

SELF-EVIDENT
The Truths That Built a Nation
STUDY GUIDE THREE
“All Men Are Created”

The Phrase

“ . . . that all men are created . . . ”

Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

Key Terms

Created. Made on purpose by a Maker; the opposite of being an accident. To be created is to have a giver who sets one's worth.

Imago Dei. Latin for “image of God.” The Biblical teaching that human beings are made in God's image and therefore carry inherent dignity.

Dignity. The inherent worth of a person; in this framework, worth that comes from being created by God and cannot be earned or lost.

What It Means

Before the Declaration says equal, it says created. This is easy to read past, but it carries the whole weight of what follows. To be created is to be made on purpose, by someone, for something. It is the opposite of being an accident. The Founders did not say all men happen to exist, or all men evolved, or all men are here. They said all men are created.

That word sets the terms for everything after it. If we are created, then we have a Maker, and if we have a Maker, then our worth does not come from ourselves, from our usefulness, or from the government. It comes from the One who made us. A created thing has a giver behind it, and the giver, not the gift, sets the value.

This is why the Founders could speak of rights that no earthly power may touch. Rights that come from being created come from above the state, which means they sit beyond the reach of the state. A king cannot revoke what a king did not grant.

Where It Came From

The conviction that human beings are created runs from the first page of Scripture. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), and within that creation, “God created man in his own image” (Genesis 1:27). Human beings are not one more feature of the landscape. They are the deliberate work of God, made to bear His image.

This is the doctrine of Imago Dei, the image of God, and it is the deepest root of human dignity in the Western tradition. Because every person is created in God's image, every person carries a worth that does not depend on strength, status, intelligence, or usefulness. The weakest human being and the strongest share the same source and therefore the same fundamental dignity.

The Founders inherited this understanding through centuries of Biblical teaching, and it shaped their conviction that rights are not earned or granted but built into us at creation. Take away the Creator, and the whole structure loses its anchor. Rights become privileges the powerful hand out, and the powerful can take back.

In Their Own Words

“Among the natural rights of the Colonists are these: First, a right to life; secondly, to liberty; thirdly, to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can.”

— Samuel Adams, The Rights of the Colonists, 1772

Why It Matters Today

Our age is tempted to locate human worth in the wrong places: in achievement, in productivity, in beauty, in the approval of others. But every one of these can be lost, and a dignity that can be lost is no dignity at all. The Founders grounded human worth in something no one can take from you: the fact that you were created by God.

This is why the created order matters for how we treat the vulnerable. The unborn, the elderly, the disabled, the stranger; none of them earn their dignity, and none of them can lose it, because it was given in their creation. A culture that forgets we are created will always end up ranking human beings by their usefulness. A culture that remembers will defend the weak because it knows where their worth comes from.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does it matter that the Declaration says created before it says equal? What would change if that word were removed?
2. If human worth comes from being created rather than from what we accomplish, how should that shape the way we see ourselves on our worst days?
3. Read Genesis 1:26-27. What does it mean to be made in the image of God, and how does that idea protect human dignity?
4. Where do you see our culture trying to locate human worth in things that can be lost? What are the consequences?
5. How does the truth that we are created change the way we should treat the most vulnerable people among us?

Going Deeper

This phrase is the foundation stone for the two that follow it. Because we are created, we can be created equal, and because we are created, we can be endowed by our Creator with rights. Everything the Declaration claims about equality and rights grows from this single root: we are made, on purpose, by God.

Next in the series: “Created Equal”, what the Founders meant, and did not mean, by the equality of all human beings.