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DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF HUMAN  
DIGNITY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF  
TWIN TIERS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY IN  
BREESPORT, NEW YORK

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Steven Richard Baley  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF HUMAN  
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I have always been surrounded by people I do not deserve:  
my beloved wife, Amy;  
our three wonderful children—Dylan, Mercy, and Carter;  
my loving, supportive parents Rich and Diane;  
my professors and teachers who taught me to love God's Word;  
and my students who inspired me to be better.

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## PREFACE

First and foremost, this journey was made possible because of the grace of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This journey, this project, this doctorate is not something I ever fathomed. I live in a state of amazement with a sense of unworthiness. It is only because of the love and strength found in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that this work was accomplished.

To my wife Amy, words cannot express how humbled I am by your love and commitment to me through this process. It has not been an easy road. Had we realized the challenges we would face over the past four years I know we would not have started this journey. Yet, you have sacrificially kept me going and kept our family moving forward. I could not have gotten through this without you at my side. You are the love of my life and I thank you.

To our children, Dylan, Mercy, and Carter, thank you for your flexibility. At times this program added inconveniences and burdens on you, but you acted graciously and lovingly. I love you and thank you.

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Steven Baley

Breesport, New York

December 2021

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As an educational institution, Twin Tiers Christian Academy does its utmost to prepare young people to be productive and successful citizens. Yet, its mission statement speaks of a deeper pursuit. Twin Tiers Christian Academy is dedicated to inspiring students with a Christ centered, student focused, and college oriented education.<sup>1</sup> Above all else, Twin Tiers Christian Academy aspires to inspire its students toward Christ-likeness in their heart, mind, and actions. For this reason, Twin Tiers Christian Academy seeks to instill students with a biblical worldview in all aspects of life, including their view of human dignity of the body and many of the key issues pertaining to the subject.

#### **Context**

I serve on the faculty of Twin Tiers Christian Academy (TTCA) in Breesport, New York, as the director of student discipleship and head Bible teacher. Though I am not a graduate of a Christian high school I have advocated for Christian education my entire adult life and have been a part of six different Christian school ministries over the past twenty-six years. TTCA ministers to the families of New York's southern tier region and has done so for nearly fifty years. Though it is a ministry of Breesport Baptist Church, the school intentionally reaches out to the larger Christian community thus creating a home for 120 students in grades 5 to 12 that represent a diversity of social, ethnical, and church backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> Twin Tiers Christian Academy, "Twin Tiers Christian Academy," accessed August 6, 2019, <http://www.twintierschristianacademy.org/>.

In any educational setting the most defining characteristic of a school is its graduates. A few years ago, TTCA went through an evaluation of the ministry and developed a vision statement that represents what it wants graduates to embody. The vision statement declares that TTCA desires that “all graduates will be committed Christ-followers who are community-minded and prepared to make a global impact.”<sup>2</sup> The vision is inspiring and worth the time and sacrifice required to run a school with the vision for making Christ-followers. This is the point of distinction between TTCA as a Christian school and its secular counterparts. It is imperative for TTCA to measure success by whether students develop Christlikeness during their academy years and continue on that path as alumni.

TTCA recognizes that Christlikeness flows from a biblical worldview; a worldview constantly besieged by modern culture. Nancy Pearcey succinctly describes today’s modern world:

Every day, the twenty-four-hour news cycle chronicles the advance of a secular moral revolution in areas such as sexuality, abortion, assisted-suicide, homosexuality, and transgenderism. The new orthodoxy is being imposed through every major institution: academia, media, public schools, Hollywood, private corporations, and the law.<sup>3</sup>

She goes on to add that young people who claim to be Christians have not been immune to this revolution. According to her research, about two-thirds of men professing to be Christian watch pornography at least monthly; nearly half of evangelical millennials see no problem with people living together before marriage; and just over half believe that same-sex behavior is acceptable.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Twin Tiers Christian Academy, “Twin Tiers Christian Academy Student and Family Handbook,” May 2018, accessed June 22, 2019, [http://www.twintierschristianacademy.org/uploads/2/7/4/8/27481187/handbook\\_for\\_students\\_2018-2019.pdf](http://www.twintierschristianacademy.org/uploads/2/7/4/8/27481187/handbook_for_students_2018-2019.pdf), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 11.

At TTCA the numbers are not as drastic as these and many alumni go on to live productive lives where they embrace their Christian faith and are productive in their community. Even so, over the past few years I have observed a number of alumni that struggle with embracing or defending a biblical worldview in areas of human dignity, specifically those areas under secular attack in modern culture. Consequently, it is imperative that believers are grounded in a persuasive biblical worldview because only in a biblical worldview is their teaching that human bodies are good gifts from God, thus holding intrinsic value and meaning.<sup>5</sup>

### **Rationale**

TTCA's success is contingent on its effectiveness as an educational institution and as a guide toward Christlikeness. Therefore, the academy needs to be aware of the world in which students live, and it needs to be aware of the nuances of this secular moral revolution inundating the lives of young people. This project means to investigate those nuances in the area of human dignity in the light and beauty of what it means to be an image-bearer of God. A biblical worldview offers a moral compass to modern day ethical issues and a picture of human dignity.

This project intended to show young people the joyous truths behind being created in the image of God. When celebrating God's creative work, King David declared, "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted him together in my mother's womb" (Ps 139:13). In the next verse he proclaims, "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made." The project contrasts this biblical picture of humanity with the failed views of dualism—views that greatly influence modern secular views.

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<sup>5</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 261.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip the hearts and minds of the high school students at Twin Tiers Christian Academy in Breesport, New York, with a biblical worldview in areas of human dignity of the body.

## **Goals**

The following three goals were designed to shape the biblical worldview of high school students.

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and opinions of students on issues of human dignity.
2. The second goal was to develop a seven-session curriculum that teaches a biblical understanding of humanity and addresses modern ethical issues of human dignity.
3. The third goal was to increase the students' knowledge of a biblical worldview, modify their attitudes toward embracing a biblical worldview on key issues of human dignity, and develop ways to connect ethical issues to the gospel.

A specific research methodology measured the successful completion of these three goals. This methodology is described in the following section.

## **Research Methodology**

The first goal was to assess the knowledge and opinions of students on issues of human dignity. This goal was measured by administering an anonymous survey that assessed their views<sup>6</sup> before the curriculum cycle,<sup>7</sup> and then re-administering the same survey at the end of the curriculum cycle. Students created their own four-digit, non-sequential ID number that they placed on both surveys so that their answers would remain anonymous, but their surveys could be matched up. Because the students are minors, written permission was secured before they participated in the project.<sup>8</sup> This goal was

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 2. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 1.

considered successfully met when 80 percent of the junior and senior Bible classes completed the survey before they begin the study.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum that teaches a biblical understanding of humanity and addresses modern ethical issues of human dignity. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of one educational leader with a doctorate in education, one curriculum writer and editor of youth material, and an educator who has training in curriculum rubrics and is doing her own research in areas of human dignity. The panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.<sup>9</sup> The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 80 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level and the curriculum was approved by the administrator of TTCA. If the 80 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to increase the students' knowledge of a biblical worldview and modify their attitudes toward embracing a biblical worldview on key issues of human dignity. This goal was measured by administering a post-survey to measure the changes in worldview attitudes.<sup>10</sup> The goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive statistically significant difference in biblical worldview in the pre- and post-survey scores.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

*Corporeal.* *Corporeal* is a reference to a person's material body, especially as opposed to a person's immaterial spirit.

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<sup>9</sup> See appendix 4.

<sup>10</sup> See appendix 5.

*Dualism.* *Dualism*, in the heritage of Plato, is the belief that the mind and the body are separate and that personhood is found in the mind apart from the body.<sup>11</sup>

*Ensouled body.* *Ensouled body* is the concept that the human as a body is unique from all other creatures because humans are everlasting and immaterial.

*“Mannishness” of man.* *“Mannishness” of man* is a phrase coined by Francis Schaeffer that he used to describe the fact that humans are self-aware and existentially know that they are unique from the rest of creation.<sup>12</sup>

*Neo-Gnosticism.* *Neo-Gnosticism* refers to the minimizing of the value and importance of earthly life while placing a high value on eternal life.

*Personhood.* *Personhood* is a term used to describe the condition of being a unique individual person.

*Protology.* *Protology* is the theological study of creation and first things.

*Sacred/Secular Divide.* The *Sacred/Secular Divide* refers to a modern form of secular dualism in which an “upper story” is the personal autonomous self and a “lower story” is the natural world.<sup>13</sup>

The project had three key delimitations. Because of the mature nature of some of the material, only the older high school students participated in the project. Second, because of the timing of the project, the seniors of TTCA were not available so only the junior class participated. Third, many different issues could have been addressed under the banner of “human dignity” but due to time constraints, I focused on four issues pertaining to the human body.

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 62.

<sup>12</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 30-31.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 104.

## **Conclusion**

It is my hope that the students at TTCA would see how extraordinary it is to be image-bearers of God. I pray that as the Word of God speaks into their life, their hearts and minds are transformed by the power of Christ in their life. As this project reveals what is going on in their world, I pray that the Scriptures give wisdom and direction to each student as they navigate their lives and culture.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR HUMANS AS IMAGE-BEARERS OF GOD WHO ARE EMBODIED SOULS CALLED TO LIVE IN CHRISTLIKE RIGHTEOUSNESS

This chapter offers an exegetical commentary on three passages of Scripture chosen for this project to demonstrate to the young people of the Twin Tiers Christian Academy that human dignity flows from being image-bearers of God. Genesis 1:26-27 will establish the foundational description of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God. First Corinthians 15:35-49 will show that, as image-bearers, humans are gloriously eternal, ensouled beings that are fearfully and wonderfully made. Ephesians 4:17-24 will show that image-bearing produces an ethic directly related to the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ and that a pursuit of Christ-likeness is the ultimate goal in life and the path toward discovering human dignity.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Created in the Image and Likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27)**

In modern culture there is a growing belief that, in the scope of nature, humans hold little significance. In 2010, Bill Nye was honored as the Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association. In his acceptance speech he conveys this idea of insignificance:

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the nature of the topic, it is also important to note the importance and intention of certain terminology and pronoun usage. In following the example of Owen Strachan, a wide range of terms will be used to describe humans—*humankind*, *mankind*, *humanity*, and *man*. Also, in reference to pronouns, this project will, at times, use masculine pronouns to describe all humans. The reason for this is that since God created Adam first, there is a sense where he, the male, represents all of humanity. With that being said, more generic and modern terms will be used as well. Owen Strachan. *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2019), 6.

I am insignificant. . . . I'm just another speck of sand. And Earth, really, in the cosmic scheme of things, is another speck, and our sun—an unremarkable star, nothing special—is another speck. And the galaxy is a speck. I'm a speck on a speck orbiting a speck among other specks amongst still other specks in the middle of specklessness! I am insignificant! I suck!<sup>2</sup>

Bill Nye portrays a consistent secular humanist belief, and he is not alone in his convictions. He represents much of the philosophy driving many areas of life. It is a belief that offers no hope or greater purpose to existence and offers no basis for human dignity. However, God's Word presents an entirely different picture, one of truth and one that offers a sure foundation for hope, purpose, and human dignity. That picture is first revealed at the very beginning, in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, the triune God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make a monumental decision. Verse 26 records, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'"<sup>3</sup> In this one sentence is seen a vastly different view of mankind than that of being a "speck among other specks amongst still other specks in the middle of specklessness." But what does it mean to be made in the image of God? This is a serious question. In fact, Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest describe it this way: "The most important matter in Christian anthropology concerns the meaning of the proposition that God created the human person in his own image and likeness."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it is here where a proper understanding of human dignity is found. Discovering the answer begins on day 6 of creation.

The sixth day of creation does not begin with the creation of man. Instead, it begins in verse 24: "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kind—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.'" The account is similar to the other days of creation: God speaks and something new

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Nye, "The Best Idea We've Had So Far," TheHumanist.com, December 10, 2010, <https://thehumanist.com/magazine/november-december-2010/features/best-idea-weve-far>.

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture citations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 2:124.

comes into existence. In this case, livestock, creeping things, and beasts. Next, God does something unique in the creation account. John Sailhamer observes that throughout the Genesis 1 creation account there is a rhythm of impersonal commands until verse 26. At this point the narrative changes and God, for the first time, speaks in the first person: “Let us make man.”<sup>5</sup> Sailhamer also observes that when other aspects of creation are mentioned, such as vegetation, bird, fish, and livestock, it is noted that each was made “according to its own kind.” Yet, verse 26 breaks the rhythm again when God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”<sup>6</sup> Whatever is going on in Genesis 1:26, it is clear that it is something entirely different from the rest of creation.

In God’s declaration, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness,” two interpretive issues need to be addressed. First is the issue of the personal plural pronouns *us* and *our*. It is easy to make the assumption that the plural pronouns refers to a Christian understanding of a triune God. In light of the full counsel of Scripture, this interpretation makes sense. However, assuming the author of this text is Moses, was that Moses’ original intent or is this interpretation anachronistic? Victor Hamilton makes the astute observation that Moses already established plurality in the Godhead back in verse 2 where he stated that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” God is speaking to the Spirit, who is God’s fellow participant in creation.<sup>7</sup> Hamilton goes on to say,

It is one thing to say that the author of Gen.1 was not schooled in the intricacies of Christian dogma. It is another thing to say he was theologically too primitive or naive to handle such ideas as plurality within unity. . . . True, the concept may not be etched on every page of Scripture, but hints and clues are dropped enticingly here

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<sup>5</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 144.

<sup>6</sup> Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 144.

<sup>7</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1990), 134.

and there, and such hints await their full understanding “at the correct time” (Gal. 4:4).<sup>8</sup>

The Old Testament has a number of other examples of plurality in the Godhead (Gen 3:22, 11:7; Isa 6:8, 48:16). Therefore, there is no reason to deny the idea that inspired Old Testament writers understood God’s plurality within his unified self. In the fullness of time, all was revealed but clear glimpses of God’s triune nature are sprinkled throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

A second interpretive issue is the meaning of the terms *image* and *likeness*. Details are found within the creation account that offer understanding to the idea that God created humans in his image and likeness. One unique descriptor appears in the latter part of verse 26: “And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” In verse 28, God attaches two commands to this role: “Subdue it [in reference to the earth], and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Functionally speaking, humans are God’s vice-regents.<sup>9</sup> This idea of rulership is found in other ancient Near-Eastern literature, but one beautiful characteristic of verse 28 is that it applies the idea of image-bearing to all people. Bruce Waltke explains that other ancient Near Eastern texts only describe kings as image-bearers of the gods. The Hebrew Scriptures are unique in that all people are given the same role and dignity.<sup>10</sup> Yet, this is an incomplete view of image-bearing because it only deals with function. Mankind’s function as steward and ruler over creation does not answer the fundamental question: what is the defining characteristic of image-bearing that makes humans God’s vice-regent over the rest of

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<sup>8</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 32.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 66.

creation?<sup>11</sup> Verse 27 offers more depth to the discussion: “So God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Here the text reiterates that God created man in his own image then it speaks of creating both male and female. Sailhamer connects God creating man out of his plurality with the plurality expressed between the male and female. He then connects the idea of relationship between the persons in the plurality of the Godhead with the idea of relationship between the male and female and concludes that when God puts man in the garden to worship and obey him it is because one key aspect of man’s image-bearing is the fact that mankind is relational with each other and with God.<sup>12</sup> Even humanity’s ability to love seems rooted in this idea of relationship. Yet, the relational aspect of image-bearing is still functional and not definitive; therefore, the question remains: what is the defining characteristic of image-bearing that makes humans relational?

The creation account also reveals the immaterial nature that connects humanity to the image of God. First is the exclusive way in which God created Adam. Genesis 2:7 explains that “the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” Only Adam received the breath of life directly from God. Gordon Wenham sees the image of God in man (1:27) connected to God breathing life into man (2:7). It is important to note that God gave life to all of creation and God made man from the dust of the ground. When God made physical man out of physical creation, he made something wonderful out of something wonderful. That fact cannot be lost especially within the discussion of human dignity. However, the argument can be made that when God directly breathed life into Adam. Adam possessed something that was the very nature of God, thus making him an image-bearer.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth M. Gardoski, “Is Culture a Reflection of the *Imago Dei*?” *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 15.

<sup>12</sup> Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 147.

<sup>13</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 60-61.

A second immaterial facet of mankind is that God gave humans intelligence.<sup>14</sup> Humans not only think, but they think about thinking. God gave Adam the responsibility of cultivating and keeping Eden (2:15). God also gave Adam the job of naming all the animals (2:19). A key aspect of Adam and Eve's intelligence is the power of language. Adam and Eve communicated with each other (2:23) and they were also able to communicate directly with God (2:23, 3:9-13). There is a sense that there was more than just mere communication here. There was love, fellowship, and worship taking place between God and Adam and Eve. Sailhamer comments that one ought not ignore the amount of detail given about the Garden of Eden, just like the amount of detail given about the Tabernacle (Exod 25:1-31:18). Both places are where "human beings could enjoy fellowship and the presence of God."<sup>15</sup> Maybe one of the most profound examples of relationship comes from the deep fear that Adam and Eve displayed after their sin (3:10). An intense loss in relationship takes place between God and humanity.

A third sign of the immaterial is that God gave humans free will.<sup>16</sup> Adam chose to tend the garden (2:15), name the animals (2:19-20), and name Eve (2:23). Adam and Eve also chose to disobey God and eat the fruit (3:6). Obviously, all fish, fowl, and land animals make choices freely, but there is a greater depth to the choices Adam and Eve were making, leading to the fourth sign.

A fourth sign of the immaterial in mankind is that God gave humans moral responsibility. It has already been established that God gave mankind the exclusive intelligence to make thoughtful choices, but God also gave mankind the exclusive ability to make free will moral choices. By prohibiting them from eating from the tree of the

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<sup>14</sup> Gardoski, "Is Culture a Reflection of the *Imago Dei*?" 18.

<sup>15</sup> John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 1992), 98.

<sup>16</sup> Gardoski, "Is Culture a Reflection of the *Imago Dei*?" 19.

knowledge of good and evil, humans were given a moral choice that resulted in life or death, thus making people morally responsible for their choices.<sup>17</sup>

Scripture does not seem to point to a specific characteristic that defines image-bearing. Instead, Scripture presents a litany of descriptors. Humans, as image-bearers, are the stewards and rulers of creation. Humans, as image-bearers, are relational with both God and each other capable of communication, love, and worship. Humans, as image-bearers, distinctively possess God's very own breath of life. Moreover, as Lewis and Demarest suggest, God created image-bearing humans, "metaphysically, as a complex material-immaterial unit,"<sup>18</sup> created out of the material dust of the ground but also possessing God's very own immaterial breath of life. This spiritual connection joins humankind to the patterns of God's own nature. In the creation account alone, humans reason, communicate, and make free-will choices and moral judgements. As a whole, the creation narrative gives a robust account of how the image of God in mankind is a complex sharing of God's immaterial nature in material form that leads to humanity's responsibility of dominion over creation and role as a relational being. Therefore, it serves a firm theological foundation for an understanding of human dignity.<sup>19</sup>

### **Image-Bearers as Everlasting Embodied Souls (1 Cor 15:35-49)**

In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul offers a thorough account of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ. Paul begins with the importance of the resurrection (vv. 1-4), proofs of the resurrection (vv. 5-7), and his own personal experience with the resurrected Christ (vv. 8-11). Paul goes on to describe the emptiness of the Christian message without the resurrection (vv. 12-19), then gives a glorious description of the Christian hope because

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<sup>17</sup> Gardoski, "Is Culture a Reflection of the *Imago Dei*?" 20.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 2:134.

<sup>19</sup> Gardoski, "Is Culture a Reflection of the *Imago Dei*?" 22-23.

Christ is truly and bodily risen (vv. 20-34). In that description Paul explains that in his resurrection Christ overcame the sin of Adam and the death that his sin brought (v. 21), and that he has brought life to all who believe (v. 22). However, the Corinthians struggled with the concept of the resurrection. Gordon Fee states that the Corinthians were convinced that when Paul talked about resurrection, he was talking about reanimating a decayed corpse.<sup>20</sup> This compelled Paul to explain the purpose and the form of bodily resurrection (vv. 35-49).

The purpose of this text in this study of human dignity is to first show the connection between mankind's material and immaterial being. Second, the text shows that both the material body and immaterial soul are fearfully and wonderfully made with eternal hope and purpose that are connected to this crucial idea of bodily resurrection. How crucial is it? Fee says that forgiveness of sins, eternal hope, Christian ethics, and even the very character of God ride on the act of a bodily resurrection.<sup>21</sup> Third, Paul connects protology (the study of creation's beginnings) with eschatology (the study of future judgement and hope) by showing that what came first was good but was is to come is even better.<sup>22</sup>

How does Paul construct his argument here in 1 Corinthians 15? One way he constructs his argument is by his usage of keywords. Throughout verses 1-34 he emphasizes the word is *nekros* ("dead"). The word appears eleven times in that span. However, in verses 35-49, the word only appears twice (vv. 35, 44). The word that prevails in the 35-49 section is *soma* ("body"), appearing ten times, yet not appearing a

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<sup>20</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 779.

<sup>21</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 775.

<sup>22</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 799.

single time in verses 1-34. With this deliberate change Paul is emphasizing the complete transformation that takes place at resurrection, including the transformation of the body.<sup>23</sup>

Paul forcefully begins his argument with a diatribe, going after a hypothetical opponent that has a crass view of resurrection, that describes bodily resurrection as a bunch of decomposed bodies.<sup>24</sup> Paul goes so far as to call this person foolish. He probably chose to use the term “foolish” because he is not describing the person as intellectually deficient, but someone who willfully refuses to recognize God work (Ps 14:1, 53:1; Rom 1:21-22).<sup>25</sup>

To communicate a proper understanding of bodily resurrection Paul returns to the word *nekros* (dies”) at the end of verse 36 to set up his description of transformation in verses 37-38. To accomplish that task, Paul uses the illustration of a seed. He explains that after the seed “dies” the new life that comes from the seed is completely transformative from the seed, yet everything the new plant needs is found in the seed. The same is true with resurrected bodies.<sup>26</sup> However, it is important to see the profound statement Paul makes in verse 38. When Paul states that “God gives it a body he has chosen,” he is making the point that each seed is unique, and that the God of the universe has a special plan for each one. Then, verse 39 tells that nothing is more special than a person. But what makes a human more special than other land animals, birds, or fish? With a twist of splendid creativity, Paul offers the answer in verse 40 as he describes the human body as both a heavenly body and an earthly body. Fee sees the apostle using a chiasmic literary arrangement in verses 39-41 to bring emphasis to the heavenly/earthly description centered in verse 42:

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<sup>23</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 777.

<sup>24</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 798-99.

<sup>25</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 727.

<sup>26</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 801-2.

A Not all “flesh” is the same; [earthly bodies]  
 B People have one kind;  
 animals another;  
 birds another;  
 fish another;  
 C There are heavenly bodies  
 There are earthly bodies  
 C’ The splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one kind;  
 The splendor of the earthly bodies is of another.  
 B’ The sun has one kind of splendor’  
 The moon another kind of splendor;  
 The stars another kind of splendor  
 A’ And star differs from star in splendor [heavenly bodies].<sup>27</sup>

Paul’s chiasmic pattern seems to hail back to the creation week in Genesis 1 by presenting earthly flesh in descending order of complexity (man, animals, birds, and fish) while ordering the heavenly bodies in ascending order of brilliance (sun, moon, and stars)<sup>28</sup> to emphasize the different kinds of flesh and the different kinds of heavenly bodies. However, there is another purpose for the chiasm. Kenneth Bailey sees verse 42 as the center of the entire passage in that verse 35 speaks of the dead being raised, verse 42 speaks of the resurrection bringing about what is imperishable, and verse 50 talks about the inheritance of the imperishable.<sup>29</sup> In either case, Paul is showing that there is a bridge between the physical realm and the heavenly realm—a bridge toward the promise that someday “this perishable body will put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (15:53). This line of thinking was contrary to the teachings of the day. Many philosophers of Paul’s time believed that the celestial bodies were divine,<sup>30</sup> and contended that it was, according to Asher, “metaphysically impossible for a

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<sup>27</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 783.

<sup>28</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 730.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 455.

<sup>30</sup> Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 131.

terrestrial body to ascend to a celestial realm.”<sup>31</sup> It seems that many in Corinth held this view.

The second important contextual point in this study is that humanity’s eternal hope and purpose is grounded in the bodily resurrection from the dead, with Christ’s resurrection being the proof of that hope. Paul has not explicitly mentioned the resurrection since verse 36, but the way Paul reengages his defense of the hope of the resurrection is with the stirring use of the rhetorical devices *anaphora* and antithesis.<sup>32</sup> He takes four parallel contrasts and succinctly styles each one with the same (*anaphora*) phrase, “What/ It is sown . . . it is raised” (15:42-44).

What is being *sown* in verses 42-44? It is clear that the subject sown is pre-death bodies.<sup>33</sup> Pre-death bodies are perishable, dishonorable, weak, and natural. What does it mean that bodies are sown? It could mean that the body will be buried.<sup>34</sup> It makes sense to see current bodies as perishable, dishonorable, and weak when it is *sown* in the ground, but why? Thomas Edwards describes a living person as a “soulish body” in which the body was made for the soul and when the soul leaves the body the body loses its main function.<sup>35</sup> This idea of a living soul appears again in verse 45, though most translations describe Adam as a “living-being” instead of a living soul.<sup>36</sup> Continuing the planting metaphor, Paul shows that when the *seed* of the earthly body is *sown* in the ground upon death it gives birth to an entirely new type of body, a resurrected body. It is important to

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<sup>31</sup> Jeffery R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 82.

<sup>32</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 131.

<sup>33</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 811.

<sup>34</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 732.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas C. Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian, 1885), 440.

<sup>36</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 819.

recognize that Paul goes to great lengths to show that the resurrected body is much more than a spruced-up version of the natural body.<sup>37</sup> Earlier in 1 Corinthians Paul described the resurrected body as something that “no eye has seen, nor ear heard nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (2:9). However, Paul shared a few contrasting traits. First, unlike the natural body that is perishable; the resurrected body will be raised imperishable, meaning that it will not be subject to corruption or decay. This might only refer to physical corruption and decay or it might have a metaphorical meaning describing a body that will be free from moral decay.<sup>38</sup> Second, unlike a natural body that is dishonorable; the resurrected body is raised in glory, which might refer to the incomparable beauty between the two bodies. Referencing back to the seed illustration, the splendor of the plant far surpasses the humble look of the seed.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, unlike a natural body that is weak, the resurrected body is raised in power. One way to understand this contrast is to think of the natural body as being defined by its limitations and weaknesses while the resurrected body will be defined by its contrasting power. It is important to remember that these comparisons were penned by someone who also said that “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (2:9). Nevertheless, these terms surrounding the natural and the spiritual describe a transformation from an earthly body to a future resurrected body fashioned in the image of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

Christ is the one that provides the connection between that natural body and the eternal spiritual body. Paul shows Christ as the bridge by referencing back to Adam in

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<sup>37</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 733.

<sup>38</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 216.

<sup>39</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 217.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, The American Commentary, vol. 28 (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 405.

Eden, “The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (15:45). Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner believe that Paul is making a connection between Genesis 2:7, Ezekiel 37, and Christ’s resurrection. In Genesis 2:7, the connection is quite clear. God forms Adam from the dust of the ground and gives him life, two analogies that Paul uses. The connection in Ezekiel is a little obscure but in the passage God, on four occasions, speaks of breathing life or placing his Spirit into mankind.<sup>41</sup> David Garland also observes that “giving life is synonymous with raising the dead” in places like Romans 4:17, 8:11, and 2 Corinthians 3:6.<sup>42</sup> Paul then connects Christ’s resurrection with the Ezekiel’s prophecy to defend this teaching of a bodily resurrection of an embodied soul in a new body.

In verse 46 Paul is making it clear that he is not making a simple contrast between two states. Instead, he is building a chronological bridge that reflects in the history of creation and new creation.<sup>43</sup> This bridge brings home the third point of the passage, where Paul connects protology (the study of creation’s beginnings) with eschatology (the study of future judgement and hope).<sup>44</sup> So far he has clearly shown that there is a clear distinction between first man Adam and last Adam (the resurrected Christ), which leads to verses 48-49 where Paul defends the idea that mankind can share in both types of humanity.<sup>45</sup>

To begin, Paul makes it clear that he is referencing resurrected Christ and not incarnate Christ. In a sense, incarnate Christ was born of dust since he had a natural body.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 820.

<sup>42</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 735.

<sup>43</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 821.

<sup>44</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 799.

<sup>45</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 822.

<sup>46</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 794.

In contrast, his body comes from heaven, clearly referring to the resurrection. Thus, Paul is laying out the promise that Christ's followers are going to be like him.<sup>47</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ will, as Paul describes in Philippians 3:21, "transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." N. T. Wright sees Paul's clear intention not to describe this transformation as a returning of the original image that was found pre-Fall in Eden. Rather, the promise is to "go on to bear, in the newly resurrected body, the 'image of the man from heaven.'"<sup>48</sup> That is not to say that new life is an escape of the world so it can exist in some separate heavenly realm. Paul's description of the "man for heaven" is one who comes and changes the earthly reality, including mankind's image, because, as Wright puts it, "Heaven and earth, after all, are twin partners in creation which, at the heart of the passage Paul has in his mind throughout the chapter, the creator had declared to be 'very good.'"<sup>49</sup> In essence, this is the climax of the story. The image bearers who belong to Christ will be part of a new Genesis where all of creation is renewed.<sup>50</sup>

Why is this discussion of image-bearing meaningful to the study of human dignity? Paul shows two important truths for this study. First, the promise of the eternal state is bodily and directly connected to the current earthly state showing that humans are eternal ensouled beings. Second, Paul shows that humanity has, and for all eternity, borne "the image of the man of heaven" (15:49). From Genesis 2 to the consummation humanity always has an intimate connection to Christ. One key component of that connection is that those who bear Christ's image and have been transformed are called to an ethic directly related to the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ leading to a pursuit of Christ-likeness as the ultimate goal in life and the foundation to human dignity.

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<sup>47</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 220.

<sup>48</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 353.

<sup>49</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 355.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 341

### **As Image-Bearers We Are Called to Live Righteously (Eph 4:17-24)**

The key to understanding this passage, in light of the discussion of human dignity, is a phrase in verse 24. What does Paul mean when he says, “Put on the new self, created in the likeness of God?” Genesis 3 already established that mankind is created in the image of God. First Corinthians 15 already established that all people are eternal embodied-souls and that followers of Christ will be transformed into the image of Christ. Paul is not directly referring to either of these two references as image-bearing. Genesis 3 is not referencing any type of “new self,” and 1 Corinthians 15 addresses a future eternal state. In Ephesians 4 Paul is speaking about a likeness of God that is new but corporeal. The parallel to this “likeness of God” portrayal is found in Colossians 3:9-11: “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” As Paul calls the reader to “put on the new self” he uses the term “image of the creator” to describe what the self should look like now. If there was any doubt in what he was talking about, Paul explicitly states that this image is Christ since he “is all, and in all.”

In the bigger picture of the epistle, Paul is about to begin a full-length exhortation on ethical living. As he does that, he puts forth the claim that to be truly righteous reflects the nature of Christ. F. F. Bruce points out that Paul used a similar technique in Colossians 3 as he launched into a section of holy living, and he does the same in Romans 12-13 where he sums up his ethical instruction in verse 14 with the injunction, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, this passage is a calling on the lives of image-bearers—a call to live righteously. Image-bearing can lead to an ethic

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<sup>51</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 359.

directly related to the perfect humanity of Christ. Moreover, it is a pursuit of Christ-like righteousness that is the ultimate goal in life, a goal only found in a relationship with Christ.

Then, Paul begins in verse 17 with a penetrating analysis of the hardness, darkness, ignorance, and corruption of the human heart. Paul was well-acquainted with his readers, having spent over two years with them. Many were Gentile converts raised in paganism, thus Paul reflects on the way they have been set free. He did this earlier in Ephesians 2:11 where he reminded them that they were once “Gentiles in the flesh” but that they were redeemed by the blood of Christ (2:13). Here in chapter 4 Paul returns to the Gentile analogy stating that though they might still be Gentile in a physical sense, probably referring to their lack of circumcision, they no longer walk “in the futility of their minds.” Bruce observes that this is not the first time Paul speaks of the futility of the unbelieving mind. In Romans 1, Paul painted a more vivid picture of the ethical bankruptcy that walks hand-in-hand with paganism.<sup>52</sup> It is a bankruptcy that begins with wrongful thinking then leads to corrupt actions.

Paul sees five manifestations of corrupt thinking. The first issue is a hardness of heart. Though it is not the first one mentioned, Paul says that the hardness of heart is the cause of the other corrupt manifestations. Bryan Chapell observes that Paul does not use the term “hard” heart, but chooses the term “hardened” heart. This implies a constant stubbornness and repeated transgressions that cause a heart to become callous and hardened.<sup>53</sup>

Verse 18 depicts a second serious issue, one that flows from a hardened heart. The issue is a deep darkness that keeps one from understanding reality and seeing the

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<sup>52</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 355.

<sup>53</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 205.

glory of the gospel. Though this darkness is the result of a hardened heart, Paul intentionally places this darkened understanding right after the problem of a futile mind, thus showing that the two are mutually reinforcing.<sup>54</sup> Futile thinking leads to this darkness and a deep darkness keeps one from seeing the glory of the God and the life found only in him. Paul said later in 5:8, “For at one time you were in darkness, but now you are the light of the Lord.” Paul shows that there was no light but because of the work of Christ one can “walk as children of light” (5:18) because Christ has taken away the darkness from the mind.

The third manifestation of corrupt thinking is sensuality. At the beginning of verse 19 Paul articulates that when a person callously lives in darkness that person will make his goal in life something other than God, which may be the gratification of his body or the gratification of his ego, anything but God. This sensuality flows from a lack of moral sensitivity, a callousness. This is the only place in the entire New Testament where this word “callous” is used. It portrays the idea of feeling no pain, a hopelessness that causes a person to put off all moral restraint.<sup>55</sup>

Fourth, inevitably the hardness, darkness, and sensuality spill over into “every kind of impurity.” This portrayal of impurity encompasses much more than simply sexual impurity. Paul is describing a self-indulgence that knows no bounds and is insatiable. Translations try to use the term “greed” or “covetousness” to describe this impurity’s nature but it best viewed as “never satisfied.”<sup>56</sup> Chapell summarizes this devastating four-step spiral of sin: “Sensuality outside the path of God promises to satisfy, but it only destroys the heart, darkens the mind, and deadens the senses.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 297.

<sup>55</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 298.

<sup>56</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 283.

<sup>57</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 207.

Hardness, darkness, sensuality, and insatiable impurity cut one off from the one thing that saves—the “life of God.” However, even though nothing on earth can stop the disease and futility of depravity, God provided a way. The one thing that saves someone from the futility of walking in the ways of the Gentiles is described in one word in verse 20: Christ. Paul has probably been away from Ephesus for about seven years at this time,<sup>58</sup> so he takes a moment in verse 21 to remind his reader of the cornerstone of truth: “The truth is in Jesus.” The escape from futility is hearing the voice of Jesus and being taught by him. Paul purposefully chooses an intimate description of Christ’s teaching. Some translations interpret the phrase in the middle of verse 21 as “you have heard about him.” However, a more literal rendering is “you have heard him.”<sup>59</sup> The implication of this is that when one hears the gospel they are not only receiving important information, but they are in touch with a living person, the person of Christ.<sup>60</sup>

Paul clearly shows the contrast between Christian teachings and a Gentile worldview. Thielman explains, “Christians have both a relationship with the living Christ and concrete instruction, derived from the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The shape for their lives stands utterly apart from the hopeless and socially destructive behavior of their unbelieving Gentile neighbors.”<sup>61</sup>

How is this relationship with Christ accomplished? According to verse 21, it requires following three teachings that flow from the truth found in Jesus. The first is presented in verse 22: “Put off your old self.” This statement generates a serious theological question. Is Paul stating something that has already happened or is he talking about an ongoing action? In a parallel verse Colossians 3:9 Paul asserts, “Do not lie to

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<sup>58</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 300.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 290.

<sup>60</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 302.

<sup>61</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 304.

one another, seeing that you have put off the old self.” Paul seems to indicate that the work is finished. By Ephesians 4:22 it is clear that Paul is referencing believers, so it seems that he is not referencing a finished work. Clinton Arnold gives clarity to this interpretive dilemma by describing it as the “eschatological tension of the ‘already’ and ‘not yet.’”<sup>62</sup> Paul shows that identities have been changed because of the work of Christ, and that change calls Christ-followers to live their day-to-day lives in light of that change. This change explains why Paul calls Christ’s followers “saints” while still calling them to pursue sanctification.<sup>63</sup> The apostle is calling believers to continually put away the corrupt deceitful desires that defined their former lifestyle. And if there is constant victory over sin then verse 23 can become a reality: “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.” This is the connection between the laying off of the old man in verse 22 and the putting on of the new man in verse 24. The bridge that leads from between the corrupting deceit in verse 22 to the sanctifying truth in verse 24 is the renewing of the spirit of the mind, which is the key to spiritual growth.

However, this leads to questions concerning the renewal of the mind. Two interpretive questions first need to be addressed: (1) is the spirit the Holy Spirit or the human spirit? and (2) is the “mind” the object of the renewal or is the “spirit”?<sup>64</sup> To the first question, the term “spirit” is probably referring to the human spirit because Paul uses it in such a way to show that this “spirit” is possessed by the “mind.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, some have speculated that Paul chose the word “spirit” to create a double entendre.<sup>66</sup> The apostle could be saying that the spirit that drives a believer’s mind in the renewal process is the

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<sup>62</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 286.

<sup>63</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 286.

<sup>64</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 288.

<sup>65</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 305.

<sup>66</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 288.

Holy Spirit. Either way, translators see this spirit as the human spirit. To the second question it is best to see the mind as the object of the renewal.<sup>67</sup> This view is consistent with the parallel passage in Colossians 3 where, in verse 10, the new self “is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator.” To what end? So that the believer can freely live in true righteousness and holiness.

In light of this discussion of human dignity, Ephesians 4 is an extraordinary calling on a believer’s life. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God as described in Genesis 3:26-27. Yes, humans are an everlasting embodied-souls as described in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, but beyond all that Christ-followers can look more and more like Christ by putting off the old self, continually mortifying the old self, and put on the new self that is the image of Christ. The ethical lifestyle that Paul outlines in the succeeding chapters of Ephesians is only possible because of image-bearing and salvation. Thus, it describes an ethic that connects to the perfect humanity of Christ, an ethic that serves as the foundation for human dignity.

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<sup>67</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 289.

CHAPTER 3  
A HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL COMPARISON  
BETWEEN NON-BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHIES AND  
A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IN REGARD  
TO HUMAN DIGNITY

Since the establishment of the *imago Dei* doctrine in Genesis 1, the principle has come up against wide and varied opposition from fallen humanity. This chapter offers an historic look at some of the diverse opinions on what it means to be human and the consequences those views had on the dignity of humanity. This chapter will also look the practical biblical responses to these views. The purpose of this approach is to utilize the *imago Dei* at creation as a guide in proclaiming the glory of God by showing the unique purpose of humanity and present the eternal hope of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> By showing the truth of the *imago Dei* in contrast to the brokenness of non-biblical philosophies, the hope is to show truth in such a way that is will resonate with a person's *mannishness*. *Mannishness* is a term developed by the Francis Schaeffer to describe the fact that humans are radically unique and, deep down, know it to be true.<sup>2</sup> Contrasting the doctrine of the *imago Dei* with other prominent beliefs can speak to some of the universally binding principles that are clear to all humanity; principles that are rooted in creation.<sup>3</sup> Prayerfully, this approach will lead people to the truth that is only found in the person and work of Christ. Or, as C. S. Lewis described it, "When you know you are sick you will listen to the doctor. When you

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> R. Scott Smith, *In Search of Moral Knowledge* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 25.

have realized that our position is nearly desperate you will begin to understand what the Christians are talking about.”<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will begin with some of the religious practices and views of humanity of the Ancient Near East (ANE) and contrast them with the Hebrew teaching of image-bearing. The next section will address the ancient theistic dualism of Plato, Aristotle, the Gnostics, Irenaeus, and Augustine. Then, the chapter shifts to the secular dualism of Descartes and Kant, followed by a look at the modern sacred/secular divide of secular dualism and how it has affected modern day ethics pertaining to the human body, specifically the issue of abortion, sexuality, homosexuality, and transgenderism.

### **A Historical and Philosophical Comparison Between the Hebrew Worldview and the Ancient Religions of the Near East in Regard to Human Dignity**

Too often, the ancient civilizations that clashed with ancient Israel are treated more as background details in the study of Scripture. This is more an observation than a criticism. For centuries, little was known about these people groups outside the biblical narrative. But time and research have uncovered details that offer a deeper understanding into the conflict between the view of humanity established in the Pentateuch and belief systems of surrounding peoples of the ANE. Though there is an abundance of nuance within the religions of each civilization, a few common themes about their attitudes toward humanity were in sharp contrast to the Hebrew’s teaching of *imago Dei*.

One common theme was the devaluing of human life. Extreme examples are seen in the occasional practices of human sacrifice. Though there is significant debate as to whether human sacrifice was common in the ANE,<sup>5</sup> reports of human sacrifice are

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<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1943), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Rodney W. Stark, *Discovering God* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 108.

recorded in Scripture<sup>6</sup> and in some of the ancient histories from such writers as Herodotus.<sup>7</sup> Much more common was the exploitation of women. This was seen in conquest, in worship, and in slavery. One example is the way Sumer welcomed in the new year. It was done with a public sexual ceremony between the king and a woman.<sup>8</sup> The woman was exploited by the fact that the ceremony was designed to display the king's connection to the gods, specifically Ishtar, the goddess of war and sex,<sup>9</sup> while woman was nothing more than a public prop.

The purpose here is not to summarize the moral systems of Israel's ancient neighbors. Civilizations throughout time have treated people poorly. Instead, the greater purpose is to consider some reasons for the contrast between Israel's treatment of the individual and the way their contemporaries treated people. Rodney Stark offers one reason. He shares that morality and human dignity suffered from the fact that the religions of the ANE "lacked attractive doctrines concerning individual salvation. Since, with few exceptions, humans faced a miserable afterlife whether or not they had been virtuous, there was no compelling religious reward for virtue."<sup>10</sup> Henri Frankfort observes that the people of the ANE thought that the gods were capricious, inflicting calamity on the virtuous thus leading them to compose songs that "abound in confessions of guilt but ignore the sense

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the clearest references of human sacrifice in the Old Testament are found in 2 Kgs 3:27 where the king of Moab sacrifices his own son. Later in 2 Kgs 23:10 Josiah destroyed the idols to Molech in the Valley of Hinnom, that were used for child sacrifice. Lev 18:21 and 20:1-5 forbade the practice of child sacrifice, specifically the practice of sacrificing children to Molech.

<sup>7</sup> Denis D. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1991), 188.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 140.

<sup>9</sup> Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 296-97.

<sup>10</sup> Stark, *Discovering God*, 93.

of sin; they are vibrant with despair but not contrition—with regret but not repentance.”<sup>11</sup>  
ANE religions offered little intrinsic motivation to be moral.

In contrast, Israel believed the Scriptures that taught that all of humanity was uniquely created in God’s image and elevated above the rest of creation (Gen 1:26-27, 5:1-2; Pss 8:3-6, 139:14). Anthony Hoekema offers a powerful description of image-bearing:

When one looks at a human being, one ought to see in him or her as a certain reflection of God. . . . In the creation of man, God revealed himself in a unique way, by making someone who was a kind of a mirror image of himself. No higher honor could have been given to man than the privilege of being an image of the God who made him.<sup>12</sup>

Humans are the pinnacle of creation. Furthermore, the Israelites believed the Scriptures that said image-bearers are ensouled bodies created to live eternally. Yet, they also understood why humanity suffers and causes so much suffering; they understood that all people are born into sin (Ps 51:5) and have wicked hearts (Jer 17:9). However, they also believed the teachings that declares that God offered salvation for all of humanity (Gen 3:15-16), redemption for transgressions (Pss 51:1-19, 103:12; Isa 43:25). and a promise to always be with them (Gen 17:8; Isa 41:10-13).

One other profound contrast between the religious teachings of the Israelites and their ANE neighbors is that each of the aforementioned Hebrew beliefs applied to every person in every generation young and old, rich and poor, male and female. Conversely, Israel’s neighboring nations used religion as a form of power and control. In short, ANE religion was for the privileged and powerful. In Sumer, only priests and rulers participated in temple worship and rituals and only the privileged could see the gods and find blessing<sup>13</sup> In Egypt, the priesthood was a position that one was born into. The wealth

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<sup>11</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 279.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1986), 67.

<sup>13</sup> Stark, *Discovering God*, 75.

of the Egyptian priests was surpassed by only that of the Pharaoh.<sup>14</sup> As for the Pharaoh, he was viewed as an incarnation of the god *Horus*.<sup>15</sup> Frankfort concludes that the Egyptians believed that Pharaoh alone bore the image of the gods.<sup>16</sup> Peter Gentry summarized the ANE view of “the image of God” as being about rulership and sonship. The rulers were offspring of the gods and the gods left them in charge.<sup>17</sup> There was a similar view of the king in Sumer. Though they did not deify their leader as the Egyptians did, they viewed the kingship as descending from heaven to give people divine direction.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout all the ancient world, human dignity for all people was rare. It was so rare that historian Kyle Harper asserts, “Apart from the Christian Scriptures, classical civilization lacked the concept of human dignity.”<sup>19</sup> There are glimpses of human dignity in the writings of certain philosophers, but apart from the scriptural teachings of image-bearing and the transforming truth of the Christian gospel those human philosophies are poor alternatives to Christianity’s noble view of humanity.<sup>20</sup>

### **A Historical and Philosophical Comparison Between the Biblical Worldview and Early Versions of Dualism in Regard to Human Dignity**

Western philosophy experienced its birth in Greece. In a few generations, men with ideas concerning the human mind, body, and spirit began a revolution in thought that

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<sup>14</sup> Stark, *Discovering God*, 73.

<sup>15</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 148-49.

<sup>16</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 150.

<sup>17</sup> Peter J. Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 27.

<sup>18</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 237.

<sup>19</sup> Kyle Harper, “Christianity and the Roots of Human Dignity in Late Antiquity,” in *Christianity and Freedom*, vol. 1, *Historical Perspectives*, ed. Timothy Shah and Allan D. Hertzke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 127.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Darling, *The Dignity Revolution* (New York: Good Book, 2018), 20.

still impacts the world today. As John Frame put it, “Western thought had two roots: the Greek and the biblical.”<sup>21</sup> The modern discussion of ethics and human dignity begins with the interplay between Greek philosophy and the biblical concept of image-bearing. Highlighting this interplay is Plato and Aristotle, the most prominent philosophers of the Western heritage.<sup>22</sup> Much of Plato’s philosophy was a response to the naturalists of his day. He rejected the relativistic, materialistic, atheistic, and hedonistic philosophies of earlier Greek thinkers such as Democritus and Epicurus, as well as the naturalism of thinkers like Pythagoras.<sup>23</sup> However, Plato’s genius is seen in the way he brought former ideas together to create a broader way at looking at the world.<sup>24</sup> One of Plato’s most important contributions to the discussion of human dignity is his theory of Forms. Essentially, Forms are the perfect, immaterial, abstract objects that serve as the foundation for reality. Plato believed that our senses were limited and that, because of Forms, humanity has an intrinsic sense of physical things, such as chairness and treeness, conceptual ideas, such as squareness and numbers, and ethical matters, such as justice, virtue, and goodness.<sup>25</sup> These Forms are immutable universals that humanity ought to discover through the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.<sup>26</sup> This meant that Plato believed in a fundamental dualism. Metaphysically there are two worlds—the imperfect, ever-changing, temporal world of particular things, and the perfect, unchanging, eternal world

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<sup>21</sup> John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015), 46.

<sup>22</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 59.

<sup>23</sup> Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 61-62.

<sup>24</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 63-64.

<sup>25</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 64.

<sup>26</sup> Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 69.

of Forms.<sup>27</sup> Anthropologically, he saw humans are immortal souls that live a life on earth in mortal physical bodies.<sup>28</sup>

Plato's ideas of the Forms clearly rejected the naturalistic and materialistic view of reality. Moreover, he taught that a life after death offered rewards and punishments for deeds done in this life.<sup>29</sup> Plato also believed that *good* was identical to the nature of God. Something was not good simply because God said so. Nor was something Good independent from God and God was compelled to call it Good. Instead, Good is a natural outflow of God's nature.<sup>30</sup> However, Plato breaks away from biblical claims in a number of ways. His views of God were ambiguous, and he rejected the concept of divine revelation, meaning he had no way of having anything more than an ambiguous God. He believed that truth was discoverable within the soul;<sup>31</sup> thus, enlightenment was found in introspection. Also, his view of human nature was much different than the biblical account. He believed that all people naturally sought virtue and all humanity needs to become virtuous is proper education.<sup>32</sup> Sin nature did not have a place in Plato's worldview. Lastly, Plato's God had no concern or connection to the physical world. This is in sharp contrast to the biblical description of God who directly created the world, personally communicates to his creation, and even took on physical form in the incarnation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 62.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *In Search of Moral Knowledge*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Plato, *Republic 6.501b-506a*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, ed. S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995), 359-63.

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Euthyphro 9b-15e*, in Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, 98-105.

<sup>31</sup> Collin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 1:34.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *In Search of Moral Knowledge*, 46.

<sup>33</sup> M. James Sawyer, *A World Split Apart: Dualism in Western Culture and Theology* (San Leandro, CA: Sacred Saga Press, 2014), 38.

The second key voice of ancient western thought is Plato's most famous student, Aristotle. Aristotle's most important contribution to the discussion of human dignity is his holistic view of human beings. Aristotle joined Plato in his rejection of relativistic, materialistic, atheistic, and hedonistic philosophies. However, he also rejected Plato's version of dualism. Aristotle believed in the body and the soul, but he did not view them as two profoundly different substances. Aristotle brought a more unified understanding to a human being's material and immaterial self.<sup>34</sup> He felt that the body was rooted in the soul and justified this by describing the fact that humans go through constant changes. People grow taller, their brains develop, their status changes from single to married, unemployed to employed. Yet, in all of this constant flux, a person never ceases to be themselves. According to Aristotle, there is a unity of self, and it is grounded in the soul.<sup>35</sup> When it comes to notions of human dignity, Aristotle described human souls as possessing reason that helps humans pursue objective truth and virtue.<sup>36</sup> He developed a practical system for living virtuously, developing character, bettering the greater community, and finding individual significance.<sup>37</sup> Aristotle's ideas were monumental when it comes to the understanding of what it means to be human. For centuries, his ideas have stood up to the naturalistic view that humans are merely organic products of chance. Yet, like Plato, Aristotle's teachings fall short compared to the biblical model of image-bearing. For all their relevance, these pillars of western thought do not offer a strong foundation for human dignity. To begin, both treated God as separate from creation without any interaction. Without interaction, there is no personal God, and if there is no personal God, then there

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<sup>34</sup> Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 100.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.3-4, trans. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, in Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, 607-10.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 1:49.

<sup>37</sup> Smith, *In Search of Moral Knowledge*, 54.

is no transcendent source of love.<sup>38</sup> Instead, both tried to derive love and moral responsibility from nature. And, as David Hume states, one cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*.<sup>39</sup> They thought that one finds truth, morals, and meaning in reason while admitting that their reason is fallible.<sup>40</sup> And the ultimate reason they fell short was because of their insistence on autonomy.<sup>41</sup> Without the divine objectivity supplied by Scripture, all a person is left with is their own personal views, which are always an inadequate foundation. For all their revolutionary ideas and profundity, they fell short in supplying the foundation necessary to explain a transcendent source of love or morals, the reason behind pain and suffering, or any ultimate hope beyond this earthly existence.

For over the past two millennia, the dualism founded in Greek philosophy continues to have a powerful impact on civilization. That impact includes heretical teachings that have crept into the church. In a discussion of humanity and human dignity these ideas have swung the pendulum to an unhealthy view of the immaterial. To quote M. James Sawyer, “This dualism has severe consequences for both theology and piety. It denied the importance of the created world and placed Christian hope in a spiritual heaven after death rather than in a bodily resurrection.”<sup>42</sup> While the secularist is rightfully accused of glorifying the material reality at the detriment or total denial of the immaterial reality, while the church, at times, has heretically done a reversal and elevated the spiritual at the harm of the physical. Examples of this distortion appear throughout church history. One such example in early church history is Gnosticism.

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<sup>38</sup> John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1995), 259.

<sup>39</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 76.

<sup>40</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 80-81.

<sup>41</sup> Frame, *Cornelius Van Til*, 237.

<sup>42</sup> Sawyer, *A World Split Apart*, 19-20.

In some ways Gnosticism functioned similarly to the exclusive religions of the ANE. The term *Gnosticism* comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge” or “insight.”<sup>43</sup> Though there were numerous variations of Gnosticism, the belief system acted like a mystery religion where secret knowledge was imparted to followers through mystic means.<sup>44</sup> Summarily, Gnostics taught that (1) God was so transcendent that he was unknowable, (2) there was no direct communication from God,<sup>45</sup> (3) the material world is completely corrupt, and (4) Jesus never had a material body.<sup>46</sup> In denying the incarnation of Christ they viewed Christ as an spiritual manifestation that only appeared to be human but was really a spirit who entered the world temporarily to bring enlightenment then returned to his higher state of being.<sup>47</sup> This meant they denied the bodily crucifixion of Christ. Simply put, they viewed Creation as the Fall and physical matter as the true source of evil.<sup>48</sup> There are serious doctrinal ramifications to these teachings and their refutation became a major thrust for writings of the Early Church Fathers who saw these teachings as undermining the gospel by replacing it with an arrogant, elitist mythology.<sup>49</sup>

The Early Church Father most associated with the refutation of Gnosticism is Irenaeus of Smyrna. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John. In his teachings, Irenaeus strove to consistently connect to church traditions set forth by

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<sup>43</sup> Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 1:81.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, 1:80.

<sup>45</sup> Sawyer, *A World Split Apart*, 9-10.

<sup>46</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 39.

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas T. Wright, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 89.

<sup>49</sup> Sawyer, *A World Split Apart*, 11.

the apostles.<sup>50</sup> Irenaeus found Gnosticism to be absurd and self-refuting. He argued that Gnosticism claimed to be transcendent and far beyond human understanding, yet the Gnostics somehow knew the teachings. He also showed the absurdity of their claim of needing teachers when receiving truth through enlightenment.<sup>51</sup> In regard to the physical body, dignity of the individual is lost. In the face of Gnostic teachings, second century church father Justin Martyr wrote,

These persons seem to be ignorant of the whole work of God. . . . For does not the word say, “Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness?” What kind of man? Manifestly He means fleshly man. . . . It is evident, therefore, that man made in the image of God was of flesh. Is it not, then, absurd to say, that the flesh made by God in his own image is contemptible and worth nothing?<sup>52</sup>

Overall, the church’s response to Gnosticism was to dig deeper and develop reasoned systematic and biblical theologies. The Church Fathers differed in many ways in their views of humanity. Nevertheless, each one upheld the biblical account of Creation, in which God made humanity in His image, in perfection and in relationship. Each one believed in the Fall, giving a reason for pain and suffering, as well as proof of free will. These teachings formed doctrines that offer a foundation for the dignity of humanity in both the material and the immaterial as image-bearers of God.<sup>53</sup>

As philosophy transitions into a more secular age, philosophers will continue to seek answers for human dignity that are already found in the Bible. As John Killner describes it, secular philosophers try to explain human dignity “in non-religious terms a

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<sup>50</sup> Richard C. Gamble, “Christianity from the Early Church Fathers to Charlemagne,” in *Revolutions in Worldview*, ed. W. Andrew Hoffecker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 113.

<sup>51</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 94.

<sup>52</sup> St. Justin Martyr, “The Dignity of the Body,” accessed January 19, 2021, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/teachings/st-justin-martyr-the-dignity-of-the-body-205>.

<sup>53</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 322-23.

persuasive concept that had long before come to light through Biblical revelation.”<sup>54</sup>

Philosophers will continue to borrow from the foundation of the Christian worldview while ignoring the fact that their worldview is built on sinking sand.

### **A Historical and Philosophical Comparison Between the Biblical Worldview and Secular Dualism in Regard to Human Dignity**

For centuries, dualism dominated the philosophical landscape when discussing what it means to be human. Plato, Aristotle, and the Gnostics brought a wide range of views, each one flawed and found wanting, but each was grounded in the concept that there was some sort of absolute. Though not part of this study, it should be noted that medieval theologians, such as St. Anselm and Thomas Aquinas, also made crucial contributions to the understanding of human dignity that have shaped theology and philosophy. However, much changed with the beginning of secular dualism—the belief that there is a clear separation between mind and matter.<sup>55</sup> Secular dualism finds its roots in the writings of René Descartes. Descartes wanted to rescue philosophy from skepticism but could not embrace the idea of divine authority either. As he struggled with this dilemma, all he was left with was doubt. Then, Descartes believed that the very act of doubting convinced him of one indisputable truth—he existed. He summed up this discovery with his famous phrase *cogito, ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am.”).<sup>56</sup> According to Descartes, there must be a reality that is separate from the physical world. That something was not subject to the mechanism of matter. However, the ramifications of Descartes’ conclusion opened the door for a human-centered philosophy that no longer saw knowledge as objectively true; instead, knowledge is authenticated by autonomous

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<sup>54</sup> John F. Killner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2015), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 102.

<sup>56</sup> René Decartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 19.

human reasoning<sup>57</sup> or, as Catherine LaCunga creatively described Descartes' theory, "the self can be a self by itself."<sup>58</sup>

Descartes used his line of reasoning as an argument for the existence of God. In his mind, only God could have caused him to have such an idea.<sup>59</sup> The irony of Descartes' philosophy is that it finds its roots in Augustine. Centuries earlier, St. Augustine struggled with the skeptics of his day who questioned any knowledge apart from experience. He came to the conclusion that his faith in God must precede his reason, thus creating the phrase, *credo ut intelligum*, "I believe in order that I might understand."<sup>60</sup> Augustine was careful not to promote a rudimentary form of fideism.<sup>61</sup> Instead, starting from Plato's Forms, he espoused the idea that God created the Forms. He also taught that God created humans in his image, which includes our rational minds. Augustine added that God continually aids the souls of people in their quest for knowledge.<sup>62</sup> This work of God makes objective truth accessible to humanity.<sup>63</sup> Augustine went on and tied Plato's Forms to the apostle John's description of the *Logos* and concluded that God divinely

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<sup>57</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 179.

<sup>58</sup> Catherine M. LaCunga, *God for Us* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 251.

<sup>59</sup> Decartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 70-71.

<sup>60</sup> Augustine first made this statement when commenting on John 7:17. The full statement is, "For understanding is the recompense of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand so that you may believe, but believe so that you may understand." St. Augustine, "Tractates on the Gospel of John, 29.6," in *Patristic Bible Commentary*, accessed September 22, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/gospel-of-john-commentary/st-augustine-on-john/augustine-on-john-7>.

<sup>61</sup> Gamble, "Christianity from the Early Church Fathers to Charlemagne," 121.

<sup>62</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1982), 81.

<sup>63</sup> Gamble, "Christianity from the Early Church Fathers to Charlemagne," 121.

illuminates the rational, intellectual minds of his image bearers so that they can comprehend absolute truth that transcends human's individual subjectivity.<sup>64</sup>

Descartes embraced Augustine's rationalism; a rationalism found in doubt. However, he rejected his teaching that human reason finds its source in divine illumination that comes from God. Descartes believed in God and even thought his philosophy provided another proof for God, but he claimed the human mind was self-sufficient, thus making a path toward a philosophy that was completely secular.<sup>65</sup> What Augustine viewed as a journey toward the mind of God, Descartes saw as a journey toward self-sufficiency.<sup>66</sup>

About 150 years later, German philosopher Immanuel Kant moved beyond the concept of self-sufficiency and introduced the world of western philosophy to the notion of complete autonomy.<sup>67</sup> For years, Kant quietly labored as a university professor until empiricism challenged his paradigm. For years, he had comfortably accepted the rationalism espoused by Augustine and Descartes, but the writings of David Hume shook him from his "dogmatic slumber."<sup>68</sup> Kant resolved his dilemma by adopting the idea that his senses supplied him with "raw data" that his mind could work with. His mind filtered the "raw data" and developed a personal understanding and a personal experience.<sup>69</sup> Kant did not think that knowledge came from a divine source, nor did he believe that knowledge came from one's sense experience. Instead, he synthesized rationalism and empiricism,

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<sup>64</sup> Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 82-84.

<sup>65</sup> Hoffecker, "Enlightenments and Awakenings: The Beginning of Modern Culture Wars," in Hoffecker, *Revolutions in Worldview*, 254-55.

<sup>66</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 70.

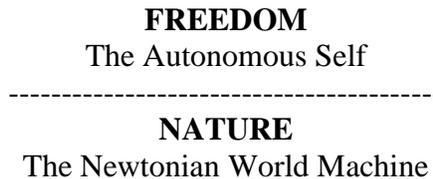
<sup>67</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 76.

<sup>68</sup> Hoffecker, "Enlightenments and Awakenings," 264.

<sup>69</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillian and Co., 1929), 67-82.

while eliminating revelation as having a role in knowledge.<sup>70</sup> Kant's new philosophy is dramatically illustrated by the closing lines of William Ernest Henley's "Invictus": "It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate; I am the master of my soul."<sup>71</sup> What Kant focused on more than anything else was a personal freedom and the human consciousness as the center of reality and the source of creativity and morality.<sup>72</sup>

Nancy Pearcey describes this view as a form of secular dualism with two stories. In the upper story is one's personal autonomous self. In the lower story is the natural world. As a visual she pictured these views as such:



The lower story is the deterministic, physical world, while the upper story is the world of freedom where the individual makes his/her own personal choices and where one finds morality.<sup>73</sup>

Kant was convinced that the human mind had rational structures called categories that anchor the mind and organize the "raw data" supplied by the senses.<sup>74</sup> Kant never states the source of these foundational categories. He insisted that these categories exist in the human mind and are essential to interpreting the world but nowhere

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<sup>70</sup> Hoffecker, "Enlightenments and Awakenings," 264.

<sup>71</sup> William E. Henley, "Invictus," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, ed. Julia Reidhead (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 1642-43.

<sup>72</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 164.

<sup>73</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 104.

<sup>74</sup> Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 264.

in his writings does he describe where this rationality comes from. He could have embraced Augustine’s view and held to the view that all humans are created by a rational God who created humans in his image, which includes rational minds. However, if he espoused Augustine’s view, it would have ramifications about theism and morality that Kant sought to avoid in the name of human autonomy.<sup>75</sup>

Kant’s two-story view of humanity was revolutionary. Kant himself called his theory a “Copernican Revolution.” Up to that point thinkers assumed the mind adapted to the world. Kant reversed the order and theorized that all objects are adapted in the mind.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Kant made the mind the source of ultimate reality as it becomes the creator of reality.<sup>77</sup> Pearcey points out, “Today’s postmodernism takes Kant’s divide to its logical conclusion. It treats the material world—including the body—largely as a construction of the human mind.”<sup>78</sup> Applying Kant’s two-story theory to the human body, Pearcey pictures the postmodern body/person divide this way:

**AUTONOMOUS SELF**

Free to impose its own interpretations on the body

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**PHYSICAL BODY**

Raw material with no intrinsic identity or purpose<sup>79</sup>

This divide can be applied to current ethical views concerning the body and personhood. Three examples to consider are abortion, homosexuality, and transgenderism. Applied to the issue of abortion, the body/person divide looks like this:

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<sup>75</sup> Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 266-67.

<sup>76</sup> Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 260.

<sup>77</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 164.

<sup>78</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 165.

<sup>79</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 165.

## **AUTONOMOUS SELF**

The worth and personhood of the unborn is determined by an arbitrary standard

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## **PHYSICAL BODY**

Raw unborn material with no intrinsic identity or purpose

The physical body of the unborn child is viewed as raw organic material that has the potential of becoming a person but has not reach personhood. In January 1973, the United States Supreme Court decided the case *Roe v. Wade*, legalizing abortion in the United States. Soon after the decision, one of the earliest voices who recognized the body/person divide in abortion was Francis Schaeffer. Schaeffer wrote, “By the ruling of the Supreme Court, the unborn baby is not counted as a person. . . . In regard to the fetus, the courts have arbitrarily separated ‘aliveness’ from ‘personhood.’”<sup>80</sup> He recognized that once life stopped being the standard for personhood any arbitrary standard could be put in its place.

Months after the *Roe v. Wade* ruling, famed science fiction writer Philip K. Dick mocked the arbitrary nature of abortion, and subsequently *Roe v. Wade*, with a published short story entitled, “The Pre-Persons.” In his story, children lived in fear of the “abortion truck” which, upon the request of their parents, would take children under the age twelve and have them terminated. Why twelve? According to the protagonist’s mother, “Congress had inaugurated a simple test to determine the approximate age at which the soul entered the body: the ability to formulate higher math like algebra.”<sup>81</sup> In Dick’s dark humor he illustrated the subjective nature of defining personhood apart from the body, or any other objective reality. By determining life by any means other than the living body, both the immaterial person and the material body are stripped of their intrinsic worth.

However, both Scripture and medical science clearly show that unborn children are persons. In Exodus 21:22-25, one of the specific laws God gave Moses speaks to the

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<sup>80</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), 223.

<sup>81</sup> Philip K. Dick, “Pre Persons,” accessed January 31, 2021, [https://oramus.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Dick\\_2.pdf](https://oramus.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Dick_2.pdf), 355.

endangered life of an unborn child. According to the law, if two men are quarreling in the presence of the pregnant woman, and she or her unborn child are harmed in the conflict the guilty party receives the same harm, including “life for life.”<sup>82</sup> The life of the unborn child is seen as equal to that of the pregnant woman and the quarreling men. Second, in Psalm 51, David is begging for God’s mercy after his sin with Bathsheba. As he is confessing his sin, he says, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51:5). Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, David describes his sinfulness as extending back to the womb. This means that David thought of himself as a distinct person, with a sin nature, while he was in the womb.<sup>83</sup> Third, Judges 13:3-5 describes Samson as a Nazirite while he was in his mother’s womb. In the passage, the Angel of the Lord tells Samson’s mother that she will conceive and have a son and that “the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines” (Judg 13:5). Just as David must have been a person to be a pre-born sinner, so Samson must have been a pre-born person to be a Nazirite.<sup>84</sup>

What does science say about the unborn child? Biological researchers have determined that at conception the unborn child has distinct genetic identity that is clearly different from the mother’s genetic identity. Right down to the cellular level the child is a separate person from the mother.<sup>85</sup> The unborn child is not part of the mother’s body, negating the “my body, my choice” argument. To forsake the teachings of Scripture and the facts discovered through scientific inquiry leaves one with nothing but arbitrary standards that devalue human dignity and destroy unborn life. Human dignity issues are

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<sup>82</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Ethics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 568-69.

<sup>83</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 567-68.

<sup>84</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 723.

<sup>85</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 572.

not necessarily religious issues. They are about defending the rights of all humans, including the pre-born.

A second ethical area in regard to the body is same-sex relations. In respects to homosexuality, the body/person divide looks like this:

**AUTONOMOUS SELF**

Sexual orientation is determined by personal feelings and desires

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**PHYSICAL BODY**

Raw sexual material with no intrinsic worth or purpose

Before looking at the particular issue of homosexuality, it is constructive to look at the original purpose of sexuality. When God created Adam and Eve, he created them in perfect sexual and relational unity. In the Garden of Eden, they were “both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). Later it says that “Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain” (Gen 4:1). The Hebrew word translated as “knew” is *yāḏá*. Often, the word refers to knowing or understanding something, but in this context the idea of knowing someone is connected to unified sexual intercourse. Thus, the biblical language points to a deep relational unity between a man and a woman.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the biblical sex ethic is based on humanity’s design. God is triune and functions in perfect love and unity.<sup>87</sup> As his image-bearers, humans are designed to be relational, and the relationship designed for the most intimate unity is between a husband and a wife. That unity is designed to bring pleasure, bring about life, and generate the most intimate depths of human love. Homosexuality, as well as any other form of sexual sin, betrays that design.

One New Testament passage that directly speaks to homosexuality is Romans 1:24-27. In the passage, Paul describes homosexual sin as giving over to desires that

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<sup>86</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 707.

<sup>87</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent: The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 1:289-90.

dishonor oneself and ultimately lead to death. Paul intentionally places his thoughts on homosexuality in the context of natural theology. He lays out an argument that is extremely effective because of its simplicity. Paul does not use Old Testament law to prove his point. He uses common sense. In verse 24, when Paul talks about “dishonoring their bodies,” he is referencing the fact that certain parts of the body were designed for obvious functions. Males have certain organs and females have certain organs and these organs are complimentary.<sup>88</sup> One does not need to know what is written in Genesis or the book of Leviticus to understand the purposes of body parts and what dishonor misuse of those parts bring. As Paul states in verse 20, these things are “clearly perceived.” In the beginning chapters of Romans, homosexuality plays a minor role in the large discussion of willful rebellion, yet same-sex relations effectively illustrate people’s propensity to rebel against their design.

What biblical ethics have to offer is a higher view of sexuality that does not separate emotions from physical pleasure, is based upon respect for human design, is more fulfilling, and offers a deeper sense of dignity.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, as a person senses his rebellion and the futility of his sin he will, prayerfully, recognize God “forbearance and patience [and recognize] that God’s kindness is meant to lead [him] to repentance” (Rom 2:4).

A third ethical area concerning the body is transgenderism. Transgenderism ought to be viewed differently from homosexuality because it is not necessarily sexual. As Henry Benjamin stated in the introduction of his ground-breaking book *Transsexual Phenomenon*, “Gender is above, and sex is below the belt.”<sup>90</sup> Transgenderism is identifying

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<sup>88</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 254.

<sup>89</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 157.

<sup>90</sup> Harry Benjamin, *Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: Julian Press, 1966), 3.

with a gender, expressing a gender, and/or behaving like a gender that is different from the gender one was assigned at birth.<sup>91</sup> It is somewhat similar to Gnosticism. Andrew Walker points out, “Gnosticism emphasizes that a person’s self-awareness is different than and more important than their physical bodies.”<sup>92</sup> Transgenderism functions in the same way. The individual is focused on what they feel like with no regard to their physical body. Also, as with Gnosticism, one might even despise their physical body. With that dichotomy in mind, the transgender body/person divide looks like this:

**AUTONOMOUS SELF**

Gender is determined by personal feelings and desires

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**PHYSICAL BODY**

Raw material with no intrinsic worth or purpose

Gender identity does not exist in any physiological sense. There is no legal or medical criteria required. The only “reality” of transgenderism is that which exists in the mind of the individual making the claim.<sup>93</sup> Transgendered men do not become women, they become feminized men. Nor do transgendered women become men, they become masculinized women.<sup>94</sup>

What answers does a biblical worldview have to offer? First, recognize that transgenderism fosters rigid stereotypes. Instead of celebrating the diversity of human expression it represses the human spirit into predetermined boxes. Second, encourage people to love the body they are in. A proper kind of self-love comes from accepting God’s love. God created us as his image-bearers, male and female. God created us all with

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<sup>91</sup> J. Alan Branch, *Affirming God’s Image* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 23.

<sup>92</sup> Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate* (New York: Good Book, 2017), 25.

<sup>93</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 197.

<sup>94</sup> Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 74-75.

intrinsic value and dignity.<sup>95</sup> Third, compassionately enter into someone else's pain with the confidence that the forbearance and kindness of God leads to repentance<sup>96</sup> (Rom 2:4).

Returning to the stated goal, the purpose of this discussion is to utilize the *imago Dei* at creation as a guide to proclaim the glory of God by showing the unique purpose of humanity and to present the eternal hope of the gospel.<sup>97</sup> These issues are barriers to the gospel and have been for too long. People are constantly being told that the Scriptures are hurtful and full of hateful negativity. On the contrary, Christianity alone gives value and meaning to the body as a good gift from God above.<sup>98</sup> Let our theology of humankind also connect hurting people to the gospel.

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<sup>95</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 200.

<sup>96</sup> Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 101.

<sup>97</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 15.

<sup>98</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 261.

CHAPTER 4  
DETAILS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

**Overview**

The purpose of the project was to present the truth that all humans are image-bearers of God, contrast that teaching with non-biblical perspectives of humanity, and apply those views to current ethical issues pertaining to the human body. The focus of the project was to show that because humans are image bearers, they have intrinsic value and that only the ethical views from a Christian worldview offer a clear foundation for human dignity. This contrasts with secular views that have evolved through dualistic philosophies. The project was a seven-session curriculum designed for high school students and was taught in ten class periods to the high school juniors of Twin Tiers Christian Academy in Breesport, New York from June 2, 2021 to June 15, 2021.

The impetus of the project stemmed from observing the struggles of TTCA students who grappled with contemporary ethical issues such as abortion, sexuality, homosexuality, and transgenderism. Since these issues deal directly with the human body and the issue of dignity, it seemed prudent to develop a curriculum of human dignity directly related to the body and the theological premise of image-bearing. The student struggles were in two general areas. First, they struggled with embracing the Christian ethic on these issues. When the world calls the Christian ethic intolerant and unloving it seems counter-intuitive to adopt Christian beliefs as their own ethical view. Their second struggle was connecting Christian ethics to the gospel. The general thought was, “See them saved then deal with the ethical questions.” To my TTCA students it seemed that the Christian ethic created barriers between the unbeliever and the gospel. Therefore, the curriculum was designed to answer both struggles and to do so in three stages. Stage 1,

on a theological and philosophical level, the curriculum began with the teachings of *imago Dei* as the theological foundation for Christian body ethics and human dignity. Moreover, *imago Dei* was contrasted with some of the historic philosophies of dualism and the current concept of the sacred/secular divide. Stage 2, on an apologetic level, the curriculum delineated a Christian worldview on the body issues of abortion, sexuality, homosexuality, and transgenderism and contrasted them with the secular views of today's culture. The goal was to show that only the Christian ethic offers a true, consistent path toward human dignity. Stage 3, on an evangelistic level, the curriculum sought to engender a sense of compassion and teach the students how to use human dignity issues as bridges to reach others with the gospel.

## **Development Stage**

### **The Basic Design of the Curriculum**

The basic design of the lessons came from Lawrence Richards's four step Hook, Book, Look, and Took found in his book *Creative Bible Teaching*.<sup>1</sup> The Hook step is a creative introduction that develops immediate interest in the lesson. The Book step is the teaching material. The Look step is an invitation to apply the lesson to one's thinking and life. The Took step is a call to apply the lesson by doing something as a proper response to the teaching. The summary statements for each session will not break down all four of the steps. Instead, the summaries will focus on the Book step, teaching material and Took step, and call to apply the lesson, thus connecting the big idea to a call to action.

### **The Curriculum Survey**

To evaluate the sessions, a survey tool was developed. The survey was a mixed-methods survey. To examine theological and ethical beliefs, quantitative multiple-choice questions asked the students their views on humanity, abortion, sexuality,

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1970), 107-11.

homosexuality, and transgenderism. To examine their understanding on engaging peers on these issues and using them as a bridge to the gospel, qualitative short answer questions were asked.<sup>2</sup> The SBTS Ethics Committee reviewed the survey and approved its use. The survey was given prior to the teaching of the curriculum to assess the students' views. The survey was given again at the end of the teaching sessions to see if the students changed their views and understanding. Because the students were minors, a consent form was developed to gain permission from their parents so that the students could take the survey and participate in the research project.<sup>3</sup> The class was made up of fourteen students, and all fourteen students gained permission and participated in the project, thus surpassing the stated goal of having at least 80 percent participation. However, one student was not present for the pre-curriculum survey or the first session. Therefore, only thirteen of the fourteen students participated in the study. All thirteen participating students were present for every session, meaning that the participation percentage was 92.9 percent.

### **Summary of Session 1**

In session 1 the goals were to empower the students to identify characteristics of image-bearing and to see how these characteristics lead to intrinsic human dignity. This was accomplished by teaching the theology of *imago Dei* that is laid out in Genesis 1 and 2. Second, those teachings were contrasted with the religious practices of some of the ancient near eastern (ANE) nations that neighbored Old Testament Israel. From the Genesis account, six descriptions and two responsibilities of image-bearing were discussed. The students saw that, as image-bearers, humans are relational, eternal, and immaterial with the ability to think, demonstrate free will, and express moral

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1.

responsibility. The students also saw that God tasked his image-bearers with the responsibility to steward creation and to thrive by being fruitful and multiplying.

This theology was contrasted with the ANE nations of the day that used religion as a tool of power and oppression. ANE religious systems only viewed rulers as image-bearers or, in some cases, gods. The rulers were empowered by privileged religious leaders. These rulers and religious leaders never shared their power, nor did they offer much hope in the eternal. The teachings of *imago Dei* were much more than a dry theology to the ancient Israelites. Genesis 1 and 2 offered a true foundation for dignity and purpose. The Genesis teaching of *imago Dei* also provided inspiration for moral behavior and hope for eternity. The session concluded with the students being tasked with creating an acronym to help them remember the six descriptions of image-bearing that would serve as the foundation for the study.

## **Summary of Session 2**

In session 2 the aim was to help students identify three historical versions of dualism and assess how dualism has developed the modern-day philosophy of the sacred-secular divide. The first version discussed was Aristotelian dualism. The discussion focused on Aristotle's opposition to the atheistic materialists of his day and his theory that humans are both material and immaterial. His argument, called the Unity of Self, stated that the physical aspects of a person are constantly changing but a person's identity does not change; therefore, identity cannot be rooted in the material self but the immaterial self. Even though Aristotle's argument was an insightful observation of God's natural revelation, his philosophy lacked any connection to the Creator.

The second version discussed was Cartesian dualism, formulated by French philosopher René Descartes. As with Aristotle, Descartes stood in opposition to atheistic materialism and believed humans were both material and immaterial beings. He concluded that humans are much more than a physical entity. He saw his existence, personhood, and identity all sourced in his immaterial thinking, thus summarizing his

philosophy with the phrase, “I think, therefore, I am.” This was similar to Augustine’s view that humans are, by nature, rational thinking beings. However, Augustine stated that the source of human reason is found in divine illumination. Descartes rejected that notion, proposing that reason, personhood, and identity were all found in the independent, self-reliant mind.

The third version discussed was Kantian Dualism, expressed in the works of German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Taking Descartes’ philosophy one step further, Kant said that the individual’s mind was the source of personal truth, making truth something that one created, not discovered. This radical autonomy has become the driving force behind much of today’s modern thought, as seen in the sacred/secular divide. The sacred/secular divide is a philosophy that divides truth between observable facts and subjective personal truths. When applied to ethics, this prevailing worldview says that a person has the liberty to do something and has the autonomy to call it ethical. It supports the notion that something “may be true for you but not true for me.”

Those views were evaluated in light of James 1:14-16. In those verses, James shows the reader that sin always begins as a desire in the heart and always presents itself as something it is not (1:15-16). This is because everyone has certain proclivities toward certain sins. The sacred/secular divide deceptively masks one’s sinful tendencies, which leads to people justifying their sin. However, this often leads to a loss of human dignity.

At the end of the lesson, the students were called on to prayerfully evaluate their own heart and ask the difficult question, “Is there some sin in my life that I justify because I am being deceived?” Due to the lengthy nature of the session, it was divided into two separate class periods.

### **Summary of Session 3**

Session 3 transitioned to the apologetic task of applying the *imago Dei* principles to specific ethical issues concerning the human body. Session 3’s topic was abortion. In session 3, the aim was to help students see the dignity of the unborn as being

fully-human image-bearers of God and how the sacred/secular divide demeans the dignity of unborn life. The lesson focused on both biblical and scientific arguments. Biblically, the session looked at Exodus 21:22-25 where unborn life was given equal value to that of an adult under the Old Testament Law. The session also highlighted two places where humanity related to conception: (1) Judges 13:3-5 where Samson was called a Nazerite while still in the womb and (2) Psalm 51:5 where David spoke of being conceived in sin. Scientifically, the session concentrated on the fact that, at conception, genetic identity is fully formed and unique from the mother, thus weakening the “my body, my choice” argument. Lastly, the lesson looked at the arbitrary nature of the sacred/secular divide and the defining of personhood at any other time apart from conception. In reflection, the students were instructed to contemplate these ideas, imagine a situation where a friend was considering an abortion, and formulating a compassionate response to that friend using some of the ideas presented in the session.

#### **Summary of Session 4**

Session 4 applied the *imago Dei* principles to the topic of sexuality. The aim of the session was to help students identify a biblical understanding of sexuality as image-bearers of God and compare that view with secular views of modern culture. Using the Hebrew word *yada*, translated “to know,” the session’s foundational *imago Dei* principle was that humans are relational. *Yada* presents sex as a beautiful and intense act of intimacy designed as a physical and spiritual connection between one man and one woman. It is also the joyful means by which image-bearers fulfill their responsibility of filling the earth. This was contrasted by sacred/secular view that divides sex into a physical act devoid of intrinsic meaning and autonomous personal desires found the mind. The lesson also looked at certain outcomes that come from this low view of sex: (1) objectification of bodies that only serve the purpose of gratification, (2) difficulty in developing healthy relationships, (3) the erosion of willpower and satisfaction, and (4) the loss of any transcendent meaning in sexuality. The lesson concluded with the apostle Paul’s observation that sex without

married commitment is a sin against the whole body (1 Cor 6:18). In reflection, the students were instructed to describe their greatest concern about sexuality in this current culture, then offer one argument of hope from what they learned from this study on sexuality.

### **Summary of Session 5**

Session 5 applied the *imago Dei* principles to the topic of homosexuality. The aim of the session was to help students examine the issue of homosexuality in light of the biblical teachings on sexuality and see the emptiness and destructive nature of the sacred/secular divide when applied to the issue of homosexuality. The lesson began with some misconceptions of the Bible concerning homosexuality. Specifically, the Bible does not define homosexuality as sharing life with someone of the same gender nor does the Bible describe homosexuality as a certain type of personality. The lesson focused on the biblical understanding of homosexuality that is, according to Romans 1:26, physically “exchanging natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.” Such activity is justified in a sacred/secular divide mindset but, in so doing, the body is viewed as nothing more than a tool for gratification and the body’s natural design is violated for autonomous personal preferences. On the contrary, the biblical view of sex elevates the material body and gives value to the way in which bodies are designed. This view restores the intrinsic value of the body. In reflection, students were instructed to describe their greatest concern about homosexuality in this current generation then offer one biblical argument of hope from what they learned from this study.

### **Summary of Session 6**

Session 6 applied the *imago Dei* principles to the topic of transgenderism. The aim of the session was to help students identify a biblical and scientific understanding of gender and recognize the arbitrary and inherently destructive nature of transgenderism. First, starting with science, the lesson focused on the facts that every cell in the body has

a sex, gender identity does not exist in any objective or physiological sense, and that transgenderism is the rejection of one's material self. Second, the lesson concentrated on a theological response in which believers show compassion for those who struggle with gender dysphoria while celebrating the uniqueness of each individual by encouraging all people to see themselves as beautiful image-bearers of God. In reflection, students were instructed to describe what they thought is the greatest barrier to the gospel for those struggling with gender identity then offer one biblical response that might help overcome that barrier.

### **Summary of Session 7**

Session 7 transitioned to the task of using human dignity discussions as bridges to the gospel. The aim of the session was to engender a sense of compassion in the students for those who struggle with these issues and to help them defend the Christian view of image-bearing when applying it to the task of reaching the world with the gospel. The lesson focused Romans 1 and 2 in three ways. The passage in Romans 1 and 2 addresses the failure of human thinking, displays the grace of God, and shows how Scripture gives value and meaning to life. According to Romans 1 and 2, every person knows God, yet many reject him (1:18-20). This leads people to turn to futile thinking (1:21-23). However, these same people judge one another based upon God's transcendent standards (2:1-3) and, by God's grace, this can lead them to repentance (2:4) because God's law is written on their hearts (2:15). Therefore, Christians ought not be ashamed (1:16) because the gospel gives God's image-bearers purpose, morality, a relationship with the Creator, significance to our actions, and hope for eternity. In reflection, students were instructed to give one way that they could regularly engage their lost community with the biblical truth of human dignity and the hope of the gospel.

### **Implementation Stage**

On Thursday, May 27, 2021, the project and subsequent study was explained to the juniors of Twin Tiers Christian Academy and the Agreement to Participate permission forms was distributed. All permission forms were returned with every student receiving permission to participate. On Wednesday, June 2, 2021, the pre-curriculum Survey on Human Dignity Issues was distributed to the students and each young person completed the survey. All information was kept in strict confidence and no student names were identified with their responses. Each student created a four-digit, non-sequential number that served as their ID so that their pre-curriculum and post-curriculum responses could be matched up without sharing their names. The curriculum study began on Thursday, June 3, 2021. The seven sessions were broken down into eight class periods with session 2 requiring two class periods. The study concluded on Monday, June 14, and the post-curriculum survey was administered on Tuesday, June 15, 2021.

### **Evaluation Stage**

After the implementation of the curriculum, the pre-curriculum and post-curriculum survey results were compiled and studied to see if the project achieved the goals stated in chapter 1. Using a *t*-test for dependent samples, the survey showed a statistically positive increase in the thirteen participants. Though many of the thirteen students showed a thoroughly biblical worldview in the pre-curriculum survey two areas showed modest positive increases in theological and ethical beliefs. On the question asking their view on casual sexual activity, eight students in the pre-curriculum survey thought that casual sex *always* has a negative effect on people while five believed that casual sex *often* has a negative effect on people. In the post-curriculum survey, twelve thought that casual sex *always* has a negative effect on people while none believed that casual sex *often* has a negative effect on people. Oddly enough one student affirmed the idea that casual sex *never* has a negative effect on people. It is odd because the same student found

pornography to be an immoral and unacceptable practice and spoke of the importance of commitment in relationships.

Another modest positive increase was observed on the issue of embryonic stem cell research. Although there was not a session dedicated to the topic, it was part of the discussion on pre-born life and abortion. In the pre-curriculum survey, one student *supported* embryonic stem cell research, five students *opposed* embryonic stem cell research, and seven students *did not know*. In the post-curriculum survey, none of the students *supported* embryonic stem cell research, eight students *opposed* it, and five students *did not know*.

In the survey, qualitative short-answer questions asked students to share their greatest concern related to the ethical topics discussed. Though the answers varied greatly among the thirteen participants a number of shifts were quite telling. On questions asking about concerns regarding abortion and embryonic stem cell research, an interesting shift was the way a number of students changed their focus toward the body. In the pre-curriculum survey, much of the language concerned life and the defending of life. In the post-curriculum survey, the same concerns about life were there, but statements were also made about the dignity of the physical body. On the post-curriculum survey, four students spoke of how abortion and embryonic stem cell devalue the physical body and how a pro-life view is also a pro-body view.

On the question regarding concerns about sexuality, responses varied but four post-curriculum responses changed their focus to the relational aspect of sexuality. They saw the connection between God creating sex for pleasure and reproduction but also for oneness between an image-bearing man and image-bearing woman. The idea of oneness was not present on any of the pre-curriculum surveys.

On the question regarding concerns about gender and transgenderism there was an obvious shift to the struggling individual. Seven of the post-curriculum responses focused on the struggles of the gender-dysphoric individual that rejects God's beautiful

design. On this point in particular there was a noticeable shift in compassion and in desire for people to see themselves as fearfully and wonderfully made image-bearers.

The most telling part of the project was whether there were any changes in the way the students felt equipped to engage their peers on issues of human dignity or use these issues as a bridge to the gospel. Each of the thirteen participating students come from homes that profess a belief in Christ and many came into the study espousing a biblical worldview on these issues. However, according to the pre-curriculum survey, none of the students offered any ways in which they would engage their peers on human dignity issues. In the post-curriculum survey the responses varied but showed a positive effect from the class material. Five of the thirteen students made general statements about feeling better equipped without offering any detail. Four students referenced the fact that all humans are beautiful image-bearers of God and that they would use the truths they learned as bridges to the gospel. One even referenced the acronym the class created on the first day to help remember the six descriptions of image-bearing. One student spoke about sharing the negative effects of secular thinking in contrast to the beauty of *imago Dei*. Lastly, three students either did not respond or said that they did not feel equipped to engage their peers on human dignity issues.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the project was to equip the hearts and minds of TTCA with a biblical worldview in areas of human dignity of the body. Building on this desire, the project sought to inform students about what the Scriptures have to say about what it means to be human and how those truths impact our worship of God, the ethics of our daily lives, and our gospel witness. Evaluating the project's purpose and the goals outlined in chapter 1 helped determine whether this project was successful. In addition, reflecting on the whole process as to what worked and what should be improved offers further value to the project. This project is very much a living document that will continue to develop.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of the project was to equip the hearts and minds of the high school students at Twin Tiers Christian Academy in Breesport, New York, with a biblical worldview in areas of human dignity of the body. To accomplish this purpose, a curriculum was developed, evaluated, and taught to the 2020-2021 junior class at TTCA. The original intent was to teach the material to both the junior and senior classes; however, due to delays in curriculum development, ever-changing school guidelines related to the COVID pandemic, and inconsistent student attendance, the project was pushed to the end of the school year during the time that the seniors were on their senior trip. Even though there was a hope for more participants, the project successfully accomplished its stated purpose.

## Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Three goals guided the work of this project. The project's first goal was to assess the knowledge and opinions of the students on subjects of human dignity. This goal was measured by administering a survey on human dignity issues, given to the fourteen students of the junior class at TTCA.<sup>1</sup> Proper permissions were received from all fourteen students<sup>2</sup> and the pre-curriculum survey was distributed prior to the course study to thirteen of the students. One student was absent for the pre-curriculum survey and the opening session, meaning the participation rate was 92.3 percent. The survey results provided helpful information and needed insight into the students' thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the project successfully accomplished the first goal.

The project's second goal was to develop a seven-session curriculum that teaches a biblical understanding of humanity and addresses modern ethical issues concerning human dignity.<sup>3</sup> The curriculum was written and then submitted to a panel of educators for evaluation using the curriculum evaluation rubric.<sup>4</sup> The goal was measured by the panel who evaluated the curriculum's biblical accuracy, pedagogy, practicality, and methodological scope. This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 80 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Therefore, the project successfully accomplished that second goal.

The project's third goal was to increase the students' knowledge of a biblical worldview, modify their attitudes toward embracing a biblical worldview on key issues of human dignity, and develop ways to connect these issues to the gospel. The thirteen students who completed the initial survey also completed the seven-session curriculum. This goal of modifying the students' knowledge of a biblical worldview and modifying

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 4.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 3.

their attitudes was measured by surveying the thirteen students after the seven sessions with the same survey taken before the sessions, comparing the results using a *t*-test for dependent samples. The questions were Likert scale and examined the students' knowledge and attitudes. The results were revealing and optimistic. The pre- and post-curriculum surveys were identical. Accordingly, the null hypothesis states that there was no difference between the means of the pre- and post-curriculum survey scores; therefore, the pre- and post-curriculum survey scores were not due to chance. The *t*-test was set up with the value of  $p=.05$ . This *p*-value indicates that it is more than a 95 percent chance that variations in answers were not due to chance but were due to changes in worldviews following the curriculum study. The results of the *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference resulting in the change in worldview ( $t_{(12)} = -3.498183548, p = 002198$ ).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the goal was successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-curriculum surveys. Therefore, the project accomplished the third goal.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The project demonstrated several notable strengths. First, the project was based on the sound biblical and theological principle of *imago Dei*. It is a beautifully profound truth that shed the light of hope on every human dignity issue. The class also developed a creative acronym to help them remember the key descriptions of image-bearing. The acronym was FERMIT—Free will, Eternal, Relational, Morally responsible, Immaterial, and Thinking. They even drew up a furry version of Kermit the Frog who acted as the unofficial mascot of the study. The students saw the weakness of other views of humanity compared to *imago Dei*. They saw how other worldviews had to borrow from the Christian worldview to make statements about human dignity. Moreover, they saw how *imago Dei* answers and gives hope to the most challenging ethical issues.

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 5.

Second, the project fairly and accurately described the views and positions that oppose a biblical worldview and Christian convictions. Thanks to authors such as Francis Schaeffer, Nancy Pearcey, and Ronald Nash, complicated philosophies became understandable and their modern-day applications quite clear to see. Logical inconsistencies were uncovered as the curriculum sought to follow the apostle Paul's instructions from 2 Corinthians 10:5 and "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God."

Third, the project dealt with ethical issues that were culturally relevant. There was great anticipation leading up to the study and the students engaged with each of the lessons. The issues discussed were ones that the students face on a regular basis and ones for which they have received limited guidance. In the weeks following the study, more and more people have asked me for help and guidance on these matters. Many are looking for wise, biblical direction on these matters.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The project also had several clear weaknesses. First, the original plan was to create thirteen lessons instead of the seven-session, eight-lesson plan that was the final version. This change was due to struggles building entire lessons around certain ethical topics. The original plan was to have separate lessons on eugenics and embryonic stem-cell research, a lesson on euthanasia, and another lesson on singleness, as well as a lesson about the body in eternity. These lessons were not added for a number of reasons. One key reason was time constraints. Developing entire high school Bible lessons concerning eugenics, embryonic stem-cell research, and euthanasia were much more daunting than expected, though eugenics and stem-cell fit nicely into the abortion study. Another problem was tying each ethical issue back to the sacred/secular divide premise. Some ethical issues connected more naturally, but topics like singleness and the eternal body did not connect very well to the premise.

A second weakness is that the project did not include more students. Teaching during the COVID crisis brought new challenges to the project. The most significant problem was school attendance. TTCA was fortunate to do in-class teaching for much of the 2020-2021 school year. However, the larger problem was consistently having students in attendance. With illnesses, quarantining, and contact-tracing as part of the daily routine, absenteeism sky-rocketed. Until the infection numbers statewide came down during the final weeks of school did student attendance become more consistent. This was one reason why the development of the curriculum was pushed off until the spring and one casualty of that delay was the fact that fewer students participated. The original intention was to include TTCA's nineteen seniors in the project. Had the project started three weeks earlier they could have joined the study. Having a smaller sample and consistent attendance simplified the research; nevertheless, this was a study I really wanted to take the seniors through, and that opportunity was lost.

A third weakness was that a study of Gnosticism was missing from the sessions. It was in the original outline but was lost in development. A study of Gnosticism would have added a "Christianized" version of dualism that appears in church cultures to this day. Some Christians take prudish views toward some of body topics that gravitate to forms of neo-Gnosticism. Christian young people recognize this. They need to see that views that devalue the *imago Dei* in any way are unbiblical and dangerous. In addition, they also need to know how to graciously respond to such attitudes.

Fourth, the term *human dignity* brought about a certain weakness. Specifically, *dignity* was not the best word to describe the study. The term *embodiment* would have been more accurate. This was a struggle throughout the project. At one time, the project's language was switched and became a project for developing a biblical worldview of human *embodiment*, but the language was switched back for two reasons. One reason was the sense that the term *embodiment* would not resonate with high school students the way the term *dignity* would. A second reason was that *embodiment* felt like a much larger topic

that was difficult to organize. As this material develops it needs to be organized under a different heading. Moving forward, a number of elements about the project should be done differently.

### **What Should Be Done Differently**

In reflection, the first element of the project that should be done differently is that more topics should be taught. This project is a *living document* in that I plan to add more topics to the study. It has the potential of being a thirteen-week church quarterly curriculum or even a school curriculum that could cover a school quarter or an entire semester. Many ethical topics fall under the banner of *imago Dei*. Much more needs to be explored and developed.

A second element of the project that should be done differently is that more class time should be given to using ethical issues as bridges to the gospel. Little time was allotted for gospel discussions. One idea is to move the session on gospel witnessing toward the beginning of the study and dedicate more class time to discussing different issues. Maybe the session on gospel witnessing should move up in the order of lessons so that the gospel principles can speak to the ethical issues. At the very least, more time needs to be given to its development and application.

A third element that should be added is a letter to the parents. In some ways, the consent form acted as a letter to the parents, but it would be beneficial if a letter was sent explaining the study in greater detail. Maybe even an outline of topics so that it could be a topic of conversation at home or an open invitation to discuss these matters with parents, helping them process these ethical matters for themselves.

A fourth element that should be done differently is that an entire discussion of Gnosticism should be included. As another form of dualism, it would show the unhealthy “Christianized” version of rejecting the physical as good.

A fifth element that should be done differently is that the whole study should fall under the umbrella of *human embodiment*, not just *human dignity*. This would also

change the way the curriculum is organized. All the original sessions could be used and the foundational sessions could remain the same. Using some of the categories supplied by Gregg Allison's work *Embodied: Living as a Whole Person in a Fractured World*,<sup>6</sup> a course outline for a thirteen-week church study could look like this:

Session 1: Imago Dei as the Foundation for Human Embodiment and Human Dignity—Genesis 1 and the aspects of *Imago Dei* as the foundation for the entire study. Plus, a comparison with ANE religions would help understand the context.

Session 2: Dualism and the Trending Views of Personhood, Part 1—Understanding historical context and having a basic understanding of modern culture is imperative for this study. Like before, this would require two lessons to cover Aristotle, Gnosticism, Descartes, Kant, and establish modern-day secular dualism presented in the sacred/secular divide.

Session 3: Dualism and the Trending Views of Personhood, Part 2—This lesson establishes the sacred/secular divide.

Session 4: Image-Bearing, Natural Theology, and Repentance—A study of Romans 1 and 2 is an excellent study before digging into the ethical embodiment issues. Paul brilliantly lays out a simple argument from natural theology and shows how all humans see God and his design yet reject him while borrowing from his standards to judge others. Moreover, this sense of truth opens the door for repentance. It is a powerful passage to have as a backdrop for connecting the gospel to the ethical issues.

Session 5: Image-Bearers from Conception—Such topics as abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, and eugenics can be combined into this session.

Session 6: Image-Bearers with Sexual Bodies, Part 1—The focus of this lesson would be the establishment of sex between one man and one woman and a discussion of certain practices against that design, minus homosexuality

Session 7: Image-Bearers with Sexual Bodies, Part 2—This session primarily looks at a biblical understanding of homosexuality.

Session 8: Image-Bearers and the Gift of Singleness—It is imperative that the church see that marriage and sexuality are not the end-all-be-all of humanity and that a celibate lifestyle, be it temporary or life-long, is actually a beautiful high calling that ought to be celebrated.

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<sup>6</sup> Gregg Allison's *Embodied: Living as a Whole Person in a Fractured World* was not released until May 2021, after the curriculum had been developed and evaluated. I did spend a considerable amount of time going through Allison's presentation "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," however, I struggled with using its structure within the curriculum sessions. In summary, I found it difficult to bridge theological topics to ethical topics. Though, Allison's *Embodied* book makes those connections with tremendous clarity. In hindsight, I would have enjoyed having the book in hand a year earlier. It probably would have changed the trajectory of the curriculum. Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as a Whole Person in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021).

Session 9: Image-Bearers with Gendered Bodies—This session will primarily look at a biblical understanding of transgenderism.

Session 10: Image-Bearers with Social Bodies—This session can address sociological topics that may include, but are not limited to, family, friendships, race, COVID quarantining, even the use of technology. There are many possible applications.

Session 11: Image-Bearing and the Call to Disciplined Living—This will be a general discussion on what the Scriptures have to say about health and discipline related to the body.

Session 12: Image-Bearing and the Place of Suffering—This session would deal the purpose of pain and suffering and address common apologetic questions related to the topic. It is also a nice set up for the last session.

Session 13: Image-Bearing and the Eternal Body—A beautiful conclusion to the study is to see that embodiment is an eternal reality because the body is intrinsically good. Plus, a glimpse at eternity brings a deeper sense of hope and joy to the study.

The logical progression of this setup begins with the foundational *Imago Dei* theology found in Genesis 1 followed by antithetical philosophies. After the worldviews are established, the curriculum shifts to a gospel focus with a study of Romans 1 and 2. Then, the following nine lessons are sessions wherein the *Imago Dei* theology is applied to ethical body topics beginning with conception and ending with the eternal glorified body. Still more categories can be explored and definitely enough topics to expand this to a quarter-length high school Bible curriculum, but the categories listed here offer a robust look at the theology of *Imago Dei*. In addition, it offers a connection to the gospel, a hope for eternity, and ethical direction for day-to-day lives. I pray to develop this work even more in the coming months and years.

### **Theological Reflections**

This project has been an intense journey deep into a topic I never expected to tackle when I first started the doctorate program. Up until a few years ago I took image-bearing for granted. In my mind, it was worthy of a paragraph in a systematic theology textbook. In my ordination paper I dedicated one whole statement to the *imago Dei*. Yet, this study taught me that image-bearing has given me an entirely different approach to the gospel. Probably the statement that has had the greatest impact on this study comes from

Leroy T. Howe's *The Image of God: A Theology for Pastoral Care and Counseling*. He states,

The *imago Dei* leads the church to center on creation rather than the fall as a guiding motif for Christian mission. Such an approach stands in sharp contrast to the countless communities of faith from Augustine's time even to the present. For whom the enormity of the fall rather than the glory of God's creation became the principal subject for proclamation.<sup>7</sup>

This one theological insight changed the trajectory of the entire project. Within each topic, I sought to focus on specific aspects of the *imago Dei* marred by the Fall and harken back to wondrous truths found in humanity's design as a means of calling people to repentance.

When I look at the beginning of Romans, I see Paul making a natural theology argument that all people clearly see God in creation. I have seen that for years and have taught it. What I did not understand is that Paul includes their actions in his argument. In other words, when Paul is working through his "dishonorable passions" and "debased mind" list of transgressions, he is saying that everyone inherently knows what they are doing is wrong because these actions violate their design. That is important because it means that the guilt someone experiences does not ultimately come from church dogmas designed to control people and make their life miserable. They come from our *imago Dei* design. This insight is so liberating! Often, I see sincere believers struggle with the idea that their ethics ultimately come from ancient writings that are disparaged for the simple fact that they are old. To quote a tweet from Richard Dawkins, "The Bible and the Quran were the best that Bronze Age tribes could do. But we've moved on."<sup>8</sup> Instead, the ethics stated in the ancient writings of Scripture are based in God's character and are rooted in the design of his creation. For example, when Romans 1:26-27 calls homosexuality a

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<sup>7</sup> Leroy T. Howe, *The Image of God: A Theology for Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Dawkins, Twitter post, May 17, 2015, <https://twitter.com/richarddawkins/status/599834516274978816?lang=en>

dishonorable passion that is shameful, it is because such activity is exchanging what is natural for what is unnatural (Rom 1:26). Each of us fundamentally recognize this because the law of God is written on our hearts (Rom 2:15) and we judge the actions of others while transgressing ourselves (Rom 2:1-3). When applied to ethics, Christian worldview arguments are founded in the design and are clearly seen because they are experienced by all. That is not to devalue the sufficiency of Scripture but highlight the fact that Scripture is addressing realities found in natural design.

When we violate our design through sin it produces guilt. Part of our image-bearing design is that the law of God is written on our hearts, giving us a conscience that struggles with conflicting guilt when we violate our God-ordained design (Rom 2:15). That guilt is actually a gift flowing out of the forbearance, patience, and kindness of God as he calls sinners to repentance (Rom 2:4). It is such an encouragement to know that when we speak biblical truth to these contentious ethical conflicts that we are lovingly defending the natural design of the very person we are disagreeing with, and, deep down, their conscience knows it. Speaking to ethical issues is gospel witnessing, and in our current cultural climate it is some of the most effective paths to the gospel.

### **Personal Reflections**

As I reflect on this project I am amazed by the work of God throughout this entire process. When I began this project in the Summer of 2019, I seriously lacked the confidence to accomplish the task. I remember sitting through the “View from 50,000 Feet lecture” in project methodology. During that hour I felt totally inadequate and ill-prepared to accomplish the task. Had I been told that I would write a majority of the project in the midst of a global pandemic and that would restructure my ministry in ways I could not have imagined, I might have cried. There were days that I quoted Christ’s loving wisdom from Matthew 6:34 over and over again: “Don’t be worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble for itself.” Many days I felt like there was no way I could perform the next task in the midst of so

much uncertainty. Then I would remember Christ's words from Matthew 6:34 and ask, "What can I get done today?" I am simply amazed at ways God has revealed his grace over the past two years.

Recently I sat down with my school administrator, Dr. Cary Shaw, and we reflected on what God has accomplished in our school and in our personal lives in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and we were simply amazed. It was not a story we could write and believe unless we lived it first. Christ's words in Matthew 19:26 ring true: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

### **Conclusion**

As this project comes to a close, I am thankful for the opportunity to interact with issues of great relevance and learn to work through them theologically, historically, and philosophically. I am also appreciative of the fact that I have developed as a curriculum writer and had the opportunity to try my hand at empirical research. All of these skills will help me be more effective in ministry.

As for the project itself, it is a *living document*. There is so much more to be written and many more applications for this curriculum. Every week people reach out to me asking for biblical direction on these topics. I am so grateful to offer truth and hope on issues I knew little about when this journey began. I am also thankful for this initial "test run" as a curriculum writer. I am thankful for the wise and insightful feedback from evaluators, readers, students, and advisors.

Lastly, I am thankful for the work of the Lord in my life. As I mentioned previously, I could not have written the script of the past two years. As I reflect on all he has accomplished I am in awe, and I wonder how I could ever doubt his strength, direction, or goodness ever again. *Soli Deo gloria!*

APPENDIX 1  
RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

**Agreement to Participate**

You are being requested to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to measure your student's ability to comprehend, retain, and apply biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Steven Baley for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, a young person will be asked to answer questions before the project and then answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. They will be asked basic questions pertaining to their personal views on issues of human dignity. Any information provided will be held in *strict confidentiality*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name identified with his or her responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2

### PRE- AND POST-PROJECT PARTICIPANT HUMAN DIGNITY ISSUES SURVEY

The following instrument is the Human Dignity Survey (HDS). The HDS measured the participant's views on dignity issues pertaining to the human body.

## Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current views of human embodiment of the participant. This research is being conducted by Steven Baley at Twin Tiers Christian Academy, in Bressport, New York for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

*Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

## Survey on Human Dignity Issues

**Instructions:** Read each question and darken in the circle that best reflects your opinion. ANSWER EVERY QUESTION. If you have a question about the definition of a term you may ask.

1. Create a four-digit, non-sequential, number that will serve as your ID.  

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*(remember your number)*
2. Which of the following best represents your view of humans?
  - Humans are the product of a random evolutionary development.
  - Humans are created in the image of God.
  - Humans are souls that experience life through a body.
  - I don't know.
3. Which statement most closely represents your view on abortion?
  - Abortion is acceptable right up to birth.
  - Abortion is acceptable in cases of rape, incest, and to save the mother's life.
  - Abortion is only acceptable when it is used to save the mother's life.
  - Abortion is never acceptable without exceptions.
4. At what stage do you think an unborn fetus *becomes a person*?
  - At conception, when the sperm penetrates the egg.
  - When the unborn has a heartbeat.
  - At viability, when the unborn can live outside the womb.
  - After the child exits the womb
  - I don't know.
5. Embryonic stem cell research destroys human embryos but is thought to hold potential cures to human diseases. In your opinion, do you support or oppose embryonic stem cell research?
  - I support embryonic stem cell research because the benefits outweigh the destruction of the human embryo.
  - I support embryonic stem cell research because an embryo has not become a person yet.
  - I oppose embryonic stem cell research because it destroys human embryos.
  - I don't know.

6. Do you support or oppose the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research?
  - I support embryonic stem cell research and the federal funding of it.
  - I support embryonic stem cell research but oppose the federal funding of it.
  - I oppose both embryonic stem cell research and the federal funding of it.
  - I don't know
7. Do you support or oppose the legalization of gay marriage?
  - I support the legalization of gay marriage
  - I oppose the legalization of gay marriage.
  - I don't know
8. Which of the following is closest to your definition of marriage?
  - Marriage is the union between two adults regardless of gender.
  - Marriage is the union between one man and one woman.
  - Marriage is a union between one man and one woman, but homosexual couples should be allowed to have civil unions.
  - Marriage is a needless social practice.
  - I don't know.
9. Do you believe that gender identity is physiologically based on DNA or psychologically based on feelings?
  - Physiological, based on DNA.
  - Psychological, based on feelings.
  - I don't know.
10. Which of the following best represents your view on casual sex between consenting unmarried adults?  
(*casual sex is defined as sexual encounters without commitment*)
  - Casual sex never has negative effect on people.
  - Casual sex rarely has a negative effect on people.
  - Casual sex often has a negative effect on people.
  - Casual sex always has a negative effect on people.
  - I don't know.
11. What effect do you think pornography has on a person's life?
  - It has a positive effect.
  - It has a little to no effect.
  - It has a negative effect.
  - It depends on the person
  - I don't know.
12. Which of the following best represents your views on pornography?  
(*pornography is defined as images and texts designed to cause sexual arousal*)
  - Pornography is a natural, acceptable part of the human experience for both adults and teens.
  - Pornography is an acceptable pursuit for consenting adults.
  - Pornography is an unacceptable, immoral practice.
  - I don't know.
13. Which of the following best represents your view of surveys?
  - They are a great tool for learning.
  - They are a complete waste of my time.
  - I love them only because it means I'm not taking a test or taking notes.

14. What is your greatest concern related to the human dignity issue of abortion?
  
15. What is your greatest concern related to the human dignity issue of embryonic stem cell research?
  
16. What is your greatest concern related to the human dignity issue of sexuality?
  
17. What is your greatest concern related to the human dignity issue of gender?
  
18. In what ways do you feel equipped to engage your peers on issues of human dignity? Feel free to address any or all of the topics.
  
19. How would you effectively engage human dignity issues with the gospel?

## APPENDIX 3

### TEACHING THE BIBLE CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The curriculum evaluation rubric assessed the exegetical merit of the proposed pedagogical principles, biblical faithfulness to both biblical and systematic theology, appropriateness of pedagogical method, and contextual fit for the teaching model advanced within Twin Tiers Christian Academy

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Teaching the Bible Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 4  
LESSON OUTLINES

**The Beauty of Being You:  
A Curriculum on Image-Bearing and Human Dignity**

This is a seven-session curriculum that is taught in eight-lessons. It focuses on modern-day ethical issues pertaining to the human body. The basic premise is that all humans are image-bearers, thus having intrinsic dignity. This is in contrast to the secular and neo-Gnostic views of humans that has evolved through dualism. The goal is to show how the ethical views of a Christian worldview are founded in the imago-dei and are the only clear path towards human dignity.

The curriculum is designed for older high-school students but it is also suitable for a college-and-career or adult Sunday school class.

My basic approach to the curriculum is based on Lawrence Richards' four steps of Hook, Book, Look, and Took. The steps are as follows: (1) The Hook step is a creative introduction that develops immediate interest in the lesson. (2) The Book step is the actual teaching lesson. (3) The Look step is an invitation to apply the lesson to their thinking and their own lives. (4) The Took step is the call to apply the lesson by doing something as a proper response to the teaching.<sup>1</sup>

The following is the master outline plus teaching notes attached to certain outline points. The teaching notes are quotes, illustrations, or elaborations of the point. The letters "TN" will indicate a teaching note.

Each lesson's learning objectives are described in a SWBAT, "students will be able to," statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1970), 107-11.

## Session 1: The Imago Dei as the Foundation of Human Dignity (Lesson 1)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to identify eight characteristics of image-bearing and evaluate their view of God in light of the eight characteristics. Students will be able to express ways in which humans have intrinsic dignity because they are image-bearers of God.

**Hook:** Begin the class period with an assignment on their Google Classroom. The assignment presents the following scenario:

Each of you are rulers of their own ancient civilization. You come from a long line of rulers that have built up this mighty kingdom in which you rule over all of it. You own much of the land and your word is law. This leads to two questions: How do you view yourself? How do you view your subjects? Pair and share.

### **Book:**

TN: The Old Testament Hebrews lived in a world surrounded by autocratic nations where power was held by few and shared by none.<sup>2</sup>

TN: The religious systems viewed rulers as gods who were empowered by privileged religious leaders. Religion was a tool of power and only offered hope for only the elite

TN: Read Genesis 1:26-30.

- I. The meaning of image-bearing as described in Genesis
  - a. Humans are **relational**. By creating humans both male and female God designed like his triune self and created us to love one another and love God. (1:27)
  - b. Humans have an **immaterial** nature that connects us to God. When God directly breathed life into Adam, Adam possessed something that was the very nature of God (1:27 and 2:7)

TN: The doctrine of the Trinity serves as the foundation for the biblical understanding of humanity. Our image-bearing reflects God's Triune nature. He made us relational with both others and him. He made us both material and immaterial. Our immaterial presents itself in a number of undeniable ways

- c. Humans immaterial nature is expressed by our ability to **think**.
- d. Humans immaterial nature is expressed by our ability to express **free will**.

TN: A common secular explanation for the mind and free will is to view the human brain as such a well-developed organic machine that tricks us into believing that it makes free-

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 140.

will decisions as a mechanism for survival.

- e. Humans immaterial nature is expressed by our sense of **moral responsibility**.

TN: Read Romans 2:1-3. In Romans 2 Paul makes the observation that moral responsibility is clearly part of our nature. How does Paul know this? Because we are constantly holding others to moral standards.

- f. Humans immaterial nature is **eternal**.

## II. The call of image-bearing given in Genesis

- a. Humans are called to rule for God. We are tasked with the responsibilities to rule and **steward** creation, thus giving each individual equal dignity and purpose.
- b. Humans are called to **thrive**. We are tasked to be fruitful and multiply, thus giving dignity and purpose to the family.

## III. The biblical concept of image-bearing offers the only true foundation for human dignity and purpose.

**Look:** Get into groups of 3-4 and create an acronym that represents all of the afore mentioned aspects of image-bearing.

**Took:** In Google Classroom there is a one question assignment. In 25-100 words take one aspect of image-bearing and describe how it changes your view of God.

## Session 2: The Dualism and the Trending View of Personhood (Lesson 2)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to identify three historical versions of dualism and assess how dualism has developed the prevailing sacred-secular divide.

Students will be able to recognize the temptation and destruction that comes from radical autonomy.

**Hook:** Read Bill Nye’s view of humanity, a view he shared when being honored as the 2010 Humanist of the Year.

I am insignificant... I’m just another speck of sand. And Earth, really, in the cosmic scheme of things, is another speck, and our sun—an unremarkable star, nothing special—is another speck. And the galaxy is a speck. I’m a speck on a speck orbiting a speck among other specks amongst still other specks in the middle of specklessness! I am insignificant! I suck!<sup>3</sup>

This view represents materialism, the view that all of reality is physical and that there is no immaterial reality.

Question #1: Who do you think is the earliest materialist(s)?

Question #2: Who was an early opponent to the earliest materialists?

**Book:** Materialism is as old as Western Philosophy. Today we will investigate early views of humanity that shape the thinking of our modern day.

### I. Dualism

#### a. Aristotelian Dualism

- i. Aristotle taught that humans are both material and immaterial<sup>4</sup>

TN: It is important to note that much of Plato and Aristotle wrote was in response to the atheistic, materialists of their day.

- ii. He described a **Unity of Self**. It states that the physical aspect of a person is constantly changing but a person’s identity does not change; therefore, identity cannot be rooted in the material self but the immaterial self.<sup>5</sup>

TN: Aristotle’s teachings show the wisdom that can come from natural revelation.

Unfortunately, his philosophy lacked any connection to special revelation.

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<sup>3</sup> Bill Nye, “The Best Idea We’ve Had So Far,” TheHumanist.com, December 10, 2010, <https://thehumanist.com/magazine/november-december-2010/features/best-idea-weve-far>.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 100.

<sup>5</sup> R. Scott Smith, *In Search of Moral Knowledge* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 49.

- iii. He had no understanding of a sin nature and ideas of moral law were ambiguous.
- iv. He denied any personal interaction between God and man.<sup>6</sup>
- b. Cartesian Dualism
  - i. Rene Descartes was a Catholic that denied naturalism but sought a way to prove his own existence without a divine authority.<sup>7</sup>
  - ii. He realized that his thinking, specifically his doubt, proved his existence, thus coining the famous line, “I think, therefore, I am.”

TN: Descartes did not seek to undermine godly thinking with his philosophy. He even felt that he had created another proof for God’s existence. In a sense he did demonstrate that humans are both material and immaterial. However, he rejected St. Augustine’s view of rationalism that says that human reason finds its source in divine illumination.<sup>8</sup>

- iii. He proposed that personhood and identity are found in the mind.
- c. Kantian Dualism
  - i. Kant moved beyond the concept of self-sufficiency and taught the concept of complete autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

TN: Immanuel Kant was bothered by the skepticism that doubted or denied immaterial reality. This led him to a rejection of older forms of rationalism of Augustine and Descartes. Instead he thought truth came from the mind.<sup>10</sup>

- ii. Kant believed that the rational mind took the raw data from nature and created a personal truth; thus, truth was something created not discovered.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1995), 259.

<sup>7</sup> Hoffecker, “Enlightenments and Awakenings,” 253-54.

<sup>8</sup> Richard C. Gamble, “Christianity from the Early Church Fathers to Charlemagne,” in *Revolutions in Worldview*, ed. W. Andrew Hoffecker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 121.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 76.

<sup>10</sup> Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 266-67.

<sup>11</sup> Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 264.

## The Dualism and the Trending View of Personhood (Lesson 3)

### II. The Sacred/Secular Divide

- i. Many in modern culture divide truth between observable facts and subjective personal truths.<sup>12</sup>
- ii. This leads to a radical autonomy where the individual determines reality for themselves with self-fulfillment is the ultimate good.<sup>13</sup>

TN: A common argument from the sacred/secular divide comes up with the discussion of abortion. There are those who find the practice terrible and would never have one themselves, yet they would not deny someone else the right to have one if they so desire. In other words, each person creates their own truth when it comes to the practice of abortion.

- iii. Radical autonomy is incompatible with any worldview that hold to a transcendent source of truth.

### III. The Truth Behind Radical Autonomy (a study of James 1:14-16)

- a. Everyone is tempted by their own desires (1:14).

TN: Everyone has certain proclivities towards certain sins. We are not all tempted in the same way. Allow that fact to develop a level of compassion for someone who struggles with a sin that does not seem to tempt you.

- b. Sin begins in the desires of the heart (1:15a).
- c. Sin always leads to death (1:15b).
- d. Sin always presents itself as something it is not in order to deceive (1:16).

**Look:** Reflect on the way you described yourself at the beginning of class. What descriptors are based on transcendent truths and what descriptors are based on your personal preferences?

**Took:** This evening set aside 10 minutes with God to ask one simple questions, “Is there some sin in my life that I do not see because I am being deceived?” For ten minutes quietly meditate on that question and ask the Holy Spirit to evaluate your heart and mind. Then confess any sin that the Holy Spirit reveals and make a plan to overcome that sin.

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<sup>12</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 104.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 164.

### Session 3: The Dignity of the Unborn (Lesson 4)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to examine the dignity of the unborn in light of the characteristics of image-bearing and the reality of the sacred-secular divide.

Students will be able to recognize the arbitrary and inherently destructive nature of abortion.

**Hook:** As a class, list as many movies and stories with pro-life themes.

**Book:** Our culture is fixated on two things that have a direct impact on the abortion issue: autonomy and personal narratives. Be prepared to offer compassion to the needy while humbly holding to transcendent truth.

- I. Facts about unborn life
  - a. A person becomes a human at conception. At conception a person's genetic identity is fully formed and unique from the mother.<sup>14</sup>
  - b. Pro-life is not a religious issue as much as a defense for all human life
  - c. The Bible treats unborn life with the same value as all born life (Ex. 21:22-25). Judges 13:3-5 makes a similar statement. There it says that Samson was called a Nazerite while still in his mother's womb.<sup>15</sup>
  - d. The Bible says that we are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), thus relating humanity to conception.<sup>16</sup>
- II. The secular view of personhood
  - a. The secularist claim that a person gains personhood at a later time. This standard is arbitrary.

TN: Months after *Roe v. Wade* the famed science fiction writer Philip K. Dick mocked the arbitrary nature of abortion with a short story entitled, "The Pre-Persons." In his story children lived in fear of the "abortion truck" which, upon the request of their parents, would take children under the age twelve and have them terminated. Why twelve? According to the protagonist's mother, "Congress had inaugurated a simple test to determine the approximate age at which the soul entered the body: the ability to formulate higher math like algebra."<sup>17</sup>

- b. This idea flows from the concept that the body is nothing more than raw organic material. Until there is a reasoning mind there isn't a person.

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<sup>14</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Ethics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 572.

<sup>15</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 723.

<sup>16</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 567-68.

<sup>17</sup> Philip K. Dick, "Pre Persons," accessed January 31, 2021, [https://orumus.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Dick\\_2.pdf](https://orumus.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Dick_2.pdf), 355.

- c. By denying the pre-born personhood it opens the door for stem cell research where the pre-born are viewed as a natural resource and a marketable commodity for the benefit of others.<sup>18</sup>

TN: Michael Bay's movie *The Island* tells the story of a company that raises genetic duplicates of the wealthy who have paid for organs that are genetics matches.

**Look:** Share your opinion concerning a "fetal heart" bill where abortion becomes illegal once a heartbeat is detected. Also, share your opinion on the role of government concerning abortion.

**Took:** In Google Classroom there is a one question assignment. In 50-200 words describe what is the best thing you can say to someone considering an abortion?"

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<sup>18</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 95.

## Session 4: The Dignity of Sex (Lesson 5)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to identify a biblical understanding of sex and examine issues concerning sex in light of the characteristics of image-bearing.

The student will be able to identify the empty and inherently destructive nature of the sacred-secular divide when applied to human sexuality.

**Hook:** Today a nonsense expression is key to understanding today's lesson on sex. Is it "Bazinga," "Doh," "Humina, Humina," "Sheesh," or "Yada, Yada, Yada?"

**Book:**

- I. Sex in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - a. Secularists view the body is the result of a mindless, purposeless process of evolution.
  - b. Self-fulfillment has become the greatest good and the body as a means to it.
  - c. Sexual preferences are seen as the result of autonomous personal truths.<sup>19</sup>
- II. *Yada* sex
  - a. When God introduced sex in the Garden of Eden he called it very good to emphasize its beauty and importance.
  - b. The word Moses used to describe sex was *yada*, a word we translate as *to know*.
  - c. The word *yada* presents sex as a beautiful and powerful act of intense intimacy.<sup>20</sup>
  - d. Sex was designed as a physical and spiritual connection between a husband and wife.

TN: Studies consistently show that the people who are happiest sexually are married, middle-aged, conservative Christians.<sup>21</sup>

- III. Sex Without Commitment
  - a. It leads to objectification. If one person's body is only seen as a means of offering pleasure to another, then their value as a human is degraded.<sup>22</sup>
  - b. It leads to struggles in building healthy relationships.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 707.

<sup>21</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 131.

<sup>22</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 121.

<sup>23</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 118.

- c. It treats sex as strictly a physical act isolated devoid of depth and meaning.<sup>24</sup>
- d. Pornography is detaching the physical pleasure of sex from all transcendent meaning.

TN: Pornography actually erodes willpower and satisfaction by shrinking the pre-frontal cortex.<sup>25</sup>

TN: Studies show that sexual activity among millennials is the lowest in a generation since the early 60's. Unfortunately, this is directly related to the rampant rise in pornography.

TN: The movie *Her* presented a future world where a smartphone app was so intuitive people started having their deepest relationships with their phones.

- e. Sex without commitment is both theologically and scientifically a sin against your whole body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

TN: Females secrete a hormone called oxytocin while males secrete a hormone called vasopressin. These hormones create a chemical sense of commitment and attachment, thus, showing that humans were not biologically designed for sex without commitment.<sup>26</sup>

**Look:** Once, when preparing for a seminar, my sister asked me why I remained a virgin while I was in high school. My response was, "I was terrified what God would do to me." Do you have a better response? In your own words, what is the most compelling argument for saving sex for marriage? Share your thoughts with the class.

**Took:** In Google Classroom there is an assignment. In 50-200 words describe your greatest concern about sex in this current generation. Then, offer one argument of hope from what we have already studied concerning the image of God in mankind.

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<sup>24</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 119.

<sup>25</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 126.

<sup>26</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 127.

## Session 5: The Dignity of Sex and the Issue of Homosexuality (Lesson 6)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to apply a biblical understanding of sex and examine issues concerning homosexuality in light of the characteristics of image-bearing. The student will be able to identify the empty and inherently destructive nature of the sacred-secular divide when applied to the issue of homosexuality.

**Hook:** Introduce the Gender Unicorn and describe how it is being used in elementary classrooms throughout the United States.

### **Book:**

- I. What the Bible does not say about homosexuality
  - a. The Bible does not condemn people of the same gender sharing a life together.

TN: Consider Paul and his band of missionaries friends, they were guys doing life together. What about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus? They were siblings sharing a life together.

- b. The Bible does not describe homosexuality as a certain type of personality trait or in line with particular interests.

TN: Esau and Jacob seem to have very different interests and personalities. That did not make Jacob less masculine.

- c. The Bible views all bodies as holding intrinsic, eternal value.

TN: Writer Melinda Selmys described the body as, “a shell, a wet machine, a juicy robot.”<sup>27</sup>

- II. The purpose of sex in light of homosexuality
  - a. God designed sex to bring pleasure, express love, and make babies.

TN: Sexual practice outside of design is destructive. Help people see the value of their material self and for the way they are designed. Because God created all things with purpose and design.

- b. God designed sex for one male and one female who are lovingly committed to each other for life. Functioning outside that design through fornication, adultery, or homosexuality means you don’t experience the true purpose of sexuality.<sup>28</sup>

**Look:** In your opinion why do people talk more about the sin of homosexuality rather than sins of adultery and fornication? Share your thoughts with the class.

**Tool:** When Ellen DeGeneres came out as a homosexual she did an interview with

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<sup>27</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 122.

<sup>28</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 137.

Oprah. In the last part of the interview Ellen took questions from the audience. As audience member attempted to give her logical reasons to turn away from homosexuality she consistently responded, "But that is who I am." In Google Classroom there is a one question assignment. In 50-200 words describe what you think is the greatest barrier to the gospel for those struggling with homosexual identity? Offer one biblical truth that might help overcome that barrier.

## Session 6: The Dignity of Gender (Lesson 7)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to identify a biblical understanding of gender and examine issues concerning the dignity of gender in light of the characteristics of image-bearing.

Students will be able to recognize the arbitrary and inherently destructive nature of transgenderism.

**Hook:** Play a piece from *Switched on Bach* by Walter Carlos. What Carlos created in the early 70's was quite controversial. Bach was being played by digitally programmed synthesizers not necessarily by a group of musicians. To this day, Carlos remains controversial, not so much for music but due to the fact that Carlos is now Wendy Carlos, who has gone through sexual transition over decades.

### Book:

- I. Truths about transgenderism
  - a. Every cell in the body has a sex.<sup>29</sup>
  - b. Gender identity does not exist in any objective or physiological sense.<sup>30</sup>
  - c. Transgenderism is a rejection of one's material self.
  - d. Transgenderism males do not become females. They become feminized-males, and vice-versa for females.<sup>31</sup>

TN: A transgender man does not get a uterus and experience menstruation or child-labor.

TN: In Queer theory one's gender is based on one's feelings. Queer theory enforces rigid stereotypes. Instead of celebrating the diversity of human expression it represses the human spirit in predetermined boxes.

- II. A Theological Response
  - a. Feel compassion for someone who feels pressure to reject their beautiful design.<sup>32</sup>

TN: Gender dysphoria is dark and painful experience that is usually experienced by young people who lack understanding about the human body but are told they have complete autonomy to choose.

- b. Celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. Encourage people to express themselves with the body God gave them.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 156.

<sup>30</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 197.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate* (New York: Good Book, 2017), 74-75.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 101.

<sup>33</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 200.

- c. Create environments where people find freedom from unbiblical stereotypes and freedom to work out what it means to be created in God's image as a holistic, unique, redeemed person.

**Look:** Do you see any logical conflicts of interest between the feminist community, the homosexual community, and the transgender community? Share your thoughts with the class.

**Took:** In Google Classroom there is a one question assignment. In 50-200 words describe what you think is the greatest barrier to the gospel for those struggling with gender identity? Offer one biblical truth that might help overcome that barrier.

## Session 7: Running Rescue Missions Instead of Fighting Culture Wars (Lesson 8)

**SWBAT:** Students will be able to engender a sense of compassion for those who struggle with human dignity issues

The student will be able to defend a Christian view of image-bearing and apply it to the task of reaching the world with the gospel.

**Hook:** Name some war movies/shows in which the main characters were actual soldiers. Which one is your favorite “based on a true story” military character?

Today we are going to compare two decorated war heroes that were also honored in film. One is Audie Murphy, the most decorated war hero of World War II. Among his exploits is holding off an entire company of German soldiers with one machine gun... that was on fire! The second is Desmond Doss. He too was a highly decorated hero of WWII. However, Doss refused to fire a weapon. He was a medic that risked his life on numerous occasions to rescue soldiers from the battlefield. One was a soldier ready for battle; the other was a medic saving lives. Based on thoughts found in Romans 1 and 2 let us view the battle from the point-of-view as a medic, not the soldier. Let us form a rescue plan based in God’s grace.

### **Book:**

- I. Rescuing begins when we humbly pray for our lost loved ones.

TN: The most profound aspect of St. Augustine’s *Confessions* is not the great arguments. It is the testimony of a praying mother.

- a. Pray for an open door.

TN: Open doors often come with shared connections. Seek natural connections with lost people.

- b. Pray for an open heart.

TN: 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that, “The God of this age has blinded the mind of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light of the gospel...” Pray for the work of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of unbelievers when you share biblical hope.

- c. Pray for an open mouth.

TN: Pray for wisdom and boldness to speak the truth with love and confidence.

- II. Rescuing takes place when we humbly identifying the failures of human thinking
  - a. By God’s grace every person knows God (1:19-20).
  - b. By God’s grace people judge one another by God’s righteous commands (2:1-3).
  - c. By God’s grace he has written his law on the hearts of all people, giving everyone a moral conscience (2:15).

- III. Rescuing takes place when we humbly show that the Bible, alone, gives value and meaning to life.<sup>34</sup>
- a. By God's grace people feel his transcendent moral standards that leads to repentance (2:4).
  - b. By God's grace we image-bearers have a gospel that we ought not be ashamed of (1:16).
    - i. Christianity gives life purpose.
    - ii. Christianity gives the foundation for morality.
    - iii. Christianity gives our actions significance that last for all eternity.
    - iv. Christianity gives us a relationship with our Creator.

**Look:** Get in groups of 3 or 4. Each person share the names of two people you want to reach with the gospel. Then pray for those people as a group.

**Took:** What do Christians have to offer an overly-individualized culture? Community! In Google Classroom there is a one question assignment. In 100-300 words describe one way you can regularly engage the lost in your community. Think about where you spend your time. Think about your social media presence. The ultimate goal is to connect the lost to community. Try to have that as part of your goal.

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<sup>34</sup> Grenz, *The Social Gospel and the Relational Self*, 15.

APPENDIX 5  
T-TEST RESULTS

Table A1 details the changes in pre- and post curriculum survey scores while table A2 contains the data analysis for the *t*-test for dependent samples.

Table A1. *T*-test results for content knowledge and worldview

Student	Pre Survey	Post Survey	Differential
1	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
2	91.67%	100.00%	8.33%
3	91.67%	91.67%	0.00%
4	66.67%	66.67%	0.00%
5	83.33%	100.00%	16.67%
6	50.00%	75.00%	25.00%
7	41.67%	58.33%	16.67%
8	83.33%	75.00%	-8.33%
9	75.00%	100.00%	25.00%
10	66.67%	75.00%	8.33%
11	75.00%	100.00%	25.00%
12	66.67%	100.00%	33.33%
13	50.00%	58.33%	8.33%

Table A2. *T*-test analysis

<i>t</i> -Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>Pre Survey</i>	<i>Post Survey</i>
Mean	0.724358974	0.846153846
Variance	0.031695157	0.028757123
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.74019724	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-3.498183548	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002198278	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.004396556	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF TWIN TIERS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY IN BREESPORT, NEW YORK

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021  
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The project is for the equipping of the hearts and minds of the high school students at Twin Tiers Christian Academy in Breesport, New York, with a biblical worldview in areas of human dignity of the body. Chapter 1 provides a brief history and ministry context for Twin Tiers Christian Academy while also outlining the goals and project methodology. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundation for humans as image-bearers of God who are embodied souls called to live in Christlike righteousness through the exegesis of Genesis 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, and Ephesians 4:17-24. Chapter 3 gives overviews of historical comparisons between non-biblical philosophies and a biblical worldview regarding the dignity of humans. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, giving an overview of the stages of development, implementation, and evaluation. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based upon the project's goals and proposes changes to improve the project. Ultimately, this project sought to equip young people with a biblical understanding of image-bearing, how that effects day-to-day ethics, and how it connects to our hope in the gospel.

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School Administrator, Corning Christian Academy, Corning, NY, 2009-2011.  
Director of Student Discipleship and Bible Teacher, Twin Tiers Christian Academy, Breesport, NY, 2011-