



BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

Lesson 2

The Truth of our Fallen and Restored Humanity

Introduction & Prayer

While we certainly need the truth, it rarely makes us comfortable. What are some everyday truths you wish were simply not so?

Lesson Objectives:

- Participants understand the shared fallen humanity unites all people of all time.
- Participants understand and rejoice in the gospel of Christ sharing our dying humanity so that we might share in his ever-living humanity.
- Participants contrast this worldview with contemporary ideas about the human condition and understand the impact those ideas have on the concept of persistent truth across generations.
- We steward Christian truth by sharing this worldview with our culture.

To Start Out

The Human Origins Initiative is an effort of the Smithsonian Institution to “explore the universal human story at its broadest time scale.”¹ As part of its work, the initiative collected public responses to the question: “What does it mean to be human?” React to the following responses.

- To be human is to live your life fully in the ways that make you happy while respecting yourself, nature, and the others around you.
- To be human means to walk upright, to have our skeleton shape, being intelligent, and to be unique.
- To be human is to be an evolutionally successful bipedal primate that is biologically adapted to a geological climate of ancestral origin.
- Being human means having the ability to control our emotions and reactions to stimulus or let them control us.
- To be human is to exist in a world full of experiences and wonders, to be free to be who you are, and to love and be loved because of it.

THE HUMAN CONDITION TODAY

While there might be as many perspectives on what it means to be human as there are people in the world, there are also some important similarities among them. This section considers three prominent views in our world today concerning the human condition. Summarize each worldview as simply as possible.

¹ “What does it mean to be human? About the Human Origins Initiative,” Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 9 July 2024, <https://humanorigins.si.edu/about>.

Evolution

According to the Smithsonian Institution, “Human evolution is the lengthy process of change by which people originated from apelike ancestors. Scientific evidence shows that the physical and behavioral traits shared by all people originated from apelike ancestors and evolved over a period of approximately six million years... The process of evolution involves a series of natural changes that cause species (populations of different organisms) to arise, adapt to the environment, and become extinct. All species or organisms have originated through the process of biological evolution.”²

Humanism

Humanism “affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.”³

Individualism

As a cultural attribute, individualism emphasizes the rights and experience of the individual. Author Carl Trueman labels this phenomenon *expressive individualism* and describes it as “the notion that every person is constituted by a set of inward feelings, desires, and emotions. The real ‘me’ is that person who dwells inside my body, and thus I am most truly myself when I am able to act outwardly in accordance with those inner feelings.”⁴

Worldview and Effect

1. How might each of these viewpoints shape a person’s understanding of what it means to be human?
2. How might each of these philosophies affect one’s understanding of truth?

THE TRUTH WE SHARE: OUR STEWARDSHIP OF TRUTH

Whereas many popular perspectives on humanity view human beings as ever improving and advancing, Scripture presents a vision that’s at once more *broken* and more *beautiful* than any of the above. It shows us a common humanity with a common problem and a common solution.

3. Through Adam’s sin, the mortality of humanity now dominates the life of all people. The writer to the Hebrews points to this, describing fallen humanity as “those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:15). Certainly, many people experience fear as death approaches; but such fear is not limited to the emotion of that moment—it’s also revealed in all the ways we avoid, delay, and minimize death. Give evidence of this drive in our culture.

² “What does it mean to be human? Introduction to Human Evolution,” Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 9 July 2024, <https://humanorigins.si.edu/education/introduction-human-evolution>.

³ “What is humanism?” *Humanists International*, n.d., <https://humanists.international/what-is-humanism>.

⁴ Trueman, Carl R., *Crisis of Confidence*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012, 2024), xv.

4. The outward effects of the fall are undeniable; yet the inward, spiritual impact is the heart of the problem. What is the greatest damage of the fall?

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Matthew 15:19 "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

5. How do non-biblical views of humanity fail to fully acknowledge this key aspect of our common condition?
6. What are some ways that humanity's brokenness continues to show itself in history, regardless of our supposed "progress"?
7. It's important for stewards of Christian truth to grasp and communicate our true, common condition. But it's even more important that we grasp and communicate the beautiful solution God has provided in Jesus Christ. This means understanding the humanity Christ shared in and the humanity Christ shares with us. How did Jesus share in the fullness of our humanity AND in the fullness of our human condition?

Hebrews 2:14-15, 17-18 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ...He had to be made like his brothers in every way...Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Philippians 2:6-8 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Isaiah 53:3-5 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows... he was pierced...he was crushed.

8. Jesus shared in our dying humanity so that we might share in his ever-living humanity. As a result of Adam's sin this creation and our lives here are cursed (cf. Gen 3:17-19; Rom. 8:20-21), and death is the just consequence of sin. God had said to Adam, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Genesis 2:17). But beginning with the first gospel promise (Genesis 3:15), God transformed this sad prospect, and in time Jesus broke "the power of him who holds the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14). How does the truth of the gospel transform our understanding and reaction towards life's afflictions and our anticipation of our coming deaths?

9. Because of Jesus what is true of our relationship with God right now?

Romans 8:1 There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

10. Jesus Christ died—but in three days, the tomb was empty. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate proof and promise of our redeemed humanity. Paul proclaims it: “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). What does this mean for us: for our experience of humanity now, and for our future humanity?

THE TRUTH WE SHARE: A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW IN AN UNCHRISTIAN WORLD

Understanding our shared human nature—and the beauty of God’s Son sharing in it – isn’t theological trivia; it’s critical to properly framing the past, present, and future. Stewarding the truth means helping one another, especially the next generation, to grasp this for themselves.

11. Go back to the worldviews discussed earlier in the lesson. How is a biblical view of humanity more sadly realistic and also more intensely beautiful than those worldviews?

12. Would you say that the worldview of our culture envisions a brighter, better tomorrow or a darker, dystopian future? How do each of these recognize but insufficiently address our shared human problem? How can these serve as a bridge to the only true and lasting solution?

13. Social issues are of prime concern to many today, including the younger generations. A Deloitte study notes that millennials and Gen Zers are “the people most likely to call out racism and sexism” and remain concerned about the environment, social equality, and discrimination.⁵ You, your friends, your kids, or others in your life may be similarly troubled by social issues such as systemic racism, discrimination, wealth inequality, environmental care and sustainability, sexual and gender identity, and politics, to name a few. How does a biblical understanding of human nature help us act and speak wisely concerning such issues, especially as we guide younger generations?

NEXT WEEK: THE TRUTH OF OUR FREEDOM FROM SIN IN CHRIST

⁵ “The Deloitte Global 2021 Millennial and Gen Z Survey,” Deloitte, 2021, <https://www2.deloitte.com/xe/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>