



RECLAIMED

STUDY GUIDE

HOW JESUS RESTORES OUR HUMANITY
IN A DEHUMANIZED WORLD

Reclaimed

How Jesus Restores Our Humanity in a Dehumanized World

Reader's Guide

Part 1: What is Human?

Chapter One: Digital Genocide

Key Points:

- The horrible crimes people commit against one another are made possible through dehumanization, seeing others as less than human.
- The internet has given us a whole new world of opportunities for dehumanizing those who are different from ourselves.
- In order to identify dehumanization and correct our view of humanity, we first have to understand what is human.
- The question “What is human?” can only be answered by first understanding who God is.

Key Questions:

1. Have you ever felt dehumanized by others? Describe an experience you've had where you have seen dehumanization first hand.
2. On page 12, Andy writes: “The truth is that people do not murder people.” What does this statement mean? Do you agree that dehumanization is a necessary step on the path to harming others? Why or why not?
3. Andy was labeled unsafe and uninvited from speaking at a high school because of an interview with a controversial figure. Silencing dissenting voices has been coined “Cancel Culture.” What positives and negatives do you see in our Cancel Culture? How do we disagree with people and love them at the same time? Why does our culture see these as mutually exclusive?
4. Read James 3:7-10. Discuss how dehumanizing language changes how we view and treat ourselves and others. Where have you witnessed dehumanizing language in our culture, and even in your own conversations and thought life?
5. Page 16 says, “Social media has become a war-torn wasteland of digital genocide. The digital era presents a unique challenge because never has it been so easy to delete another's humanity.” What kinds of wise practices could help you avoid the temptation to dehumanize others online?
6. What did you learn in this chapter about dehumanization and humanization? Do you believe that God is essential to the way that we view ourselves and others? Why or why not?

Chapter Two: Caged Bird in Bangkok

Key Points:

- In order to have our perspective changed like Noi's was and to begin to see ourselves and other people correctly, we first need to see God correctly.
- When God is denied as the source of creation, the universe becomes purposeless and humanity becomes nothing more than stardust adrift in the vastness of a random universe.
- Humans intuitively understand that there is a difference between a collection of parts and the purposeful arrangement of those parts.
- Jesus taught that humanity was created for the purpose of relationship.

Key Questions:

1. What part of Noi's story did you identify with?
2. How does our culture answer the question: what is human? How have you seen this question wrestled with in our movies, tv shows, and books?
3. What does Andy mean, on page 29, that "science killed the scientist?" Can a purely physical universe account for all of human experience? Why or why not?
4. The lego illustration reminds us that there is a difference between the parts that something is made of and the purpose that something is made for. How does this apply to humans? Discuss how both secular culture and Christianity answer this question.
5. Read Mark 12:28-31. What does this passage have to say about humanity's purpose? How do you see that purpose reflected in the life of Jesus?
6. Read the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. How does the question, "Who is my neighbor?" reveal the man's heart? How does Jesus' answer challenge our view of others?

Part 2: What Is the Value of Human Life?

Chapter Three: Furbabies

Key Points:

- Dehumanization, like the kind that happened in the Congo, occurs when we begin to equate human beings with objects or animals.
- By removing God as the purposeful creator of humanity, our culture has removed the foundation from which to argue for inherent human value.
- The irony is that our culture loves the idea of universal human rights, yet this same culture also rests on a worldview in which inherent value and equality are delusions which can contribute to a stable society but which have no objective truth.
- Only Christianity, with God as the author of life, can endow humanity with worth, value, and rights which can never be taken away.

Key Questions:

1. Why do you think people love their pets so much? What does a healthy and an unhealthy relationship with an animal look like?
2. How do we draw the boundaries for who or what qualifies for human value? Discuss both the secular and Christian responses to this issue. How does giving human value and rights to animals, technology, and nature lead to the dehumanization of people?
3. Is it right to remove the statue of King Leopold II? How do we remember the past without venerating it?
4. What is the logic of Aristotle's slavery and Galton's eugenics? How is this logic playing itself out in our culture today? How does a Christian worldview change our perspective?
5. Why is dehumanization so well documented in books, letters or photographs, especially from the perpetrator's perspective? What kind of mindset leads people to not be ashamed of how they treat others?
6. Most people haven't thought about it, but a belief in evolution implies that it is an ongoing process that continues even today. What are some ways that secular culture deals with the implications of continuing human evolution? What effect do you think this will have on human value in the future?

Chapter Four: She Has a Hole in Her Heart

Key Points:

- Our society pays lip service to inherent human value, and yet our media, social norms, voting habits, and online behaviour continually contradict that truth and reveal an unspoken hierarchy of value.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights got half the story right: it recognizes the truth that all humans have inherent dignity, equality, and inalienable rights, yet it lacks the foundation to explain why it's true.
- Christianity teaches that every person is loved by God and created in his image, and this provides a foundation of human value that cannot be taken away
- Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the greatest conceivable demonstration of human value and it changes how we experience human value in our daily lives.

Key Questions:

1. What aspects of Matlynn's story can you relate to?
2. Why do you think that people tend to agree that humanity has inherent value, equality, and inalienable rights? If we do all agree, then why is there still so much dehumanization in our world?
3. Read Genesis 1. What does it mean to be made in the image of God? How does God answer the "why" that supports the UDHR's declaration of inherent value, equality, and inalienable rights?
4. What's problematic about Gandhi's view that human rights come from being a good person? How do you see this playing out in our culture today?
5. Residential schools are one example of the church dehumanizing. Should Christians hide from our mistakes? What are other examples of dehumanization in the church, both historically and today? Do the dehumanizing mistakes of Christians discount the humanizing message of Jesus?
6. Where have you become caught in the comparison trap and lost sight of your own value? How does the life and teaching of Jesus encourage you?

Part 3: What Leads to Human Flourishing

Chapter Five: Lonely Planet

Key Points:

- People around the world are giving up on traditional paths to human flourishing and are rejecting relationships, both with God and with other people.
- With technology as our god, technology likewise becomes the answer to what will lead to human flourishing - it promises to solve all of our relational desires quickly and conveniently.
- When we outsource relationships to technology, we outsource the very thing we were created for and desperately need - real relationships that are messy, difficult, and ultimately life-giving.
- We will never be fully human or treat others as fully human in a way that leads to our flourishing and theirs until we take our focus off of ourselves and put it onto God.

Key Questions:

1. What did Andy's cab driver mean by "human flavor"? How have people lost their "human flavour" in your country and city?
2. In our world today, how do people define a flourishing life? How is this different from what Christianity teaches about human flourishing?
3. How is technology changing the relational landscape? In what ways is technology both beneficial and harmful to relationships?
4. As a Christian, is it okay not to marry or have children? How does motivation play into the answer to this question? How can a Christian be committed to relationship without getting married or having kids?
5. Are you lonely? Have you ever been lonely? How has your answer to this question changed as the world has gone increasingly digital? How do both the secular and the Christian answers to human flourishing impact loneliness?
6. On page 102, Andy writes, "Most of the time, we don't create technology that helps us to worship God and better reflect his image. Instead, we make technology that mirrors our own image, and we are captivated by it. Like Narcissus, we will stare at that screen until we die." In what way do we make technology in our own image? How can humans ensure our technology serves us, and not the other way around?

Chapter Six: Human Flavor

Key Points:

- A life without God always leads to dehumanization - a tasteless world. Yet following Jesus acts like salt, restoring life's flavor and our human flourishing.
- The Bible tells us that we flourish when we rightly reflect the image of God in which we were created, and that if we want to know what God looks like, we are to look to his son, Jesus.
- The implication of the Trinity is that people have been created in a relational image and thus when God made mankind, he made us with relational needs.
- Sometimes flourishing as God defines it does not look like flourishing to us. When God promises that following him will lead to flourishing, it's important to remember that he is less concerned about our temporary happiness and comfort here on earth than he is about our eternal good.

Key Questions:

1. What part of Pastor Lee's story impacted you most?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says, "you are the salt of the earth?" In what ways has human life lost its flavor? How does following Jesus change the taste of life?
3. Imagine that each baby is born with a gardening tag tied around its wrist, giving instructions for their flourishing. What do you think it should say?
4. On page 114, Andy writes: "A church that does not love and serve each other is not a church, and a person who is not committed to community with God and his people is not a Christian." Most Christians agree about the importance of community with God. But is a commitment to other Christians a necessary part of the Christian life? Why or why not?
5. Read Matthew 6:19-21. Based on this verse, what are you investing your life in? Consider what you spend your time and money on. Is it worth it?
6. On page 122, Andy writes: "the idea that hope, love, meaning, and beauty can go hand in hand with suffering has been echoed in the lives of Christians for thousands of years." Discuss a story of suffering that has inspired you. Can a flourishing life include suffering? Why or why not?

Part 4: How Should Humans Live?

Chapter Seven: Of Wedding and Funerals

Key Points:

- Without God, there is no such thing as good and evil, right and wrong. In the absence of a divine standard, morality can only be culturally constructed, which means that it can't possibly be for all people for all time.
- A determined universe and a random universe are two sides of the same coin: both eliminate free will and absolve humans of responsibility for their actions.
- Morality cannot exist as just a fact of the universe, like gravity or mathematics. If so, we couldn't reliably know what those moral facts are and we wouldn't be required, through force or duty, to follow them.
- In Christianity, morality is not a fact. It is a person—God. Morality or right relationship flows from God's character.

Key Questions:

1. Relationships are important to humanity - but it is a certain type of relationship that we need. How do wedding vows reveal the type of relationship that humans long for? What does our failure to live up to a standard teach us about ourselves?
2. Our culture is driven by the idea of social justice, but who decides what is just and unjust in a world that has erased God?
3. Why is it important that humans have free will? What changes in a culture that no longer believes in personal responsibility?
4. What is the purpose of putting people in prison? Should we even put people in prison? Why or why not? How do our foundational beliefs about God, free will, and morality change how our country makes and enforces laws?
5. Think of examples where humankind's idea of what is morally right and wrong has changed over time. How is our current cultural consensus changing? How is that change being driven by our beliefs about God and ourselves?
6. On page 144, Andy claims that we have duty to morality because God is a person, not a fact. How does the personhood of God affect how you live? What about the personhood of others?

Chapter Eight: Skull and Crossbones

Key Points:

- Our culture offers a variety of paradise narratives (harvesting, regrowing, or escaping the garden), each saying something specific about what paradise looks like and thus how humans should live.
- We intuitively know that the key to paradise is good relationships. God desires real relationships with us, which means that evil must be a real possibility.
- God's law flows from his character. If we believe that God is wise and good and loves us, we'll gladly follow his rules, because we know doing so will lead to our good.
- Only in Jesus are we free to be fully human with the purpose, value, and flourishing that we were made for. We were made to be loved by God, to love him, and to love each other for all eternity.

Key Questions:

1. What part of John's story did you find the most meaningful?
2. Compare and contrast these two questions: "Why does God allow evil?" and "Why does God allow me to do evil?"
3. In what ways do you see our culture's three garden narratives being played out today? What do you envision paradise to look like? How does this differ from paradise the way that the Bible describes it?
4. On page 157, Andy talks about the Best Friend Forever Police and says, "The depth of relationship between two people will always be proportional to the measure of freedom between them." How does freedom affect your own relationships, with others - your boss, kids, friends, family - and with God? What does that freedom tell us about the depth of evil we experience in this world?
5. Read Colossians 1:28-29. What does the Apostle Paul mean by the word "perfect"? How does Jesus fulfill what it means to be perfectly human?
6. What does the purpose of humanity teach us about heaven and hell? How have you experienced a taste of those realities in your life already?

Further Reading:

Historical and Cultural Background:

- Less Than Human by David Livingstone Smith
- Alone Together by Sherry Turkle
- King Leopold's Ghost by Adam Hochschild
- Spectacle by Pamela Newkirk
- For the Thrill of It by Simon Baatz
- Ordinary Men by Christopher R. Browning
- Utopia and Terror in the 20th Century - a Great Courses class taught by Professor Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius

Christian View of Humanity:

- Love Thy Body by Nancy R. Pearcey
- Christianity: The True Humanism by J.I. Packer and Thomas Howard
- Why People Matter by John F. Kilner
- Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God by John F. Kilner