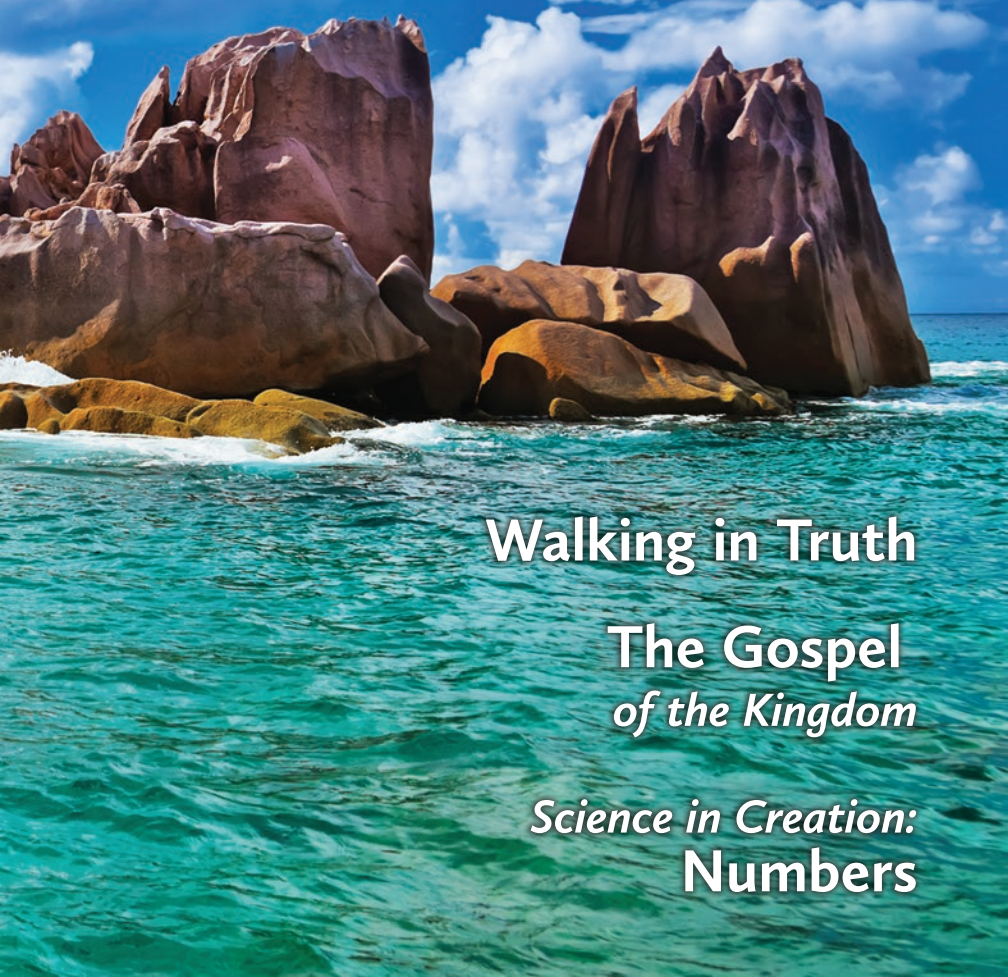


Loaves & Fishes

Issue 27



Walking in Truth

The Gospel
of the Kingdom

Science in Creation:
Numbers



This Morning

This morning I awoke
And got on my knees;
To the Lord I was praying,
And I did it with ease.

Although my body is confined
In a place with windows and bars,
I can call on the Lord's name,
And my spirit travels afar.

I place my hand in His,
And I instantly see the stars.
The walls are removed,
And there are no more bars.

My sadness disappears;
On my head I wear a crown.
The love of my life,
The Savior of my soul.

His name is Jesus,
To Him I owe it all.
He loves me regardless
Of my blunders and falls.

So when I awake,
On my knees it will be.
Praying to the One
Who daily sets me free.

Sheila Vandergriff
Tutwiler Prison for Women, Wetumpka, AL

We publish *Loaves & Fishes* as the Lord provides. Our goal is to point those in prison to Jesus Christ and help them experience the life, hope, and freedom of a daily walk with Him.

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PO Box 332
Bedford, PA 15522
800-313-1871
info@lighthousepublishing.org
www.lighthousepublishing.org

The Team

Lavern Gingerich
Darold Gingerich
J. Anthony Hertzler
Mike Fisher
Mike Kauffman
Matt Feener
Bill Fluke

Loaves & Fishes

Issue 27

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This Morning
The Greatness of God

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Walking in Truth

Lavern Gingerich

In recent issues, we have seen that Jesus is the light of the world, and that He has invited each of us to leave the darkness of our sin and come to Him for mercy and healing. We have learned that following Jesus daily is the key to living in this marvelous light.

As a disciple of Jesus, you will face doubts and questions. The “Christian” world is filled with confusion and false interpretations of Scripture. Perhaps you are caught in the middle of such a debate right now, and your heart is crying out for answers: *Is it even possible to know which side is true?*

Unfortunately, even with the light of Jesus within us and the Holy Spirit to guide us, we humans are still vulnerable to the influence of false teachers and bad reasoning. We tend to seek out a single person or a church denomination to lift up as per-

fect, but that person or church will eventually disappoint us. Church fellowship and Christian friends are vital, but we must look to God together as the only unfailing source of truth.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

1 John 1:5-10^{ESV}

This passage teaches that the foundation of understanding truth is *practicing the truth*. God made us to have fellowship with Him, but sin separated us from Him. When we leave the darkness and begin walking in the light, He washes us clean from every sin. Because sin is dealt with, our relationship with Him is restored, and since God is truth, our new harmony with Him allows Him to reveal more truth to us.

Does this mean that a real Christian will never sin again? No; but when you do stumble into sin, you confess your sin and immediately return to walking in the light that is shining on your path. This is what it means to *practice the truth*.

God reveals truth to people who are ready to obey it, so the key to understanding more truth is to *practice the truth* you already have (verse 6). As long as you are

making excuses for not obeying the truth you know, you will not be able to tell whether the ideas you encounter are true.

Living in truth is like driving down the highway at night. The headlights of the car illuminate the road signs and show you where to drive. As you travel down the road, the light moves with you, giving you light exactly *when* and *where* you need it in order to arrive at your destination safely.

The truth of Jesus is like those headlights. As you walk in the truth, He shines His light on the road exactly *when* and *where* you need it. It can be hard to cut through the fog of many different voices and accurately interpret the Bible, but if you stay within the beams of His light and obey the road signs, you will make progress and continue to discover new truth.

Here are several points that will help in your search for understanding the truth of the Bible:

1. *Truth is absolute.* Truth does not change depending on what you think or experience. Some people like to think there is no absolute truth and that all paths lead to God. If that were so, it would mean all organized



God reveals truth to people who are ready to obey it.

religions are false, since they all make some absolute claims. Truth is truth, whether we accept it or try to explain it away.

2. *Truth is bigger than a “proof text.”* Many Christians teach from the Bible, yet they reach very different conclusions on important subjects. Beware of teachers who make rash claims about their interpretations and pull single verses out of the Bible here and there to “prove” a point. It is unwise to use three verses that seem to support your view on a subject, while ignoring thirty verses that disagree with you. A good interpretation of a Bible passage harmonizes with the chapter and book it is taken from, as well as with the rest of the Bible. Diligent study and reading of the Scriptures are very helpful for finding related passages that shed further light on a subject.

3. *Truth is sometimes hidden.* We must become students of the Scriptures and understand how the Old and New Testaments fit together. At first, even the New Testament may seem to contradict itself, but everything harmonizes once we

understand the true nature of the Gospel and focus on Jesus and His priorities. “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). God reveals truth to those who are diligent and eager to learn, and the person who expects it all to be handed to him like a bag of fast food will miss much of what God has for him.

4. *Truth makes sense.* God’s revelation will not seem irrational and false to an honest and humble seeker who uses his mind. Beware of teachers who refuse to face factual evidence and engage in an honest discussion. God gave us our minds to help us identify lies and nonsense, and if we don’t use them, we have no guarantee against deception.

5. *Truth is for living.* God will judge you for the life you lived, not for some mental assent or doctrine that made no difference in your lifestyle. A profession for Christ means nothing if you are still walking in darkness (1 John 1:6). Some people falsely teach that salvation is basically a license to go to heaven, and

Truth will always lead you into a life of righteousness.

that nothing you do after you are “saved” can keep you out of heaven. Heart issues are important, but God gives us a clean heart so we can live a clean life. If right living was irrelevant, why did God pack the New Testament with practical instructions for living? Truth will always lead you into a life of righteousness.

“²⁰Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

John 3:20–21

≈

The Good News of the Kingdom

J. Anthony Hertzler

Most Christians know the word “Gospel” means “good news.” But what is this news, and why is it good? Many people treat the Gospel as if it were a bus ticket to heaven. Perhaps they hear that they will go to hell unless they believe in Jesus, so they say a prayer, confess and apologize for their sins, trust Jesus for salvation, and go on with their lives. For awhile they feel much happier, but after awhile they realize they are living pretty much the same broken life as before they were “saved.”

Is this good news—that you’re still the same sinner you always

were, but that God will let you into heaven because of the sacrifice of Jesus? No, the Gospel is much, much bigger and better than a scheme to get sinners out of hell and into heaven—in fact, that’s only a small part of what the Gospel is about (2 Corinthians 4:1–6).

To understand the good news, we have to talk about the bad news. Many people think the bad news is that we are going to hell, but that’s not the real bad news; the bad news is that we are sinners who are living in rebellion against God! (Genesis 4:7) That’s the problem Jesus came to earth to solve. Hell is merely

the just result of our rebellion against God; our real problem is our sin and the destruction it brings (Isaiah 1:18; 59:2, Daniel 9:24, Zechariah 13:1, John 1:29).

God made us in His own image, perfectly designed to love Him and each other. The first man and woman could have lived in absolute joy and peace forever. But they chose to listen to Satan instead, bringing death on all their descendants (Genesis 3). The disease of sin went far beyond the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and it wrecked our relationships with God and one another. Humans became selfish, greedy, and suspicious, lying, stealing, fighting, murdering, and raping one another.

God never wanted this for His children, and ever since the first sin, His love has been working to restore the creation to its original perfection (2 Peter 3:9, Romans 8:18–25). As one of the first steps in that plan, God chose a faithful and obedient man named Abraham to begin a family who would learn to serve God and one day bless the entire world (Galatians 3:8). But Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, forgot God's call. They piled up wealth for themselves

and neglected the poor and the foreigners. Even their kings and judges were corrupt. It was a mess.

God sent prophets to call His people back to Him, and to announce the coming of a King who would restore the broken world. This King would bring justice to the poor and destroy the crooked oppressors. He would end all wars, and everyone's weapons would be re-made into garden tools. The world would again be ruled by God, the just and merciful King (Isaiah 11:1–9).

Centuries later, when Jesus was born to a working-class family in a barn in Bethlehem, the angel Gabriel told Jesus' mother her child would grow up to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). When Jesus finally began His ministry, the first thing He preached about was the Gospel of the Kingdom. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," Jesus said. "Repent!" (Matthew 4:17)

Repentance means changing your mind, turning your back on your old loyalties, and following a new King. Jesus was inviting His countrymen to follow Him into a new, peaceful nation where God rules. The first four books of the New Testament are

Repentance means following a new King.



called the Gospels because they present this good news: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and His invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Those who followed Jesus realized that He was the good King the prophets had foretold so long before. At last God was going to turn the world around. At last, the spiritual children of Abraham would obey God's call to take His blessings to the world. But Jesus would not win this battle with a bloody sword, like the kings of the world; He would conquer through love and sacrifice (John 18:36). When Jesus died and rose on the third day, He paid the cost of our sins and set us free to live the life God made us for. He opened the way into the Kingdom of Heaven and its blessings for everyone (Ephesians 3:1–12).

The Kingdom of Heaven, like every nation, has its own ruler, territory, and laws. God is the King, He makes the laws, and His territory includes the en-

tire universe. One day, He will destroy His enemies in a final battle and return to rule the earth; but until then, He rules among those who willingly submit to His lordship. These people, who accept Jesus as king, allow Him to forgive and cleanse their sin, and obey His laws, are part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus said very little about hell, but He talked constantly about the Kingdom of Heaven. That's because His main message was not about a ticket out of hell and a place in heaven in some future age; it was an invitation to become a citizen of heaven now. In the Kingdom of Heaven, people actually live by the rules of heaven today. They renounce fighting, dishonesty, selfishness, and everything else that doesn't fit in heaven (Matthew 5:2–11). As they follow Jesus, He purifies their hearts and makes them citizens of His new nation. That invitation is still open for everyone, including you.

Following Jesus is about much more than praying a prayer and inviting Him into your heart; it's about loving Him enough to obey Him, even if it costs you everything. God will pour out His grace and power on anyone who chooses to surrender and follow Him. When we choose to let go of every earthly thing in order to actually follow Jesus in everyday life, we enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and the blessings of living under God's rule far outweigh any sinful pleasures we are tempted to cling to (Philippians 3:7-11).

According to the Gospel of Jesus and His apostles, salvation is a lifelong journey of change and growth into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Any gospel that offers a ticket to heaven in the future without changing your life here on earth is a fraud (Romans 6). Never let a false

gospel cheat you out of the joy of living in God's Kingdom now.

To understand Jesus' Gospel, the Gospel of the Kingdom, prayerfully read the four Gospels, committing to obey whatever Jesus tells you to do. Trust Him to give you the grace and power to obey. It will take time to learn to live by the new laws of God's Kingdom, but Jesus will give you His Spirit to direct you, and you will grow as long as you love and obey Him. No matter what hardships you face, the Gospel of the Kingdom can free you in ways you could not have imagined.

The Gospel is the good news of a new King, a new Kingdom, and a new way of life, and you can begin living in it now. Even in dark and troubled times, Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom can bring you the peace and power to live in faith and hope. ~

Never let a false
gospel cheat you
out of the joy of
living in God's
Kingdom now.





Science in Creation

The Wonder of Numbers

Andrew Zimmerman

What do sunflowers, mathematics, and Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece *The Last Supper* have in common?

Numbers aren't always tedious and boring! Make the effort to dig into the world of mathematics a bit, and you'll be amazed at the patterns and relationships you find. The intricacies of numbers and their connection to the physical world are not the result of chance. They show evidence of design. God created numbers as a key part of His marvelous universe.

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were

created through Him and for Him."
Colossians 1:16

Fibonacci Sequence

The Fibonacci Sequence seems to have been described first in India, and it was introduced to the Western world by Leonardo Pisano in 1202. This Leonardo was of the Bonacci

Andrew has had an avid interest in science since he started studying it in his early years of school. Because of his interest in science and his belief in a literal six-day creation, he enjoys telling others about creation science. He lives in Central Pennsylvania with his wife and children.

family, and is now better known by his nickname, Fibonacci.

To calculate the Fibonacci sequence, start with the numbers 0 and 1, and add them together for the third number, 1. Then add 1 and 1 to derive the fourth number, 2. Continue this pattern, where each number is the sum of the two preceding numbers. The sequence looks like this: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144—and so on for as long as you want to keep adding.



The number of petals on a sunflower can be any of several numbers in the Fibonacci sequence.



Spirals in Romanesque cauliflower

The Fibonacci numbers are found all around us in God's creation. For example, the number of petals (or *florets*) of a plant often are Fibonacci numbers. The iris has 3 petals, buttercups have 5, and delphiniums have 8. Corn marigolds have 13. Some asters have 21. Daisies can be found with 34, 55, or 89 petals. Though other numbers are present as well, Fibonacci numbers seem especially common in plant structures.

The number of petals on a sunflower can be any of several numbers in the Fibonacci se-

Fibonacci numbers are all around us.

quence: 34, 55, or 89, depending on the size of the sunflower. The seeds in the sunflower head are arranged in two interlaced sets of spirals in opposite directions. The number of spirals is a pair of Fibonacci numbers, often 21 and 34 or 34 and 55. In larger sunflowers you'll find sets of 55 and 89 spirals. A pine cone has seed spirals counted in Fibonacci numbers. Pineapples and Romanesque cauliflower grow in spirals based on Fibonacci numbers, as does the spiral aloe.



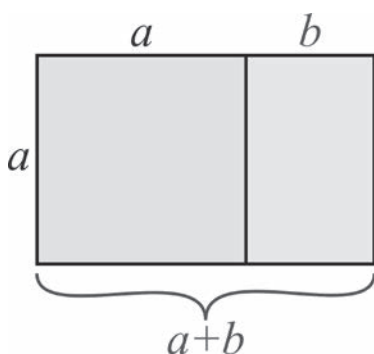
5 spiral pattern in spiral aloe

Divine Ratio

The Fibonacci sequence contains the Divine Ratio of 1.618. The higher in the sequence, the more precise the ratio. The number pair 13 and 21 have the ratio 1.615. Going a bit higher, 89 and 144 have a ratio of 1.618. The Divine Ratio is also known as the Golden Ratio. Mathema-

ticians refer to this number as *Phi*. (Don't confuse it with *Pi*, the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.) As you continue higher in the Fibonacci sequence, the ratio between each set of numbers gets closer and closer to a precise Golden Ratio.

Two numbers with the Golden Ratio also have the Golden Ratio between the highest number and the sum of the two numbers. In other words, **a** is to **b** as **a+b** is to **a**. See the diagram of the Golden Rectangle below. This is a unique characteristic of the Golden Ratio.



Like the Fibonacci numbers, the Golden Ratio is found often in nature. The DNA double helix molecule has a length-to-width ratio of *Phi*. In 2010, the journal *Science* reported that the Golden Ratio is present at the atomic scale in cobalt niobate crystals.

Many parts of the human face fit the proportions of the Golden Ratio, on average. People seem to find faces more attractive the more closely they fit the Golden Ratio. The Ratio also appears in the proportions of the rest of the body.

The nautilus shell is often offered as an example of a Golden Ratio spiral. While it doesn't fit the conventional Golden Spiral, it does have the Golden Ratio in the size of the outer spiral compared to the inner spirals.

Because the dimensions of the Golden Ratio are aesthetically pleasing, artists often use it in their works. Leonardo da Vinci used the Golden Ratio in multiple places in his famous painting *The Last Supper*.

Mandelbrot Set

Compared to the Fibonacci sequence, the concept of the Mandelbrot Set is a bit more difficult to understand and explain. It was discovered in 1979 by Benoit Mandelbrot, one of the first people to use computer graphics to create and display fractal geometric images.

What is a *set*? A set is a group of numbers that have a certain property in common. The Mandelbrot Set includes all the

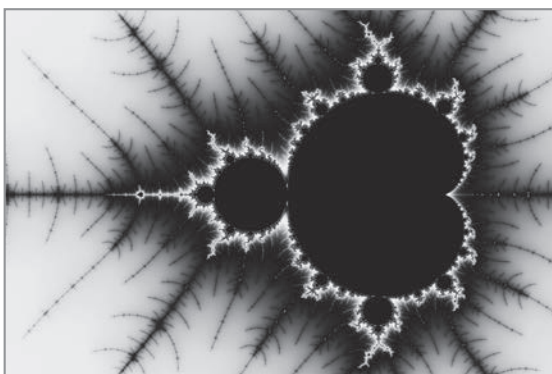
numbers that have the characteristic of Z staying small in this formula: $Z = Z^2 + C$. We start with $Z=0$, and the calculation is *iterated*, meaning we use the result of the calculation for the value of Z , and then repeat the calculation, over and over. In this formula, the n shows that Z is a series, and the calculation is iterated: $Z_{n+1} = Z_n^2 + C$.

Let's try $C=1$. 0 squared + $1 = 1$. 1 squared + $1 = 2$. 2 squared plus $1 = 5$. 5 squared plus $1 = 26$. Because Z continues to get larger, 1 is not in the Mandelbrot Set.

Let's try $C = 0$. 0 squared + $0 = 0$. 0 is in the set, because Z stays at 0 when $C = 0$.

Let's try $C = -1$. 0 squared + $-1 = -1$. -1 squared + $-1 = 0$. -1 is in the set, because Z continually cycles between -1 and 0 , never getting farther away from zero.

But the Mandelbrot set doesn't use only ordinary integers. It uses *complex numbers*. A complex number is a *real* number multiplied by an *imaginary* number. Even though mathematicians call these numbers imaginary, the numbers really do exist. An imaginary number is the square root of a negative number. The letter i is used to denote the square root of -1 . You may remember from math class that a negative number squared



Shape produced by the Mandelbrot set

is always positive, and a positive number squared is also positive. So *real* numbers are only the square root of positive numbers. But imaginary numbers are not positive, they're not negative, and they're not zero. On a number line, positive numbers are to the right of zero, and negative numbers are on the left. We can add a vertical axis to the number line for the imaginary numbers. Complex numbers consist of a real number component and an imaginary number multiplied together.

The Mandelbrot Set is all of the complex numbers that run through the formula above and never get far away from 0. These complex numbers are then plotted,

on a two dimensional chart, not just a number line. Numbers that are part of the set are black. Numbers that are almost part of the set are assigned other colors, depending on how quickly Z climbs away from zero.

Turned into a picture, this short little formula, $Z = Z^2 + C$, produces an incredibly complex shape. In fact, it is infinitely complex, as complex as anything can be. As you zoom in on this shape, you see that it is very *self-similar*. That little black spot to the left of the image is a "baby" copy of the original image. And the little black spot to the left of that one is another baby copy.



Infinite detail emerges as you zoom in.

You can zoom in as much as you want and there is more and more detail. Even the Fibonacci numbers appear as the details of this shape are revealed!

Fractals in Creation

A coast line is fractal in nature, because there is more and more detail as you zoom in. Trees have branches off the main trunk, and then branches from branches, twigs, leaves, and parts of leaves. Romanesque cauliflower grows in a spiral Fibonacci shape, and also has fractal characteristics in being self-similar. A lightning bolt takes an uneven, chaotic path. It branches and forks into intricate patterns. A fern blade (leaf) has

pinnae (leaflets) that look like miniature blades. Its leaflets have pinnules (subleaflets). The pinnules can have lobes. Ferns show self-similarity at increasing levels of detail.

Conclusion

The laws of mathematics, as well as the existence of mathematical relationships in nature, show evidence of a Designer. God created mathematics, just as He designed the rest of creation.

There is a verse in the Bible that says we should “number our days.” Psalm 90:12: “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” This verse is telling us to consider that our days in this life are limited. Then we will realize the importance of using those days for our Creator. You were created for a purpose. Are you living that purpose? ≈

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*The laws of mathematics,
as well as the existence
of mathematical relationships in nature,
show evidence of a Designer.*



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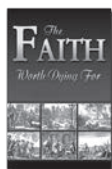
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Word Search Puzzle

Psalm 24:3-5

Find all the words from this Scripture passage in the puzzle below.

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

B Q A N B N Z B F E M H L V E M T E D
Y K R V N A P S T K R E V C D H U N U
V U N D A U O M S K T U A A E M E E B
W F B J W H O N I D O L P Z Y C X B Z
K M O R F V X S H F P Y A M S U H J Y
X W N L O G G N P N P I A A V O W P Z
T F T C L F Q V R H T S R B M J H T E
D C O J R J N O R F B L P O Y L F R Y
O O L Z D I W W O D R O L A U H U Y Y
B D H E N S N V B P N H N Z R F U O X
B N M W A D K M A L M Y H C S X N K S
P G I H D N O D M R T H S O H W R I X
U T R P E A J G L G Z H A Q T S B W L
N M O L C H E A R T D L E S W X M I Q
Q B R T E K I U G T D N Z N I H D W B
R U O S I S S S E N S U O E T H G I R
C N Z K T O N A A H I N T O H W I U D
S A H X F V A T L L N S D Y B K D C C
Z A R R U U S W S V H N S Q Z Y Z D Q
U S H A L L V G Q I A L Z E A X K D E
P V H Z L X F E S L A T F M L Y U U X
V T G Y Y V R D R O L Y I H Y B E E G
U D M H C C O D I P L I E O I A H E K
C A E V O C M H R S T M H V N T U H E
D E T F I L L D A J R E C E I V E T D
Z O T P P E Y F M Q C H H L C Q C Q Q
P B Z B K M S Y F A Z R P Z Z O O T H

Let's Study...

James



- **James** is the 59th book of the Bible and the 20th book of the New Testament.
- **Author.** James is an “epistle” or letter, believed to have been written by James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ. (Mary was their mother, but Jesus was conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit, not by Joseph, Mary’s husband).
- **Time of writing.** James was likely written around 45 AD. This makes James the first New Testament book to have been written, even though it is the 20th book in the traditional order.
- **Historical context.** James wrote this letter to a group of Jewish Christians who were experiencing suffering, poverty, and oppression. These were likely some of the first believers who had been driven away from Jerusalem by their fellow Jews because of their faith in Jesus. The good news of Jesus had not yet spread to non-Jewish people this early in the story of the Church
- **Summary.** James begins the letter by talking about the suffering his readers were enduring, telling them to ask God for wisdom. Then, he launches into one of the most practical series of teachings in the New Testament. James is very concerned with the importance of living out one’s faith in a real way. We must not only hear the word of God, but do it.

Here are just a few of the many topics James talks about in this letter: controlling our speech, favoritism or discrimination, wisdom, pride and humility, wealth, speaking the truth, and effective prayer.

- **Themes.** The theme of the book of James is genuine faith, or *faith that works*. James repeatedly emphasizes that true faith

expresses itself in righteous deeds. For example, he says, “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:26–27).

- **Book outline.**

- I. Salutation (Chapter 1:1)
- II. True religion endures trials and temptations (Chapter 1:2–18)
- III. True religion consists of doing, not just hearing (Chapter 1:19 – Chapter 2:26)
- IV. True religion displays wisdom, not just speaking (Chapter 3:1–18)
- V. True religion befriends God through humility (Chapter 4:1–17)
- VI. True religion is blessed through patience, prayer, and love (Chapter 5:1–20)

- **Key verse.** “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

- **Key questions.**

- » What good comes from enduring trials?
- » What is the difference between dead faith and living faith?
- » James says that Abraham was not justified by faith only, but by what else?
- » What is the cause of war and conflict?
- » How does God feel about the wealthy who oppress others?

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If any of you lacks wisdom,
let him ask of God,
who gives to all liberally and without reproach,
and it will be given to him. *James 1:5*



Free on the Inside

Prisoners encourage Prisoners

I'll Not Be a Prisoner

One day when life is over
And time will be no more,
There will be a celebration
When I reach Heaven's shore.
There will be a glad reunion
With loved ones gone before;
Then I'll not be a prisoner anymore!

There'll be walls of Jasper
Instead of iron and stone;
There'll be no more prison bars
Or sorrow I have known;
No more locks anywhere,
For Jesus is the door;
Then I'll not be a prisoner anymore!

No I'll not be a prisoner
When Jesus I shall see;
I'll wear a robe of righteousness,
For then I shall be free.
All things will be perfect
(And for once—EVEN ME);
Then I'll not be a prisoner anymore!

Art Mayse, Lois M. DeBerry Special Needs Facility, Nashville, TN

TESTIMONY OF DERRICK K. OSORIO

I was born into a strict Catholic family in the fast-paced city that never sleeps (NYC). I had a loving mother, who had high aspirations of my becoming a priest, but that was not in my plans. More importantly, it was not in God's plans. I actually wanted to be a doctor, though unfortunately that only lasted until I was about ten years old. I had already started gambling at age eight.

As I grew older, gambling became an obsession. I began drinking and eventually turned to drugs. I had fathered two beautiful children by age sixteen. A child raising children, I eventually abandoned them and their mother. I had a second family at age twenty-five. We had three more fantastic children, but twelve years later I walked out on their mother as well. This time, my two girls came with me.

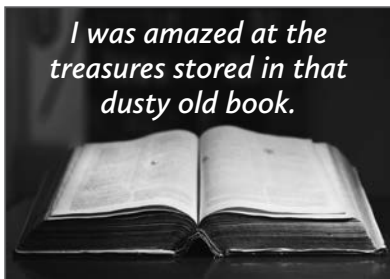
A year later, I was accused of a crime and found myself in a state prison for the first time in my life. I was all alone, doing real time! I lost everything—my

daughters, my freedom, my business, even my fiancée. I hit rock bottom.

While in prison, I faithfully attended the Catholic services. In the summer of 2003, I walked into the church as usual, and the moment I stepped in and looked up at the cross, a teardrop ran down my face. I quickly wiped it away and left. This happened every time I went to church for several months, until one night, the tears just kept on coming. I looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Lord, I know you're trying to tell me something, but I just don't know what it is. Please show me, God."

The next night, while sitting in my cell feeling sorry for myself, my entire life flashed before

*I was amazed at the
treasures stored in that
dusty old book.*



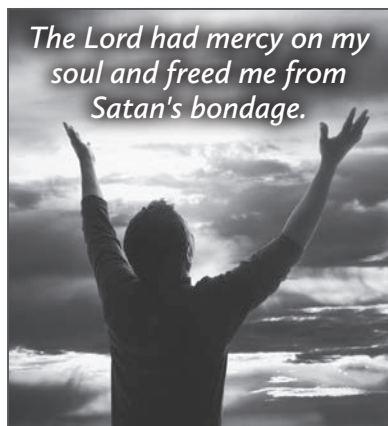
me. I saw nothing but horror, pain, and anger. I turned to look toward a Bible another inmate had given to me months earlier. I hadn't wanted it, but he had practically forced it on me; so I had taken it and thrown it on my trunk, where it had been gathering dust. I picked it up and began reading at the beginning of all beginnings, the book of Genesis. I was amazed at the treasures stored in that dusty old book. Like a dry sponge, I absorbed every word. I started to hunger for the word of God! I read from sunup until midnight, and I read through the entire Bible in less than two months.

I came across a verse that changed my life forever: "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3). *But what exactly does that mean?* I pondered. I had never heard that before. After a few weeks of reading and asking questions, I dropped to my knees and begged the Lord's forgiveness for all the horrible things that I had said and done throughout my life. I cried and cried what seemed an endless ocean of tears. I confessed every sin I could think of and asked God to forgive me for those I

could not remember. I pled for the blood of Christ to cleanse and change my life. The Lord does answer prayer! He made a new creature out of me that day! I was free at last! "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

I continued to read the Bible. Within the first year, I read it three times and started the fourth time. However, it wasn't enough that the Lord had mercy upon my soul, broke the chains of sin, and freed me from Satan's bondage; He also called me into the ministry of reaching out to others who were as lost as I was. The Lord has used me to help many of my fellow men who struggle with loneliness, depression, backsliding, and many other issues.

The biggest thing God is teaching me is the need of



prayer, and He has led me to develop a strong prayer life. I believe sweet fellowship with the Lord is the most important weapon we have in our spiritual warfare. Satan does not want us to know that through prayer we can tap into the abundance of heavenly power and authority the Lord has given us over him. A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian!

Prayer is the single most cherished devotion that we can offer our Lord. Of all the souls that have been led to Christ in

this prison, most of them were prayed for well before I even spoke to them. It is glorious to see how God prepares hearts to receive the word.

Though I long to go home to be with my children, who have recently reentered my life, I would not trade the past six years for anything in the world. The Lord has used this place as my training seminary, and this is where I truly met my blessed Lord and Savior for the first time. Thank you, Jesus! ~

I Keep Him in My Heart

**Jesus is the Almighty;
Jesus is the King.
I keep Him in my heart;
He is my everything.**

**The Lord is my Savior;
I turn to Him each day.
On my knees every night,
To the Lord I shall pray.**

**Victory is coming;
He shall set me free.
The Lord has opened my eyes;
Finally I can see.**

**Even though I'm in prison;
I'm free on the inside.
No longer will I run from fear;
No longer will I hide.**

**Because Jesus opened my heart,
He lives within me now.
If you do not know Him,
I can tell you how.**

**Bow down on your knees;
Ask Him into your heart.
For Jesus is the only way;
He gave me a brand new start.**

Jamie Selkey, Lowell Correctional Institution, Ocala, FL

Little Hearts

Sometimes in life I've failed to see
Those little things so close to me;
Those little hands that reach for love
Among those grownups way above.

We don't slow down, we go so fast
And fail to see what truly lasts;
Those little eyes that watch so close
For them it's love that means the most.

For nothing breaks as easily
As little hearts, we fail to see;
For all they ask is only time
A second spent costs not a dime,

But is priceless to a little one
And helps them love each rising sun;
It molds them into happy souls
When parents fill their rightful roles.

We only have one shot at love;
We are the grownups way above;
It is our duty here on earth
To raise and love them from their birth.

To hold those little hands so tight;
To tell them it will be alright;
The greatest gift that we can give
Is to teach a little one to live.

By showing just a little love,
We show them there's a God above.

Mickey Hughes
Stafford Creek Corrections Center
Aberdeen, WA



TESTIMONY OF PATRICE DANIELS

Pontiac Correctional Center, Pontiac, IL

Peace and blessings to all of you. I pray this finds you all clinging firmly to the promises of God. I'm a 38-year-old black man originally from Chicago, serving life without parole for a brutal and senseless gang-related homicide. I have been in prison since June 1994. Unfortunately, I am guilty as charged, and it's the single most glaring regret in my life. I had no right to do what I did.

Typical of an angry, lost, hurting, mentally ill young prisoner with a boatload of time, the first six and half years of my prison term was spent wasting time. In fact, from December of 1995 through April 2006, I was in continual disciplinary segregation. I spent my entire twenties in lock-down. I was arguably one of the most problematic prisoners in the state of Illinois from the years 1998–1999. When the now-closed supermax facility in Joliet, IL opened in March 1998, I was a part of the first shipment there. Staff assaults,

inmate assaults, weapon violations, arsons, exhibitionism, and property destruction were all a part of my narrative. In fact, by March 2000 I had accumulated 48 years of disciplinary segregation time. I was completely out of control, and I was both homicidal and suicidal.

Yet, here I am today, saved, redeemed, and restored. I can attribute this to nobody but God! In March of 2000, I literally got sick and tired of being sick and tired. I didn't know the whys or the hows at the time, but I just knew I wanted something different from what I'd been getting out of life. So I called out to God in that dark, dank cell as I lay there on that cold concrete slab. I remember thinking, then saying: "God, my life is a mess. I need you to help me. Lord, I know we haven't talked in a long time, but I admit that I'm a sinner. I'm so sorry—I'm so lost—I'm so alone. I need you, God. Show me the way. Please help me, Lord."

I had finally decided to let go of everything and surrender. In that moment, I had no ego or pride, and I was totally desperate for something better.



regation time and returned me to general population. But before this could happen, I also had to do my part, on and off record. Because I had been transformed

God heard my pleas and answered my prayers.

True to His nature, God heard my heartfelt pleas and answered my prayers. He began to perform what I like to call a modern day progressive miracle in my life. Slowly but surely, people entered and re-entered my life—people who were instrumental in guiding me, encouraging me, supporting me, teaching me, loving me, and chastising me as I embarked on this transformational journey from useless to useful. God also began to place me in specific positions of significance.

In 2000, God took me out of the supermax, a place people said I would never leave. Eventually, He also took me out of disciplinary segregation. In about six years, the DOC cut 41 years, 10 months, and 12 days off my seg-

in Jesus, I no longer wanted to be destructive and disruptive. As I engrossed myself in God's Word and surrounded myself with constructive, positive, and purposeful things and people, I was no longer drawn to the old allurements. It was a gradual, incremental shift, but it was thorough.

My transformation was not easy. The devil is real, and the war being waged for our souls is also real. I was constantly tempted, ridiculed, criticized, threatened, challenged, and attacked, but with the help of the Lord, I remained steadfast and resolute through it all. I wanted to prove my faithfulness not only to God, but also to myself. While I was a gang-banging parasite, I was wholly commit-

ted to that destructive lifestyle and behavior. If I could suffer and endure that, I could surely do the same and more for God! So I grew in God's grace, and my entire life began to reflect this change.

God has used me for His glory in many instances, including a structural overhaul of the entire IDOC as it relates to the care of the mentally ill. What an answer to prayer! I wanted to share this with you all so that you too would know what is possible to those who believe!

I am truly too blessed to allow myself to be stressed. I just can't thank God enough for all He has done in my life. I often tell my brothers that I don't live like a condemned man anymore. Although I have a natural life sentence, I have eternal life and peace in Jesus Christ—a life I humbly and willingly choose.

I didn't flip the script to impress a parole board or warden,

and I truly enjoy serving God. My present circumstances, the 8x10 concrete and steel cell, the horribly nasty food, and the stench that surrounds me each day is no match for the wholly transcendent love, grace, and mercy of God that I regularly experience. I'm physically jailed, but spiritually free.

It is my sincere hope and prayer that those of you reading this can be inspired or reinforced by it. Either way, to God be all the glory. Keep on fighting the good fight. Trust and believe in God and surrender to Him, and your life will be enriched beyond your wildest dreams. Right where you are can truly be heaven on earth.

God can use anyone, anywhere, at any time. The Apostle Paul wrote seven epistles while under house arrest or in prison in Rome. If you believe, God can use you just as He used me, right from your jail cell. ~

Where you are can be
heaven on earth.



A Dwelling Place for the Living God

Denny Kenaston

For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

2 Corinthians 6:16

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

We are coming to the end of this section on practical child training. This chapter is intended to be both motivational and informative, offering a look at the reasons why training is so important.

As we hold a newborn baby in our arms, it can be hard to imagine that God wants to live in this child someday. God says of

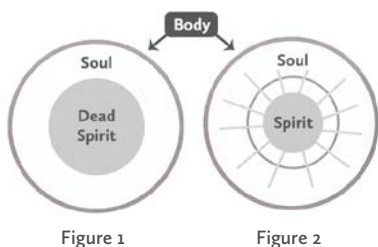
Himself that He is "the High and Lofty one who inhabits eternity" (Isaiah 57:15a). Again He says, "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool" (Isaiah 66:1a). This awesome God wants to come and take possession of my child. This leaves me staggering in the face of a task beyond my understanding. The everlasting God has given us a child, a

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Denny Kenaston and his wife, Jackie, were delivered by God from the drugs, drunkenness, and immorality of the 1970's hippie culture. From that time on, Denny devoted much of his energy to igniting a vision for godly homes based on Christ-centered, Biblical principles. His book, *The Pursuit of Godly Seed*, shares the wisdom God gave him during many years of raising a godly family and serving as a pastor. We pray that this selection from the book will challenge you and change your heart and home.

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vessel to prepare for His indwelling. When my task is finished, I want to say what Solomon said at the dedication of the earthly temple: “I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in forever” (2 Chronicles 6:2). May God deepen our understanding of this principle.



I have chosen two simple diagrams to illustrate some very important truths in this chapter. These circles represent the way God created man as a three-part being: spirit, soul, and body. With our bodies, we relate to the physical world around us; we see, hear, eat, and so on. This is the body.

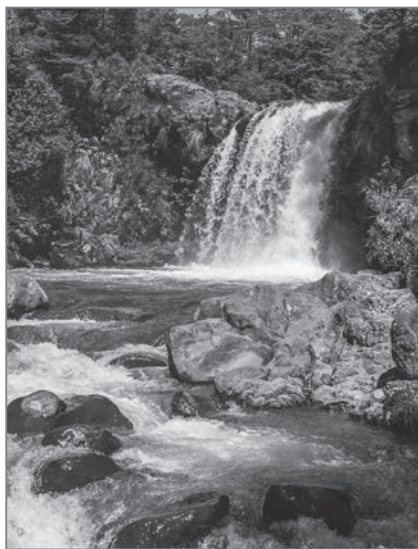
God also made man with a soul. Your soul is made up of your mind, will, and emotions. We use our minds to think and reason. We use our will to choose right or wrong, and we use our emotions to love and set our affections on things.

The third part of man is the spirit. The spirit is the center of your being. It is here that we have fellowship with God. It is here, in your spirit, that God has chosen to dwell.

God made Adam in His own image and placed him in the Garden of Eden, where everything was perfect. Adam was one beautiful creation of God. He was filled with God's presence and able to love God with his whole heart. He could fellowship with God and hear His voice. Adam was a God-centered being, and God was all he needed and wanted.

Consider how Adam functioned in the beginning. His spirit was filled with and controlled by God. His mind, will, and emotions were in subjection to God, Who ruled in his spirit, and his body was ruled by his spirit and his soul. Adam was a beautiful God-centered, God-controlled being. No patterns of sin had defiled him in any way. God looked at man, and “indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

But then came the fall of man. When Adam and Eve fell in the garden, something happened inside them, something that changed them completely. God had said, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you



**Adam was a beautiful
God-centered,
God-controlled being.**

shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). We know Adam and Eve did not drop dead when they took their first bite of that fruit. Their bodies were still there. Their minds were still thinking. They still had a will by which they could choose.

But something was drastically different about Adam and Eve. In the center of their being, in their spirits, they died. Their ability to fellowship with God died. The place where God’s Spirit had lived had died. The Spirit of God

was not there anymore. They went from being God-centered to being self-centered, because of their rebellion. God was not in them anymore, and the history of man has been tragic from that day until now.

This change is illustrated in Figure 1, which depicts a body, a soul, and a spirit cut off from God. I know this is a bit theological, but we need to look at God’s plan for man so we can see what God’s plan is for our children.

A God-Centered Man

From the time of man’s fall, God set His plan of salvation in motion to bring us back to a state where God would again live in the center of our being. This is the purpose of redemption. Regeneration, which means “re-gensis,” happens in our spirit. This is where we are born again by the Spirit of God. We receive a new heart, a new spirit, and God puts His Spirit in us and dwells in us again. This is illustrated in Figure 2, which depicts a body yielded to God, a soul also yielded to God, and a spirit made alive to God again and filled with His presence. This is salvation, and it is glorious. Now we can have fellowship with God again through the blood He shed on Calvary.

All this is explained in Ezekiel 36:25–27. I do not mean to be dogmatic in my explanation of these diagrams. I am using them only to help us see that a major change takes place at conversion. God, through His plan of salvation, is seeking to restore His original, beautiful relationship with man. God is pursuing us in order to save us and dwell in us again—to make us God-centered beings, possessed and controlled by Him.

This might be a bit too deep for some of you, but be assured it is what God wants for each of us. He will not be satisfied until we are back in that beautiful place of fellowship with Him. If God is seeking all this for me, He also wants the same thing for each of my children. It is helpful to know where God is going with my children; that way, I can work together with Him for their full salvation.

Consider Christ's Disciples

I was meditating on the disciples of Christ some time ago in the light of the diagram I have been describing. It came to me in my meditations that God had not come to dwell in them yet. They were, as the diagram in Figure 1 explains, body and soul with a spirit dead and cut

off from God. Jesus called the disciples and said, “Follow me.” They were willing to follow, but God was not inside them yet. They were merely good Jews. They had been taught what was right. They had gone to the synagogue and learned the law for many years. Even so, God was not inside them yet.

For three and a half years, they followed the Lord Jesus around with their bodies, and even with their minds, wills, and emotions. They saw the miracles He did and listened to what He said. They saw the example of His righteous life, and their minds took it all in. What a beautiful example they had before them—God in human flesh! What a training program!

Still, the disciples were largely unchanged on the inside. They were still self-centered men. We can get a bit frustrated with them as we study their lives: after three and a half years with the Lord Jesus, how could they still make the blunders they did? But what can you expect from a self-centered person? Although God was with them, He was not in them.

However, when the day of Pentecost arrived, everything changed. All those years of

training in the law and teaching about righteousness really made a difference then. All those years of being taken to the synagogue, and those beautiful years with the Lord Jesus Christ made a big difference then. They had been trained on the outside, but now they were empowered on the inside. The Spirit of God came upon those disciples and filled them. They were totally changed from that day forward.

Peter, the man who had once trembled in fear of a woman, was changed into another man. He became Peter, the man who stood before a crowd of thousands and told them, “You crucified the Lord.” He was fearless, even though they had the power to cut off his head. What a transformation took place when God came to dwell in them! What an awesome group of men they became!

Consider with me a moment—all those years of training at home and at the synagogue were not wasted on the disciples. All those days spent with Jesus were not wasted, either—not at all. They were days of preparation for the time when God would come and give them a new heart and make them God-centered men again. Jesus trained them and disciplined

them in the mind, the will, and the emotions, but their inner beings could not be changed until Pentecost.

This is the same training we need to give our children who have not been born again. It is important for us as parents to understand how this diagram relates to our children. As with those disciples, our children are in the midst of the training program God has ordained and revealed in the Bible; but someday God will come and give them a new heart and live inside them. It is good for us parents to understand where God wants to go with our children so we can work with Him.

What is God after? He wants a disciple whom He can possess, live within, and fill with His presence. He wants a disciple over whom He can rule in every part of his being, and whom He can use for His glory. There is so much God wants to accomplish on the earth, but He needs yielded vessels He can use. This is God’s plan for our children.

I want to go a bit deeper in our consideration of these diagrams and how they relate to the training of a child. I think it will motivate us to see the tremendous impact we can have on the future usefulness of our children.

Two Innocent Babies

As I see it, when God gives us a newborn child, that child comes to us as pictured in Figure 1. Humans are born after Adam, with spirits dead to God and unable to commune with Him. Our children come to us as self-centered beings, simply because God is not in them. However, they are not yet filled and controlled by their selfishness. In one sense, they come to us totally blank. The mind, the will, the emotions, and even the body come to us blank. The body has not been turned loose to defile itself. The soul (the mind, the will, and the emotions) has not been left to itself yet.

O the beauty of a newborn child! Everyone agrees with this little statement. Did you ever consider what makes a newborn child so beautiful? It is more than the pink skin on its cheeks. When you hold a newborn child in your arms, you are holding a living soul with nothing written on it. There it is, innocent and open like a blank piece of paper. Nothing has been written on it yet, it is innocent. This is what makes a newborn child so beautiful.

Now, what will happen if we take this beautiful innocent child and put it in the wrong

environment for five years? If we leave the child to itself, with all its openness, in the midst of anger, lust, and gluttony, what will happen to the child? If we submit the heart of this child to all the world has to offer on television (evil spirits, conflict, hatred, pornography, drugs, drinking, and stealing), what kind of child will we have in five years? As we look into that child's face, will we still see innocence, purity, and openness? We all know the answer. In some cases, you don't have to wait five years; two years, even just one year, will show the change. In the evil environment of an inner city, the soul of the child can be imprinted with all kinds of evil.

Now, let's look at the positive side of this illustration. If we



**Innocence is what
makes a newborn child
so beautiful.**

instead put the same child, with its sweet, open innocence, into a righteous environment, what do you think we will have at the end of five years? If we place the child in the midst of love, kindness, purity, church life, the Bible, a spiritual atmosphere, and all that we have been discussing, we will get a very different child. I think we can all agree with this and understand how it happens. This is why we say a child is the mirror of its parents. The true life of the parents is etched out in the soul of their children by the things the child hears and the things it senses.

Both types of children are pictured in Figure 1 at this point in their lives. They are both unregenerate, needing to be born again by the Spirit of God. However, consider how differently they come to the place of personal salvation, because of their environments.

The life of the parents is etched on the soul of the child. Oh parents, I hope we are alert and can grasp the implications of this. Can we see the impact of the positive and negative sides? The negative potential makes our task urgent; but the positive potential makes our task exciting.

Both types of children will

grow up and hopefully hear the same plan of salvation someday. They both will need to be saved. They both will have to deal with their own self-centered nature. But let me ask you a question: which one has the better chance, and which one would you rather be?

What a blessing and favor we give our children when we recognize what God wants to do with them and begin to work with God to preserve their souls from many evil patterns.

Loose the Heavy Burdens

I know all children are self-centered, born after Adam with a sinful nature. I know we cannot preserve them from everything, but we can preserve them from many things. What a tremendous burden we place on them if we neglect our responsibilities and let them just grow up on their own.

Some people might say here, “Well, someday my children will get converted, and then they will be all right.” This is only partially true. Yes, your children will have an opportunity to give their lives to God, but they also will have more burdens to bear in their Christian lives. The process of sanctification will be much harder for those who were

left to themselves when they were young. I had some major things to deal with after I was converted. For instance, I was lazy and didn't like to work hard. After I was born again, I had to deal with this sin. I faced it many times until it was totally rooted out of my life.

If we neglect training our children, we place a heavy burden on them that they have to drag along with them. Yes, God will help them. Yes, God will set them free. Yes, God can give them victory over every one of these sins. God can change every character flaw in their lives as the life of Jesus is manifested in their flesh. But it is so much easier for a child coming to conversion who was trained according to the Bible pattern. Such a child gets converted and takes off running for the glory of God.

Some of the verses we have addressed take on new meaning when we look at them in the light of these diagrams. "A child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

Again, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

And one more, "If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol [hell]."



The process of sanctification will be much harder for children who were left to themselves.

Do you see it? Our children are not yet converted, but we are responsible to train their souls and their bodies, looking forward to the day when they will give their hearts to God and be converted.

May God renew our vision and help us to see, "I have a child from the Lord." God Himself places them one by one into our hands. We must realize, "Here is a living soul given into our care. God wants to possess this vessel someday." For every one of our children, let's consider each of the four areas in the diagram: the mind, the will, the emotions, and the body. All the teaching given so far covers these four areas of a child's person.

The Mind

When God gives us a baby, this baby has a clean mind. It is empty. It has nothing in it yet. It is like a new computer. A new computer comes with sufficient data for it to function, but its main storage is blank. What will we do with the clean, fresh mind of our children? What kind of data will we put into their minds? What kind of impressions will we allow to flow freely into their minds? Will we protect our children's minds from the multitudes of media vying for the opportunity to fill them? These are good questions for challenging our hearts. It is not right to allow this little child to be filled with useless data, foolish data, worldly data, and especially not filthy data. Will we, out of our neglect, allow his blank mind to be filled with all that?

As we all know, the things that go into the mind do not go away. They are etched on the memory. Many of us have hundreds of memories we wish we could take out of our minds. Praise God, we can push such memories to the back and fill our minds with good things. We can renew our minds with beautiful things from the Bible. All this helps, but unwholesome things

you did, thought, or saw remain in the back of your mind. They sit there just waiting for the right input, such as a little phrase of a worldly song while you walk through the grocery store. At this signal, those unwanted memories come marching like soldiers into the front of your mind. This is how the mind works.

We do our children a great service if we stand guard over all the data that goes inside their young minds. They are not old enough to guard their minds on their own; that is our responsibility. We are responsible to make decisions for our children about television, radio, books, computers, and magazines. The list is endless. People behind all these media are vying for the opportunity to fill our children's minds with things that should not be there.

What kind of words will enter children's minds at home? What will they hear? Will they sit at the feet of parents having an argument, again and again? Some parents think, "Oh, that child is only one year old. They don't understand anything." This is not how you should look at it. You are feeding data into the child's "computer," and all that data will bear fruit someday. All the hate-

ful words, all the silly words, and all the harsh words you speak will go into their minds and bear fruit. God is calling us parents to sanctification. We as Christian parents are not allowed to live in ungodly behavior patterns any more.

But what about the positive side? We have the opportunity to fill that “computer” with data that will bless the children’s lives for the rest of their days. At our house, we have used the Bible on cassette to fill the minds of all our children. From the time they were a year old, they went to sleep listening to the Bible. Sometimes they went off to sleep, but other times, they just lay there listening.

Many chapters of the Bible can be hidden away in children’s minds. Bible stories, holy books, sermons, and theology discussions on Sunday afternoon—all these can be used to influence the mind of a child. The family table is an excellent place to fill their minds with the holy and the right. I approach each mealtime with purpose and vision, planning out things I want to talk about. There are times when the breakfast discussion gets so good and extended that we just sing a hymn and go to prayer. I tell the family, “We

have been having devotions already.”



The family table is an excellent place to fill children's minds with what is holy and right.

The songwriter Fanny Crosby is a beautiful illustration of this point. Fanny Crosby got converted when she was about thirty-one years old. When Fanny lost her eyesight as a little girl, her grandmother said, “I am going to be Fanny’s eyes.” She told Fanny how beautiful the sunsets and the sunrise were. She sat next to this little girl and went over Bible verses, again and again. Fanny Crosby literally hid scores of chapters of the Bible away in her mind.

One day the Spirit of God came to dwell inside Fanny Crosby. When the Word of God and the Spirit of God met each

other inside the being of Fanny Crosby, thousands of hymns rolled out. Hallelujah! What a hymn-making machine she was for the glory of God!

I'm not saying that if we do all these things our children will not need to be converted. They *will* be self-centered instead of God-centered until the Lord Jesus comes to sit on the throne of their hearts by His Spirit. But there is much we can give them in preparation for that day. When the Word of God and the Spirit of God meet in the being of our children, beautiful things will start flowing out.

The Will

Let us go on to the will. The will of the child must be in subjection to the parents from an early age. I have given much instruction on this subject already; however, I want to pick it up again to make a point.

The mind-set of parents toward their children's wills should be, "Not your will, but my will be done." Why? Because someday God will require them to say, "Not my will but Yours be done." Someday our children will need to yield their wills to God, and this will be much easier if all their life they are taught to yield to their parents. I believe

that is why God tells children only one thing in Scripture: "Obey your parents." If they do this with all their heart, then when God knocks and says, "My son, give Me your heart," it will be much easier.

Remember our discussion of Susanna Wesley in an earlier chapter? This yielding of her children's wills to God is what she was after. The will of the child was of utmost importance. I mention this again here so you can see how it connects with the child's conversion. We must ensure that our child's will is yielded to our will.

Many everyday activities can be used to bring the child's will into subjection and hold it there. Children have foods they don't like, toys they want to play with, and chores they don't feel like doing. There are naps they don't want to take and mornings when they don't want to get up. There are many opportunities to train the child's will. We should be asking ourselves the question, "Is my child's will yielded to me?"

The Emotions

The affections and feelings of children, like the other parts of their being, come to us totally blank. We have the blessed opportunity to train the palate of

their soul from the time of birth. Just as a parent enjoys introducing new foods to a growing baby, we can enjoy training our small children to love what we love.

Here is where example is extremely important. What we choose to love, our children will choose to love. Although God is not living inside a four-year-old child, that child can love going to church if you love to go to church. He can learn to love singing godly songs or going out on the streets to pass out tracts. Words and repetition do not teach affection for what is good; it is taught only by the example of the parents. The child emotionally senses what the parent loves, and the child finds his affections attached to the right things, even though God is not controlling him yet.

A little two-year-old boy will want his Bible in his hand. He can't read it, and he doesn't know what is in it, but there is something inside him that he picked up from his father and mother that says, "There is something special about this book called a Bible." He holds it in his little hand and carries it to church proudly. What is he doing? He is attaching his affections to the things his parents love. Someday the Spirit of God

will come inside that child, and then he really is going to get excited about the Bible.

Until then, let us use our example to guide the affections of our children in the ways they should go. We must guide them to love what is right and hate what is wrong. Watch the *thrill level* of your children. (I'll say more about this in the next chapter.) What *thrills* your children? This tells you what their affections are attached to. Today that thrill of affection is called a *rush*. I want my children's emotions to rush when they walk through the doors of the church on Sunday morning.

Our emotions cover more than just our affections. Emotions also include anger, love, and many other feelings. A child should be trained to express the proper emotions at the proper times. Wouldn't it be a blessing to children if they had never had an outburst of anger in their emotional experiences? It is possible. If they never see and hear outbursts of anger at home, and they are never allowed to view them on TV, they may not ever express them. Emotions are caught, as I explain in the next chapter.

The whole purpose of teaching and training is to fill the

mind with the right things, to guide the will to choose the right, and to encourage the emotions to get excited about the right things. If you work on these three things together, godly character will grow in the hearts and lives of your children, even though God is not inside them yet.

The Body

Now let's consider the body. We do our children a great favor if we help them gain control over their bodies. We do them a great favor if we protect them and help them keep their bodies pure. They will each have to live with the body they were given and the patterns it follows for the rest of their days on the

earth. If we guide our children with loving direction into proper habits, these will just be normal life to them.

For example, when you hear the alarm go off in the morning, do you jump right out of bed? If not, I can almost guarantee that when you were growing up, no one made you get up on time. So now, many years later, though you love God and want to do what is right, you don't get up when the alarm goes off.

For your children, getting up on time can be as normal as 1-2-3. When the alarm goes off, you get out of bed. You tell your body, "Body, get up! I'm in charge, and it is time to get up." Or, "You are going to eat green beans, body. I'm in charge. Not you." Some people think it is ridiculous to work with your children this way, but if you don't teach them to rule their bodies, their bodies will rule them. A well-trained child can look at those green beans on their plate and say, "No, they're not my favorite. But we are going to eat green beans today because that is what Mom has put on the plate." He can even learn to thank God for those beans with a sincere heart.

Help your children bring their bodies under subjection. Watch



We do our children a great favor if we help them gain control over their bodies.

over them, guide them, and keep them from defiling their bodies. Don't let them play behind closed doors. Don't let them go play in the outbuildings or back bedrooms on Sunday afternoon while you're having such a good time talking about the Bible. They may defile their body by the suggestion of a playmate.

It is our urgent responsibility to watch over these things. Why? Because someday God will come and live inside them, and they will have to deal with their bodies as Christians. Praise God, He can deliver them and purify their passions, but how much better if we keep them from these things in the first place. Communicate with your children about these things on whatever level they understand, God giving you wisdom. The purpose is to teach them to keep themselves pure.

I am not talking about making robots out of your children. I am talking about having a vision and understanding where God is going with them. I intend to guide my children in such a way that they will have a ten-step head start on where I was when I was born again. How beautiful is the life of the child whose body and soul have been guided and disciplined in right paths! It's easy to see what will happen when

such a child comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The battles then will be short-lived if we have helped them in these areas as children.

John Wesley was not converted until he was thirty-five years old, but the things his mother planted in him gave him an advantage. All the things she kept from him and all the disciplines she ordered for his life helped him. He knew how to get up in the morning. He knew how to drink the castor oil that didn't taste good. He knew how to be content with simple things. Then, when he was thirty-five years old, he was listening to the introduction to the book of Romans by Martin Luther, and a light went on inside his soul. God came to live in that man named John Wesley. God, living within him, turned England upside down. He didn't have a lot of garbage from his past life, and he rose, went forth, and ran for the glory of God.

I have been doing a lot of research into godly homes of the past. I have observed that the men and women who were preserved and trained this way seemed to have more grace on them after they were converted. There was a special blessing on them. When the Spirit of

God comes to live inside children who have been guided through their days in Christian principles, they “hit the ground running.” The others, like me, stumble around quite a bit. We love God, but we face struggles we would not have to deal with if we had been trained in godly practices from a young age. Let’s give our children that edge we didn’t have. May God help us.

Prayer

O God, who lives in man, hear us. We pray for wisdom to build temples for the living God to live in. Lord, we live in a difficult age. Media is everywhere calling to our little ones. Make us strong to protect them in Jesus’ name.
Amen.



Send Your Work to Loaves & Fishes!

Do you have a testimony, poem, or other inspirational writing to share with the rest of our readers? To improve your chances of being published in *Loaves & Fishes*, please keep the following in mind:

- **If your poetry uses rhyme and rhythm, the rhyme and rhythm should be consistent throughout the poem.**
- **The message of the writing should be clear and focused, not rambling from subject to subject.**
- **The writing should be consistent with the truth of the Bible.**
- **If you write your Christian testimony, it should not focus on your sinful past or your attempts at self-improvement, but on God’s redemptive work in your life.**

We receive far more submissions than we can use. Thoughtful attention to these guidelines will increase your chances of having your work published.

God Sees the Truth, But Waits

In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. He was a handsome, blond, curly-headed fellow who loved fun and singing. One summer morning, as Aksionov was preparing to attend a fair and telling his family goodbye, his wife said to him, "Ivan Dmitrich, don't go; I had a bad dream about you last night."

Aksionov laughed. "You're afraid I'll get drunk in town."

His wife replied: "I don't know what I'm afraid of; all I know is I dreamed when you came back from town and took off your cap, your hair was all gray."

Aksionov laughed again. "That's a lucky sign," he said. He kissed her goodbye, his driver started the horses, and they drove away.

Half-way to town, Aksionov met another merchant he knew, and they picked the same inn to stay for the night. After drinking a little tea, they went to bed in adjoining rooms.

The next morning, Aksionov paid his bill and left early with his driver. He had gone about

twenty-five miles when a fast carriage overtook him, carrying a government officer and two soldiers, and signaled him to stop. The officer began firing questions at him: "What's your name, and where are you from? Where did you stay last night? Were you alone or with someone else? Did you see the other merchant this morning? Why did you leave the inn before dawn?"



The officer began firing questions at Aksionov.

Puzzled, Aksionov told the officer everything he could remember about the night before. "Why are you questioning me like I'm some kind of thief?" he

asked. "I am traveling on business, and I need to be going."

"The merchant who slept next to your room last night has been found with his throat cut," said the officer. "We're going to have to search your luggage." The soldiers and the police officer opened Aksionov's luggage and began digging through it. Suddenly the officer pulled a knife out of a bag and held it up. It was covered with blood. "So whose is this?" he asked.

Aksionov's face turned pale, and he started trembling. "I—don't know," he gasped. "I—I've never seen it before!"

"That house was locked from inside, and nobody else was there," said the officer. "How did you kill him? How much money did you take?"

Aksionov swore he was innocent, but the police-officer ordered the soldiers to bind him and throw him in the cart. They confiscated his money and his luggage and locked him up in the nearest town. He was charged with murdering a merchant from Ryazan and robbing him of twenty thousand rubles.

Aksionov's wife was in despair and didn't know what to believe. Bringing all their small children with her, she went to the town where her husband was in jail,

and after much begging, she finally got permission to see him. She told him how things were at home and asked about what had happened to him.

After he told her the whole story, she asked, "What can we do now?"

"We need to appeal to the Czar not to let an innocent man die."

His wife told him she had already sent an appeal to the Czar, but it had been rejected. "It was not for nothing I dreamed your hair had turned grey. Remember? You should not have gone to the fair that day."

She ran her fingers through his hair. "Vanya," she said, "tell your wife the truth; it was you, wasn't it?"

"So you suspect me, too!" said Aksionov, and he buried his face in his hands and cried. A guard came to say that his wife and children needed to leave, and Aksionov said good-bye to his family for the last time.

After they left, Aksionov thought about what his wife had said. "It seems only God knows the truth; it is to Him alone we must appeal, and from Him alone expect mercy." And Aksionov gave up all hope of being acquitted, wrote no more petitions, and only prayed to God.

Aksionov was found guilty of the murder and robbery and sentenced to be whipped and sent to hard labor in the mines. For twenty-six years he lived as a convict in Siberia. His hair turned white as snow, and his beard grew long, thin, and grey. He never told jokes anymore; he walked slowly, with a stoop; he spoke little but prayed often.

With money he earned making boots in prison, Aksionov bought *The Lives of the Saints*. He read this book whenever he had time and enough light. On Sundays in the prison chapel he read the lessons and sang in the choir, for his voice was still good. The prison authorities liked Aksionov because he never made trouble, and his fellow-prisoners respected him; they called him “Grandpa,” and “The Saint.” When they petitioned the prison authorities, they always made Aksionov speak for them, and they often came to him to have him settle their fights.

No news reached Aksionov from his home; he did not even know if his wife and children were still alive.

One day a fresh gang of convicts arrived at the prison. In the evening the old prisoners gathered around the new ones and asked them where

they came from and what they were sentenced for. Aksionov sat near the edge of the circle to listen.



*Only God
knows the truth.*

One of the new convicts, a tall, strong man of sixty, was telling the others what he had been arrested for. “I merely took a horse that was tied to a sleigh, and they arrested me for stealing! I explained that I only took it to get home quicker and then let it go, but ‘no,’ they said, ‘you stole it.’ The strangest part of it is that I’ve done much worse things than that, but never got in trouble—actually, that’s a lie; I did get sent to Siberia once before, but I didn’t stay long.”

“Where are you from?” someone asked.

“From Vladimir. My name is Makar, and they also call me Semyonich.”

Aksionov raised his head and said, “Tell me, Semyonich, do you know anything about the Aksionovs of Vladimir? Are they still alive?”

“Sure I know them. They’re rich, but their dad’s in Siberia: a sinner like ourselves, it seems! How did you get here, Grandpa?”

Aksionov did not like to speak of his troubles. “I’ve been here twenty-six years,” he sighed.

“What for?” asked Makar.

“Never mind,” said Aksionov. “I must have deserved it.”

That was all he would say, but the others told the new convicts how someone had killed a merchant and put the knife in Aksionov’s luggage, so that he had been unjustly convicted.

When Makar Semyonich heard this, he looked at Aksionov, slapped his knee, and exclaimed, “That’s amazing, man! You’ve aged so much I never would have known you!”

“What do you mean?” asked Aksionov. “Did you hear something about the crime, or did you see me somewhere before?”

“Oh, I’m sure I heard something; the world’s full of rumors. But it was a long time ago, and I’ve forgotten what I heard.”

“Maybe you heard who really killed the merchant,” said Aksionov.

Makar Semyonich laughed and replied “It must have been the man with the knife in his luggage! If somebody else hid the knife there, ‘He’s not a thief till he’s caught,’ as they say. How could anyone put a knife into your bag while it was under your head without waking you up?”

Aksionov was sure he was talking to the real murderer. He got up and walked away.

All that night Aksionov lay awake. He was miserable. In his mind rose the image of his wife as he remembered her the day he left for the fair. He saw her face and eyes as if she were present; he heard her speak and laugh. Then he saw his children, quite little, as they were when he went to prison: one with a little coat on, another at his mother’s breast. He remembered himself, young and cheerful as he used to be. He saw in his mind the place where he was flogged—the executioner, the people standing around. He remembered the chains, the other convicts; his twenty-six years of prison life, and his premature old age. He felt like killing himself.

“And it’s all his fault!” thought Aksionov. He longed for revenge

on Makar Semyonich, even if he had to die for it. He kept repeating prayers all night, but they brought no peace. During the day he did not go near Makar Semyonich or even look at him.

Two weeks passed like this. Aksionov could not sleep at night, and was so miserable he did not know what to do.

One night as he was walking around the prison, he saw some earth come rolling out from under one of the bunks. As he stopped to see what it was, Makar Semyonich crawled out from under the bunk and looked up at Aksionov with a scared face. Makar was digging a hole under the wall and smuggling the dirt out in his boots when they did field work.

"Keep quiet, old man, and you'll get out too," he hissed. "If you squeal, they'll whip me to death, but I'll kill you first."

Aksionov trembled with anger as he stared down at his enemy. "I don't want to escape, and you don't have to kill me; you killed me long ago! I'll either tell on you, or not, as God directs me."

The next day, when the convicts were led out to work, the guards figured out that one of the prisoners had emptied dirt out of his boots. They searched

the prison and found the tunnel. The head of the prison questioned the prisoners, but they all denied knowing anything. Finally, knowing Aksionov was an honest man, the head of the prison turned to him. "You are a truthful old man; tell me, before God, who dug the hole?"

Makar Semyonich stood nearby, looking as if he didn't have a care in the world. He never glanced at Aksionov. Aksionov's lips and hands trembled, and for awhile he could not say a word. *He ruined my life, thought Aksionov. Why should I protect him? Let him pay for what he did for me. But I could be wrong, and what good would it do me anyway?*

"I can't say, sir," Aksionov replied. "It is not God's will that I should tell! Do what you like with me." And no matter how they questioned him, he would say no more.

Just as Aksionov fell asleep that night, Makar Semyonich slipped through the darkness and knelt by his bed. "What do you want now?" asked Aksionov. "Go away or I'll call the guard!"

"Ivan Dmitrich," whispered Semyonich, "forgive me! I killed the merchant and hid the knife in your bag. I meant to kill you too, but I heard a noise and escaped out the window. For-



*God will forgive you;
maybe I am far worse
than you.*

give me, for the love of God! I'll confess it, and you can go free."

"It's easy for you to talk," said Aksionov, "but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years.

Now my wife is dead and my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go."

Makar Semyonich beat his head on the floor and sobbed. "I can't bear to think what I did to you, yet you had pity on me, and did not tell on me. For Christ's sake forgive me, wretch that I am!"

Then Aksionov began to weep too. "God will forgive you!" he said. "Maybe I am far worse than you." And his heart grew light, and the longing for home and freedom left him.

Makar Semyonich did confess his guilt, and Aksionov was pardoned, but by the time the order for his release arrived, Aksionov was already dead.

Adapted from Leo N. Tolstoy

Somewhere in James 1

Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV).

fl ennoay oanmg oyu kntish he si ersiiuglo, and sode not dielrb sih
ugnoet but desceiev his onw ahtre, sthi oen's orinielg si lssuee.

Reference: _____

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

God is good, God is great!
He saved my life with a prison gate.
My life was empty, my spirit dead;
He gave me a chance to clear my head.

Broken down and beaten up,
He made me whole and filled my cup;
He took this wasted flesh of mine,
And He showed me how I could shine.

Through Jesus Christ and His grace,
The word is mine, for my embrace;
I'm no longer filled with shame and fear,
But facing life with a vision clear.

For in the Spirit is the way
To be free day by day;
So if you're down and cannot see,
Go with God, and He'll set you free!

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**Jesus said, “He who does the truth comes to the
light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that
they have been done in God.” *John 3:21***