

Theological Anthropology

What is a Human Being

Created In The Image of God

- In the book of Genesis we read that God created human beings in his image. What does that mean?
 - We have intellect and use reason
 - We are created for relationships
 - We are spiritual creatures
 - We are created to give and receive love and express emotions
- God also created human beings to be incarnational representations of who he is. We are intended to have bodies.
- Theological anthropology is a way of understanding what a human being is from a theological perspective.

Intellect and Reason

- One way we image God is in our ability to reason. Human reason is distinctly different than other forms of thinking found in other creatures.
- Even the ancient pagan philosophers understood reason as the unique characteristic of being human. Aristotle in “Metaphysics” calls people a “Rational Animal.”
- Historically Christian thought views our ability to reason part of the divine image.

Intellect and Reason - Scripture

- "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. - Isaiah 55:8-9
- "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword " Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken. - Isaiah 1:18-20

Intellect and Reason - Scripture

- We can see just from these brief passages that God is a God of reason and we were created to reflect this aspect of who he is when we use our minds to reason.

Relationships

- God exists as one God yet three divine persons. He is within himself a communion of love. The love shared within the Godhead is so perfect that the three are one.
- People were created to live in relationships the same way. God saw “It was not good for man to be alone” and therefore created Eve to be in relationship with Adam.
- The relationship between man and women reflects the God head in that “The two become one flesh” and in that communion of love life comes forth through the birth of children. This is one example how people reflect the image of God in relationships.

Spiritual Creatures

- Of all the things God created, he uniquely breathes his spirit into the human person. While all other creatures are animated by life, only the human being has a unique spirit connected intimately to God:

“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.” – Genesis 2:7

Emotional Creatures

- Too often we believe our emotions get in the way of our ability to think well and do things properly. Yet, emotions are essential to good decision making. In fact, sociopaths, those who kill people in cold blood, cannot make good decisions because they have no emotional experience.
- Love, when properly ordered toward God first, our fellow human beings, and the rest of creation helps us live as God intended. We experience emotions, particularly love, because love indeed is the experience of God (1 John 4:6). Christ also experienced human emotion. God intends us to be emotional creatures.

Created to Have Bodies

- God intended us to have bodies. The Christian faith teaches that God created the human person to have a body and when Christ comes again we will have bodies. We are not souls trapped in bodies we are creatures created to have bodies and souls intimately connected to one another. It is only because sin has brought death into the world that we become divided creatures. The coming of Christ will reunite our bodies and souls.

A Christian Anthropology and Psychology

- A good Christian anthropology recognizes human beings are created with a body, mind, spirit, emotions, and for relationships. All five of these components are integrated tightly together and impact human behavior and mental experience. To understand psychology holistically we must explore how all of these components impact what we do and how we think.
- In this lesson, it's important we learn about how the body impacts human behavior and mental experience as one element of the many elements converging on why we do the things we do.

A Christian Anthropology and Psychology

- If we focus too much on any one component of human anthropology, we fall into the trap of reductionism. Here are the examples:
 - Physical processes determine behaviors – Physical reductionism
 - We rationalize all our decisions – Rational reductionism
 - We are driven by our emotions – Emotional reductionism
 - Everything we do is to be accepted by others – Social reductionism
 - Our spirits are who we really are – Spiritual reductionism
- All of these are errors that a Christian psychologist avoids by being holistic in understanding behavior and mental experience.