

Unit 11 Assignment

Being Human:

What it means to be a human being



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1 briefly describe a recent news event or advert

Grand Theft Auto.

On Thursday 28th August at approximately 5 pm a VW minibus belong to a Mr Newton of Loughborough was broken into and the CD player stolen.

On return from a day doing field work I arrived at the works car park to discover the glass from a broken side window all over the ground and the CD player been ripped from my vehicle. Initial attempts to gain entry had been made to the passenger door lock with a large screw driver but this had proved unsuccessful. The perpetrator had cut himself at some point either during entry on either the broken glass or on the sharp metal of the unit's chassis whilst removing the CD player and although he'd been careful not to leave his fingerprints he had left a perfect blood sample for DNA testing.

The 19 year old drug addict and thief was apprehended two days later after all the evidence had been collected. The CD player was not recovered and was replaced by the insurance company along with the damaged door and window.

2 explain in detail how aspects of it offer views of human nature.

The Criminal

The youth lives in council accommodation in a deprived area of Loughborough where life is often hard, poor and, for the most part, unhappy. Peer pressure during childhood would encourage antisocial behaviour and demoralise self worth and esteem. It is easy to imagine how such a boy could end up by the time they were 19 with a sense of complete hopelessness, which is possibly why taking drugs appealed as a means of escape.

It could be suggested that he had had the same start as all humans and that his life choices justified his current predicament. Given a lack of experiential sense of right and wrong along with the restricted family finance the choices available were probably limited and although this can hardly justify his actions it does go some way to appreciate the situation that took him there.

It could also be speculated that his genetic make up created what he had become. This was his destiny and irrespective of what happened or with whom he interacted the outcome was unchangeable. Born a poor child in a poor area with no ability to raise his expectation beyond mere survival.

This criminal act however highlights the depth to which this particular human had fallen; what makes a youth go to a secure, video taped car park and risk being caught, to break the

window glass of a vehicle and risk injury just to steal a CD player he may sell to a fence for £20?

Is that something wrong with him? Society? or how he's already thought of by most of society? Where is the failure when a youth cares so little about himself to commit such crimes? Who is it that has let this lad down so badly that at such a young age there is so little purpose in his life?

The Victim

On discovery that my vehicle had been broken into I felt violated, as though I had been personally assaulted. The first feelings were that of anger and rage that anyone, even the lowest of scum, could have damaged my bus and stolen my personal property. It is instinctive that the initial reaction was to require retribution in kind to this violent act. Had the young man been caught there and then there would have been an overwhelming desire to severely beat him.

Probably assisted by the fact that it was raining I soon moved my attention to practical necessities of the situation. I talked to call centre personnel, campus security, the police, scene of crime officers, insurance people, a replacement window glass man, the repair centre clerk, the car stereo company and my neighbours. Not one or any of them had a any sympathy or thought for the perpetrator of my crime. All wished all manner of ills and misfortune to befall him just as I had done. I suppose most could image themselves in a similar situation and could empathise with my predicament.

It wasn't until over a week later when the CD had been replaced and the damage repaired when I spoke to a police officer who was telling me the background of the young man they had arrested. It was only after then that I gave any thought to the perpetrators situation and moved from my initial position that there was only one person to blame for this crime.

That evening at prayer I asked the question "what would Jesus have done?" and my attitude to the whole episode was then transformed.

3 how far are these views supported or contradicted by

a. the passages from Genesis studied in section D of the unit.

What we are and where we're from

In Genesis we are taught how it all started. That the whole world was created and shaped by God and there is plan and purpose in the creation and not just some random and haphazard experiment by some super intelligent force. Moreover all that was created by a caring God was good, nothing either spoilt or wrong, everything right and perfect. This included the most important part of creation; man and women. Given the awesome responsibility of being steward over everything else humankind needed abilities greater than to just survive but to consider, to appreciate others, to similarly care as God cares. Humankind, we read in Genesis, was created in God's image, reflecting the characteristics of a God who is filled with love for all His creation.

How we fit in

Though people occupy a position above most other creation we were still conceived of the same dust. The clay from which God formed the whole earth in the same from which we are

made. The constituent parts that were moulded into man are no different from every other thing in creation. The very breath of God gives us life. As we were created as part of God's perfect world we too were perfect and able to live as He intended in harmony with each other and creation. Peace and tranquil perfection as God viewed His creation and saw and said that it was good. Humanity was worthy and valuable to God as an embodied being of body, mind and spirit.

How we stray

Humans are ambitious and strive for God's knowledge and power driven by the desire to become more than they are, to not just find out more about God but to become more like God. So humans must now labour to feed and clothe themselves, women endure childbirth and humankind are made mortal; to return to the dust from which we were created. The fruit of the tree of knowledge had a great cost, one which we are still paying, but though we are banished from the garden of Eden we are not distanced from the love and care of our creator.

Still tempted

As a small child attempts to discover where the parental line is drawn so people will reach out beyond where God has set the limits. From a stand point of 'I don't care if there is a God or not' to 'God does not exist' humanity loses the basic bench mark by which we should live with each other and all creation. If God bestowed stewardship of creation to humans and then humans say God does not exist then creation will have no stewards. The logical end to this is that there are no limits, nothing illegal, immoral or wrong. Yet those who claim that God does not exist are defeating their own argument by acknowledging there is a God to not exist.

Though for many the existential questions about God never get asked. Where there is no concern for human authority and clearly defined laws of right and wrong there is likely to be less thought of a spiritual nature. Actions are governed by the desire to satisfy a need and it would be difficult to pinpoint a start where events took the wrong turning.

Adam's offspring

Eve's disobedience was quickly followed by passing on the problem to Adam, to spread the sin. Adam put up no argument, made no attempt to resist though he knew it was wrong, his instinct was to accept what was offered, to go with the choice of that time. Humanity is given to acting impulsively and often contrary to God's will. The right and true course often left for later reflection after the damage has been done.

b. the new Testament passages studied in section D of the unit.

Roman3:21-26

Following from Genesis story the apostle Paul reiterates that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. By God's standards we have failed to make it on our own and all are in real an certain need of His redemption. This is, of course, freely available to all through faith in His son Jesus Christ and only by His recognition as the son of God can we be saved from our sin.

It is a simple and straightforward statement and not a difficult concept to understand. Yet even some who have heard and understood it reject it out of hand as either inconsequential or irrelevant. Far too many have yet to hear the message in a way that enables understanding or shown the transforming capabilities of such a message. Some are already in a position where

they feel they are beyond the redemption of earthly authorities without thought of considering being forgiven for all they have become by their maker.

For some of us it is as difficult to appreciate that falling short of God's glory in our own strength is what we all do; the local preacher and the drug addict thief alike, and that accepting Jesus as Saviour is all that makes a difference.

John 10:7-10

The analogy of shepherd and his sheep although very apt is not always understood as it has been historically. In these post modernist times being cared for and looked out for is compared to being restricted and stifled. In these days of abundant 'off the shelf' spirituality it appears too restrictive to only have one gate and one gatekeeper, there is a lack of necessary choice if there is only one option. Even the warning that all the other ways are guided by thieves and robbers doesn't stop many from going their own way.

There seems to be a contradiction between the offer of life in all its fullness and only one narrow way through which to accept it. So the offer is rejected time and again and by those who would need to benefit from it most of all.

Abundant life doesn't mean life protected from real life itself. Those who choose to enter God's kingdom through Jesus are not protected from the horrors that life can deal out. Turning the other cheek can mean being smacked on both cheeks rather than just one. The promise of life eternal should stand to help us cope with whatever life turns up, though to keep that thought foremost during life's turmoil can be difficult.

1 John 4:7-8

To love one another is to know God as God is love and in contrast not to love is to not know God. Contemporary culture has contaminated the understanding of love away from the description in 1 Corinthians 13, the sacrificial, uncompromising and unselfish love to something far more shallow and egotistical. Too easily we speak of love without being able to back the statement with loving actions. To give love to those we know will return it is effortless but to love those who wrong us in both thoughts or deeds is a greater test of our love. Humanity would generally have us deserve the love we receive and those who would harm us or our property will be far from deserving.

For God the love comes first, ahead of everything else, love for all humanity by the grace of God. It is a difficult standard to attain though we may aspire to it. It is often far easier to see someone else's failing than accept that we could fail ourselves at all or even accept part of the collective responsibility for another's failing.

Epilogue

By the time the case of the stolen CD player goes to court I pray the young man involved will have accepted the need for help with his addiction and that he is aware of the distress he has caused to all his victims. I pray also for his salvation and for someone to be placed where they can share the gospel with him.

I am able to forgive him for what he did to my property and given the chance would help in any way in his rehabilitation. I confess that my love for another human wasn't unconditional and before everything else and I hope to have learnt and grown from the experience.

- 4** **a. retell the same event as an attention-grabbing opening to a sermon.**
and
 b. explain how the retelling relates to the Christian Good News.

Has anyone been a victim of a crime?

I was on Thursday evening.

R2, my bus was broken into and the CD player was stolen. I phoned the police on my new mobile phone and all the due process of the law got underway.

I got to the car park to find R2 with a broken window and a missing stereo. The violation of my vehicle was upsetting, the impending hassle was annoying, and having to drive without music was completely intolerable.

Yet we are called as Christians to love our enemy as ourselves, that all people are our neighbours. So there should be no difference in how I treat those I call friends and the youth who stole my CD player. No difference.

Well there is a difference, The difference is my friends are nice guys and car thieves aren't.

In James it says;

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

I talked to call centre personnel, campus security, the police, scene of crime officers, insurance people, a replacement window glass man, the repair centre clerk, the car stereo company and my neighbours. Not one or any of them had a any sympathy or thought for the perpetrators of my crime. All wished all manner of ills and misfortune to befall them. And to start with I was the same.

Then as the whole picture became clearer you have to think; what makes a youth go to a secure, video taped car park and risk being caught, to break the window glass and risk injury just to steal a CD player he may sell to a fence for £20?

Is that something wrong with him? Society? or how he's already thought of by most of society?

Where is the failure when a youth cares so little about himself to commit such crimes?

Who is it that has let this lad down so badly that at such a young age there is so little purpose in his life?

And it's at this point we ask; what would Jesus do?

In Mark Jesus teaches that it's what comes out of a person that makes them either clean or unclean.

“For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'.”

It's easy to do good deeds for those we like and consider 'worthy'. But what can make us unclean before God can be what we think about people we may not like and how we treat them.

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