

## ***You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News***

Kelly M. Kopic, Brazos, 2022.

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Kopic writes in a well-researched yet accessible and engaging manner. With today's societal obsession with youth, health, diet, and optimization of physical performance and personal appearance, Kopic firmly but gently reminds us that despite our best efforts, we are all aging and dying and that this is not necessarily bad. One reviewer labeled this book a real "page-turner." It is engaging, winsome, and counter-cultural.

In Part 1, Kopic focuses on our uniqueness, finitude, and particularity. God created each of us specifically for the exact time and place where he has placed us. While we should labor to do good as we follow him, we should be free in his grace to experience not only the fact that he loves us, but that he cherishes us and actually likes us as well (pp. 18–19). This simple yet profound truth is one that most Christians struggle with, at least occasionally. As Kopic says, "I think we all struggle to believe God likes us" (p. 35). We are saved by grace, but sometimes we live as if our salvation and God's favor depend primarily on our works and their results. Kopic reminds us that we are called to faithfulness, not to success, and that despite disappointing outcomes in particular projects, battles, or relationships, God both loves us and likes us, too.

The two central tenets running through this work are that: (1) we are not infinite—only God is, and he calls us, not to achievement, but to love of him and our neighbor; and (2) we should not ask God for forgiveness for not being able to do everything—it is hubris to act as if we could (p. 14). We should repent and ask for forgiveness for sloth, willful inaction, and lack of love for him or others, but asking for forgiveness for waning strength, aging minds, illness, or failing at tasks despite sincere attempts to please him is unscriptural.

While we faithfully care for our bodies (p. 59), we should not despise our weaknesses and flaws to motivate ourselves to improve our fitness. Chapter four encourages us to affirm our human bodies with which God has endowed us, despite our frailties, and to affirm those of our neighbors and family—in prudence and never in lust. A smile, a firm handshake, a hug, or even a "sacred kiss" are ways to affirm others. Caution must be our guide, but reluctance to appropriately affirm others physically may prevent deeper fellowship and promote loneliness, an international epidemic. While some churches have capitalized on the COVID epidemic to reach people who otherwise would not be part of a fellowship at all (a good thing), the obvious drawback is the lack of physical presence provided by corporate worship.

Chapters five and six clarify and expound on the reality and importance of our dependence on God and each other. No one makes it on their own, despite popular cultural ideas to the contrary:

Robert E. Cranston, "Review of *You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News*, by Kelly M. Kopic," *Ethics & Medicine* 38, no. 1–2 (2022): 91–92.

Secure in Christ and aware of my dependence on others, I know that the Spirit works in me against the distorting effects of sin that harm the relationships that God created us for. With gratitude I have been set free to engage in acts of love and reconciliation that now foster mutual life-giving . . . community . . . in relationship to God's whole creation" (p. 94).

Part 2 of *You're Only Human* focuses on healthy dependence. With the aid of Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and the apostle James, Kacic leads us to a deeper understanding of humility:

Even if we don't realize it, we all constantly depend on others, whether in developing our talents or filling our stomachs. . . . When the sense of gift and interdependence is lost, however, then we get arrogance, discord, and eventually oppression (p. 101).

In particular, Calvin calls us to two questions, (1) "Do you recognize that all your talents are gifts from God," and (2) "How do you react to the talents you see in others?" (pp. 109–10).

In Chapter nine, the author delves briefly into the complex subject of the church's mission. While we are clearly to care for souls, how do we choose to address the many physical needs we see every day, including foreign missions, the homeless, addiction, misogyny, abortion, cultural ethics, and many others? We cannot individually minister to all of these needs, so we therefore need to seek God's guidance to choose where best to dedicate our time, energy, and material goods. Only the efforts of the whole church can address these multiple priorities. I would love to read Kacic's thoughts on these decisions in greater detail, perhaps in a future book.

In his final chapter, the author reminds us to embrace the rhythms of life, recognizing our vulnerabilities and coming to the Father with gratitude for his many blessings, but also bringing our laments for the pains and losses that are a part of our finitude. God is big enough to listen to our concerns, gripes, and doubts—see Job, Psalms, and Lamentations. He already knows what we feel and think, and he encourages us through his Word to share both our praise and complaints with him.

In all of life's seasons, we can and should rest in the Lord. Kacic calls sleep a "Spiritual Discipline" (p. 214) and Sabbath a "Subversive Spirituality" (p. 218). Both of these are not only restorative, but they are essential tools for deepening our faith.