

Growing Number Believes Animals Should Have Human Rights

PETA must be happy. According to a new Gallup poll, more Americans than ever before believe animals should have the same rights as humans.

The poll found 32 percent of Americans support equal rights for animals, up from 25 percent in 2008. Meanwhile, 62 percent of Americans believe animals should have some protections but can still be used to benefit humans.

“The growing belief that animals should be on par with humans when it comes to rights raises the timeless questions: ‘What is a human being?’ and ‘Is a human being a different kind of creation?’—questions that take on increased importance given not only this survey, but also the growing trend of robots taking on human-like characteristics and activities,” said Southern Evangelical Seminary President Dr. Richard Land.

“For centuries, society—including our laws and our cultural mores—has been based on a belief that humans are distinct creations. Indeed, our own Declaration of Independence establishes the premise that humans are ‘created’ and ‘endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.’

“One of our responsibilities as human beings created in God’s image is to care for animal life. Proverbs 12:10 clearly says that the righteous man regards the life of his animal. However, when society loses the ability to make meaningful distinctions between human life and animal life, it doesn’t so much elevate animals, but rather it inevitably devalues the unique character of human life.”

Land pointed out specifically the irony that while there are

laws imposing penalties for destroying unborn turtles, outcries arise over efforts to protect unborn babies—a clear indication of the loss of a societal moral compass that can make meaningful distinctions between the relative value of human beings and animals.

“Should our treatment of animals be humane? Yes, absolutely. For example, I am the proud owner of what may be the world’s most spoiled-rotten German Shepherd,” Land says. “However, when we begin to place the lives of animals on equal par—at that point, with the lives of human beings, we have reached a position that is logically defenseless, as we are advocating, essentially for either dehumanizing human beings or humanizing animals.”

SES delves into the questions of the nature of humanity through its Ethics of Emerging Technology initiative, which specifically evaluates the nature of humans in light of technological advancements.

Land recently taught a summer module called “A Christian Perspective of Ethics,” which asked and answered such questions as “Is a human being a separate creation of God and different in kind or merely degree from the animal kingdom?”

“Our beliefs regarding the nature of humanity have far-reaching implications,” Land continued. “This isn’t simply a question of whether Fido should be humanely cared for, but of whether as a society we are moving towards a scenario in which Fido will have equal claim to medical resources and legal protections that human beings currently possess.”