*Moes and Tellinghuisen* (2014) delineated five themes related to a biblical view of human nature. I will use Modules 40 and 41 to exemplify three of these themes. The three themes are: embodiment, responsible limited agents, and relational beings.

Modules 40 and 41 provide examples of how humans are embodied. When we are stressed, there is a physical response in the body. Seyle explained a concept of stress response in the body: alarm, resistance, exhaustion. In the alarm phase, the sympathetic nervous system is activated. In the resistance phase, the sympathetic nervous system is still engaged. “Your temperature, blood pressure, and respiration remain high. Your adrenal glands pump hormones into your bloodstream”. You are “summoning all your resources to meet the challenge” (Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 491). In the exhaustion phase, your resources are depleted and you are vulnerable to illness, collapse, and death. This is an example of how stress is a physical response in our bodies. There is a clear physical result of stress; prolonged stress damages the body. For example, “The brain’s production of new neurons also slows and some neural circuits degenerate” (Dias-Ferreira et al. 2009; Mirescu & Gould, 2006 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 492). Stress also makes us more vulnerable to disease: “Stress can trigger immune suppression by reducing the release of disease-fighting lymphocytes” (Myers and Dewal, 2015). Stressed people heal more slowly from surgical wounds, are more vulnerable to colds, and are less affected by vaccines (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1998; Cohen & Pressman, 2006; Segerstrom et al., 2012 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 494). Stress can also worsen an existing condition such as HIV (Chida & Vedhata, 2009 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015). A different example of embodiment is exercise, which has a physical effect on the body. Just like stress in the mind can affect the body, exercising the body can affect the mind. These effects can be similar to the effects of an antidepressant drug. Exercise “increases arousal, thus counteracting depression’s low arousal state. It often leads to muscle relaxation and sounder sleep. It also orders up mood-boosting chemicals from our body’s internal pharmacy--neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine, serotonin, and the endorphins” (Jacobs, 1994; Salmon, 2001 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 509). Taking care of our body helps our mind. We are embodied, and our physical bodies are affected by stress and exercise.

Modules 40 and 41 provide examples of how humans are responsible, limited agents. We are limited by stressors from our environment and the result of our past choices, but we are responsible for our reaction to those stressors. We are limited in that we cannot control stressors. Catastrophes are an example of stressors that we cannot control. “In the four months after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans’ suicide rate reportedly tripled” (Saulny, 2006 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 489). The people in New Orleans were exposed to a significant stressor that was difficult to cope with, and they became stressed as a result. Their control over the situation was limited. Perceived lack of control increases stress and negatively affects our health. For example, nurses with less control over their environment were more stressed than those with similar workloads and more control (Fox et al., 1993 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015). Also, “A study of elderly nursing home residents with little perceived control over their activities found that they declined faster and died sooner than those given more control” (Rodin, 1986 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015). This means that our health and stress is limited by our control (or lack thereof) over our environment. However, there are many situations in which we do have control and thus responsibility, especially in terms of how we respond to stressors. A number of different studies looked at how various personality types respond differently to stress; specifically, different personalities have different responses to negative emotions. Friedman and Rosenman hypothesized that “stress increases vulnerability to heart disease”, so they “measured blood cholesterol and clotting speed of 40 US male tax accountants” and found that their hypothesis was correct (Friedman & Ulmer 1984 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 497). Further study led those researchers to conclude that Type A personalities were more prone to heart disease. Multiple other studies have found that the “toxic core” of a Type A personality is “negative emotions--especially the anger associated with an aggressively reactive temperament” (Chida & Hamer, 2008; Chida & Steptoe, 2009). A different personality type, Type D, “suppress their negative emotion to avoid social disapproval” (Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 490). These people are at “increased risk for mortality and nonfatal heart attack” (Grande et al., 2012). We are limited by stressors we cannot control, but we are responsible for how we respond to stress. Another example of limitations and responsibility is self-control. “Like a muscle, self-control weakens after use, recovers after rest, and grows stronger with exercise” (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011; Hagger et al., 2010; Vohs & Baumeister, 2011 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 503). We are limited by our past choices (how much self control we have exerted in the past), but we are also responsible for exerting a reasonable measure of self-control in the future.

Modules 40 and 41 provide examples of how humans are relational beings. Seeking social support is a way of coping with stress, and the fact that we as humans tend to seek support from each other indicates that we are created to have relationships with each other. Social support decreases stress. For example, happily married women who held their husband’s hand showed less activity in areas of the brain that respond to threats when given an electric shock to an ankle (Coan et al., 2006 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 506). “Social support fosters stronger immune functioning” (Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 506). A study in resistance to cold viruses showed that people with more social ties were less likely to catch a cold. (Cohen et al., 1997, 2004 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015). Modules 40 and 41 also explain how social support can help cope with stress. An example of this is the tend-and-befriend response: “under stress, people (especially women) often provide support to others (tend) and bond with and seek support from others (befriend)” (Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 492). Relationships allow people to help each other in times of need. Close relationships also provide an opportunity to “confide painful feelings” (Frattaroli, 2006 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 506). For example, “in another study of surviving spouses of people who had committed suicide or died in car accidents, those who bore their grief alone had more health problems than those who could express it openly” (Pennebaker & O’Heeron, 1984 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 506). We are relational beings because connecting with other people and talking about our stress helps us cope with it. Another example of how we are relational beings is the influence of our social network. Friends, friends of friends, and friends of friends of friends can “influence your thoughts, feelings, and actions without your awareness” (Christakis & Fowler, 2009 as cited by Myers and Dewal, 2015 page 507). Relationships are an important part of our lives.

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