

The DNA of Peace
By Nancy White

“From whence come wars and fightings among you?” James 4:1

In December of 2007, the incumbent leader in Kenya won an election fraught with vote tampering and other shady dealings. The results touched off a firestorm of rioting along tribal lines. Supporters of the leading opposition party pulled their neighbors, suspected of supporting the incumbent, out of their homes beating and killing them and burning down their homes. The incumbent used that as an excuse to escalate violence against the opposition in the name of restoring peace. Turns out that the two leaders represent the two largest Kenyan tribes and the root cause of the hostilities are ancient tribal differences. What I found most difficult to accept was that neither the incumbent nor the leader of the opposition party called for an end to the violence. Neither one said, “Hey, stop! You are killing your neighbors.” One beleaguered citizen asked the key question, “We’ve lived together so long, why are we fighting now?” Are Kenyans predisposed to war? Possibly.

I believe that some people and some cultures are more prone to violent responses than others. With individuals it can be nurture – how they are raised – or it can be nature – their DNA – or it could be a combination of the two. With a tribe or a nation or a corporation or even a church or a family, it comes down to culture, which is really just the compilation of the natures of the individuals that make it up. When individuals with either a natural or cultural predisposition to violent reaction come together, they create a family, a home, a tribe and ultimately a nation of violence.

DNA is fascinating to me. It is a testament to the detail in which God planned out the functioning of the human body. In 1953 James Dewey Watson, Maurice Wilkins and Francis Crick identified the four basic components of DNA and created a prototype of its “double helix” layout construction. Adenine, guanine, cytosine, and thymine are the base pairs that create the rungs of the ladder with the sides being formed of sugar and phosphate. The full string of your DNA sequence is found in every single cell of your body. Who you are at the most basic level is made up of various patterns of just four nucleic acids.

It wasn’t until the 1980’s that the potential of DNA in solving questions of identity was recognized. Less than a decade later, DNA became perhaps the most powerful tool ever used in forensic science and the solving of crimes. Your unique DNA identifies you and every aspect of your being.

But does your DNA dictate who you are? That is what I’d like to explore.

In the 1997 film “Gattaca,” the future is a place where you can choose what type of child to have. You have the ability to eliminate any predisposition to violence, stigmatism, heart trouble, etc. and choosing everything from eye color to musical talent. Everything in the future of that child – both what he/she **can** do and what he/she is **allowed** to do

within society – is in the DNA. So, most parents of Gattaca do not leave it to chance. They employ in vitro fertilization and sort out the bad, leaving only the best. Those foolish enough to leave the DNA mix (half from the father and half from the mother) up to God, give birth to children who are second class citizens even before they are born.

Of course, Gattaca is not the story about life running true to the plans of those who feel they can engineer DNA and, therefore, behavior. In the film a murderer, in an effort to deny his crime, says, “Check my ladder (DNA), you won’t find a trace of any tendency toward violence.” The hero of the film, a so-called “God child,” with DNA that predicted limited intelligence and medical conditions that would kill him by age 20, rises to the highest level of success both from a physical, educational and career standpoint.

The tag line of the movie is this: “There is no DNA for the human spirit.” In other words, we can overcome who we are at the core. And we should.

As human beings, who we are comes down to a unique but repetitive string of adenine, guanine, cytosine, and thymine. Everyone starts out with the same set of nucleic acids.

However, upon repentance and baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit – the DNA of God. When we receive it, we begin, on a spiritual level, the same process that occurred at our physical conception. The DNA of the Father becomes a part of who we are and begins to form the pattern of who we will become.

Overcoming the human DNA isn’t easy. God does His part and we must also work at overcoming the wrong things that are a part of our human DNA.

Aristotle said, “We are what we do repeatedly.” And that is our part to do in the process. We must do, and do repeatedly, what is good and right, though it will be difficult at first.

Each Christian has a responsibility to be the first one to say, “Why are we fighting? Let’s stop. I’ll be the first to lay down my weapons.” When we do that, we are allowing the DNA of the Father and the Son to replicate within us. When we don’t, we allow the human, carnal nature to replicate and the result is that we fracture our homes, our churches, our workplaces and our society.

When it comes to a culture with a deep seated history of violence, we sometimes see that a strong dictator can end it with great military force and strong discipline. But that is not peace. No relationships are mended. It is simply a “cold war” waiting to be rekindled if the strong man dies or falls out of power.

A Christian should be easily entreated, compassionate, a peace maker. A Christian home should be a place of peace, where differences are resolved in love.

Christ will return one day and bring lasting peace to the world. He will, at first, put down violence with force. But that will only be His first step. Next, He will provide the power of God’s Holy Spirit so that everyone has within him the ability and the desire to become

something more than what his or her DNA would dictate. Like the parents of Gattaca, Jesus will remove all the bad DNA and its negative characteristics. He will also remove Satan, who has been encouraging mankind to replicate negative DNA for thousands of years.

In the meantime, as the children of God, we should listen to the Holy Spirit and we should respond according to the leading of God's DNA. We will find in our day-to-day walk that the old DNA is still there. But the more we do what the Holy Spirit guides us to do, the more of God's DNA will be in each of us. We'll develop more of the character of God and display more of the characteristics of God with each repetition of godly response.

And with each positive response we will be building more godly DNA within us and changing the culture of our homes, workplaces and the communities in which we live. Changing the world at large will take Christ's return.

In an Op-Ed piece appearing in the January 11, 2008 New York Times, two weeks into the election-induced violence, Aidan Hartley, a newspaper columnist living on a working farm near Liakipia, Kenya said, "...despite all the talk of another Rwanda, I think Kenya will pull back from the brink. This is mainly thanks to the basic decency of ordinary Kenyans – whose priorities are to work hard, educate their children, fear God and enjoy a few Tusker beers." For the sake of all the decent people in Kenya, I hope Mr. Hartley is right.

It will take the return of Jesus to infuse the world with peace. We Christians have it in us now within our revised DNA – adenine, guanine, cytosine, thymine and the Holy Spirit.

Since we in the Church of God today are the vanguard – the advance for the coming world tomorrow, we should be the epitome of peace promoters, so that when Jesus returns he won't say "why were there wars and fighting among you?" Instead, He will say, "blessed are you peace makers, come inherit the earth."

"Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:9

Nancy and her husband, Wes, live in Big Sandy, Texas on three beautiful acres of the family homestead where she grew up. She and Wes founded a non-profit organization, Dynamic Christian Ministries, to help support small local churches with products and programs they might not be able to produce on their own.