

"Christianity offers humanity – the dignity of each person"

our church sending several missionaries. go to folks who are not Chrn to tell them about Jesus / encourage toward Chrn faith.

is this narrow-minded & conceited of us? --seeing us as right and everybody else in world as in need of what we have to offer?  
should we stay home & be more broad-minded and humble?

during mo of May give you my answ to that.  
for me missions is not someone "up here" magnanimously reaching out to someone "down here."  
but "one beggar reaching out to tell another beggar where to find bread."

*but, Harold, what if the Hopi in Arizona & Balantu in Guinea-Bissau already have a relig that tells them where to find bread?*

Here's how I answ : we here at CMF --poor, needy, not exceptionally brilliant or wise-- we, beggars, have happened to receive --thru nothing that's any credit to ourselves-- the most nutritious & delicious bread available in the whole earth.  
and we are not going to share it?!

*but, Harold, there you go again: saying we-in-this-ch know what's best. & everybody else needs what we got.*

but it's true, I tell you.  
I want to present to you this Sun & 2 more Suns why I believe that.

we have many religions claiming to receive revelation from sp-al realm.  
claiming to teach purpose of life / how we should live.

there's a way to evaluate quality of a religion's bread:  
see how each it "works." what advantages does a partic relig bring for people who believe it/ practice it?

I say: in Chrnty we find incredibly good "bread."  
we as humanity receive incredible advantages from Chrnty .  
**The Christian faith consistently helps fulfill the best and most-basic hopes of humankind**

am I saying we do this better than any other relig ?  
my goal is not to put down other religs but to lift up Chrnty as the worldview that produces the good life.

am I saying that persons in the Chrn faith only do good?  
oh, no. great evil has been perpetrated by Chrns .  
but not bec they are Chrn but bec they are human and humans are "bent" toward evil.  
can make case that those acts of evil did not flow from teachings of Christ.  
I see much in the teachings of Christianity that moves those who obey them toward the realization of our deepest human goals.

the "bread" I receive from my faith that excites me most is personal peace & fulfillment & satisfaction. most precious - sense of presence of God.  
but not going to talk about that these Suns .  
subjective. hard to measure / compare.

many Chrn believers say: promise of eternal life is best bread our faith offers.  
not going to talk about that either.

going to stay w most-basic hopes and longings that all humanity talks about and ackns --even atheists.

today look at this instance:  
**We all have a goal of human dignity. The teachings of Christianity encourage us to give dignity and respect to everyone we meet.**

Chrn faith instills sense of human dignity.  
not talking about dignity in sense of pride.  
rather worth. --every human being is worthy of our respect.

for most of human history only those who had power/ prestige given dignity.

Sc is full of passages that celebr a God who cares about & raises up the poor & oppressed (eg. Psalm 113:1-9). all people are viewed as impor .

to most people growing up in this society, the goal of human dignity seems obv . "no-brainer." universally shared value.  
every human being deserves respect --even handicapped/helpless.  
seems like something every human being intuitively knows.

but was a time our society didn't value handicapped --no curb-cuts. no laws against hiring discrim .

our society tries to value women equally as men.  
 but haven't always. not have voting rights until early 1900s.  
 thru most of human history women merely chattel/property. no legal rights.  
 virtual slave to father or husband.

slavery definitely assaults equal dignity:  
 not abolished in Britain until 1807 (200 yrs).  
 in US, Emancipation Proclamation - 1863

today is consensus that every human being, just bec they exist, has  
 dignity/worth. inherent dignity.  
 but that's not way has been for most of human history.  
natural tendency is to only give dignity & respect to those who have power over  
 us.

for most of human history only **elite or ruling classes** were consistently given  
 dignity.  
 even the Grks, from whom got concept democracy, used word "dignity" for  
 only a few.  
 --both Aristotle and Plato held that most humans are by nature slavish and  
 not worthy of freedom/ of being able to make decisions for selves.

but somehow society moved from that to where-we-are-today.  
**what were the impulses that led to there-being-a-consensus-today that  
 should treat all w dignity?**

there's no way I can prove what led humanity in this direction.  
 but can celebr Chrnt'y's involvement in this movement!

did you know **first declaration of human rights** in history was prompted by  
 Chr'n faith?  
 Spanish missionaries argued that the Native Amers encountered in the New  
 World had rights & dignity.  
 maintained that many of their countrymen were treating them wrongly.  
 their theologians pressed suit at the Spanish Court to urge the monarch to  
 rule accordingly.  
 insisted that violence against them is not justified for religious reasons (to  
 convert the heathen) nor for economic causes (to gain their gold) nor for  
 political reasons (to extend the empire). The natives, tho pagan, immoral  
 and uncivilized, are human beings with rights equal to those of all other  
 persons.  
 & they argued their suit successfully.

Outside the United Nations building in New York stands a statue of one of the  
 greatest of these theologians, **Francesco de Vitoria (1486-1546)**,  
 considered the founder of international law.

coincidence that first declaration of human rights flowed out of Chr'n comm ?  
 or is there something in the Chr'n faith that fuels sense should treat every  
 human being w dignity?

could talk about **abolition of slavery**  
Chrns, like Wm Wilberforce in England, led the fight to abolish slavery.

in US, earliest opponents of slavery were Chrns .  
 (first public declaration against slavery in North America was signed in the  
 Menn Meetinghouse in Germantown by Quakers & Menns .)

in Chrnt'y we again & again see movement toward human beings given  
 dignity.

what is it in Chrnt'y that fuels such movement toward human dignity??

I'm not saying nonChristians don't also do those things.  
 & I'm also not denying that the ch has often been repressive.  
 I'm saying that in area of raising human dignity, followers of Christ have been  
 there at the forefront, and again & again supplied critical mass that led to  
 action.

why did those things happen in Chrnt'y ?  
 the rest of our time, want to celebr that  
**Beliefs of Christianity help us give dignity and respect to  
 everyone we meet**

are 3 beliefs look at.

## 1. Each human being is created in God's image

### Genesis 1:26-27 TNIV

*Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so  
 that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the  
 livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along  
 the ground."*

<sup>27</sup> *So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he  
 created them; male and female he created them.*

male & female --we are ones in image of God.  
 "image" not mn identical model. eg clone.  
 but that which resembles. represents. eg as child does a parent.

this ("we - image of God") is basic fact B says about humanity.  
 Sc spks of no other creature as God's image-bearer.

we could talk about specific thing about us that makes us be image of God.  
but just bare fact "we - image of God" loaded w signif / mng .  
gives us special dignity.

bec we are in the image of God, all thru Sc all human beings are taken  
infinitely seriously.  
if we love & value God, going to value his image-- our neighbor.

eg if you love someone don't darts at picture that contains their image.

**Genesis 9:6** forbids us to shed the blood of a man. why? **"for in the image of God has God made man."**

every human being has dignity just bec they exist.  
to be is to have value & dignity. an inherent dignity. bec of this image.

Chuck Colson to *NY Times* reporter in 2003:

"...we are passionate about the fundamental question of human dignity. In our view, all humans are made in the image of God, and we care equally for the child dying of AIDS in Africa, the unborn child in Chicago, the six-year-old sex slave in Thailand, the prisoner raped in a prison yard. ..."

most of us so used to this value, say "of course."  
but in other worldviews, value of such indivs not obvious.

in Marxist ideology, people are only material (not sp-al) and their worth is primarily measured by the work they produce.

in Hinduism & Buddhism, personal existence is a distortion of reality / an illusion. The wheel of reincarnations or rebirth traps the person in an illusory cycle of existences.

The goal of a person is the cessation of personal existence, just as the drop of water vanishes into the sea.

2nd belief of Chrntiy that encs h dignity:

## 2. God loves and wants to redeem each person

**John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

**2 Peter 3:9** *The Lord is ... patient ..., not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

think of any person.

the Chrn worldview: God loves them -- created/ Christ died for / willing to redeem . wanting to make them into all-they-can-be.  
mns they have incredible potential & value.

*ChrnT* interviewed Archbishop Desmond Tutu of S.Africa. Nobel peace prize in 1984 for fight against apartheid. (Oct 5 1992 p39-40)  
*What role has faith played in your life, and how has it led you to the fight against apartheid?*

I have come to understand [from my faith] that a person's worth derives not from extraneous things, such as achievement, status, or race. One's worth is intrinsic and comes from being created in the image of God. God values his own image in mankind even after the Fall.

God has also sent his Son to further underline our infinite worth. He says, "You are of such worth that I will ransom you from the clutches of the Devil-- not with perishable things, such as gold and silver, but by the precious blood of my Son."

As if that were not enough, God says, "I will sanctify you by the gift of my Holy Spirit." So human beings are of worth not only because they have been created in the image of God and are offered redemption by the precious blood of our Savior, but also because they may become tabernacles of the Holy Spirit.

It is like spitting in the face of God to treat a child of God as if he or she were anything less. Injustice and oppression are not simply wrong or evil, they are positively blasphemous.

can feel the passion that his faith gives toward treating all w dignity!

if I love God/ want to please him, & know this-person is a child of God, that God died for them / gives his presence, will treat person w value.

talked about Spanish citizens who pressed suit against their countrymen in the New World not respecting rights of native Amers .  
were missionaries. communicating "God loves..."  
of course they would treat the "Indians" as persons of full human dignity, not some lesser species!

who is that person you in some moments despise? think about someone!  
God does not despise them. offers them eternal friendship and communion .  
if you are one of the people-of-God, should you do diff ??

Ravi Zacharias tells story of a young couple who went to Romania to adopt a little boy named George, who was born without arms.  
In the orphanage there, they noticed that nobody would even look in little George's direction because his handicap was viewed as an ill omen and a curse upon a family.

But the couple determined to bring George back to the United States and raise him as their son if his mother agreed.  
 The mother was apprehensive -- why did the couple want this child? had heard that in America they use babies for genetic experimentation.  
 "Why is it that you want to take my son?"  
 how reassure, w limitation of language?  
 an inspiration struck the would-be parents:  
 got a Romanian Bible, opened it up to Psalm 139, handed it to her.  
 She took it and began to read:  
*O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.  
 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.  
 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.  
 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.  
 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
 your works are wonderful, I know that full well.  
 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.  
 When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
 your eyes saw my unformed body.  
 All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*  
 The mother wept as she read and clutched the Bible to her heart. [and] gave her armless son into the arms of one who saw her son as cared for/ precious in sight of God.

is 3rd major way Chrinity helps us "give dignity and respect to everyone we meet."  
 usually in every society some lucky persons are "more-equal", w more privileges and rights --bec they are persons of power.  
 part of the reason Chrinity has been such a force in giving dignity/respect to everyone is bec of what God says to those persons.

### 3. God calls those with power to serve others

this is not the natural tendency!  
 when we have power we tend to use it so others do what we want.  
 something tends to rise up within to want to use our power to make people yield to us and give us what we want.

when someone is stronger than us & dominates us for their advantage, we "bide our time" (if we have to) & wait for our turn to be one of the powers-that-be who dominate others.

into this world comes something revolutionary: a teacher who calls those with power to serve others.

Jews in J's day were expecting God to send a "Messiah" who would come in power and make right everything wrong, driving out the Romans.

last days of J's ministry, ds become increasingly certain J - Messiah.  
 and that, as inner circle of J, they were positioned well.  
 as started thinking about the power would wield, started arguing among themselves as to who would be "the greatest"  
 one day when J & his ds came into their house in Capernaum, J *asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?"* <sup>34</sup>*But they kept quiet because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest.* (Mk 9:33-34)  
 happened again. so **Mark 10:42-44** NLT  
*So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. <sup>43</sup> But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.*

heard T Campolo talk on feminism.  
 whenever conducts family seminar at some local ch, always some man says to him during q & a time, "*Dr, you haven't answered the real q.*" "What is the real q?" "*Who's supposed to be the head of the house?*"  
 has standard response:  
 (it's a little radical --bec Tony likes to be radical!)  
 "if you were really a Chr, wouldn't ask the q."

the follower of J doesn't ask "who's going to be the master, who's going to be first?"  
 we are taught to ask "who's going to be the servant? ...last?"

### Philippians 2:3-7

<sup>3</sup>*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*  
<sup>5</sup>*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*  
<sup>6</sup>*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,*  
<sup>7</sup>*but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, ...*

when we have power, our Chr faith calls us to not dominate others / take advantage of those weaker, but to exercise love. treat them as essentially more impor than me.

Chrinity fosters even the most vulnerable indiv among us receiving dignity and worth.

end by reading something a prominent Jewish human-rights activist wrote to evang Chrns in Sept 2005 CT. Michael Horowitz.

*In almost 10 years of intimate association with Christians engaged in human-rights causes, I've watched evangelicals as both an outsider and a sympathetic ally. [I've watched you working to defend the rights of Chrns in other parts of the world who were being persecuted.] [I've also watched you mount initiatives on behalf of] abused prison inmates, North Korean refugees, and other vulnerable victims. For example, you've played an essential role in advancing the great slavery and women's issue of our time: sex trafficking. The trafficking by international mafias and corrupt government officials of at least 1 million girls and women per year into sexual bondage and slavery had been the world's fastest growing area of international crime. [These initiatives could not be] discounted as "mere" parochial efforts to protect your own. By such leadership, evangelicals have demonstrated how deeply they are moved, and often driven, by deep compassion for the vulnerable victims of injustice.*

*When the NAE was first getting started on the Christian persecution issue, I spoke with one of its board members. He asked, "You are a Jew. Why are you so involved [in helping protect Chrns ]?"*

*My response: "That's a good question. When I was a young boy coming home from yeshiva (Jewish parochial school), I got beat up by kids who said, 'You killed our Christ.' "*

*His response: "Oh, how I apologize. Oh, please forgive me." He was just so bereft, contrite, ridden with guilt.*

*I listened and then said, "Okay, I accept your apology. Now may I say something? If it weren't for the rooted Christian decency of this country, I'd be a lampshade. I'd be a bar of soap." [allusion to horrors of Nazi Ger ] Whatever sins may have been committed in the name of your faith, please know that Rabbi Joshua Haberman got it right when he called America's Bible Belt his safety belt. Evangelicals should apologize for the sins of Christians as they must, but it is right and important for you to glory in what your faith has done -- not only for your fellow believers but for others as well.*

I do glory in the good, healthy "bread" Chrinity offers the world.

& look forward to glorying in some other forms of it the next Suns as well.