

Dignity and Depravity

from *The Contemporary Christian* by John R. W. Stott

"Millions of people do not know who they are, nor that they have any significance or worth. Hence the urgent challenge to us to tell them who they are, to enlighten them about their identity, that is, to teach without compromise the full biblical doctrine of our human being—its depravity, yes, but also its dignity."

"Christian teaching on the dignity and worth of human beings is of utmost importance today... for the welfare of society." Stott observed that, "When human beings are devalued, everything in society turns sour. Women are humiliated and children despised. The sick are regarded as a nuisance and the elderly as a burden. Ethnic minorities are discriminated against. The poor are oppressed and denied social justice. Capitalism displays its ugliest face. Labor is exploited in the mines and factories. Criminals are brutalized in the prisons."

"But when human beings are valued as persons because of their intrinsic worth, everything changes. Men, women and Children are all honored. The sick are cared for, and the elderly enabled to live and die with dignity. Dissidents are listened to, prisoners rehabilitated, minorities protected, and the oppressed set free. Workers are given fair wages, decent working conditions, and a measure of participation in both the management and the profit of the enterprise. And the gospel is taken to the ends of the earth. Why? Because people matter. Because every man, woman and child has worth and significance as a human being made in God's image and likeness."