



## Imago Dei

### Part 4 – You Knitted Me Together in My Mother’s womb

Dr. Travis Brawner

We’re continuing today in the series called *Imago Dei*. *Imago Dei* simply means the image of God. We are declaring that every person possesses the image of God in them. Today, specifically, we’re talking about the image of God in the unborn as we declare *You Knitted Me Together in My Mother’s Womb*. This message is strategically placed today because today is Sanctity of Life Sunday where we remember those who have been lost to abortion, and we commit to protecting life at all stages.

A few weeks ago, Ted texted me. He said, “Hey, Sanctity of Life Sunday is coming up, Dr. Brawner, would you be willing to do the message? I would prefer the medical doctor on our teaching team to give the message.” I said, “Of course, I would love to. I would be honored.” So, I’m excited to walk through this with you this morning.

I want to start out with a few things just to declare what we believe as we start on this Sanctity of Life Sunday. We believe that all life is sacred, born and unborn. We believe that every person is a human being with eternal value, created in the image of God, knitted together in their mother’s womb, fearfully and wonderfully made. We believe that life begins at conception. Life doesn’t begin when the heart starts beating, life doesn’t begin at a certain number of weeks, life doesn’t begin because that baby is now viable outside of the womb. Life begins at conception. We believe that no person should have the legal right to end a life simply because that life is living inside of them temporarily.

We believe that if abortion is made illegal across the board, everyone will still retain full reproductive rights. You see, we believe that when there is a pregnancy, reproduction has taken place because life begins at conception. We believe that when there is a pregnancy, reproduction has taken place. I don’t think I have to walk through that with you, that process. We believe also that God’s design for sexual intimacy within the confines of a marriage relationship is best. This is one of the reasons. When you do things God’s way, things work out better, things are simpler. These are some of the things that we believe.

As we have gone over several times over the past weeks in the series, *Imago Dei*, the image of God, we’re going to go over the cornerstone scripture, Genesis 1: 27, which is the bases for this series. Genesis 1: 27 – ***So God created mankind in his own image... the image of God in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*** Now, remember that God created mankind on the sixth day. Leading up to that, he had created everything else that exists. Then he created his masterpiece, mankind, and imposed on him his own image, his own likeness.

Today, looking at the imago Dei in the unborn, *You Knitted Me Together in My Mother's Womb*, we're going to turn to Psalm 139: 13-16 – **13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**

The Psalmist, David, uses the illustration of knitting. I think it's a perfect illustration because when we think about knitting, we think about this basic substance, yarn, which is without really much form. It doesn't have much value, doesn't serve much purpose. This ball of yarn cost a few bucks, maybe. But then when that yarn is taken, this basic substance, and used to knit together something like a sweater, now it has form, it has value, it has use. And I don't know how much a sweater like this would cost. Frankly, I'm the wrong person to ask about the cost of clothes because a twenty-dollar department store sweater is just fine with me. But there is value, there is use to it. That's the illustration David is using in "you knitted me together." God takes something of a basic substance and creates something of eternal value.

God has been in the business of knitting people together for a long, long time, back to the very first man that he created. We read about that in Genesis 2: 7 - **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.** Remember, God created everything else in days 1 – 5, and then he created man. And in creating everything else, the mountains and the valleys and the oceans and the sky and the sun and the moon and the stars and the planets and all of the other living creatures. When he did that, he had already created the substance that we know as the periodic table of elements. All of this would have already existed before he created man. I think it's pretty neat how scripture tells us he formed the man from dust. We know both figuratively and, literally, he took basic elements and he knitted Adam together with some carbon and some nitrogen and some potassium and sodium and hydrogen and oxygen. He took these basic elements and knitted Adam together.

Then God did something maybe even more important. He breathed his own life into the nostrils of Adam. He breathed life into him, and he became a living creature. You see, all of the other living creatures that he created, he spoke them into existence. And then he knitted Adam together and breathed his own breath into him, imparting upon him the imago Dei, his own image and his own likeness, even his own breath. That's how he created Adam.

And then from Adam, he made Eve, he made woman. When he made Adam fall asleep, took one of his ribs and now with substance that already existed, knitted in a different way, he created woman. Now he has man and woman; he created them. God has been knitting human beings together ever since then. He said to them, "Multiply. Be fruitful and fill the earth."

So, that's what we are going to look at now, moving forward, how is God knitting people together today? He does it differently than he did with Adam and Eve. First, we're going to look at the process of fertilization. We're going to move forward a little bit. We're going to skip a couple of steps and keep it G rated this morning. We're going to skip to fertilization. Fertilization is the process where the male

gamete or reproductive cell, the spermatocyte or sperm cell fuses with the female gamete or reproductive cell or oocyte or the egg and the two combine into one. Their membranes fuse and they combine their genetic material, the genetic material being DNA, their deoxyribonucleic acid. What's important is that the sperm and the egg each had an exact, random half of copy, the sperm did, of the father and the egg had an exact random half copy of the mother's DNA. And as they combine, they get a completely unique individual set of DNA. Now that fertilized egg has its own complete and unique set of DNA.

That's what this is right here. We call it a Karyotype and it's the 23 chromosome that exist. These provide the programming for what you look like and how you behave and how you process things and everything about you. This is the genetic material that programs really who you are as an individual. It programs for tens of thousands of different traits about you, in 23 chromosomes. A chromosome is kind of a bundle or a cluster of genetic material. Each of these sets of DNA come as a chain. DNA kind of exists as a chain with a bunch of different links, if you will. In every set of DNA, that one set of DNA in one cell contains about three billion links. We call them nucleotides.

Now, think about this. Your Social Security number is something you have to provide to identify yourself often, right? It's kind of a unique identifier for you, and it's nine digits long. Your DNA is three billion units long. How unique are you? Separate from any other human being that has ever existed. Now, every single cell in your body, every single cell in every human body has a complete copy of this DNA, every cell except for the male gamete, the sperm, which has an exact half copy, and the female gamete, the egg, which has an exact half copy because it will later combine to form a complete copy. Every cell has a set of the DNA.

Now, what's interesting is in the bottom right of that picture, you see the X and Y are what are called the sex chromosomes. It's really simple. The 23<sup>rd</sup> chromosome are the sex chromosomes, and you are either coded XX or XY. XX codes for female. XY codes for male. And when that egg divided its DNA into two parts, there is either X or X in it. And that sperm, when it divided DNA into two parts to bring half, it's either X or Y. So, you see, an X from the egg is going to combine with either an X or a Y, 50/50, from the father, creating a complete set of DNA. Either XX or XY, male or female.

Now, something that's interesting is that the X chromosome has about 10 times more genetic material than the Y chromosome. So, science has proven what we've known for all of history and that is that women are more complicated than men. Now, I'm convinced that that part that is on the X Chromosome, that is lacking on the Y Chromosome, is what makes women always be thinking about something all the time. Let me put it a different way. The fact that the Y chromosome lacks that means men are capable of thinking about absolutely nothing. My wife might ask me, "What are you thinking about?" I'll say, "Nothing." She'll say, "Really? That seems impossible. Surely you were thinking about something" I'll say "You know, you're right. That does seem impossible, but the fact is I was thinking about nothing."

Tim Hawkins says this well. He says, "It's like two crickets just playing racket ball up there... Nothing."

We love celebrating the differences between men and women. Ted did a whole message on it last week. If you've not seen that, I recommend you go back and listen to that. The differences between men and women. We know that looking at the genetics of human creation, but even more so, we know it because of what Genesis 1: 27 says. **Male and female; he created them.**

By the way, that 23<sup>rd</sup> chromosome makes up 1/23<sup>rd</sup> of the genetic material in every cell of your body. That's almost 5% of your genetic material is dedicated to determining male and female. Any other trait about you is a fraction of one percent of the traits about you. Five percent is dedicated to male and female. Male and female; he created them. And every single cell in your body has a copy of that DNA. Male and female; he created them.

Moving on, now we have a zygote. It's called a zygote, a fertilized egg. This is the first and single cell that will eventually divide and multiply and differentiate into what will become a fully developed human being. We believe that at this point, reproduction has taken place. A soul has been created. Life has begun. This cell is going to divide and multiply to the tune of creating the thirty-seven trillion cells that are in a fully developed human. It's going to develop into thirty-seven trillion cells. Incidentally, if this zygote divides and those two cells aren't cohesive and you get two separate zygotes, that's how you get identical twins. We call them monozygotic twins. Every now and then, two eggs are fertilized and share the same womb. We call that fraternal twins or dizygotic twins. Interesting...

Once you get to this point, you can't go back. You can't create an egg and a sperm out of zygote, it's done. Those two sets of DNA, those two halves of DNA have combined, and you have one human being here at this point. The snowball has been rolled down the hill. The skydiver has jumped out of the airplane. Here we go. It's happening. It's like telling a four-year-old that they can have cotton candy. You can't take that back. It's going to happen.

Now, this cell has to divide into thirty-seven trillion cells. So, we have to start with the first cell division. That one cell has to become two. In order for that to happen, remember that every cell has a copy of the DNA in it. So, that DNA has to go through a process called DNA replication. This is where we can really get into the weeds, but this is important, and you'll see why. DNA exists as a chain with all of these links. And it carries a code because there is a specific order of four different nucleotides, one after another, in that chain of your genetic code. In order to replicate, it has to peel apart. It's like a zipper, equal and opposite parts, it pulls apart, so it has half of a copy. From those bear edges now, what happens is within the cell, within that zygote, there are free nucleotides, chain links, if you will. They are going to come along and depending on the code that is there, specifically pair up nucleotides to complete that double strand.

What happens is after the DNA has been split, God knits together the DNA, one nucleotide at a time, completing the set of DNA, three billion times for the first cell division, one time.

Psalms 139: 13 says, **You knitted me together in my mother's womb.** Do you think David knew about DNA? No, but God did, and he gave David his inspired word. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. Three billion times. Creating an equal set of DNA so that that cell can divide for the first time.

And guess what? Now those two cells have to be knitted, creating new DNA to divide again. One cell becomes two, two become four, four become eight, and so on.

The next phase we get to in the development is called the morula phase where we have kind of this cluster of cells now as this division has taken place. There's no real differentiation yet, one cell to the other, but they are starting to multiply. It is starting to have a substance. It's not just a cell but we're having substance now. It doesn't have form.

Psalm 129: 16 says, ***Your eyes saw my unformed substance.***

And then we progress through development through something called a blastocyst where you get this cavitation of these cells and development continues. It's around then, about day six, that the baby implants into the uterus and actually makes a physical connection with the mother. Then we move on to something called the gastrula phase. Here it's interesting because now we're starting to see that there's significant differentiation that's taking place. We begin to see the weaving of layers and different clusters of cells. They are becoming meticulously arranged within this structure now, bringing order and complexity to what was once a basic form.

Psalm 139: 15 says, ***Intricately woven in the depth of the earth.*** We're seeing that intricate weaving at this point in development.

Then we move on to something called organogenesis. That's where the tissues and the organs are starting to be formed. We get things like nerves and muscles, we get intestines, liver, eyes, and ears, significant production of organs within this developing baby now. We get a differentiation from the outside and the inside, and so our inward parts are now being put together and formed.

Psalm 139: 13 says, ***You formed my inward parts.***

By 12 weeks, this child becomes fully recognizable as a human being. There's a frame, limbs, organs; they've all been established. And this is the picture you get: fully recognizable as a little person. Again, we believe that is not where they get the imago Dei, not at that point; it was at the time of conception. When the process of development was set in motion.

This is a pretty neat time as far as the development goes. The pregnant mom may start to show the baby bump. You know the baby bump. And if you see what you think is a baby bump and you are going to venture to ask questions, then I want to wish you God's speed. I no longer ask when the baby is due. I only ask the question, "How old is that baby that you're holding?" I believe that's the only safe bet there. It can be dangerous. I have put my foot in my mouth so far I choked on my knee.

But at 12 weeks, we see a baby bump. And we are starting to see that there are changes happening externally with the mother even though for 12 weeks, we know all of this has been going on inside, that God has been there from the moment of conception, knitting together this new human being. We can't see the frame from the outside as we look at mom, we just see the bump.

Psalm 139: 15 says, ***My frame was not hidden from you.*** When David wrote these words, inspired by God, we didn't have ultrasound; we couldn't see the frame of the child, but now, thanks to technology of course, we get that privilege.

We have a special guest with us this morning. She is able to be here because her mother, Ember, has agreed to bring her up on stage. Ember and her husband, Matt, have been gracious to share with us the depths of the earth as scripture says, to give us a front row seat to this knitting and weaving that is taking place before our very eyes.

[song performed]

I want to thank Options Pregnancy Clinic, the Crisis Pregnancy Center here in Branson, that ministers to mothers with a crisis pregnancy that may even be considering abortion. They do great work and you, as a church, have partnered with them many times before financially. And we have a financial gift for them today in celebration of Sanctity of life Sunday.

Also Imaging Miracles out of Springfield provided the ultrasound and the techs and they brought their equipment down for us today to do this with us. They have a non-profit – Life Mean to Live – that also ministers to women considering abortion. And they have a unique ministry in that they minister to women who are pregnant with a child who has a terminal diagnosis within the womb. So, a much-needed ministry and we are grateful for their work. We have a financial gift for them as well. Can you help me thank them again?

By the way, Ember is about 15 weeks along in pregnancy and so just past what we have described so far. A healthy little girl. We are so excited for her and her husband Matt. It's their first, so they have some exciting times ahead. We pray for them.

Now we move on into the second and third trimester where really, at this point, the baby is growing, getting bigger. All those organs that have been formed and the inward parts that God has woven and knitted together intricately in the depths of the earth inside the mother's womb are growing now. The baby is getting ready to be independent outside of the womb at birth. These are some beautiful times and interesting times.

We know that there is significant hormonal communication that is taking place between baby and mother. Science has proven that baby will send to mother signals that say, "I know you just ate a meal of roast and potatoes, but you really need some blueberry pancakes right now." That's from personal experience. Maybe science hasn't proven it... This is where it can be tricky to be the husband of a pregnant mother because am I full from that meal I just ate? Yes. Am I going to make my wife eat blueberry pancakes alone? No. I'm going to fight through it and I'm going to enjoy pancakes with her because that's the kind of man I am. Tasty blueberry pancakes.

That baby is growing, developing, and the thing that is utterly important to understand is everything that we have just described in the development of this human being has required no intentional effort, externally. I want to be careful with my words. Women I did not say it was easy to grow a baby. I said

no intentional effort. Remember we said life begins at conception. The snowball is rolling down the hill. The skydiver has jumped. God is there knitting that child together. Ember, over the past several weeks, has not been thinking, *I need to start the heart beating today*. She hasn't thought, *it's time to develop a spinal cord and these ears need to grow*. She hasn't thought of any of that. Scripture tells us God is there, knitting that baby together. The thing that child needs more than anything else is for us to let it be, to let God do his work in knitting that child together. That baby needs most for us to not interfere with what the Lord is doing. Because we know that if that developing child is left alone for the Lord to do what he's doing, it will progress to full development and birth.

Are there miscarriages? Yes. I want to take a moment here to say we pray for you that have experienced miscarriages. We love you and we know there is pain and there is loss, and we mourn with you with hope, knowing that one day, if you are a follower of Jesus, you will meet that child face to face. There are miscarriages, but there are also car crashes, heart attacks, and cancer. That would not make it reasonable for us end the life of an adult because those things exist.

This is where pro abortionists do not have any moral ground to stand on. Let's remove our biblical worldview, let's remove the imago Dei. Let's just talk ethics for a minute. It is unethical to end the life of a person who would go on living if not for the actions that you took to end that person's life. Regardless of the imposition that person is going to be on someone physically during the pregnancy or afterwards. And the care that is going to be required, they may be a burden, it's unethical.

We also believe that it would be unethical to end the life of someone else that might be a burden with a physical or mental disability, someone who is advanced in age and unable to care for themselves or otherwise incapacitated. In the same way, it would be unethical to end the life of a child simply because they were in imposition. A child that if left alone will go on to full development and birth. All of those people we just talked about possess the imago Dei and all of those people we have just talked about deserve to live.

I want you to hear what our friend, Lane, has to say.

**Lane:** Dear Young Lady,

I know you might be staring down at that double blue line on your pregnancy test, laying helpless on your bathroom floor like you have nothing left. And maybe it's because he up and left and you don't feel ready or like you can do it by yourself. And so many people surround you, but it feels like no one can help. And I know your scared and you don't know what to do, but please don't let society fog your view. A million different voices are all offering advice and I know it's easy to crumble when you're under the weight of all the light, but please know that everything will be all right because nothing can take away the importance of life. And raising a child is scary, especially if you're doing it on your own, but I promise there are so many people who want to help you and you're not alone. You might think that this baby was an oops or a mistake, but the only mistake you would make would be the decision to end a life.

So, dear young man,

If you up and left, then it's time to make things right. In this pit of darkness, there's this glimpse of lights, so it's your job to step up to the plate and be a man. Be remembered as the man who did what was right, not the man who left and ran, and two wrongs don't make a right. So, choose to be a father. It's not a consequence, rather a blessing to have this son or daughter.

And finally, Dear Christian,

It breaks my heart that so many of us were quick to judge. Our first reaction should have been Christ-like, one out of love. And, yes, these people are broken, but so are we. I'm glad I gave my broken pen to a perfect savior and let him perfect my story. Spreading hate and pointing fingers is the last thing that our world needs. Instead, let's bring the change and start meeting needs.

Dear abortion, As a future husband and father, you have caused my heart to break. Staggering statistics that make my chest hurt and my legs start to shake. How many more smiles, laughs, and cries will we never get to see or hear? If you're wondering where the changes starts, then it starts right here. Who can make the difference? It starts by looking in the mirror. And I know I've said a lot, but let me make one more thing clear. God is the creator of life, and he does not create mistakes. My prayer for this world is that we would be shaken awake, and we need to be purged of our recklessness and our culture's distortion, so right here, right now, let's commit to ending abortion.

**Dr. Travis Brawner:** Thank you, Lane, for your gift and sharing with us. You said so many important things. I think one of the things that we need to just echo for sure is that no person is an accident. I'm speaking about you, I'm speaking about any child that you've had, any child that you're carrying, any child that you know someone is carrying, any conceived life, no person is an accident. It doesn't matter where, when, or how that conception took place, they are not an accident. God was there at that moment. Remember, from the very beginning, he started knitting them together.

Maybe from an unwanted pregnancy? Unwanted by who? Someone abandoned at birth or who's birth parents couldn't take care of them. Someone that may have bounded around from foster home to foster home. Someone that was an invitro fertilization. Wherever, whenever, however, no person is an accident. They possess the imago Dei and they deserve to live. And maybe you have struggle ever since your birth, wondering, *why am I here? If only my mother had an abortion, then I would not have had to deal with all that I've had to deal with*, and you've struggled.

Maybe you've struggled all of your life with so many things. From your own transgressions, your own sins. Maybe you've suffered because of the sins and transgressions of other committed against you and you wonder, *was I an accident?* No person is an accident. God was there at the moment of your conception. He knitted you together. He's there with you all along the way. You possess the imago Dei. You have his image. And if you are a follower of Jesus, you've confessed with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart God raised him from the dead and you have been saved and you are now a child of God.

James 5: 16 says, ***The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.***

Why do I mention that this morning? Well, in early summer of this year, we are expecting to hand down a decision on a case out of Mississippi. Since 1973, the Roe vs Wade decision federally legalized abortion, based on precedent. Any time a state tries to come along and ban abortion, it's knocked down by that precedent that was set. This case out of Mississippi has been heard by the Supreme Court and a decision is going to be handed down in the first part of the summer, most likely right before their session ends. And the impact of that is that if the Supreme Court rules in favor of this state ban of abortion past 15 weeks, it basically resets the precedent that Roe vs Wade set. And it would potentially allow states to ban abortion. That is our prayer.

Righteous people, not righteous by your own doing, righteous by the blood of Christ, we're asking you to pray. Pray for the Supreme Court, for the Justices, for the decision, for the lives that can be saved, and also that those who are pregnant and considering abortion wouldn't not have an abortion because they legally can't now, but because they would know the truth about the imago Dei, about their existence as a creation of God, about their child's existence as a creation of God, that they would understand and they would believe. So, pray. That's one way we can take action on this Sanctity of Life Sunday. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

There may be some of you who today are feeling condemned because maybe you've had an abortion, you've encouraged someone to have an abortion, you've participated somehow in an abortion in the past. We want you to hear that if you are feeling condemnation, it's not from us. And if you are a follower of Jesus, it is not of the Lord.

Romans 8: 1 says, ...***there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

We want you to know if this is a part of your past, we, as a church, are here for you, before that decision, during that decision, and after that decision. You will not be and will never be abandoned by this church for decisions that you've made in the past. We want you to know that we're here for you for counseling, for prayer, and for anything else you may need because of past transgressions. We all have past transgressions. Every single one of us in this room, at the Chapel, online, we can look back and understand regrets that we have about decisions before. In the same way that we're here for you in all of those past transgressions, we're here for the issue of abortions.

May I encourage you also that if you know a young lady in a crisis pregnancy, may your first words or your first thoughts not be judgmental, but of love and support. God is in the act of knitting and how dare you throw offenses at God's handiwork inside that young lady at the moment. May we act and speak in love and come behind those that need us in such a time. We're grateful for the folks at Options Pregnancy Clinic and Life Meant to Live for the work that they do in that.

You see, we all have our past transgressions, and we rest in this. Philippians 1: 6 says, ***And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.***

When did he begin a good work in you? At the moment you were conceived. He was there at that moment. He began knitting you together, fully forming your inward parts. You were born. Regardless of your past, he's there with you. If you're a follower of Jesus, you are a child of God. And someday, he

will bring that work to completion when you're face to face with your Savior. Whether he returns, whether you depart from this earth to be with him, he will complete that work that he began in you so long ago.

Father, we love you and we're so grateful for your son Christ for the forgiveness we receive through him for past transgressions. Father, we acknowledge and celebrate your image in every human being from the moment of conception and at every stage of development and regardless of past sins and transgressions and everything that they may have experienced, that they may be involved with right now. I pray for this congregation, this church, that we would be a loving church, a supporting church at whatever stage someone might be in around the issue of abortion. We pray for support and love that they would know that they are loved and that they matter to us, Lord, and that they matter to you.

We pray for the supreme Court decision coming up this summer, that lives would be saved because of the precedent that is set. And more so, we pray for the lives and the souls of those, Lord, that are fighting the opposite. We ask that they would know the truth and that the truth would set them free.

We love you and we give you praise and it's in the mighty name of Christ that everyone agreed and said... Amen.