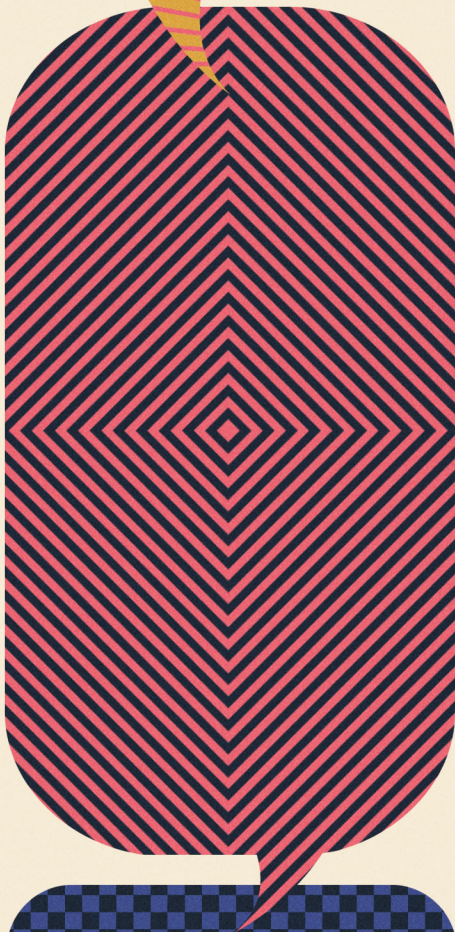


WHAT DO I SAY WHEN...?

A Parents' Guide
to Navigating
Cultural Chaos for
Children & Teens

ANDREW T. WALKER
& CHRISTIAN WALKER



“Christian parents urgently need help as they lead their children and teenagers through the white-water rapids of our increasingly hostile culture. Andrew and Christian Walker know what they are talking about, and they are both sweet Christian parents and faithful Christian thinkers. They are brilliantly insightful, and this book is perfectly timed.”

R. Albert Mohler Jr., President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Our team at Focus on the Family is seeing an increasingly common theme in the calls and correspondence we receive: Christian parents are deeply concerned about the culture and its impact on their kids. These moms and dads are looking for help discussing tough topics with their children, which is why I’m so encouraged that Andrew and Christian Walker have released this timely and engaging book, *What Do I Say When . . . ?* I’m confident many parents will refer to this volume often as they point their kids toward the Bible’s teaching on challenging issues.”

Jim Daly, President, Focus on the Family

“Andrew and Christian Walker provide an incredibly rich and deeply practical resource for Christian parents in their book *What Do I Say When . . . ?* The Walkers are a perfect pair to pen such a resource with their educational and vocational backgrounds, as well as their intentionality with parenting. They have dug deep into Scripture and brought forth a timely resource for parents navigating the current chaos in our culture. I encourage parents to pick up this resource and enjoy!”

Lauren McAfee, Ministry Director, Hobby Lobby Ministry Investments; Founder, Stand for Life; coauthor, *Beyond Our Control*

“This is a rare book that is practical, wise, robustly theological, and usable at the dinner table. Andrew and Christian Walker have given a profound gift to those of us parenting in this chaotic cultural moment. And the stories are the best part, especially for those of us who don’t always know how to get a conversation started with our children.”

John Stonestreet, President, Colson Center; coauthor, *A Practical Guide to Culture*

“As a mom to two young kids, this book is exactly what I need to navigate tough, cultural conversations from a biblical worldview. It’s more important than ever to be confident in the theological and biblical truth behind *why* we believe what we do when explaining things to our kids. Kids today want answers they can stand on. This book delivers.”

Ericka Andersen, author, *Reason to Return: Why Women Need the Church and the Church Needs Women*

“*What Do I Say When . . . ?* is a needed book for all pastors who are looking for biblical, gospel-centered, and practical resources to equip their church. I plan to order a box to give to the parents in our church to help them disciple their children in these challenging times. The book is faithful to God’s word and easy to implement. My wife and I have already used it in our own parenting.”

Jason Dees, Senior Pastor, Christ Covenant, Atlanta, Georgia

“What a truly helpful and delightfully practical book! In a culture of chaos, it’s more important than ever that Christians know how to discuss difficult topics with their kids in a way that is faithful to the truth of Scripture. The Walkers have provided an outstanding resource that will give you the biblical clarity and confidence you need to have some of the conversations that matter most today, all in a mercifully short format. *What Do I Say When . . . ?* achieves the perfect balance of depth and accessibility that every busy parent needs.”

Natasha Crain, speaker; podcaster; author, *Keeping Your Kids on God’s Side*

“Parents often discover, to their dismay, that their children are asking difficult questions about thorny issues that they didn’t even realize existed. Christian parents need trusted voices to help them apply biblical truths and godly wisdom to the ethical confusion and cultural insanity that the world relentlessly throws at their kids. Thank God that Andrew and Christian Walker have written an indispensable guide for families to face the hard things head-on with a confidence that the Bible is sufficient to navigate the troubled waters of twenty-first-century chaos. This book is a lifeline for drowning parents!”

Hershael W. York, Victor and Louise Lester Professor of Christian Preaching and Dean of the School of Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“As a pastor I love this book, and as a dad I’m thrilled. If churches and parents won’t disciple their children, the world will, and the Walkers have given us a center-bullseye resource to apply the lordship of Christ to the chaos of our kids’ culture.”

Josh Howerton, Senior Pastor, Lakepointe Church, Rockwall, Texas

What Do I Say When . . . ?

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*A Parents' Guide to Navigating Cultural
Chaos for Children and Teens*

Andrew T. Walker and Christian Walker

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

What Do I Say When . . . ? A Parents' Guide to Navigating Cultural Chaos for Children and Teens

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*We dedicate this book to our daughters,
Caroline, Catherine, and Charlotte.*

You each bring us more joy than you can ever possibly understand.

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EVERY BOOK IS a labor of time, love, and frustration. What thing worth doing in life isn't?

We want to say thank you to a number of people who supported us in the drafting of this book. We want to thank our agent Andrew Wolgemuth for all of his help in overseeing the development of this book from start to finish. Champ Thornton at Crossway has been nothing but a cheerful encouragement to us. We also want to thank friends who reviewed the manuscript and provided us with feedback: Whitney Bruce, Dean Inserra, Carey Murphy, Morgan Nichter, and Erik Reed. And of course, our own moms and dads (Fred and Sue Walker and Duncan and Lynda Locke) for their pursuit of having their children in church every Sunday and Wednesday when it would have been convenient to do otherwise.

Introduction

WE ARE LIVING IN a moment of rapid cultural change that is leaving everyday Christians and Christian parents completely flat-footed. Change is not new, of course, but historians could point to recent developments in the culture that signal how fast that change is happening, compared to past times.

As I (Andrew) speak across the United States, one of the most frequently asked questions I get is: “How do Christian parents equip their children to face the cultural challenges in front of them? And how do you do it in age-appropriate ways?”

One of the answers I always give goes like this:

You must catechize and disciple your children at ever-younger ages intentionally, or else the culture will do so unintentionally and with even greater effectiveness.

If you don't teach your children, the world will.

Moreover, if you think two hours per week in church and the well-intentioned efforts of your youth pastor excuse you from having to talk about these topics (some of them *very* awkward), then I regret to inform you that your outlook needs to change.

In response, heads always nod, and low-murmured voices give near-unanimous affirmation to my answer. What I say out loud, all parents seem to internally recognize themselves. But that raises the important question: What are the topics needing to be discussed, and what's the best way to discuss them?

That is what this book intends to offer to weary parents: a resource to equip you to equip your children. If you aren't discipling your children, we can be sure that secular classrooms, peer groups, and social media will.

It is really difficult to be parents in today's culture. We feel this ourselves. Actually, every parent in every culture in every generation has probably had to face difficulties of their own and said the same thing. But today's culture seems to be moving at such a fast rate that it feels impossible to keep up with what's happening. It's difficult to stay on top of discipling our children to understand and rely on God's word. We hope and pray that we are discipling our children to use their knowledge of Scripture to stand firm against the war Satan is waging through mass cultural confusion.

It's all happening so fast that I (Christian) often feel left in the dust. Andrew will ask me often, "Did you hear *x*, *y*, *z* today on the news?" My response is usually, "No. I've been teaching since 7:00 a.m., helping our children with homework, cooking dinner, switching over laundry, and now we're putting kids to bed. When would I have had time to hear that?" He laughs and says, "I forget that you don't live in my world. It's amazing how our attentions can be so focused on different things." Not everyone lives in Andrew's world. He knows everything about everything almost exactly as it happens. He is an expert on culture and current events. And yet I live in the same house, literally sleep in the

same bed, and cannot keep up. I've tried to become an expert by osmosis, but I never feel as though I measure up.

I (Christian) need help. I want to do my best, but I am busy, tired, and don't know how to make the sun stay up and give me more time during the day (see Josh. 10:12–14). Does anyone else feel that way? I am no expert on today's constantly shifting culture, but I desperately want to help my children plant the Lord's word deep in their hearts, understand what's facing them in the culture today, and know how to stand against it both with God's love and truth. I wanted to be a part of writing this book so that I could have it for myself to use in my own home with my own children.

Let's be clear: this is not a parenting book from authors who have parenting all figured out. In fact, we are emphatic in telling friends that we are not writing a parenting book but a book for parents. The subtle difference is important: we haven't mastered the art of parenting. What we offer is a unique combination of expertise in thinking about what the Bible says about current issues facing Christians and how to translate those answers for everyday Christian parents to use conversationally with their children.

We are writing this book because we also need this book in our own home just as much as we want you to have this book in your home. We are parents of three young girls who ask us questions daily. We are parents who strive to lead our children to understand the way God created the universe and the way we fit into his world. We are parents who eagerly pray for their salvation. We need help with all of those things too!

So, if we as parents need this book too, what makes us think we're qualified to write it? We're only able to do this together! I (Andrew) teach Christian ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological

Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Therefore, I write, speak, and teach on cultural issues facing Christians, including some of today's most controversial topics, regularly. My experience has allowed me to help parents understand the ethical issues at hand and understand how God intended for us to interpret these issues according to his twofold revelation in (1) his revealed word that we call Scripture and (2) his revelation in nature and creation order. I (Christian) am a children's curriculum writer and educator in both children's ministry and elementary education settings. My experience has allowed me to understand how children learn best, and I've developed my abilities to communicate gospel truths to little hearts in developmentally and age-appropriate ways.

Accessible, Trustworthy, and Age-Appropriate

We want this resource to be accessible, trustworthy, and age-appropriate. First of all, busy parents need this book to be accessible. As busy parents ourselves, we know too well the difficulty of finding time to read lengthy books and process the material to disciple our children. We desire for this book to be a quick reference guide, a short and readable book for you to use to help guide the discipleship of your children.

Second, we pray that this book is trustworthy. We prayed over this book for months before beginning to write it. We asked the Lord to guide our words directly from his Scripture. These are not our thoughts about today's culture. God has revealed himself in his word and in the natural order of his creation. He had a plan from the beginning of his creation for all of creation. We learn of that plan in his word. We will be using his word and his good plan to define our responses to today's cultural issues. And

it's good to remember that as uncharted as culture seems today, these are not new ideas that the church is facing. The church has been facing these issues for centuries in some manner.

Lastly, we are writing this book to be age-appropriate. Certain ages can handle certain levels of understanding and comprehension of topics. As we said previously, it's difficult as busy parents to discern what levels of understanding are appropriate for our children after reading a lengthy book on a heavy topic. We want to help take the guesswork out of the way for you. Each cultural topic will be intentionally broken down into developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate levels of understanding for your children. Hopefully, this will help guide you in discipling your family in the most helpful and effective ways possible.

In this book, we have devoted ten chapters to ten important cultural topics facing children and families today. Not every topic that could be discussed is discussed, sadly. To do that, a much longer book would be necessary. But our goal for this book is to provide the essentials, not the last word on every subject. These chapters are quick reference guides that give the very basic foundations and introductions to these cultural topics. There is so much more to say and so much more to learn, but we wanted to give you the very basics to help you begin teaching and discipling your children.

Each chapter begins by introducing the topic. We then explain what God says about that topic and what should be laid as the biblical foundation for parents to understand. From there, each chapter moves into a portion for parents to use as a guide for talking with their children about the cultural topic. Because we believe the home is central to the development of the next

Christian generation, we're calling our sequence of conversational instruction "floors" that correspond to a home. Each chapter has three "floors" of biblical truths and conversation starters. Instead of having strict age guidelines, we are using "floors" to help guide you to determine where your child may best fit based on development, maturity, and age.

First-floor children are probably between the ages of four and eight, second-floor children are probably between the ages of eight and twelve, and third-floor children are probably between twelve and sixteen. If you think your child is ready for a more mature conversation, then move up to the next floor. If you think your child is not ready for a conversation, then move down to the floor below. The floors are not rigid and are intended to guide you in discussing the topics thoroughly as your child grows and help you to keep ahead of culture.

Remember that you want to be the first person to have the conversation with your child to be able to lay the biblical foundation. Otherwise, culture will form the foundation for you. Stay vigilant and keep ahead of culture.

Both a Defensive and Offensive Resource

We pray that this book will be used as a defensive and offensive resource.

I (Christian) need a quick reference defensive tool. When I drive home from school with the girls, there is so much chatter in the car: stories from the school day, observations of flags and signs in people's yards, and talk about movies and songs. All the chatter leads to questions about what things mean, the definition of new words, how people interact with each other, and so forth.

I am hit fast and furious with questions I need to answer and comments that I have to patrol for the various ages and levels of maturity of my daughters as I drive. I need answers to these questions. Some answers I have, sometimes I have no idea what to say, and other times I need help finding where to look in Scripture. Additionally for all of these responses, I need help figuring out how to answer them in age-appropriate ways for all three of our girls. If they all heard the same thing in the car, then they all need a solid, biblical answer. I need this book! I am going to find the corresponding cultural topics, quickly read the short chapter, then find the floor response for each child. I can defensively disciple the girls with biblical truths as they come to me with questions.

A Proactive Tool

We also pray that this book is used as a proactive tool. We hope to use this book as a family devotional tool. Each chapter includes one unifying Scripture verse that ties all of the biblical truths together. We want our entire family to memorize the verse as we learn about the cultural topic together. We use the biblical truths and conversation starters to guide our family devotional time. Maybe your family needs to focus on one chapter for a while because you're facing something specific. Perhaps you are about to encounter a gay family member at a family event and need to equip your children. Maybe your family would like to move through the book chapter by chapter. Just remember that you are the one who needs to lay the biblical foundation with your children.

Biblical truths could be referenced and recited for memory and mastery. Discussion starters could be used to check in on your

children's understanding or growing knowledge of a topic. There can be check-ins often to see if they have matured and need to begin deepening their biblical understanding by moving to the next "floor."

We want to offer one word about the types of arguments you're going to hear in this book. First, you must realize that if you want your children to survive with their faith intact in our present culture, it's going to require some level of study for both you and your children. Discipleship in today's culture requires a high degree of responsibility. We are, after all, no longer in a culture that just agrees with what Christians believe. A lot of Christian parenting literature does not make complete arguments. What Christian parenting books frequently do is make statements that the author just expects you to agree with. That's fine, but it's also incomplete. Some of the content you're going to read in our book may appear difficult or complex at first. We've tried to make complex arguments as simple as possible, but even then, you're going to have to dig in, read, ponder, and maybe even re-read if something is not immediately clear. That's inevitable when wading through difficult subjects. Issues in this book are not as much complex as they are simply controversial given the culture we live in. But let us encourage you: there is no greater investment of your time, focus, and energy than effort put forward on behalf of your children to build up their faith in order to thrive in our culture. You can do this.

One thing that we pray you remember is that God has given your precious children to you to protect and disciple. But he has not given you the power of salvation. Only God can rescue your children from their sin (Rom. 1:16). As parents we can do all of

INTRODUCTION

the right things, read all of the right books, send our kids to all of the right schools, have the most perfect family devotions (that's never happened at our house, but maybe in yours!)—but it will never be enough. We cannot save them. We should pray over our children, eagerly teach them his truth, and trust that God will be faithful to finish the good work that he has started (Phil. 1:6). We have a responsibility to train them up in righteousness (Deut. 6:4–7; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4), but only he can call them to salvation (Rom. 8:28–30). Mom and Dad, rest in him. Rest in his faithfulness. Rest in his love for your children, which is greater than even yours.

Human Dignity

ONE FALL SATURDAY our family went to run errands and then grabbed lunch afterward. As we were leaving the restaurant, a family was entering the restaurant. Our paths crossing, I noticed in the family was a young boy in a wheelchair with severe disabilities. We could tell the boy caught our young girls' attention (they did not awkwardly stare as much as just notice). When we got to the vehicle but before we drove off, I (Andrew) said to the girls, "Girls, I noticed that you saw that young boy in the wheelchair. How should we treat people who for whatever reason cannot use their legs or whose minds may not function properly?" To my delight, one daughter spoke up and said, "Well, God loves that person and that boy is made in God's image, so we should be kind and help where we can."

Perfect answer. That answer proved to me that it is those small conversations along the way that accumulate into a worldview. For a long time, we had been working to instill a concept in our children's minds that only Christianity can fully hold to—human dignity. We did not do this through assigning them books. We

have made the intentional plan to drop in these teachings when opportunities allow in the humdrum of daily life.

Christians cannot overlook the tremendous significance of this teaching. Christianity alone provides the best solution for a coherent reason to value a human person and the necessary authority to confidently guarantee it.

This is an idea that all societies require and that other thought systems or worldviews try (and fail) to develop on their own. Every society is governed by ideals that only Christianity can truly explain and resolve with definitive clarity.

At the heart of all political views, religious traditions, or cultural systems are beliefs, stated or unstated, about the value of the human being. Do human beings have actual moral value? Do humans have rights that actually matter? Or are humans mere carbon and water molecules that gained consciousness by sheer coincidence and blind chance? How does one arrive at the conclusion, a conclusion not subject to the whims of mere human opinion, that human beings bear a unique value and that this value should be recognized in and protected by law? What prevents a government from overpowering its own citizens and dispensing with them at will?

From beliefs about the appalling tragedy of the Holocaust to horror at America's past involvement with slavery, modern society hinges upon beliefs about human beings—that human beings are worthy of protection from threats of abuse, wanton endangerment, and tyranny. The question is: Can non-Christian systems arrive at a position of human dignity on their own that does not end up being arbitrary? For example: Why does modern America assign human dignity regardless of skin color such that racism is considered morally wrong (which it is), but the same

modern America overlooks human dignity on the basis of size and development and thus approves of abortion? There's an inconsistency at the root of modern America's dilemma on human dignity. Christianity has no such dilemma.

Generally people don't think that human dignity can exist apart from a profound appreciation for the human being as a special product of God's own making. Even atheists will admit this idea. As one atheist publicly acknowledged, "We may have to accept that the concept of the sanctity of human life is a Judeo-Christian notion which might very easily not survive Judeo-Christian civilization." The same author goes on to observe three options facing the atheist with the idea of human dignity. He writes,

The first option is to fall into the furnace [admitted despair in having no dignity ethic]. Another is to work furiously to nail down an atheist version of the sanctity of the individual. If that does not work, then there is only one other place to go. Which is back to faith, whether we like it or not.¹

Governments exist for the sake of protecting and facilitating the ability of human beings to live together without wantonly destroying one another. What any earthly political regime believes about the worth of human beings will impact how its people are treated. The question is not whether there will be a concept of dignity (or indignity) at the heart of our culture; the question is whose concept of dignity reigns supreme.

1 Douglas Murray, "Would Human Life Be Sacred in an Atheist World?," *The Spectator*, April 19, 2014, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/would-human-life-be-sacred-in-an-atheist-world->.

BIBLICAL TEACHING OVERVIEW

Human dignity. What is it? Dignity refers to the moral worth of a human being simply from existing—not from an attribute based on skin color, cognitive ability, athletic skill, age, height, location, or anything else. The good news of human dignity from the Christian worldview is that it is not parceled out by the sovereign decrees of human government or human opinion. There is nothing you or anyone can do to truly subtract from, or even add to, the dignity that someone possesses. We may think we can subtract dignity when we mock or insult someone. But because Christianity teaches that we do not bestow dignity upon a person (we only recognize it), it is impossible for us to truly take it away. Dignity resides within the person.

Human dignity exists as a result of humanity being made in God's image. Christians arrive at this conclusion about human dignity because of who makes human beings—God. Genesis 1:26–27 declares:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Though theologians debate the full meaning of “being made in God’s image,” what every theologian who honors the Bible

as God's word recognizes is that Scripture places a pronounced emphasis on the unique status of human beings compared to the rest of creation. As human beings we are not only existent and animate, we are beings whose faculties resemble God's: we can reason with our minds and relate to one another in love. We can organize our activities to reach preconceived goals.

Human dignity is not a mere social construct, brute fact, or convention arrived at by consensus or whatever majorities deem it to be. To be truly protected from arbitrary human opinion, dignity must be and *is* a divine concept that speaks about the unique status of human beings alongside the rest of God's creation. Because dignity is bestowed by God, it is issued with an unbreakable and unchangeable bond and guarantee. As there is no shadow of change in God, so there is no change in the value that God places on human beings.

There's an internal moral logic to the value that Scripture places on the identity and dignity of human beings. The fact that Scripture calls us to love our neighbor assumes we are to respect our neighbor's existence (Mark 12:30–31). Since Christians believe that dignity is the result of divine action, there is also a divine consequence. If you were asked why human beings have dignity, the answer is simply: "Because they do." That might sound like circular reasoning, but if dignity does not exist as a divinely brute fact of someone's existence, then dignity is something that can be added to and subtracted from based on the change in human opinion. Once that type of logic is introduced, it spells disaster for those whom people might recognize as having, perhaps, less dignity. It's no surprise that the history books are full of episodes of government wanting to get rid of people whose lives are considered a "drain" on society. If dignity is not an absolute property tied

to one's existence, whether that person—or group of people—is worth respecting can change from one person to another. Every imaginable human injustice has occurred because one group of human beings failed to respect the equal dignity of the other.

The idea of human dignity is a truly unique and revolutionary concept that Christianity introduced into the world. Before Judeo-Christian thought came to predominate in certain areas of the world, it was difficult to say *why* someone's existence should be respected. Christianity says that people are owed respect, honor, and their existence because God delights in creating humans. So much of what we take for granted as Christians living in today's world is built upon the tradition of human dignity that Christianity brought into the world. If we are to respect the so-called "rights" of other human beings, we do so in confidence that rights are real because human beings have real moral worth and moral aspects of their being that are worthy of protection. For example, the universities, hospitals, and the rule of law that so much of our society hinges upon stems from Christian beliefs about the dignity of the human person: that human beings are rational and thus education is valuable for its own sake, that human beings should be treated with healing compassion, and that human beings deserve equal protection under the law (Luke 6:31).

Human dignity stands as the foundation for Christian opposition to any assault on God's image bearers. Christian opposition to any number of social evils is based on our understanding of human dignity. Because all human beings are what they are—human beings made by God—we do not differentiate what is owed to persons because

of their skin color, cognitive ability, medical status, or anything else. Racism is abhorrent because it violates human dignity. Determining value based on skin color is as dumb as it is unjust. Euthanasia is evil because it permits killing people under a false concept of compassion. Mocking the intellectually or physically disabled person is egregious because intellectual ability or physical ability is no measure of why a person matters—a person matters because human existence requires honoring an inherent dignity within each person.

Human dignity supplies Christians with the ability to amicably disagree while respecting the value of all persons. Throughout the Bible, we are commanded to seek peace and to do good to those outside the household of faith (Col. 4:5–6). In other words, a Christian account of human dignity allows us to express disagreement while also affirming the inherent worth of every individual, regardless of whether or not they agree with us. This is not a call to abandon or downplay truth in exchange for placating those who disagree with Christians; it is a call to confidently and unapologetically share the truth in a way befitting the respect that other human beings deserve. It is human dignity that allows a Christian to disagree with another person while still respecting their humanity.

Here are some basic biblical, theological, and philosophical truths that every parent should know:

- Human dignity is a creational property woven into the fabric of biblical creation order.

HUMAN DIGNITY

- Dignity is a property that exists *only* because God declares human beings to be made in his image.
- Dignity is not a property determined by any attribute apart from existence itself.
- Apart from the Christian worldview, upholding the dignity of the human person is a mere invention of human thought without any firm grounding or absolute foundation.
- “Dignity” for the secular individual requires *faith* in something that a secular individual cannot adequately account for apart from the arbitrary assertion that dignity exists.

MEMORY VERSE

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

THE FIRST FLOOR

Biblical Truths

- God created all humans in his image. Humans can think and love one another (Gen. 1:26–28).
- God created all humans worthy of respect. Respect means to be kind and polite.
- Humans deserve respect because God created us in his image.

HUMAN DIGNITY

- We should be kind, polite, and loving to everyone *simply* because God created them.
- Every human matters to God (John 3:16).

Conversation Starters

- How did God create all humans? What can humans do since we are created in God's image? What are some ways that we can love one another?
- What does respect mean? How can you be kind and polite to others?
- Why do humans deserve respect and love? Did you do anything to deserve respect and love?
- Why should we be kind, polite, and loving to everyone? How can you be kind, polite, and loving to others?
- Who matters to God? Why does every single human matter to God?

THE SECOND FLOOR

Biblical Truths

- God created all humans in his image. Human beings are created with the capacity to reason with their minds and love one another relationally (Gen. 1:26–28).
- God created all humans worthy of dignity. Human dignity means that everyone is worthy of honor and respect.
- Humans have dignity *simply* because God created them in his image. This truth is unbreakable and unchangeable because it is a divine truth from God.

- Every human matters in God's eyes. We should not look down on someone because he or she looks different, thinks differently, acts differently, or does anything else differently than you or I do. Others deserve honor and respect simply because God created them (James 2:1–13).
- As Christians, we are called to speak truth and seek peace with others, even if we disagree (Rom. 12:18; 1 Cor. 13:6).

Conversation Starters

- How did God create humans? What does it mean to be created in God's image? How are humans different from all other created beings? What does it mean to reason with our minds? What does it mean to love one another relationally?
- God created humans worthy of what? What does human dignity mean? What is honor and respect? How can you show someone honor and respect?
- How do humans have dignity? Where does this human dignity come from? How can we be sure that this is an unbreakable and unchangeable truth?
- Why does every human matter to God? Why should we not look down on others who are different from us? Have you ever encountered someone who is different from you? How was he or she different? Did you think you were better in some way? Do you now see how he or she deserved honor and respect just like you?
- What does it mean to speak truth and seek peace? Do you think you will ever disagree with someone while talking about the Bible? Have you ever disagreed with someone?

How did you handle that? Read Col. 4:5–6 and make a plan about how to have a conversation with someone who might not believe the way you believe.

THE THIRD FLOOR

Biblical Truths

- *Imago Dei* means that humans are created in the image and likeness of God. Humans are created to reflect God morally, spiritually, and intellectually. Humans are rational and relational beings, we have a purpose, and we can partake in fellowship with God. *Imago Dei* is the Latin translation for “image of God” (Gen. 1:26–28).
- Human dignity is showing honor and respect to everyone simply because they have been made in God’s image. There is nothing anyone can do to earn dignity or lose dignity. Everyone has dignity because of *imago Dei*.
- Human dignity is woven into the fabric of the creational order. God confers dignity at the moment of creation. Dignity exists because God declares it, and it does not exist apart from God.
- All human beings deserve dignity. We should never look down on someone because of skin color, physical differences, cognitive differences, or anything else that the world may deem “less than.” People are worthy because God called them worthy the very moment they were created. All human beings matter and have value because of *imago Dei* (James 2:1–13).

- Human dignity is the foundation of Christians standing against social evils or assault on image bearers. Human dignity was introduced through Jewish and Christian teaching and revolutionized the world with the idea of human “rights”: equal protection under the rule of law that allows human beings to flourish.
- It is the doctrine of human dignity that led Christians to form schools and universities, charities devoted to repairing social breakdown, and hospitals for healing people.
- As Christians, God calls us to a high standard of conversation with others. We are to show others dignity even when we disagree with them: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:5–6).

Conversation Starters

- What does *imago Dei* mean? What are the unique characteristics of humans? What does it look like to be made with a purpose and partake in fellowship with God? What is the English translation of *imago Dei*?
- What does human dignity mean? How does someone receive human dignity? Who decides who deserves dignity? What can you do to earn or lose dignity? How can you show dignity to others?
- How is human dignity woven into the fabric of the creational order? How does God confer dignity at creation? Explain how dignity exists because of God and not apart from him.

- Who deserves dignity? Have you ever seen someone who is different from you? How was that person different? Do you think that person deserves dignity? Why or why not? Have you ever witnessed a situation where someone did not receive or show dignity? What did you do? Have you ever treated someone unfairly? Explain how *imago Dei* gives humans value.
- How did Christianity and human dignity revolutionize the world with the idea of human rights?
- Describe the higher standard of conversation that God requires of Christians. Have you ever experienced a disagreeable conversation? How did you handle that? Discuss Colossians 4:5–6. How can these verses help you with conversations in the future?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Darling, Daniel. *The Dignity Revolution: Reclaiming God's Rich Vision for Humanity*. London: The Good Book Company, 2018.

Hoekema, Anthony. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.

Kaczor, Christopher. *A Defense of Dignity: Creating Life, Destroying Life, and Protecting the Rights of Conscience*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013.

Kilner, John. *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015.

Snead, Carter O. *What It Means to Be Human: The Case for the Body in Public Bioethics*. Harvard University Press, 2020.

