

BEING HUMAN

INTRODUCTION

The first three modules in this series provide a framework for making sense of the various dimensions of our lives.

The Book of Genesis opens with the words, “In the beginning, God....” Therefore, in this *Scriptural Roots of Commerce* series, we started with God. In particular, *The God of Commerce*.

Let’s recall from Module 1 that God’s active presence in our lives should make four foundational differences: our false allegiances or idols are destroyed, replaced by the fear of the Lord, so that we live for God’s glory and learn to worship Him.

This module continues with *Being Human*. The interplay between God and Mankind is at the heart of reality. Without an accurate picture of both, we will not have a biblical worldview. We will not be able to live authentically or to participate with God in His purposes. Theology, “the study of God,” needs to fuse with anthropology, “the study of mankind.” Only then will we be ready to look into *Seeking the Kingdom*, which is the focus of Module 3. It will provide the setting for the right ordering of our lives.

In starting with these two modules, we follow the reformer John Calvin who began his *Institutes of The Christian Religion* in 1536 with the words, “Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”

A realistic understanding of human nature is vital, if we are to live and prosper in the marketplace. By “understanding,” we mean more than gathering data. To understand is to observe and experience with the totality of our minds and hearts. This will draw us into a passionate and lasting relationship with the living God.

In the light of the framework established in these first three modules, we will go on in Modules 4 through 6 to examine the practical interplay of three everyday essentials: people, work and material things. How we integrate them will shape the quality and meaningfulness of our lives.

Our purpose in this complete series of studies is to help build fresh, biblical foundations for our lives, so that we can fruitfully participate with God in His eternal enterprise—and do so in the midst of business, social, civic and family demands.

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God takes the initiative in all that shapes and instructs mankind. Indeed, we are made for His glory.

Incredibly, God persists in pursuing us because He loves us and yearns for our friendship. In spite of our wandering eyes and ungrateful hearts, He still wants us for Himself. He works towards the end of history, when He can say, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God”—Revelation 21:3.

Are we worth such hot pursuit? Why does He lavish so much attention on us? How do we fit in God’s great program? Indeed, who are we? We need answers to these questions, if we are to make sense of the lives we lead and to position ourselves for lasting success.

Because God takes the initiative, the early sections of this module focus on how He launches us into His world. We are created, designed, tasked, sustained and blessed.

However, even before His creation of the universe, God Himself existed in relationship. Section 1 looks at the glimpses of His eternal and relational heart that the Scriptures provide. We will discover that we were and are at the center of His plans, from the very beginning. Indeed the universe was made for us. We are privileged beyond description!

Sections 2 through 5 examine our original specification and God's perspective on humanity. Who are we and what should be our response to our Maker?

Tragically, we turned away from God's love and sought to please ourselves instead. Section 6 surveys this catastrophe, which damaged everything...and covered us with shame and guilt.

Yet, God is nothing if not persistent. He not only supplied a way out of our predicament but also gave us His Son, the ideal Man, Jesus Christ. In sacrificing this exemplary person so that every human dilemma could be solved, He emphatically confirmed His deep commitment to the human race. Through Jesus, we can know (Section 7) that we are valued, reconciled and restored.

But the battle continues! Each day brings new issues and fresh tensions. So, where do we stand? Are we a permanent paradox, a living dichotomy? Can we live as:

- fallen, yet magnificent
- guilty, yet forgiven
- judged, yet loved
- rebellious, yet redeemed

Can we hope to exist in peace and harmony? Not by our own efforts, but through the reconciling power of Christ and the transforming energy of His Spirit. Section 8 describes our human realities and lays out the only solution.

Section 9, finally, leads us forward in obedient freedom to our God.

NOTE

The term Mankind in this module refers to human beings, both male and female. It is equivalent to the human race or humanity. Occasionally, the generic Man is also used, in accordance with the translators of the New International Version of the Scriptures.

Our Christian religion is unusual because it is one in which God takes the initiative. He sets the scene and is the principal actor, throughout history. This fact is reflected in the arrangement of this module. Sections 1–5 and 7 explore His initiative towards us, and Sections 6, 8, 9 examine our response.