

Am I an Animal?

Scientifically we are classed among the vertebrates and mammals as the species Homo Sapiens. This is OK as far as it goes, but we are so very much more. We are the stewards and crown of all God's physical creation, made in His image and likeness. The rest of the world was made with us in mind. Like God who is three persons, we are each persons. Animals are not persons. We have an immortal soul. Animals have a life force that perishes when they die.

We have rational intelligence with free will. Animals react to their environment with instinct and some memory, according to their genetic programming. They do not have free will to choose between good and evil. Animals can not sin.

We humans have a moral sense of right and wrong. We have language and a unique self awareness that are undeveloped even in the higher animals. Signal reactions are not true language.

Recent science tells us all human DNA can be traced back to a single truly human parent. Archeology tells us the earliest true Homo Sapiens were obviously as intelligent and creative as we are. If we had a time machine to kidnap an early human baby and bring him up in our day we would find no evolutionary handicap. He would be no more animal than any of us. But are we all a little bit animal?

St. Francis of Assisi calls animals our brothers. Indeed we are not pure spirits like angels and we do have an intimate relationship with all of physical creation. Humanity is the God-appointed leader of the pack. We are the stewards of our entire environment. We do have big-brother responsibilities to animals.

So, Am I an animal? When I allow my instincts and passions to rule my life the animal side of me comes out. By the grace of God I have the higher ability to rise above my animal-ness. I can be all that God created me to be and that is much more than my animal tendencies.