

## Foundations 1: Man

I read something recently that got me to thinking. It was about a church that also uses Connection Cards. And one woman wrote on her card: "I have been coming to church for a month now and heard that the first Wednesday of every month the church meets for a Bible study and a celebration of the Lord's Supper. What does that mean? Does that mean we all bring some kind of food to share? I plan on going but wanted to make sure I bring something if need be.

They were going to celebrate the Lord's Supper and someone is wondering if they needed to bring coleslaw.

This woman is far from being alone. A study found that when it comes to religion, people don't know much. Only 19% of all Protestants knew that salvation comes from faith and not works. 45% could not name the four gospels. Only 55% knew that the Golden Rule was not one of the Ten Commandments. And to add insult to injury, atheists scored better on the test than people of faith.

It made me think how I assume people know a great deal more than they actually do. So I decided to do a series called "**Foundations**." And I'm really going to get down to basics.

Today we are going to talk about Man, and by that I mean mankind. Then in coming weeks we are going to talk about God, then Christ, then the Holy Spirit and then the Kingdom of God.

And we are going to be studying the very foundation stones, the very important parts, on which all Christendom is built and on which our universe is based.

## Foundations #1: Man

A few years ago, Time Magazine featured a story about Peter Sellers. He was on the Muppet Show & being interviewed by Kermit the Frog. Kermit told Peter Sellers, "Now, just relax & be yourself." Peter Sellers responded, "***I can't be myself because I don't know who I am. The real me doesn't exist.***" **One of his friends**, said, "***Poor Peter***, the real Peter disappeared a long time ago. What he is, is simply a mixture of all the stage & screen characters he has ever played, and now he is frantically trying to unsnarl that mess and find out who he really is." **I don't know** if Peter Sellers was ever able to find the real him or not, for just six months later he was dead. **But whether he did or not, he isn't alone. The majority of us go through life wondering:**

1. Who we are?
2. What we're supposed to be doing?
3. Where are we going?

And remember by "Man" I mean in the sense of mankind, men and women.

Let's go back thousands of years to Psalm the eighth chapter and imagine David sitting on a hillside outside of Bethlehem, gazing up at the moon and stars, his heart filled with wonder. He takes out his harp and begins to sing...

*"O Lord, how majestic is your name! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?** You made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks & herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea."*

**What is man?** The world gives us all kinds of answers. Some scientists tell us that we're just by-products of nature, no more important than the **cockroach** that runs across the kitchen floor. But that kind of answer just doesn't satisfy.

**What is man?** The answer to that question is important for a number of reasons. The Bible says we are made in God's image and likeness. We learn something about the Creator by seeing what He has created. Man is the highest of God's earthly creatures. So, the study of man helps us in understanding God's work and, in a sense, of God Himself.

**What is man?** Studying about man should also shed light on our understanding of Jesus, because the Bible says that Jesus took on human nature. So to understand the nature of Christ we would need to understand the nature of man.

And likewise the study of the human nature of Jesus will give us a more complete understanding of what God intended man to be. Also, our conclusions about man will help us know **what** is needed to **be** done for him, **how** it is done, and **what** his destiny is.

Not only is there a great interest in the question "**What is man?**" There is also great confusion regarding the answer. And it is not only young people who struggle to answer, "**Who are they?**"

**What is man?** Christianity answers that question. **We are creatures of God, made in His image and likeness and for fellowship with Him.**

This means that man didn't come about as a chance process of evolution but by a conscious, purposeful act of God. **There is a reason for man's existence and we find this reason by finding out what God's intention for us is.**

In Genesis 1:26, it says that God made man, *"In His image, in His likeness."* The image of God is a basic part of man. Man would not be human without it. This sets man apart from the rest of creation. Man alone can have a conscious personal relationship with the Creator. Man can know God and understand what He desires from him.

**Man has an eternal dimension.** He has a starting point but no end point, he has an eternal future. So we must not only consider our physical needs, like food, clothes, and housing. We need to also consider our more important eternal needs.

To be sure we have physical and social needs. If we are in pain or hungry it is hard to focus on spiritual things. There is an old saying, *"There is no such thing as a philosopher with a toothache."*

The **contradiction** in man is deep and profound. ON the one hand, he is capable of incredible accomplishments -- space travel -- computers -- medicine, while on the other, seems almost a devil, capable of cruelty not found in the animal kingdom.

And here is something that people have discovered over and over again. It is counter intuitive but we cannot discover our real meaning if we think of ourselves and our happiness as the highest of all values, nor can we find happiness, fulfillment, or satisfaction by going out in search of it.

Many a person has searched for it, including **Solomon**, who was so rich that Bill Gates couldn't have carried his wallet. He used his great wealth to try every delight known to man and used all his wisdom and this is what he said, *"I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."* Ecclesiastes 1:13-14. He came to the conclusion that outside of God it was all meaningless.

Man's value has been given him by God, and he is fulfilled only when serving and loving God. This is when satisfaction comes, as a byproduct of commitment to God.

Mark 8:35, *"For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."*

God created man and that means that everything we have is actually God's. It means that man is not the ultimate value, but God is. It means man is not a part of divinity. He does not know all, and is not able to do all.

Man is a part of Creation. Man is very different but not so different that there is no relationship with the other beings. He was created on the same "day" as the land animals. He is not a god, so he has the same types of needs as the animals.

Man, however, has a unique place in the Creation. All the other creatures were said to be made after their kind. But Man was made in the image and likeness of God. Man was placed over the rest of creation and to have dominion over it.

**Important:** This means that man is not fulfilled when all his animal needs have been satisfied. Human life is much more than just food, clothing and pleasure.

Man is not the highest object in the universe. His value is great, for except for the angels, he is the highest of the creatures. But he is the creature not the creator John 13:16, *"I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master..."*

We have limitations; our knowledge will always be incomplete and subject to error. **This should impart a sense of humility to all our judgments**, as we realize it is possible to be wrong, no matter our education or what the facts may seem.

We need to accept our place in God's plan. Genesis 3:4-6, *"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The woman took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*" Adams and Eve's fall consisted at least in part of wanting to be like God -- to know what God knows.

However, MAN IS SOMETHING WONDERFUL. He is made in the image of God and was deliberately designed by God.

In Genesis 1, God reaches down & takes the dust of the ground and forms it into a human body, & breathes into its nostrils the breath of life. Adam blinks his eyes, begins to breathe, & becomes a living human being.

And we're told that **Adam & Eve** are created in His image. Not that they look like Him, but that they think like Him. They can make decisions like He makes decisions, & they're responsible for their decisions.

They can love in the same way that God loves. They can hate the things that God hates. Because God created them in His own image.

And while we are not to think too highly of ourselves, we are not to think too lowly of ourselves either, realizing we were designed and created by God Himself.

Just what is it God created when He created man? In Genesis 1:26-27 it says, *“Then God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”*

What does the “image of God” mean? Also note that Genesis 1:27 says, *“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them.”* Which settles once and for all, whether females were also created in His image. And it also lets us know He is not talking about our physical bodies being made in His image.

Genesis 5:1, *“When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them “man.”* Both were included as being made in God’s image. Different but not inferior.

The most popular belief and the belief that the early church leaders held is that the **“image & likeness”** refers to ability to reason, to think, reflect and deduce, to be able to figure things out.

An interesting aspect of this is that the “likeness” is in all humans whether or not he or she recognizes God’s existence. They might be using the “image of God,” their reasoning ability, to reason that there is no God. Like the fish that says “There is no ocean.”

**Okay, so what?** What are some implications of the fact that we are made in the “image & likeness” of God?

**1. We belong to God.** If we bear God’s image then we belong to Him. Jesus said to *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”* Mark 12:13-17. Commitment, devotion, love, loyalty, service to God -- all of these are proper for those who bear the image of God.

**2. We should pattern ourselves after Jesus.** He is the full image of God, and He is the one person whose humanity was never spoiled by sinning. This is not something we can obtain, He was, after all, the Son of God, but it does give us something to shoot for. And we become a lot better person for the attempt.

**3.** When we become Christians it appears **God not only restores the damaged image but that He builds upon it. But He won't without our permission!**

2 Corinthians 3:18, *“We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord...”*

**4. There is goodness in learning and work.** In Genesis 1:26 it says, *“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,”* and is followed immediately by, *“and let them have dominion over the animals.”*

Immediately after creating man, He gave him something to do, a job. And mankind had to go about learning how to do the job.

Now let's look at the makeup of man. Is he a single unit or is he made up of parts?

There are two main views about this:

**1.** The first is that man is made up of **three parts, body, soul & spirit.** The ones who hold this view believe that the personality traits reside in the soul. And that the spirit is the seat of the spiritual qualities of a person.

1 Thess 5:23, *“...May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**2.** The second view is that man is made up of **two parts, body & soul.** That the words “soul & spirit” refer to the same thing and that the body is the physical part and the soul or spirit is the non-physical part.

This is the most widely held view. In many instances it appears that the words “*spirit & soul*” are used interchangeably.

Matthew 10:28, *“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”* Ecclesiastes 12:7, *“And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”*

If the soul and spirit are not exactly the same they are very close. Hebrews 4:12, *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow...”* Just as close as narrow it to the joint or bone.

Here is what **important** to know, we have all soiled the original image but Jesus can restore it to the original likeness.

And **meanwhile**, until we let Jesus restore it, **we are walking around wondering** who we are, trying to fill the empty places in our lives, searching, making foolish mistakes, trying to stuff something into the empty parts of our lives.

But we don't have to live that way, Colossians 2:9, *"In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."*

Paul says you are created in God's image and the image has been marred. But you can once again reflect the glory of God. Through Christ you can be made full and complete.

Who am I? Of all the other labels that I may give myself, the one that counts the most is this, **"I am a Christian."** I have been born again in Jesus Christ. I have a new life. I have been bought & paid for by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and I am His. That gives me identity. **That is who I am.**

And we have to wonder, **"Why in the world** am I so concerned and anxious about things?" The only thing that really counts is whether or not Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. In the long run, nothing else really matters.

Why did God create man? What is our purpose? Is our purpose to be successful? No, Being successful and fulfilling your life's purpose are not the same thing. And actually we don't get to choose our purpose.

*"For through Christ God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see... Everything was created through him **and for him.**"* Colossians 1:16

Even atheists understand that without God life makes no sense. The very famous and well known atheist **Bertrand Russell** said, *"Unless you assume a God, the question of Life's purpose is meaningless."*

The Message version of the Bible put it like this: *"The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us."* Romans 12:3

**What drives your life? Everyone's life is driven by something.**

Right now your life may be driven by a problem, a pressure, or a deadline. You may be driven by a painful memory, or a haunting fear. Nothing matters more than knowing God's purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them.

Knowing your purpose gives meaning to your life. Knowing your purpose simplifies your life. Knowing your purpose focuses your life. Knowing your purpose motivates your life. Knowing your purpose prepares you for eternity. When we go before the judgment seat of God He will ask us two questions:

1. What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?
2. What did you do with what I gave you?

In Psalm 149:4 it says, *“The Lord takes pleasure in His people.”* God chose to create you. You exist for His benefit, His glory, His purpose, and His delight. When you really understand that, you will never again have a problem with feeling insignificant.

It proves your worth. If you are that important to God, and He considers you valuable enough that He wants you with Him for all eternity, what greater significance could you have?

**Maybe you are sitting there thinking**, *“I sure don’t feel like the image and likeness of God is in me.”* And you are pretty sure that the image and likeness of God has been marred in you.

That you are far from God, so very far, and is it even possible to restore or establish that relationship?

The **“Good News”** is: You can restore that image by rededicating your life or by accepting Him as your Savior for the very first time.