

Lesson 1

Man Is a Tri-unity

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MAN IS UNIQUE

God created everything in the heavens and in the earth. Nothing exists in the physical realm that was not created by God. God created man unique—a spiritual being:

*Then God said, “**Let Us make man in Our image**, according to **Our likeness**; and let them **rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” And God created man **in His own image, in the image of God He created him**; male and female He created them.* (Ge.1:26-27 NASB)

Not only did God create man to rule over His creation, but God also made man in the image and likeness of Himself. Every human bears the likeness of God:

*This is the written account of Adam’s line. When God created man, **he made him in the likeness of God**. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them “man”. When Adam had lived 130 years, **he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image**; and he named him Seth.* (Ge.5:1-3 NIV)

God is a tri-unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man is in the likeness of God because man is also a tri-unity of soul, body, and spirit. No other earthly creature was created a spiritual being like God:

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse **men, who have been made in God’s likeness**.* (Ja.3:9 NIV)

We can conclude that man was set above the rest of creation because of his unique design and authority. With all the other creatures, God spoke them into being; but with the creation of man, He used a personal touch:

*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**.* (Ge.2:7 KJV)

NOTES:

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

1. What did God imply when He said, “Let us make man in our likeness” (Ge.1:26 NIV)?
2. What differentiates man from the rest of creation?
3. What causes the death of a person?
4. Why can’t our bodies live for eternity?
5. How do our bodies become corrupt?
6. List the three elements that aid in the formation of our souls?
7. What are the three functions of our souls? How do these functions interact with each other?
8. What is saved when we believe on Jesus?

God made man from two elements: the dust and the Spirit/breath of God. When God combined these elements, He created a living soul. The dust, soul, and spirit represent the three distinct parts of man: body, soul, and spirit:

*May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit and soul and body** be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1Th.5:23 NRSV)

Because each of us has a body, a soul, and a spirit, we are a tri-unity like God. For God is a tri-unity of Father, Son, and Spirit. Man’s body was created to enable him to relate to the physical world; man’s soul was created to be the very essence of his being; and man’s spirit was created to enable man to relate to God. Animals do not have spirits. When they die, they cease to exist:

*The Egyptians are human, and not God; their **horses are flesh, and not spirit.*** (Isa.31:3 NRSV)

The spirit of man separates him from the animals because his spirit enables him to understand creation with higher level functioning. This functioning allows him to rule over the earth. For instance, man has the ability to alter his environment (building a house and heating it with fuel), but animals instinctively adapt to their environment (digging a den). Because man has a spirit, he has the creative ability to process information in order to resolve situations:

*But **it is a spirit in man**, And the breath of the Almighty **gives them understanding.*** (Job 32:8 NASB)

This distinction between man and animals can be seen in the first task that God gave Adam—to assign names for the animals. Animals could not accomplish this creative task:

*And out of the ground the LORD God **formed every beast** of the field and **every bird** of the sky, and brought them **to the man to see what he would call them.*** (Ge.2:19-20 NASB)

We must understand human conception in order to understand the uniqueness of man. Human conception is not just the uniting of egg with sperm. Conception also consists of a spirit being placed in the embryo. This God-given spirit signifies God’s responsibility for the conception of life in a woman’s womb:

*Thus says **the Lord, who** stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and **forms the spirit of man within him.*** (Zec.12:1 NKJV)

A baby without a spirit is stillborn because the Spirit of God is the One Who sustains life in a fertilized egg. The baby does not grow by happenstance but by the workmanship of God:

*For You **formed my inward parts**; You **wove me in my mother's womb**. I will give thanks to You, for **I am fearfully and wonderfully made**; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.*

(Ps.139:13-16 NASB)

God gives life to babies by giving each baby a life-giving spirit:

*The **spirit of God has made me**, and the **breath of the Almighty gives me life**.*

(Job 33:4 NRSV)

In this way, God not only created the first man and woman but continues to create people by giving life in the womb through His Spirit. We do not die because our bodies cease to function; rather, we die because our spirits leave our bodies:

*For **as the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is dead also.*

(Ja.2:26 KJV)

God retains ownership of our spirits. When He gives a spirit, He creates a life. When He takes a spirit away, He ends a life in this physical world. Both are acts of God:

*If it were his intention and he **withdrew his spirit and breath**, all **mankind would perish together** and man would return to the dust.*

(Job 34:14-15 NIV)

Since God controls the giving and taking of our spirits, God is the One Who retains ownership of our spirits:

*May the LORD, the **God of the spirits of all mankind**, appoint a man over this community.*

(Nu.27:16 NIV)

Once life is conceived, it is eternal and cannot be destroyed. In death, the spirit returns to God:

*Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and **the spirit will return to God who gave it**.*

(Ec.12:7 NASB)

Since God retains ownership of our spirits, we are accountable to Him. The story of Jairus' daughter is an example of God's control of man's spirit. When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, her spirit had already departed and had to re-enter her body in order for her to return to life:

The body possesses five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Through these senses, we perceive the world around us; but the perceived information is processed by our souls. The soul's intellect gathers the information from the five senses and processes it; the emotion decides what one feels like doing; and the will dictates to the body how to respond to the intellect and emotion. Since the Greek word for "soul" can also be translated "life," the following verse equates the life with the soul of a person:

*Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry **about your life** ^[soul], what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. **Life** ^[soul] **is more than food**, and the body more than clothes."*

(Lk.12:22-23 NIV)

When we die, our bodies remain in the ground and return to dust; but our souls are eternal:

*Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, **the salvation of your souls**.*

(1Pe.1:8-9 NRSV)

Without Christ, our new eternal bodies with our souls will spend eternity in the lake of fire. People experience a physical death, and then they can experience an eternal death:

*You should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering **will save the sinner's soul from death** and will cover a multitude of sins.*

(Ja.5:19-20 NRSV)

Since a person's soul and spirit will live forever while his body will return to the earth, his soul will be separated from his physical body. However, his spirit and soul are inseparable. We need to distinguish the thoughts of our souls from the voice of God in our spirits:

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, **it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit**, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

(He.4:12 NIV)

Therefore, our bodies connect our souls with the earth through the five senses; however, our spirits were originally and intentionally created to connect our souls with God.

God has given each of us different strengths: intellect, emotional stability, or determination. A life controlled only by the soul is similar to an animal's life. Animals have a form of intellect similar to the intellect of our souls. For example, a dog can be smart or dumb. However, human intellect allows us to collect and process information:

- *How long shall I **take counsel in my soul**, having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?* (Ps.13:2 NASB)
- *I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works, **and my soul knows it very well.***
(Ps.139:14 NASB)

The soul is the source of our emotions and desires. Animals have similar emotions like happiness or sadness. We may intellectually know the correct response, but our emotions ultimately dictate our actions. Our emotions influence our desires, which direct our actions:

- *"But his flesh will be in pain over it, and **his soul will mourn over it.**"*
(Job 14:22 NKJV)
- ***Why are you in despair, O my soul?** And why have you become disturbed within me?*
(Ps.42:5 NASB)

The will is the cognitive part of our souls and enacts our thoughts and feelings. Similar to humans, an animal can be either strong-willed or compliant/easy to train. Our wills drive us to action or inaction:

- ***Our soul waits** for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.*
(Ps.33:20 NASB)
- *So that **my soul chooses** strangling And death rather than my body.*
(Job 7:15 KJV)

Each person's soul is dominated by one faculty while the other two faculties are less dominant. How a soulful "Christian" chooses which church to attend exemplifies the way that the dominant faculty of a person's soul influences his actions. If intellect is dominant, a person will choose an evangelical church in which knowledge is valued. If emotion is dominant, he will choose a charismatic church in which feelings through experiences are valued. Yet, if will is dominant, he will usually choose a fundamental church in which the observance of rules is stressed. In conclusion, our soul's formation (personality, preferences, and past experiences) and faculties (intellect, emotion, and will) determine who we are as individuals.

*But he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" **Her spirit returned, and she got up at once.** Then he directed them to give her something to eat.*
(Lk.8:54-55 NRSV)

Our spirits are eternal. Hence, the question of "will we live eternally" changes to "where will we spend eternity." God honored man by making him a spiritual being, supreme over creation. Man's spirit enables man to reason, but animals cannot reason because they do not have spirits. In conclusion, man is a spiritual being made in the likeness of God and designed to dwell with Him forever.

MAN IS BODY

To relate to the physical world, the body has five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Without our senses, we would not be able to interact with the world. If we did not have these five senses and were left to ourselves, we would physically die. The body is an essential component of man because it houses man's soul and spirit. No human life can be created without a physical frame:

*I think it is right to refresh your memory as long **as I live in the tent of this body**, because I know that **I will soon put it aside**, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.*
(2Pe.1:13-14 NIV)

Paul's life was contained in the tent of his body which contained his soul and spirit. Our bodies are temporal and were given to us for life on this earth:

*What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*
(1Co.15:50 NRSV)

The physical body will die, but the soul will live forever:

*You shall beat him with a rod, **and deliver his soul from hell.***
(Pr.23:14 NKJV)

Man's spirit also lives forever because his spirit separates from his body and returns to God when he physically dies:

*For **as the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is dead also.*
(Ja.2:26 KJV)

Our souls express the essence of who we are. However, man's soul also enacts his sinful desires through his body. Consequently, man's body is corrupted by sin:

*Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—**hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*** (Jd.1:22-23 NIV)

Before our spirits were given life in Christ, our souls lived for the pleasing of our bodily senses. Pleasing the senses became man's focus in life. But eventually, man became bored with common pleasures and began to search for new experiences. Our souls' sinful desires warped our natural needs, causing us to sin against God's intended purpose for our bodies. Our bodies were not the cause of our sins but were merely the instruments that enacted the sinful desires of our souls. Our souls' control of our bodies can be understood with an example of a car. Just as a car without a driver cannot go anywhere, a person without a soul (brain dead) cannot do anything. A car may swerve off the road and kill a man, but the car did not commit the crime. The driver killed the man through his control of the car. Similarly, even though our bodies enact the sins, it is our sinful souls that control our bodies:

*For what the law was powerless to do because **it was weakened by the sinful nature**, God did by sending **his own Son in the likeness of sinful humanity** to be a sin offering. And so **he condemned sin in human flesh.*** (Ro.8:3-4 TNIV)

Since our sinful natures dictated the actions that our bodies committed, our bodies were enslaved to sin through sin's control of our souls:

*We know that our **old self** was crucified with him so that **the body of sin** might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin.* (Ro.6:6 NRSV)

The body was not the cause of sin: it was simply the instrument that carried out the soul's pursuit of gratification through sinful desires. Man's body was merely the slave of his sinful soul:

*The spirit is willing, but **the body is weak.*** (Mt.26:41 NIV)

Since our bodies were corrupted by sin, we must leave our corrupted earthly tents to enter heaven. Our earthly bodies were not designed to enter heaven: they were designed to connect us to the present world. Consequently, our physical bodies will not enter heaven:

*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for **the things which are seen are temporal**, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* (2Co.4:18-5:1 NASB)

When we die, our physical bodies return to dust:

*If it were his intention and **he withdrew his spirit** and breath, all mankind would perish together and **man would return to the dust.*** (Job 34:14-15 NIV)

We are either on the earth in the physical body or in heaven with the Lord, but we are never in both places at the same time:

*So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are **at home in the body** we are **away from the Lord**—for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather **be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*** (2Co.5:6-9 NRSV)

When we die, our bodies separate from our souls and spirits. This separation proves that man is a tri-unity:

*Then the **dust will return to the earth** as it was, and **the spirit will return to God** who gave it.* (Ec.12:7 NKJV)

In the resurrection, we will receive new spiritual bodies. Our new heavenly bodies will last for eternity and will not suffer sickness, injury, or death:

*So will it be **with the resurrection of the dead**. The body that is sown is perishable, **it is raised imperishable**; it is sown in dishonor, **it is raised in glory**; it is sown in weakness, **it is raised in power**; it is sown a natural body, **it is raised a spiritual body**. If there is a natural body, **there is also a spiritual body.*** (1Co.15:42-44 NIV)

Therefore, our physical bodies connect us to the physical world through our five senses.

OUR SOUL

The soul is the third part of the tri-unity of man and is the essence of who we are. Identical twins can share the same DNA but have totally different personalities. Each twin has a unique character which is developed through time and experiences. Likewise, every person has different preferences: a favorite color, a style of music, or a preferred food. Most of these preferences are not wrong, just different. People are also shaped by their pasts: their parents' coping skills, tragic or cruel experiences, and supportive relationships. The past is not necessarily evil, but it does determine who people are. Man's soul is composed of not only his **soul's formation** (personality, preferences, and past experiences) but also his **soul's faculties** (intellect, emotion, and will).