



**Week 12: Human Beings, Warts and All! (A topic study)**

**Day 1. Human nature as it was meant to be**

**Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 8**

Read these two sections. Then see what they say about each of the following descriptions of human nature. Write the relevant verse(s) beside each statement.

A person in his nature is:-

- deliberately created, the climax of God's creativity
- made in God's image
- enabled to communicate with God
- a sexual being
- made for human companionship
- God's representative on earth to exercise lordship over the rest of creation
- a pleasure to God, evoking his care
- given a purpose in living

Rushing waterfalls, majestic mountains and delicate flowers cause us to marvel at God's creativity. But if a person is the climax of all creation, he or she is more precious to God than all these. After all, he or she alone can communicate with God. As Jesus said, 'Look at the birds of the air ... your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?' (Matthew 6:26, NIV). Since humans have such a privileged position, what responsibility does that place upon them? (E.g. treating every person as someone, like you, made in God's image, ensuring that God's world is not spoilt.)

**Praise** God for his world and for his care of you in that world.  
**Pray** that you will take seriously your responsibility towards it.

**Day 2. Human nature corrupted**

**Genesis 3**

1. God had made human nature perfect, but the serpent in Genesis had serious limitations. What were these?
2. The serpent's powers of persuasion won the day. Take each of the statements made in the last study and note down how each of these aspects of human nature was affected by the fall. As with Adam and Eve, so with all of us. Think

about how these particular elements of corrupted human nature are present in your own life.

3. But all was not lost. How did God respond to this corruption?
4. Read the commentary on Psalm 8 found in Hebrews 2:5-11. What grounds for hope are to be found there?
5. You may be acutely aware of your own fallen nature. In the light of Hebrews 2 how are you to view your imperfection? Think of what it cost Jesus to make you holy and the fact that he has made you so and in the future will do even more.

**Pray:** In your prayer time, concentrate on Jesus, the perfect man, whose body suffered corruption and who tasted death for everyone so that we might have a new nature. Praise God for him.

### Day 3. Fallen nature has far-reaching consequences

#### **Ephesians 2:13; Romans 1:18-32**

These two passages contain a vivid description of what the fallen world is like. Write down a summary of what the passages say about our fallen world.

1. We have already seen that Adam and Eve's sin affected their own relationships. But it also led to the corruption of the world and society itself. As you look at the world we live in, how true are Paul's descriptions in his letters to the Ephesians and Romans? For example, you could think about family relationships, law and order, public honesty. What can people do about it?

Again we should not despair, for God is still making the truth about himself plain to people.

2. Think of two aspects of society which you are particularly interested in, e.g. education, family life, national politics — all of which reflect the distortion (on some level) of our world from what God intends. Then pray specifically that God's way and righteousness will be revealed here, bringing about change in our world. You could challenge members of your Cell group or fellowship to do the same.

How far would these verses help you to answer a non-Christian who came out with a statement similar to the one Lenin made in 1919? Lenin said: "*The workers are building the new society without having turned themselves into new men who would be free from the dirt of the old world. They are still in it up to their knees.*"

**Pray** for those in our world (and specific people you know) who are living a lifestyle which is very different from what God intended for them.

### Day 4. Human nature restored

#### **Romans 8:1-17**

1. Divide a piece of paper in half lengthways. On one side write down what Paul

says about the sinful nature. On the other write down how he describes the new nature. The contrast is startling.

2. Now go through the passage again, noticing all that God has done. It is his initiative all the time. Only he can make anyone righteous. The privileges of being a co-heir with Christ are enormous. Take each of the privileges that you have found in this part of the letter and turn them into praise. God has given us guidance for living which we must strive to observe. (We shall look at these in the next Study.)

He also wants us to relax in him, knowing that we have been given his Spirit so that his righteous demands might be fully met in us.

**Prayer:** Spend a few moments in God's presence, asking the Holy Spirit to fill you again today with a sense of His peace.

### Day 5. My new nature

#### **Colossians 3:1-17**

Although every Christian has a new nature and status, we are all aware that the old nature is still fighting for a survival — a survival which, we are assured, it will never achieve. Paul told the Colossians that they must resist every attempt of the old nature to rear its ugly head.

1. Read this part of his letter to the Colossian church. Then, put in your own words what he says it means in practice to 'set your minds on things above' (v.2, NIV), both in terms of what things are to be deliberately excluded and what things are to be consciously included in our lives. Pause to assess your own life by these standards of behaviour. Notice that Paul is talking mainly about attitudes.
2. Glance back at Romans 8:12-14 to see how Paul puts it another way. Pray that God will help you to put to death what is wrong in your life.
3. Paul was not just writing to individuals but to a church. They were to help each other to resist the claims of the old nature. In what ways recently have you helped another Christian to exercise the qualities of a restored nature?

**Think** of some way in which this week you will be able to help another Christian to live a holy life, the kind of life God expects from someone whose fallen nature has been restored. Remember however that we do not do this in our own strength. God's Spirit within us is working to make us like Jesus, who came to show us what perfect human nature was meant to be.

**Pray** for the grace to help your Christian friend and to do so in His strength.

### Weekend review

Over the weekend look back over your notes to trace the progression of human nature. Then read Romans 5-8 in one sitting. This summarizes what God has done in restoring our nature. Use it as a basis for worship.