

WHAT IS MAN?

by A. Craig Troxel

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Before you embark on reading the booklet, try answering the question, “What is Man?” Then answer this question for yourself, “Who am I?” (5-6)

Ever since the 1960’s defining man has been a critical issue as “modern man” has seemingly gotten more and more impersonal. By the time you get the group together they will have read the booklet; try to get them to answer the questions as they did *before* they read the booklet.

2. If mankind did get here by evolution, then what can we conclude about the meaning of man? What might that lead us to conclude about God? (6-7)

If evolution is the answer, then man has **no** meaning! This makes man no different from the animals. If that is the case, then there can be no difference if you hunt a deer and have it for dinner or if you hunt your neighbor and have him for dinner. That sounds terrible, but if everything just got here by chance then there can be no rules except what is arbitrarily set by a 51% vote, which can change like the wind.

3. Thankfully, we are not animals. We are God’s special creation, made in His image. What, then, is this image of God? (7-12)

There are several questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) which will help in explaining this image. In question 4, “What is God?”, we are given four attributes of God He does not share with us. There is a list of seven which He does share with us. These are all part of that image. Take them to question 10 to see four more.

4. If the heart is your mind, desires and will, then which of these are you most likely to neglect or to favor? Why is this important in light of the great commandment to love God “with *all* your heart?”

Most of us probably tend to emphasize one aspect of the heart over the others. Do we intellectualize the faith or do we disregard serious thinking. Are we ruled by inner desires or do we simply ignore them hoping they will go away. Are we stubborn or do we easily submit (depending upon whether it is God’s command or temptation). A healthy Christian seeks to guard and to nurture all aspects of their heart before God, which means paying attention to areas of weakness and strength.

4. What difference would it have made if Adam never sinned? (17-18)

This is not as tricky a question as it might sound. If he had not sinned, then the race would have continued to be perfect. The choice was in Adam and the covenant God made with him. As we know, Adam failed to live a perfect life. This is why Jesus is called the “second Adam.” Jesus had to live that perfect life so that He could be the perfect, spotless, sacrifice for our sin.

Be sure to cover what Dr. Troxel brings out in the last paragraph of this section.

5. Let your imagination run freely on this question. What must it have been like to live in Eden? (18-19)
Make this a fun time using their imaginations. When you are done, point them to Rev.21-22, and let them know this state of perfection will be returned to us in the New Heaven and New Earth.

6. Read Genesis 3:1-13 and 4:1-16 carefully. When man sinned, there were five areas of his being that changed. The first one is given here, can you figure out the other four? (19-21)

Man fell Spiritually : Our relationship with God was broken. **This is the most obvious one, but there was more.**

Man fell Psychologically : Our relationship with ourselves was broken. **Look at the emotions that appear for the first time in these passages – fear, guilt, anger, rage enough to kill...**

Man fell Sociologically : Our relationship with each other was broken. **The first thing Adam did was to blame Eve. No longer was there a perfect bond between humans.**

Man fell Ecologically : Our relationship with the creation was broken. **All of creation became affected by man's sin. We would never again have perfect dominion over it.**

Man fell Physiologically : Our relationship with our bodies was broken. **With that sin, man's body was no longer perfect. It was now subject to pain, disease, and finally death.**

7. Ok, we sinned. But what did we do that was so bad as to deserve an eternity in hell? (21-26)
Read WSC #14 – “What is Sin?” Help them to understand what is meant by the Law of God. God is not a law-maker; He is the Law-giver. His Laws are the representation of His character. Therefore, sin is personal. Every sin is a “slap in the face” to God. Help them understand God is holy, and therefore cannot tolerate anything that defiles His character. Therefore, we deserve hell.
Also work them through the points in this section by Dr. Troxel.

8. It is easy to make a list of what an unsaved person is like, but how many changes can you list which displays what a Christian is like? (26-32)
This is the positive side of the study. It will also be, for some at least, the most important part of the lesson. Depending on the size of your group, divide them up. Give each group a portion of this section of the booklet to list all the ways we are different in Christ. Have them share with the whole group their top three, emphasizing all the changes are important if we are going to understand who we are. Don't shortchange this topic by not giving it enough time. There will be those in your group who will only now, for the first time, learn who they are in Christ, and how important that makes them.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

Pick out the top five things you learned about yourself as a human being made in God's image. Memorize them, and even post them where you can be reminded of how important you are to God. You are created in His image for the purpose of reflecting His image, through you, to a lost and hurting world. The more you understand and appreciate how He has made you, the more the world will want what you have found.

For Further Study

Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children, Robert A. Peterson. P&R, 2001.
Self-Image: How to Overcome Inferiority Judgments, Lou Priolo. P&R, 2007.

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