



## Are People Basically Good?

*R.C. Sproul*

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The philosopher Blaise Pascal called man “the supreme paradox,” because compared to all other creatures, he is both the most magnificent and the most miserable. What did Pascal mean? The answer goes to the heart of what the Bible says about man.

Man is created in the image of God, but the Bible also tells us that man has fallen into sin and become corrupt. In *Are People Basically Good?*, Dr. R.C. Sproul explores the nature of mankind by looking at what it means to be made in the image of God and exploring the nature and effects of the fall.

## Are People Basically Good? Details

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## From Reader Review Are People Basically Good? for online ebook

### Steve Campbell says

This is an excellent discussion of what it means to be human. The book succinctly lays out what it means to be created in God's image and explores what that means in the light of the existence of sin. It takes up the questions of whether or not sin is an intrinsic and necessary part of what it means to be human and the extent of sinfulness in humans. Of course, this book's brevity means that it doesn't say everything that needs to be said on the topic or fully develop the answers to the questions, but it is a good introduction to the topic.

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### J Layne says

Good, clear speaking on the subject

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### Bill Pence says

In this booklet in his Crucial Questions series, the late Dr. R.C. Sproul looks at what Scripture says about the nature of man, including such related topics as the image of God and the reality of sin. He writes that the Scriptures tell us that humans, male and female, are defined as creatures made in the imago Dei, or the image of God. Whatever happened to mankind in the fall, man still bears the image of God. What uniquely stamps us as bearing the image of God has to do with our ability to mirror and to reflect the character of God.

He tells us that two things that every human being absolutely must come to understand are the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. Sin is not an external blemish, but something that goes to the very core of our being. "Radical Corruption", a term the author prefers to "Total Depravity", means that the sinful nature goes to the root or the core of human experience. The heart of the matter is that we, though made in the image of God, transgress His law.

He tells us that we are taught that man is basically good. Yes, we have imperfections and blemishes, but underneath all the surface problems, everyone is righteous. But the Bible simply does not teach that man is basically good. In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes: "As it is written, 'None is righteous, no, not one'" (Rom. 3:10). The author tells us that this idea runs contrary to everything that our culture teaches. There are people who think they have enough goodness to satisfy the demands of God—but they have no goodness that meets the requirements God has set forth.

The author addresses the subject of original sin, which refers to our sinful condition. He tells us that we sin because we are sinners, not that we are sinners because we sin. Since the fall of mankind, it is the nature of human beings to be inclined and drawn toward sinfulness. We are born with a disposition and an inclination to sin.

The only way we can possibly be obedient to the commandments of God is if He helps us in the process by extending grace to us and enabling us to do what He calls us to do. The Bible says that the desires of man's heart are wicked continuously (Gen. 6:5).

The author tells us that we always act according to the strongest inclination that we have at a given moment, which is the essence of making choices. That's what freedom is: the ability to choose according to what you want.

If he is left to himself, the desires of man's heart are only wicked continuously. His heart and soul are dead to the things of God. But, the author states that there is one thing that Christianity has that no other religion

has, and that is an atonement. Christianity addresses is the problem of guilt. It takes guilt seriously, because it takes man seriously, and it provides a Savior. In His mercy, God has made a way to be reconciled to Him.

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### **Douglas Gates says**

Didn't answer all my questions, but answered a few. Helpful little book.

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### **John Yelverton says**

R.C. Sproul does a fantastic job answering one of theology's most difficult questions. He splits hairs over totally depravity, but that doesn't greatly detract from his concise investigation into this deep issue.

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### **Fred says**

Superb overview of the doctrine of total depravity (the "T" in TULIP).

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### **Becky says**

First sentence: When I was in high school, my biology teacher told me that my value as a person was \$24.37. He was adding up the value of all the minerals in the body—zinc, copper, potassium, etc. Today, thanks to inflation, that total would be around \$160. That's still a paltry sum. But it is one way to take the measure of a man.

The question posed in this short booklet is "Are People Basically Good?" Your answer to that question says a lot about you and your worldview. I think it is in our human nature to answer, YES, people are deep-down basically good. But is human nature to be trusted in this regard? in any regard?

Sproul answers the question from a theological standpoint. What does the Bible have to say on this issue? What does it say about humanity's creation? It says quite clearly that we were created in the image of God. What does the phrase 'in the image of God' mean? What did it mean before the fall? What did it mean after the fall? How does being created in the image of God impact our view of mankind--of humanity--today in our everyday lives?

Also. What does the Bible have to say about the fall? about sin? Why is the doctrine of original sin so fundamental to a right understanding of ourselves? Can you hold a right opinion of humanity if you fail to have a right opinion of God? of God's holiness?

Lastly. What does the Bible have to say about salvation? about God's sovereignty in election? Do humans have free will? Do they have liberty? Apart from God's effectual call, would anyone ever choose to believe the gospel? Sproul argues that original sin has radically corrupted our free will, our desires. We do not desire God. We do not seek after God. We do not love God. We do not want to obey and in fact cannot obey God.

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This is a very good--though brief--introduction to Total Depravity or Radical Corruption.

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### **David Steele says**

Whenever a friend purchases a Kindle or e-reader, I always make an important recommendation - Pick up The Crucial Questions Series by R.C. Sproul. Ligonier Ministries has graciously made this 25 book series available, free for the asking. Subjects explore basic matters of the Christian life and provide encouragement for Christians at different stages of maturity.

The most recent offering, *Are People Basically Good?* helps readers wrestle with a vital question. Most people in post-modern culture affirm that people are in fact, basically good. Indeed, this is the premise of secular psychology. Such a premise is flawed from the start, as it ignores the biblical doctrine of original sin.

Dr. Sproul answers the proposed question with Bible-saturated wisdom and guides his readers through this thorny matter that not only addresses original sin; he also presents broader anthropological matters such as the image of God and the constitution of man.

The concluding three chapters go to the heart of the matter as the author explains the reality of sin, the depth of sin, and the extent of our sin. Readers will learn about the clash between Pelagius and Augustine and will see how this debate has shaped the thoughts of many, both for good and evil.

*Are People Basically Good* is introductory material. It is not meant to be a comprehensive treatment of original sin or the Pelagian/Augustinian controversy. But make no mistake - this is a solid offering, one that is worthy of careful study, especially for new believers.

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### **Charles van Buren says**

#### **The answer, of course, is no**

The answer, as anyone who studies and believes scripture knows, is no, we are not basically good. All have sinned and gone astray. One of our many problems is that we aren't basically good, can't be basically good but many of us want to be good. The only answer to the dilemma is God's grace. Unmerited, unearned grace given as a free gift of God.

For those who don't believe Scripture, there is human history to tell us that man is not basically good. Little things such as roughly 10,000 recorded wars in roughly 10,000 years of recorded history. And this does not take into account the wars lost to history and those too small for history to even notice. One of our major predilections is killing each other in mass or individually. Nothing man can do will ever stop it.

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### **D Des Roches says**

#### **Clear Teaching**

Once again, Dr. Sproul has hit the nail on the head tackling a prevalent question in our day. Backed by Scripture and the beliefs of some of the church's most prominent theologians, Dr. Sproul explains that man is not basically good, but rather steeped in sin, while showing how the arguments of some of the supporters of human goodness are contrary to what the Bible teaches.

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### **Rodney A. says**

#### **Sin is real, but it is also defeated**

Listening to someone talk about the condition of man, and not fear mankind in general, is refreshing. It is better to see life as it is than to live a life of pretending, or maybe in our day, a virtual reality.

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### **Luke Schmeltzer says**

Dr. Sproul does, as always, an excellent job at explaining the biblical, philosophical, and historical argumentation of an idea. In this booklet, he the effects of the image of God, the effects of the Fall, and the corrupted nature resulting. It was a good booklet, but it seemed hard to follow at times; Sproul went on a few tangents that made it seem a little meandering instead of attacking the issue head-on. It could have used a little more analysis of the relevant Scriptures, but that's just me. Worth the read!

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### **Ilya Klyuchnikov says**

Is this book basically good or worth reading? No way. Silly and vague reasoning.

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### **Michael Schmid says**

A good little book explaining the nature of sin.

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### **Tom says**

**As usual, Dr Sproul gives a cerebral and scriptural answer to the question, "Are People Basically Good?" from a Reformed perspective. I certainly recommend this book to anyone who is pondering this question.**

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