

# One Person, Destined for Eternity

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## Will you still be you in eternity?

### **Death can be scary.**

There is so much about death we don't fully understand ... which makes us nervous.

It seems to mean the end of our existence. It seems irreversible. Dying can seem traumatic.

### **Dr. Zola, a minor character from the Marvel Cinematic Universe, thought he beat death.**

Dr. Zola was a scientist. He was a complicated figure—seeming to switch from villain to hero, all the while actually being a villain. An evil genius, really.

When Dr. Zola discovered that he had a terminal disease, he did what any evil genius would do: He built a supercomputer and uploaded his consciousness to it.

For decades, after his body died, his mind lived on in the secret recesses of a computer, still plotting and building his evil empire.

Secretly, he was living the dream that some tech entrepreneurs are still chasing: immortality by separating one's consciousness or soul from the body and transferring it to a new body.

But is that really possible? Can we separate our soul or consciousness from our body?

### **Being reduced to data on a computer doesn't capture what it means to be human.**

Being human is more than a collection of algorithms.

Our thoughts can't be totally separated from our brains or our bodies. And our souls are not like flash drives that can be taken out of one computer and put into another.

### **God has something much bigger, much better planned.**

We human beings consist of bodies married to souls now in this life.

God plans for us to be glorified bodies and souls united for eternity.

That's far more than uploading our consciousness into some divine ether.

And God's plan beats death—hands down.

### **Jesus, risen from the dead, shows us what God has planned—and how.**

Jesus came back from the dead as a flesh-and-blood person.

His Resurrection is a template for what will happen to us someday. What He is now shows us what we will become. And what it means to be human in the fullest sense of the word.

And Jesus' death on the cross made it all possible.

## **“I am one person.”**

### **Jesus startled His disciples.**

Jesus had been crucified, died, and was buried. Then, three days later, He rose again.

Several women found His tomb empty and heard the news from an angel. A couple of His disciples went to the tomb and also found it empty.

Word was circulating that people were seeing Jesus alive!

As the disciples discussed this, suddenly there Jesus was, standing right there among them.

They were startled. Jesus hadn't come through the locked door. They still couldn't believe it was Him. Something was different about Him. Was it a spirit?

### **But He proved to them that He was still flesh and blood.**

He invited the disciples to examine His hands and feet. **Luke 24:39** says, "...Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

That should have proven that He still had a body, but the disciples were still not convinced.

So Jesus asked if they had anything to eat, and ate a piece of broiled fish they provided.

No spirit could do that. Jesus was still flesh and blood! But how exactly? Because while Jesus was still Jesus, something was definitely different.

### **Paul says that these bodies will become resurrection bodies. Let me show you how.**

He specifically says that the physical body is like a kernel of grain that goes into the ground.

Let's make it clearer. The body is like an acorn that goes into the ground and so dies. But it is also transformed into an oak tree—something related but different. And entirely better.

Paul explains in **1 Corinthians 15:42**: *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.*

Then he adds in **1 Corinthians 15:44**: *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body...*

*To be resurrected is to be given a new, spiritual, glorified, and imperishable body.*

That's our future in Christ. It's difficult to wrap our minds around, which is part of what makes it hopeful, thrilling ... and a little scary.

### **Adam shows us what it means to be human *now*.**

Adam is the first human being, and he is the template for every human being that follows.

Like Adam, we all have physical bodies. Like Adam, we all sin. Like Adam, we all die.

### **But Jesus shows us what it will mean to be human *forever*.**

Jesus' Resurrection becomes like a new starting point for humanity.

Adam brought sin, and Jesus brings forgiveness.

Adam had a physical body, and Jesus was resurrected with a spiritual body.

Adam brought death, and Jesus gives eternal life.

Being one person, in Christ—resurrected with eternal life—is what it means to be human in the fullest sense of the word.

## **“I am one person, not two or many.”**

### **Some people think that human beings are souls with bodies.**

Imagine with me for a moment that the soul is like a goldfish and the body is like a bowl.

Some of us think that souls are little bit like a goldfish swimming around in the bowl that is our bodies. The goldfish is just using the bowl as a home, and the two are separate things.

### **But what happens when the goldfish leaves the bowl?**

Death is like the goldfish leaving the bowl.

But what happens to the goldfish after it leaves the bowl?

Some faiths teach that the goldfish goes and finds another bowl. Then another as the goldfish is growing and becoming something more. That's not what Christianity teaches.

Some people think that the goldfish goes away to Heaven and swims around in the great beyond without a bowl forever. That's not what Christianity teaches either.

Christianity teaches that the goldfish leaves the bowl, and we will cover that in a bit. But the goldfish comes back to the bowl. The same bowl. Resurrection is how.

### **Resurrection teaches us that the goldfish and the bowl belong together.**

The Bible teaches that when Jesus returns, the Christian's soul goes back into the body.

The goldfish goes back into the bowl, if you will.

But the bowl is made new. The body is so new that it's like an oak tree, where there had only been an acorn before.

But the goldfish goes back into that bowl in the resurrection. They belong together. Forever.

And this doctrine has important implications!

### **God never puts a goldfish in the wrong bowl.**

Sometimes we get the idea that there is a massive pile of souls somewhere waiting to be born, like a giant pond of goldfish in the sky looking for bowls here on earth.

Sometimes the match is good, and sometimes the match is not so good.

That picture is completely false. There is no giant pond of goldfish in the sky.

God Himself creates us from the moment of conception.

The soul and body are created at the same time; they are created together and fit together perfectly. After all, God does not make mistakes. It is not possible for a consciousness, personality, soul, or goldfish to be put in the wrong body. It can't happen.

### **Please hear what I am about to say knowing that I am your pastor, your shepherd.**

It is my job as your pastor to teach, preach, and lead.

It is my job as your shepherd to care, provide, and protect. All of you.

That's what I am trying to do here.

What I am going to say, I say in love for all of you. Even if you don't hear it that way.

**If God always puts the right goldfish in the right bowl, then transgenderism doesn't work.**

Transgenderism is just one place in which our society is confused about what it means to be human. This is part of why understanding the doctrine of humanity is so critically important. And why it is so important to understand that we are body-soul unities, not souls with bodies.

Transgenderism is attempting to explain a difficult reality. Some people feel like their bodies are wrong. They don't quite fit. There is a disconnect between the way a person feels on the inside and the way they look on the outside, and the disconnect is painful. It hurts.

Can you imagine living feeling that way? It's real and very painful.

That kind of pain matters to God, and it should matter to us.

Still, the way that transgenderism presents the human condition is flawed.

Transgenderism teaches that somehow a soul, consciousness, or personality of one kind can be put into a body that doesn't fit. Let's go back to our goldfish and bowl analogy. Transgenderism would say that somehow a female goldfish has been put into a male bowl.

But that cannot be. The soul and body are created together. By our sovereign, good, and perfect God. There cannot be a mismatch.

So, treating the underlying pain by changing the outside to reflect the inside isn't going to address whatever really going on and driving the pain.

We are one person, not two or more.

**Our society is wrestling with this question right now, and I know it has affected some of us.**

Sometimes in profoundly personal ways.

If you are struggling with the pain of gender dysphoria, your church is here for you.

If someone you love is struggling, your church is here for you.

If you are worried that your children are being confused by the messages they are hearing in powerful and public places, we are here for you.

We want to equip our parents in particular to think through this issue theologically, and to help our children and students deal with this issue.

So we are offering a conference on Saturday, October 25, called "Wonderfully Made." I will be there.

We have experts lined up. Dr Mark Buchanan will be talking, and he has done extensive research in the field. We have doctors, teachers, and parents speaking.

Come and hear more on Saturday, October 25.

And if you need to talk, there are people ready to listen and pray and help.

**"I am one person, destined for eternity."**

**Heaven as we know it now is a temporary destination.**

When we die, the soul of a Christian goes to Heaven to be in the presence of God.

Going back to our goldfish analogy, the goldfish leaves the bowl and goes to Heaven.

But to have a disembodied soul living in Heaven is not the full human experience.

It's a place of waiting, of longing for God to finish history and recreate all things.

**Heaven and earth will be resurrected and made new in the end as well.**

At the end, before He judges the evil, God will appear on a great white throne.

He will dissolve Heaven and earth as we have known them.

Then, He will create again. A New Heaven and New Earth. **Revelation 21:1** says: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. It's like God has resurrected heaven and earth.*

And that is our final home. With God. It's like Eden, only better.

### **That's what we mean when we say, "I am one person, destined for eternity."**

My body and soul are back together. They are Resurrected and fit for eternity.

It all fits together!

### **We can make that claim because of Jesus.**

Jesus made our forgiveness and eternal life possible.

With Him, I am one person, destined for eternity.

Without Jesus, all we can say is, "I am one person, destined for eternity without God."

## **Remember—resurrection will be more than a new coat of paint.**

### **Resurrection is more like what happened to the DeLorean in the first "Back to the Future" movie.**

"Back to the Future" is a classic movie about time travel and growing up.

There's a teenage boy, Marty McFly, and his goofy mentor, Doc Brown.

Doc Brown happens to be a genius who is turning a DeLorean sports car into a time machine.

In the last scene of the movie, the DeLorean shows up again--this time with a fusion reactor that runs on garbage. Doc Brown pulls out of Marty's driveway to go back to the future again, but Marty warns him that he doesn't have enough road. Doc quips back, "Roads? Where we're going, we don't need roads!"

Then the DeLorean lifts off the ground and flies off into the sky and into the future.

It's far more than a paint job; it's a fundamental transformation.

Resurrection will change you in those kinds of fundamental ways and fit you for the future God has planned. But what does that mean right here and right now?

It means lots of things. Let me lift up three today:

#### **1. Treat your body like it's not going anywhere.**

Our bodies are not accidents. They are gifts from God.

We never want to confuse the gift and the Giver; we should never make our bodies into idols that we pamper, nor should we treat them like the boxes we get in the mail and then dump in the recycling bin when we're done. Let's take care of our bodies.

#### **2. No "oops." Celebrate being a woman or a man.**

Our gender is a good gift given by God. It is a gift to be a woman or a man.

As with our physicality, our gender is something to cherish and celebrate.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, after all!

And so is everyone around us. They are fearfully and wonderfully made too! Just as God intended. Which means that things like sexism don't belong in our hearts and minds.

Instead, we love one another with godly love as the family of faith.

Our differences are God-given and good!

Let's respect each other and ourselves.

### **3. *Don't panic when your fender gets dented.***

If you've ever owned a car for any length of time, you know that scratches on the paint happen, dings show up, and (eventually) the bumpers are going to get dented.

The same is true with us as we live in a fallen world. We get sick. Parts stop working. We get injured, and sometimes the injuries are permanent. For now. Our fenders get dented.

How do we respond when our fenders get dented?

It's never easy when dents, scratches, and broken parts show up. I'm not suggesting that it should be easy either.

But when life leaves us different than we were, it is not the end!

It's not the end in this life. God is still good, and life is still filled with possibility! And this life is not the end. In eternity, we will be made new. Right. Better than ever.

And that kind of hope enables us to keep going. No matter what.

### **The answer to our first question today is, "Yes! In the best possible way!"**

Yes, we will be ourselves in eternity.

But all the damage caused by sin, death, and evil will be wiped away.

We will be fully human. We won't be what humans were when creation was new. We will be everything God has planned for us to become.

Jesus is our trailblazer. He showed us what the future will be like when He rose from the dead. And He made it possible for us to follow where He has led.