

The Human Spirit

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God created man as a fully functioning being; man is capable of drawing on the resources around him to sustain his life. There are certain needs of life that man will instinctively pursue in order to support himself. Foraging for food, seeking shelter and protecting himself, are just some of the things that man will instinctively seek out and then take whatever action is necessary to provide, or obtain those things. The human body is an amazing, incredible creation, formed by God. As you are sitting there right now, as you are reading these words, there are actions being carried out within your body that require no conscious thought or input by you at all.

Right now you are taking in oxygen as you breathe, your eyes blink automatically at an interval necessary, to keep the surface of the eye lubricated and free of debris, you can even feel the very chair you are sitting on underneath you and all without even thinking about it! There are also other functions, necessary to sustain life, that are performed by the human body internally, that occur without any conscious input on our part. The beating of the heart, the filtering of the blood as it passes through the kidneys, the digestive process; again all of these things and many other processes; occur automatically without us even having to think about them.

God also created many other different forms of life, including the many different animal species. They are also able to sustain their lives from the environment around them and their bodies also function without conscious thought, or input.

God created man in his image and set him above all the creatures of this world (Genesis 1:26), but what is it, other than the obvious physical differences, that truly separates man from animal? Other than the shape and design of our bodies, they perform essentially the same functions, so what is it that really sets man apart and allows him to have dominion over all the creatures on the earth?

Man has an awareness, a consciousness...man is a thinking, reasoning, being, capable of making decisions and then taking action, based on those decisions. Animals rely completely on their instinct to survive and react to each situation without thought. Animals do not possess conscious thought, at least not in the same sense that we understand it, they do not think of past, present, or future. Animals can be taught and animals can learn, but it is the result of conditioning, rather than an ability to recall and react based on a past experience.

Ivan Pavlov was a Russian scientist, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1904 for his scientific work. Pavlov experimented with conditioning animals. He setup an experiment, involving dogs, in this experiment he would ring a bell near the time the dogs were fed. Over time, he was able to cause the dogs to salivate at the ringing of the bell alone. The dogs had learned to associate the sound of the bell, with being fed. The dogs reacted purely as the result of being conditioned over time.

We adopted an Australian Shepherd a few years back, from a family that had moved and no longer had enough room for her to have quality of life. They had moved to a house with a small yard and she was confined to a small corner of the yard, penned up in a very small dog run. She was a very sweet dog and the day I went over to meet her, she came right to me and we hit it off from the very start. I decided that day that we could give her a home and the family was happy after meeting me and decided that it would be a good match. They hugged her and said goodbye and she followed me right outside to where I was parked. I opened the door of the truck and she jumped right in. No emotion, no remorse, no tears, she was just happy to jump in the truck and head off with me, none of the pangs of sadness and attachment that human beings feel.

Animals are intelligent creatures and some more so than others. Scientists have successfully trained some primates to communicate in sign language, but the animals can only respond to simple basic needs and questioning. They can ask for food, or water, but they are incapable of engaging in a meaningful conversation, or relating past experiences. There is no recall in the sense that we have memories that we carry around with us. God created us with an additional component to our minds that lets our brains perform on an advanced level.

Human beings are aware; we know that we are, that we exist. We can draw on past experience and make conscious, deliberate actions, based on those experiences. We can even make a decision to follow, or not to follow, God and His way that leads to eternal life. What then, is the source of this incredible power of reasoning and conscious thought that resides within man? In Job 32:8, we are told the following:

Job 32:8

**⁸But *there is* a spirit in man,
And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.**

So, we can see that there is a spirit placed in man, by the great creator God, that allows him to have conscious thoughts, to muse, ponder, consider and reason. Out of everything that God created, man is the only one that is spoken of, to have received this spirit from God and this spirit gives him (man) understanding!

Genesis 2:7

⁷ 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 being.

By putting these two scriptures together, it is clear that God's breath gives man both life and understanding. This spirit must grow and mature right along with us from the start, just as our bodies grow and mature. God could not wait until we were a certain age and then just place this spirit within us. The spirit is what gives us each our individuality and it must reside within us from the very start and to begin interacting with our minds. It is the essence of who we are as individual persons.

The human spirit, that each of us receives from God, does not actually perform any decision making, or physical processes. The human brain handles all the physical and mental processes that occur in our minds. Animals make decisions, they can determine whether something is good to eat, or not. They use their sense of smell and sometimes that is combined with taste, then they make a decision to accept, or reject the item.

Our human brains perform the same function, but our decision making process is on a much higher level and God planned it that way. We have much more input to help us to make decisions. Animals make decisions based on the basic senses, but we have the human spirit given to us by God to help us reason and consider different aspects of different situations. Let's use food again as an analogy. When animals are hungry, they will usually eat whatever is put in front of them, within reason. Human beings on the other hand will choose what time to eat, where to eat, what type of food to eat and how they would like the food prepared. God equipped us this way purposely, so that we could make the decisions required of us.

There is an example, in the bible, that give us some insight into what man is like apart from the spirit that gives him conscious thought, and the power to use his mind. In Daniel 4, God pronounces judgment on King Nebuchadnezzar for boasting of his own greatness and accomplishments, and for not recognizing that God is the sovereign ruler over all creation.

Daniel 4:30-33

³⁰ The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"

³¹ While the word *was still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! ³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

³³ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' *feathers* and his nails like birds' *claws*.

Deprived of his God given human spirit, Nebuchadnezzar became as a wild animal. He dwelled in the wilderness away from other men and even his body and appearance was transformed. When his punishment was fulfilled, God placed Nebuchadnezzar's human spirit back within him:

Daniel 4:34

³⁴ And at the end of the time* I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.

Notice what Nebuchadnezzar says here; "my understanding returned to me". ***Incredible? Yes!*** Yet, there it is...recorded for us to see and learn from. Nebuchadnezzar's understanding, his conscious thought, returned to him when his punishment was complete and God placed his (Nebuchadnezzar's) human spirit back within him. Notice in verse 33 that Nebuchadnezzar was driven out from men. Apparently, when God removed Nebuchadnezzar's human spirit, he became so wild and uncontrollable, that he was driven out of the very city he had earlier boasted of creating! Likewise, without the human spirit provided by a loving God, we would all be running loose and behaving as wild animals.

Another very important point to notice here, is that the instant his spirit was restored to him, Nebuchadnezzar's understanding and the realization of who he was returned to him. He began to praise and bless God, now fully realizing who was in complete control. God is able to store and retrieve our human spirits; and our human spirit contains the essence of who we are as individuals.

It is in this same manner that God restored Nebuchadnezzar's spirit back to him, that He will resurrect the dead. Once the physical body has been raised up, God will place the exact spirit of that person back within the body and it will be for them as though they had just slept. Every thought, memory and feeling will be restored back, just as it was when the physical body perished.

King Solomon understood this concept of the human spirit within us. In Ecclesiastes 12, Solomon spoke of the end of man's physical life:

Ecclesiastes 12:7

**⁷ Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.**

God receives back the spirit of each and every person who has ever lived out a physical existence on this earth, until a future time when these spirits will be restored to physically resurrected bodies. In Ezekiel chapter 37, a great future resurrection is pictured. In verse 10, the breath of life enters the resurrected bodies and with the breath of life comes understanding:

Ezekiel 37:10

**¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them,
and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.**

Each person resurrected back to their fleshly bodies and their human spirit restored, just as though they had never perished. Now God will begin working with these people and they will have access to God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is able to work with and influence our behavior and thoughts; it is also able to impart wisdom and understanding in the ways of God. The human spirit does not have any control, or influence in our lives. Why would God place this human spirit within us, yet leave it powerless to influence our lives?

The human spirit that God places within us, allows us to have conscious thought, without conscious thought we would never be able to come to any knowledge of God. But, we must come to God willingly; He will never force us to accept Him and His way of life. The human spirit within us will not help, or hinder us in spiritual matters. There is an example of this in the bible too; in Genesis 2, God warned Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Genesis 2:15-17

¹⁵ Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

God could have easily put it into Adam's mind to obey Him without question, but He did not. Adam was completely aware of who he was, who God was and what He had told him. Through Adam's failing, an incorrect decision was made and as a result God's commandment was disobeyed and Adam and his wife Eve suffered because of it.

Genesis 3:6-8

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Just as Adam and Eve were tested, we must also be tested and proven. We must willingly make a decision and set our minds to go God's way. Evidently, when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the forbidden tree, some sort of process was triggered in their brains, that allowed them to understand the difference between good and evil. Along with this understanding that they now possessed, another change occurred as well, their minds could now be influenced directly. Notice in Genesis 3, that Satan actually appeared before Eve in the form of a serpent and spoke directly to her:

Genesis 3:1-5

³ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

It appears from this account, that before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit Satan was unable to influence their minds, and that is why he had to appear before Eve and speak to her directly. Now we know that Satan can influence evil and sinful thoughts directly into men's minds as we read in Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:1-2

² And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

Satan's spirit is at work in all who disobey and live contrary to God's law. Our loving God has also provided a counteractive force to Satan's broadcasts, God gives us His Holy Spirit to unite with our minds and allow us to live God's way and to repel Satan and his influences. We can read this in Acts 2:

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God's spirit influences us in positive ways and creates within us a whole new way of thought and action, a way that leads to eternal life! Notice Romans 8:

Romans 8:12-14

¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

The truth of the human spirit that exists within all of us, this “spirit in man” as it has been called, absolutely convinced me, when I came to understand it, beyond all doubt, that God was who He said He was and that He did exist. The understanding of the existence and presence of this spirit, and its purpose, proves once again what a wonderful, loving God we serve. It is up to us individually to seek out why we are and where we may be. God has given us each an incredible opportunity, He has given us the tools and the understanding, but the decision is ours. He gives us every chance to go the right way. If we take advantage of all that He has offered to us, we can join Him for all eternity!

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)