The Cornerstone of Our Faith

Jesus Christ
The Chief Cornerstone
Ephesians 2:20

But God
Edward J. Robinson

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table of contents

1 Everybody Is Somebody ........................................ 7
2 God Gave Me You ................................................ 13
3 The God of Questions ............................................. 19
4 Am I My Brother’s Keeper? ................................. 25
5 Making God Smile .................................................. 31
6 Don’t Let the Green Grass Fool You .................... 39
7 They Thought He Was Joking ................................. 45
8 God Has the Answer Before You Pray—Rebekah .. 51
9 Don’t Give Away Your Blessing ......................... 57
10 God Can Change Your Name ............................... 63
11 The Fall and Rise of Joseph ............................... 67
12 The Power of Forgiveness ................................. 73
13 But God ........................................................ 79
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introduction to Genesis

The Book of Genesis is appropriately called the “Book of Beginnings.” It discusses the origins of the world, the origins of man, the origins of sin, and the call of Abram. Moses, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote the Book of Genesis. In Genesis 1-11, Moses delineates the creation of the world, the fall of Adam and Eve, the Great Flood, and the spread of the nations. In Genesis 12-36, the inspired author chronicles the call of Abraham and the lives of Isaac and Jacob. In Genesis 37-50, Moses illustrates how God began fulfilling His promises to Abraham by enabling Joseph to be a blessing to the Egyptians and other nations of the world. In these 13 lessons, Edward J. Robinson hopes that all students of the Word will be edified and that God will be glorified.

Dedication:
To the memory of
R. C. Wells (1935-2019)
and
Cecil Herndon (1945-2018),

Hard fighting soldiers for the Lord
Everybody Is Somebody

*Genesis 1:26-27*

In our modern society, a human being is often regarded as either nothing or a number. This is especially true when one does not have the right color, when one does not possess the right credentials, when one is not the right age, shape, height, or weight. The message of the Bible, however, is that “everybody is somebody.” The author of Genesis teaches us: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them’” (Genesis 1:26-27, NASB).

Noted professor John T. Willis has noted that the “meaning of this phrase is debated among scholars. But it seems most likely from the contexts involved that the fundamental concept is that man is a creature of dignity and thus deserves to be treated with the highest respect by his fellowman. For one who takes this seriously, a rich man has no right to mistreat or even to despise the poor man, because the poor man (like himself) is made in the image of God. The poor man is worthy of the rich man’s respect, good will, empathy, compassion, and help, for God has made him” (Willis, *God and Man: Then and Now*, page 8).

In other words, everybody is somebody because all human
beings were created by God. Ethel Waters famously and fittingly said, “I know that I am somebody because God don’t make no junk!”

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? It basically means that although man is a physical being, he is essentially a spiritual being just like God (Psalm 139:7; John 4:24). In addition to this point, consider the following four points.

First, man is a rational being with the ability to think on a level that distinguishes him from all other creatures. Men and women have the capacity to think on such a level that our thoughts can turn us to righteousness or unrighteousness, good or evil, right or wrong. The mind of man is powerful. Man’s thinking ability is amazing!

All good deeds and all misdeeds begin in the mind. All sin originates in the mind. Before a sin is ever committed physically, it has already been committed mentally in the mind. Jesus put it this way: “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23, NASB). On one hand, wicked living starts in the mind of man; on the other hand, righteous living begins in the mind (Proverbs 4:23, Luke 6:45, Philippians 2:5; 4:8).

Second, being made in the image of God means that man is a volitional being. That is, man not only has the ability to think rationally, but that he also has the ability to choose—to choose right or wrong, good or evil, life or death, salvation or damnation. When God created Adam and Eve, they had power to choose. They regrettably chose to disobey the Lord’s command (Genesis 3:1-19).
God has always given human beings choices. Moses wrote, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants” (Deuteronomy 30:19, NASB). Joshua stated, “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15, NASB).

Some people today insist that “I’m a homosexual because God made me that way.” The truth is that God does not create homosexuals, lesbians, fornicators, adulterers, rapists, and the like. In other words, people choose to engage in such vile activities. Solomon observed that “God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices” (Ecclesiastes 7:29, NASB). A person’s lifestyle is his or her own choice.

Third, man is not only a rational being and a volitional being, but he is also a moral being. In essence, man has a conscience. George Eldon Ladd in his book, A Theology of the New Testament points out, “God has implanted in all men a moral instinct that gives them a sense of right and wrong.” In other words, man does not always do what is right, but he knows right and wrong. Human beings know that stealing and killing are moral violations. Joseph, Jacob’s son, stands out as a good example here. The seventh commandment—“You shall not commit adultery”—would not be issued for another several years, yet Joseph knew that sleeping with another man’s wife was wrong. Therefore, he told Potiphar’s wife, “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9, NASB). Joseph did not have the Mosaic code in his possession, but he had a moral conscience. Thank God for a good conscience!
God gave us our conscience to keep us away from evil deeds. David refused to kill King Saul when he had an opportunity and even when his cohorts urged him to do so. Scripture states that “David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe” (1 Samuel 24:5). According to the Apostle Paul, a person’s conscience can become “seared” as with a “branding iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). Thank God for a good conscience! A good conscience causes us to feel remorseful when we have acted wickedly. A seared conscience feels no such guilt.

Fourth, being made in the image of God means that man is a social being. God created human beings with social needs. We need companionship and friendship. That is why God created the institution of marriage. Read Genesis 2:18: “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (NASB). Men need women, and women need men.

Furthermore, that is why God created the Church, so that we might enjoy the friendship and fellowship with one another. God set up the Church so that our spiritual, social, emotional, and even material needs can be addressed and met. Paul instructed Christians in Galatia to “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, NASB). The wise man Solomon gave a vivid illustration about how important fellowship and friendship are. “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NASB). This Old Testament passage speaks a pertinent truth to Christians in the 21st century.
Everybody is somebody because first, God made human beings. Second, God made human beings in His own image. Even though we live in physical bodies, we are essentially spiritual beings, like God our Creator. We are rational beings, which means that we have the ability to think on a higher level than all other creatures. We are volitional beings, that is, we have the power to choose right or wrong. We are moral beings, meaning, God has implanted in us a conscience that pricks when we go astray. We are also social creatures, which means that we have deep needs for friendship, fellowship, and companionship.

Regardless of your color and credentials, you are somebody. Regardless of your height and weight, you are somebody. Regardless of the size of your bank account and the square footage of your house, you are somebody. Regardless of the quantity of your degrees or the quality of your education, you are somebody.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Where does all sin originate?
2. Why did God create the Church?
3. Discuss man as an intellectual being.
4. How powerful is the mind of human beings?
5. Discuss man as a volitional being.
6. Discuss man as a social being.
7. Discuss man as a moral being.
8. How did David demonstrate a good conscience?
9. How did Joseph demonstrate a good conscience?
10. How does a seared conscience look?