he is not supposed to stay there. To stay humble — yes. But to continue as a sinner — no.

When Paul wrote his letters — even to churches dealing with serious, visible, undeniable sin — he did not address them as sinners. He addressed them as saints. To the saints in Corinth. To the saints in Ephesus. To the saints in Philippi. He didn’t say “to the unworthy sinners of...” He said saints. Because that is what they were. That is what the blood of Christ had made them.

We are a royal priesthood. A holy nation. Co-heirs with Christ. These are not small words. The word holy is typically reserved for God. But Scripture applies it to us — not because of who we are in ourselves, but because of who we are in Him.

Sinner is what we were. Saint is what we are and are continually becoming. That does not mean we do not sin. But a sinner is not our identity anymore. Our identity is with Christ. And Christ is not a sinner.

There is a kind of false humility that looks spiritual but is actually a subtle form of pride — because it is disagreeing with what God says about you. When you say “I’m just a sinner, I’m nobody, God couldn’t really use me,” you are not being humble. You are contradicting the Word of God. And that is not a safe place to stand.

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THE HEIGHT MAKES EVERYTHING ELSE MAKE SENSE

Understanding the original design — the height God placed mankind, the image He stamped on us, the purpose He gave us, the authority He delegated, the friendship He pursued — changes the weight of everything that comes next.

The fall hits harder when you understand the height. When you see what was lost — not just the garden, not just the easy life, but the dominion, the intimacy, the image

operating at full capacity, the circuit between God and man running uninterrupted, the friendship that God Himself had been building toward since the moment He breathed life into Adam — the tragedy of it becomes clearer. This was not a small stumble. It was a catastrophic fall from an extraordinary height.

And the grace becomes more breathtaking. Because Jesus did not simply come to fix a problem. He came to restore a design. To reclaim an authority. To reconnect a circuit. To reopen the door to the friendship God never stopped wanting.

Where there was no way, Jesus made a way. Where it was impossible, God made it possible. Through Christ, we can be born again in the Spirit — given a new man, a new image. Not the corrupt broken image that has been passed down since Adam. A new man. Which is exactly what God intended in the very beginning.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!” — 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

The original design was not abandoned. It was restored. And the one reading this — if you are in Christ — is not a sinner scraping by. You are a new creation, bearing the restored image of the God who made you, called to the same purpose He gave Adam in the garden.

Rule. Fellowship. Bear His image. Walk with Him. That was always the design. And in Christ, it is still yours.