

The DNA of a Christian

by Travis Dean
October 10, 2009

Have you ever driven a car that was out of alignment? I have. Let's say we're driving down I-71 between Columbus and Cleveland. The road is perfectly straight for as far as we can see. You're driving a car that is aligned correctly. I'm driving a car that is out of alignment. You propose that we let go of the steering wheel, since the road is straight. Everything for you goes fine. You stay in your lane with no hands. (Assuming there aren't any grooves in the pavement or potholes in the road) But as soon as I let go of the steering wheel, I start heading into oncoming traffic. It doesn't matter how long I have been going straight. As soon as I let go of the steering wheel, the car starts wandering out of my lane. Driving a car that's out of alignment can be frustrating. It takes constant effort to stay in your lane, even if the road is straight.

Trying to be a HEALTHY Christian is like driving a car that is out of alignment.

Last week we found that a healthy Christian means being like Christ all the time. It means bearing the fruit of the Spirit. It means radiating love, peace, and joy all the time. Most of us don't know what it's like being a healthy Christian for one day, much less all the time.

I remember one day when I experienced being a healthy Christian in a very powerful way. It was the best day of my life. It was the day I accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of my heart. The love, peace, and joy of Christ were radiating in my being. It was a wonderful experience. I was in New Mexico at the time, and it was the Sabbath. I remember walking into Golden Corral (don't worry, I'm pretty sure it was after sunset) and feeling like I was on a cloud. I was free. My stress was gone. God's love for everyone in the restaurant filled my heart. "If only they knew what Christ has given them!" I thought. For the first time I was realizing what it is like to be a healthy Christian. I wish I could say this experience never ended. But it did. It lasted maybe for the rest of that day. And then I started veering off the road. People seemed more like obstacles than God's children. My stress level shot through the roof. I sat in the ditch wondering what happened.

I make a commitment to give the Lord the best part of my day. I leave this sacred time holding His hand. My thoughts are on Him. But in a matter of minutes I can be off the road and in a ditch. I lose my temper. I get consumed with worrying about all the things I have to do. I wish the kids would just be quiet and get along.

Why do I constantly feel pulled AWAY from what I know is right? Why am I not who I WANT to be? Why is it so difficult to be a HEALTHY Christian?

To answer these questions, we need to understand our DNA. What is DNA?

In MSN's online dictionary you will find this definition of DNA: a substance in our body that carries genetic information. Here's another way to explain it: Our DNA contains the blueprint for every cell in our body. The information in our DNA is what makes us who we are.

God created the human race with an original DNA. In Genesis 1:26, 27 we find out what it is. (Read) This is perhaps the most honorable DNA God could have given us. He made us in HIS OWN image. It's as if He used some of His own DNA to make us. We were not duplicates of God. But we were like Him in the same way our shadow is like us. There is a resemblance. So, when we were created, we were perfect. We were 100% good. This was our original DNA.

The 2nd and 3rd chapters of Genesis describe how this original DNA was lost. Adam & Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. And when they disobeyed God, the DNA of the human race changed. The Bible uses the word "sin" to describe Adam & Eve's disobedience. And in Romans 3:12 it says, "All have turned away. They have become worthless. There is no one who does good; not even one." The whole human race became infected with sin. Our DNA was no longer perfect. It changed. It became 100% sinful.

This is a brief history of our DNA as a human race. Now we will look at the unique DNA of a Christian.

I believe Paul understood the Christian's DNA like few ever have. In Romans chapter 7 he shares his own experience. He describes how he came to understand his DNA as a Christian. Paul was raised as a Pharisee. He reached the point in his life when he thought he was perfect. He thought his DNA had become 100% good. That is, until the 10th commandment got a hold of him. The words, "Thou shalt not covet" pierced him. Suddenly the "perfect" life he had built came tumbling down. This one commandment pointed out sin in his life he never knew was there. It showed that every good thing he did was corrupted by selfish motives. Everywhere he turned he saw sin in his life. As my son would say, "His life was a mess."

In this condition Paul ran to Christ. He found there what he had been missing. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5:17. (Read) This is an incredible miracle. This is what Paul experienced. He believed in Christ. He was made new. God implanted inside of him a new DNA that was 100% good. He was a completely new person with new desires. He hated the things he used to love. Instead of focusing on his own apparent perfection, he led people to the one who was perfect, Jesus Christ.

But Paul describes a frustrating time in His Christian experience. He wasn't able to carry out the good that he wanted to do. There was something pulling him away from his new desires. And in the process he came to understand the Christian's DNA. Turn with me to Romans 7:21-23. Paul says as Christians we have TWO forces inside of us that are in opposition to each other. One is our new mind that wants to do what is good. The other is our sinful nature that wants to do what is sinful. As a Christian, then, we have two opposing DNA's. One DNA we have had since we were born. IT only wants to do what is sinful. The other DNA we have had since we were born AGAIN, when we became Christians. IT only wants to do what is good.

This is why it is so difficult to be a HEALTHY Christian. When we become Christians, our sinful DNA does not leave us. In fact, it will remain until Jesus returns. In another sermon, we will discuss WHY God leaves us with our sinful DNA. But for now I would like to reassure you. Struggling against sin does not mean you're not a Christian. Seeing how far you are from being like Christ does not mean you're not a Christian. Struggling with old habits that you thought were gone does not mean you're not a Christian. It simply means you still have a sinful DNA. Don't feel guilty. Don't feel hopeless. God has implanted a new DNA inside of you that is 100% good. This DNA is in opposition to your sinful DNA. This creates a conflict. If you were not a Christian, there would be no conflict. Your sinful DNA would not have anything opposing it. Never doubt the validity of your Christian experience, because of an inside conflict. You are His. And no struggle or feelings will ever change that. Rest in God. He accepts you. You are HIS child. If you're feeling discouraged, don't give up hope. Keep holding on to the steering wheel.