

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

## Part 5: The Doctrine of Man (Anthropology)

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The term “anthropology” comes from two Greek words, namely, *anthropos* meaning “man” and *logos* meaning “word, matter, or thing.” The word “anthropology” refers to the study of man and *Biblical anthropology* is the study of man as understood primarily from Scripture. Therefore, it often involves discussion of the particular creation of man as he was made in the “image of God,” the constitutional nature of man, and man after the fall.

### A. WHY DID GOD CREATE MAN?

1. Man was created to fulfill God’s purposes (Eph. 1:11).

*“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Eph. 1:11).*

2. Man was created to rule the earth (Gen, 1:27-28).

*“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Gen. 1:27-28).*

3. Man was created to bring God heartfelt praise (Eph. 1:12).

*“...in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:12)*

4. Man was created to bring glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31).  
*“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31)*
5. As we glorify God and enjoy him, he rejoices in us (Isa. 62:5).  
*“...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you” (Isa. 62:5)*
6. God created man to experience a life of fullness and joy (Psa. 16:11; John 10:10).  
*“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Psa. 16:11).*  
*” I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10)*

## **B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CREATED IN GOD’S IMAGE?**

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1. To be created in God's *image* (Heb. *salem*) means to have a moral and spiritual likeness. (Gen. 1:26a).  
*“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image (salem), in our likeness...’” (Gen. 1:26a)*
2. But the phrase "made in the image of God" refers not to the physical, but to the immaterial part of man (John 4:24; Exodus 20:4; Psa. 115:3-8; Rom. 1:23).  
*We must be careful to avoid the assumption that because man has a physical body, God also has a physical body.*  
*In that sense, we are unlike God, for “God is spirit” (John 4:24) and to ascribe a physical body to God is a sin.*

## **C. MAN IS LIKE GOD IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS**

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1. We are like God morally (Gen. 2:17, 3:10; Psa. 119:127-128; Rom. 1:18-20; 13:3).  
*We have an inner sense of right and wrong (Gen. 2:17, 3:10; Psa. 119:127-128; Rom. 1:18-20; 13:3).*  
*Adam and Eve feared God after their sin (Gen. 3:10).*  
*When we act according to God’s moral standards, our likeness to God is reflected. In contrast, our unlikeness to God is reflected whenever we sin.*
2. We are like God spiritually (Gen. 3:8; 1 Cor. 6:7).  
*We have a spiritual life that enables us to relate to God as persons, to pray and praise him, and to hear him speaking to us (Rom. 8:16). Adam and Eve had fellowship with God*
3. We are like God mentally (Mark 12:30).

*(Mk. 12:30 NIV) " Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."*

*We have the ability to reason and think logically and to learn. This aspect has given us the use of complex abstract languages. It gives man an inward sense that we will live beyond physical death.*

4. We are like God relationally (1 Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:20; 1 John 1:7).

*We have the ability to develop deep interpersonal relationships.*

*This is reflected in our marriages, our families and our fellowship with other believers.*

*Knowing that we have been created in God's image, that we are different than anything else in the universe, should give us a profound sense of dignity (1 Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:20; 1 John 1:7).*

5. In this life we are imperfect, but God is making us like his Son (1 Cor. 15:49; Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

*"And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49).*

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:28-29).*

*"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).*

6. God's purpose in creating man in his image was completely realized in the person of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4).

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Col. 1:15).*

*"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).*

7. Complete restoration happens when Jesus returns (1 John 3:2; Phil 3:20-21).

*"But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).*

*"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Phil. 3:20-21*

## **D. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF HUMANS**

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1. God has given us a soul (Gen. 2:7; Job 30:25; Psa. 43:5; 2 Kings 4:27; 2 Sam. 5:8; Song of Solomon 1:7; 3:1-4; Jer. 13:17).

*“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Gen. 2:7 KJV)*

*The soul is also the center of various spiritual and emotional experiences of humans, such as sympathy (Job 30:25), despair (Psa. 43:5, bitterness (2 Kings 4:27), hate (2 Sam. 5:8), love (Song of Solomon 1:7; 3:1-4), and grief (Jer. 13:17).*

2. God has given us a spirit (Deut. 34:9; Psa. 51:10; Rom. 1:9).

*This word (H. ruah; Gr. pneuma) refers only to the immaterial, non-physical part of man, unlike soul, which can denote the whole person (Deut. 34:9; Psa. 51:10; Rom. 1:9).*

*The Hebrew word (ruah) can also mean the general character of an individual or group.*

3. God has given us a heart (1 Cor. 4:5).

*The term (H. lebbabh; Gr. kardia) usually does not refer to the physical heart but is a very broad term describing the inner man and the many aspects of his personality such as his intellect, his emotions, and his volitions.*

*(1 Cor. 4:5 NIV) "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. "*

*(2 Cor. 2:4 NIV) "For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you."*

4. God has given us a conscience (2 Cor. 1:12).

*This word (Gr. syneidesis) refers to the witness within a person that tells him he ought to do what he believes is right and not to do what he believes to be wrong.*

*“Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. (2 Cor. 1:12 NIV)*

5. God has given us a mind (Mark 12:30; Rom. 1:28; 2 Cor. 4:4).

*This includes both the faculties of perceiving and understanding as well as those of feeling, judging and determining. In the NT it often refers to the intellect.*

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mk. 12:30 NIV).*

*“Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done” (Rom. 1:28 NIV).*

*“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4 NIV).*

6. God has given us flesh (Gen. 2:21; Rom. 7:5; 8:7-8).

*This word can refer to the muscular structure of an animal or to the human body. In the NT it is often refers to man's sinful nature.*

*“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.” (Gen. 2:21 NIV)*

*“For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.” (Rom. 7:5 NIV)*

*“The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:7-8 NIV)*

7. God has given man a will (1 Pet. 5:2; Rom. 12:16).

*This word (H. rason, Gr. boulomai) refers to the desire or intention of a person to do something, to have something, or to obtain a result.*

*“Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve...” (1 Pet. 5:2 NIV)*

*“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” (Rom. 12:16 NIV)*

## **E. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER STUDY**

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1. How does knowing why God created you affect your outlook on life?
2. Explain why Christians can actually enjoy a life of fullness and joy even when life gets stressful.
3. In what ways can we use our minds as Christians?

### Where to Get More Information

Grudem, Wayne. *An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine: Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

MacArthur, John and Richard Mayhue. *Bible Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*. Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2017.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986, 1999.

Taylor, Michael D. *Beliefs: Understanding What Every Christian Should Know*. Scotts Valley, 2016.