



Publishing Peace

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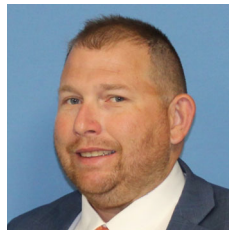
Vol. 22 No. 2 April-June 2024

“Behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!...” (Nahum 1:15)

Upcoming Events

Graduation: June 14, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

Come join us for the graduation of



D.J. Hatfield & Jordon Morris

**Charge to the Graduates: Rico Brown*

Also, honoring posthumously



Glen & Berneda Ward

Sing & Pie Fling: August 30, 2024*

Singing: 7:00-8:00 pm

Dessert: 8:00pm - ??

**Note the date change*

2024 Victory Lectures: October 20-24, 2024

Let This Mind Be in You: The Book of Philippians

Cain and Abel

David Deagel

An argument exists in the realm of psychology that attempts to answer the question concerning how different characteristic traits are formed within a person. One proposed thought centers around the idea that our personality traits are ingrained in our DNA. Personality is solely produced through biological processes and genetic makeup. The code of our DNA is what makes a person an introvert or extrovert; a pessimist or an optimist; a workaholic or a couch potato. The other proposed thought finds its core in how an individual is raised, their social interactions, and life experiences, even as an infant, which forms our behavioral characteristics. Being raised by outgoing parents often produces outgoing children. Being raised in a home where tensions are high and arguments regularly occur produces children who can be either aggressive or overly timid. These discussions are generally referred to as the argument of Nature versus Nurture. Do genetics or early interaction play a larger part in the personality characteristics of an individual?

An interesting phenomenon that I have witnessed within families, as I am sure you have also, is in the fact of two or more children raised in the same house with the same parents under the same rules and responsibilities, yet they are different and respond differently to the stresses of life. Perhaps we all have seen this in our church families where children who have been raised in the same household, with the same rules and responsibilities, and with the same faith, yet there will be those children who have confessed faith and obedience to Christ and those who are not faithful. Psychology asks, is this Nature or Nurture, is this a difference in genetics or parenting?

We clearly recall how the “First Family” had their struggles. Adam and Eve gave into the temptation of Satan (Gen. 3:4-5) and as a result of their disobedience, they were exiled from the Garden of Eden (3:24). While in exile the first Husband and Wife began a family. Cain and Able are born (4:1-2). These two were innocent of the sin which Adam and Eve committed but, as a consequence, they were raised in a world that was altered. There was a change in maternity and authority (3:16) and a change in living and livelihood (3:17-19).

Biologically, Cain and Abel were the offspring of two biologically perfect people. They were nurtured by Adam and Eve and in the presence of the Lord (cf. 4:16) If nature vs nurture are the only factors affecting our personality traits one would assume that Cain and Abel would have had similar personalities. One could also assume that being of perfect, or as near perfect as possible, genetic makeup that nature would not be a factor. Additionally, one could assume that being raised by Adam and Eve who were being instructed by God and in the very presence of God that nurturing would not be a factor.

Eliminating Nature and Nurture in this context – what is the factor that led to the sin of murder by Cain due to a rage of jealousy? Was God to blame for creating a faulty DNA? Were Adam and Eve to blame for their parenting style? We certainly cannot place the blame on things that did not exist (school, media, peer pressure).

A few lessons we can learn from Genesis chapter 4:

1. Satan is alive and well. We cannot discount his influence. While we do not see Satan intervening directly in chapter 4 like we read in chapter 3 there is no doubt that Satan is just as hard at work on Cain and Abel as he was on Adam and Eve. He is always prowling about looking to tempt anyone to sin (cf. 1 Pt. 5:8). Perhaps Satan tempted Cain and Abel to skip the sacrifice offering. Perhaps Satan tempted Cain to bring the “leftovers” of the harvest as a sacrifice. Perhaps Satan tempted Cain to be proud and not seek an animal for sacrifice from his brother Abel. Perhaps God told both Cain and Abel what was desired for the sacrifice but Satan rebutted with, “Has God indeed said...” What we clearly can see is that Satan brought anger into Cain’s heart which influenced him to commit murder. Satan already devoured Cain once he was able to feed the anger (cf. Mt. 5:22). It became just a matter of time before Cain would step into the trap Satan had set.

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I Am Not Conformed

Rod Goddard

2. Overcome bad circumstances. Another lesson to be learned is that children will handle the same circumstances differently. While we do not know the age gap that might have existed, Cain and Abel grew up in the same “house.” It seems they lived a difficult life of toil for their daily needs. Through the difficult circumstances of living in a fallen world Abel was respected by God (v. 4) and considered righteous by his obedience to God (cf. Heb 11:4). Yet, Cain gave in to anger, allowed sin to rule over his life, commit murder, and went out from the presence of the Lord. (4:6-7, 8, 16). We may not have the perfect house for children to thrive, however, they still have a choice on how they respond. We cannot allow outside influences or circumstances to affect our choices of doing what we know is right. We have a choice to give in to temptation or not. We have a choice in how we respond to negative situations. We can choose to have joy in all circumstances (2 Thes. 5:16; cf Acts 5:41).

3. Keep moving forward. We are not told of the remorse Adam and Eve experienced following the news of the death of one son and the banishment of the other. We do not see them in a long lament, however, I would believe they would have grieved. We do not see them blaming God. We do not see them losing their faith in God. The death and banishment affected them (4:25) but did not stop them. Adam and Eve continued to obey God. They continued to have children (1:28; 4:25; 5:4) and continued to leave a legacy of faithfulness to God (cf. 4:26; 5:22; 6:9).

4. There is no hiding from God. Perhaps Cain learned the art of evasion from his parents. Following the murder of Abel he attempted to hide his actions and act innocent. God knew Adam and Eve were hiding in the garden after eating the forbidden fruit. God knew Cain killed Abel and his blood cried out from the ground (4:10). We may be so secretive and evasive in our dealings with people that we can hide from them our true selves. However, God knows all and sees all. All things are open and seen by Him (cf. Heb 4:13).

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind...” (Rom. 12:2). Christians are to be different from the world (Matt. 5:13-16). We are not to be conformed to the “flavors” of the world as Jesus spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount. We are to be transformed from “tasting” like everyone else to God by being like salt. Salt does not taste like sugar, flour, or anything else. Salt tastes like salt, nothing else. We are to taste differently than everyone else in our sacrifice to God. We are not to be conformed to the darkness of the world as Christians. Jesus spoke about our being the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). There is a complete difference between light and darkness. It is impossible to have half-light and half-darkness in a room. Light is the absence of darkness and darkness is the absence of light. If someone speaks about a room filled with darkness, that room has no light whatsoever. We are to be transformed from the spiritual darkness that fills the world by becoming the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness and obliterates the darkness while the light shines. This is how we are to be in this world of conformation.

It is much easier to be conformed to the world and blend in with the world than to transform ourselves into what God wants us to be. God wants humble servants, not haughty masters. This world is full of sinful pride and is beginning to lack in righteous humility as God would want us to have. God said for us to be “clothed with humility” through the words of Peter (1 Pet. 5:5). How can someone be clothed with humility if they already have the large cloak of haughtiness?

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Being haughty is not how God wants us to live. We are to serve God humbly all the days of our lives. We must not be conformed to the haughtiness of the world. Be transformed to the humility of a righteous servant of God.

God wants a faithful spouse as the Church, not a cheating spouse as the Church. The Church is the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2, 9). The world views the sanctity of marriage as rubbish. Marriage in the world is viewed as unimportant and not necessary. This is the dark idea in the world. Should we be conformed to the darkness of the world? Definitely not! We are to be transformed from the world and live faithfully as a spouse to Christ. Jesus is the Groom to the Church and the Church must not commit adultery against Jesus with the Devil. When we sin, we commit adultery against Jesus, the spouse of the Church. Let us not be conformed to the world by sinning against Jesus, the Bridegroom to the Church. How is one transformed from the world and not conformed? We are to **HEAR** the Word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17), not the vain words of the world. We are to **BELIEVE** in Jesus, who is the Word of the Lord (Jn. 8:24), not in the doctrines of the world. We are to **REPENT** from the works of the world (Acts 2:38). This means that we are to transform from our past sins. We are to **CONFESS** our belief in Jesus (Rom. 10:9), not confess the vanity of the world. We are to **BE BAPTIZED** into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:4). Baptism is how we become transformed from the world only after we have taken all of the other steps. The final step is that we are to **LIVE FAITHFULLY**. This means that we are to remain transformed from the darkness of the world.

Commentaries Available

We have been blessed to handle our dear brother Gene West's commentaries. These are available (with requested donation prices noted; extra for shipping is appreciated, also).

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Hebrews (\$20)

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