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Our "Gen 1" heritage

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When I was a teenager, my family was labeled as dysfunctional by a psychiatrist who was treating one of my family members. I remember hearing that and immediately thinking that the label didn't fit.

I'm not knocking the care this family member was getting or scrutinizing how they might have been feeling. There was some strife in our household, which was disconcerting. As this family member struggled with physical and emotional challenges, there was arguing and stress. But there was plenty of love and laughter, too. Traditions such as nightly family dinners, family vacations, and Sunday church provided steady support.

I also had a grandmother who was a Christian Science practitioner. I recall conversations with her in which she would talk about how good we all are, how deeply we are loved by God, and how, as God's spiritual offspring, we can never be led astray. I got so used to thinking this way that it wasn't until my early adulthood that I began to appreciate what it really meant, and that the label "dysfunctional" couldn't truly be affixed to my family, to the family member who was struggling, to me, or to anyone.

This fact that we are created as God's spiritual and perfect children is identified in Genesis 1 in the Bible. It's noteworthy that this fact was written in the first chapter of arguably the most important and well-read book in the history of humanity. This established fact is about the true nature of each of us. Man is made in the image of divine Spirit, or God, and is therefore spiritual, strong, and everlasting. It is an undeniable foundational fact for each of us that God blessed all He created and declared His creation to be "very good" ([Genesis 1:31](#)). Despite generational and cultural differences, in this way all of God's children have a "Gen 1" heritage.

Yet, many folks grow up with an entirely different notion of their heritage. Perhaps this springs from the completely opposite view of God's creation in the second chapter of Genesis. In this creation account, there are two flawed parents who inadvertently make a bunch of mistakes, and we see this cycle continue with their kids. This material view of mankind's origin would imply that each of us could be punished for someone else's mistakes. In this view, God seems only vaguely involved in our lives, distant and unable to communicate with us or guide us rightly.

Well, which one is it? Are we God's children, whole and free, or mortals from potentially dysfunctional families? Can we be both? If there was ever any doubt about this for any of us, the question was put to rest two thousand years ago by Christ Jesus. In his ministry, as it is told in the Gospels, right where others saw a sinner or sickly person, he correctly saw the spiritual offspring of an all-loving and good God. He was so clear on this fact that he lifted the

thoughts of those around him to see this same truth, and they were released from suffering.

Perhaps previously they had been unable to see their worth, their health, or their possibilities, and in a moment, this new view proved to be restorative. For example, when confronted with someone who had been blind from birth, his disciples asked whether this person or his parents had sinned and caused the apparent flaw. Jesus responded, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, . . . but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3, New International Version). Jesus saw in this man the undeniably good and pure work of God. God’s child couldn’t be any other way, no matter who their parents were, where they grew up, or what trials they had encountered. And the man was healed; he could see.

Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered Christian Science and founded the Church of Christ, Scientist, studied the works of Christ Jesus in conjunction with an in-depth study of Genesis. Her writings explain that because the accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 are contradictory, only one can be true, and that one is Genesis 1.

In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, she concludes: “In Science man is the offspring of Spirit. The beautiful, good, and pure constitute his ancestry. His origin is not, like that of mortals, in brute instinct, nor does he pass through material conditions prior to reaching intelligence. Spirit is his primitive and ultimate source of being; God is his Father, and Life is the law of his being” ([p. 63](#)).

It’s important to be aware of the falsity of the narrative of Genesis 2 so that we don’t mistakenly take this myth of creation as our own story. Having learned my true nature as a “Gen 1” child while growing up in Sunday School, and having had this message reinforced by my grandmother, I felt certain of this as I matured into adulthood.

As I left home in my early twenties, I was very clear that God was my only true Parent and the source of a rich inheritance of Godlike traits. This divine, perfect, and ever-present Father-Mother God had raised me in His likeness, and therefore I had inherited a full range of unfettered qualities and talents that were not limited to the family or town I grew up in or my life experiences. If any of us were limited by our human history or parents, as Genesis 2 implies, we might not expand beyond the inclinations and societal constructs of our parents to develop our unique talents. But understanding my rich spiritual inheritance from God, I felt both loved and liberated. It was a sturdy foundation to stand on as I spread my wings into adulthood, career, and family.

Knowing my spiritual heritage in this way didn’t make me feel distant or disconnected from my family, but it enabled me to feel a less emotional link based on a shared human story. I felt more of an all-encompassing love that is patient and can’t be offended. Dropping whatever baggage of family history there seems to be, we can all take each day as a new day and enjoy the many ways in which family is a blessing.

So, a feeling of dysfunction comes from a mistaken understanding of our true origin. But in light of God being our true Parent, this mistaken view cannot define us. *Science and Health* states, “The eternal Truth destroys what mortals seem to have learned from error, and man’s real existence as a child of God comes to light” ([pp. 288–289](#)).

Discovering our true heritage as God’s children not only frees us to be the unique and complete individuals God made us to be but can also heal us of any seemingly inherited trait or condition that we’ve come to see as part of our life. Each one of us has unique spiritual qualities that God develops and expresses in us. As members of God’s family, we inherit a loving foundation and steady support—a universal family of like-minded brothers and sisters to

walk along with.

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