

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN

UPSIDE

A STUDY IN THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

DOWN

WORLD

Christ

Baptist

Church

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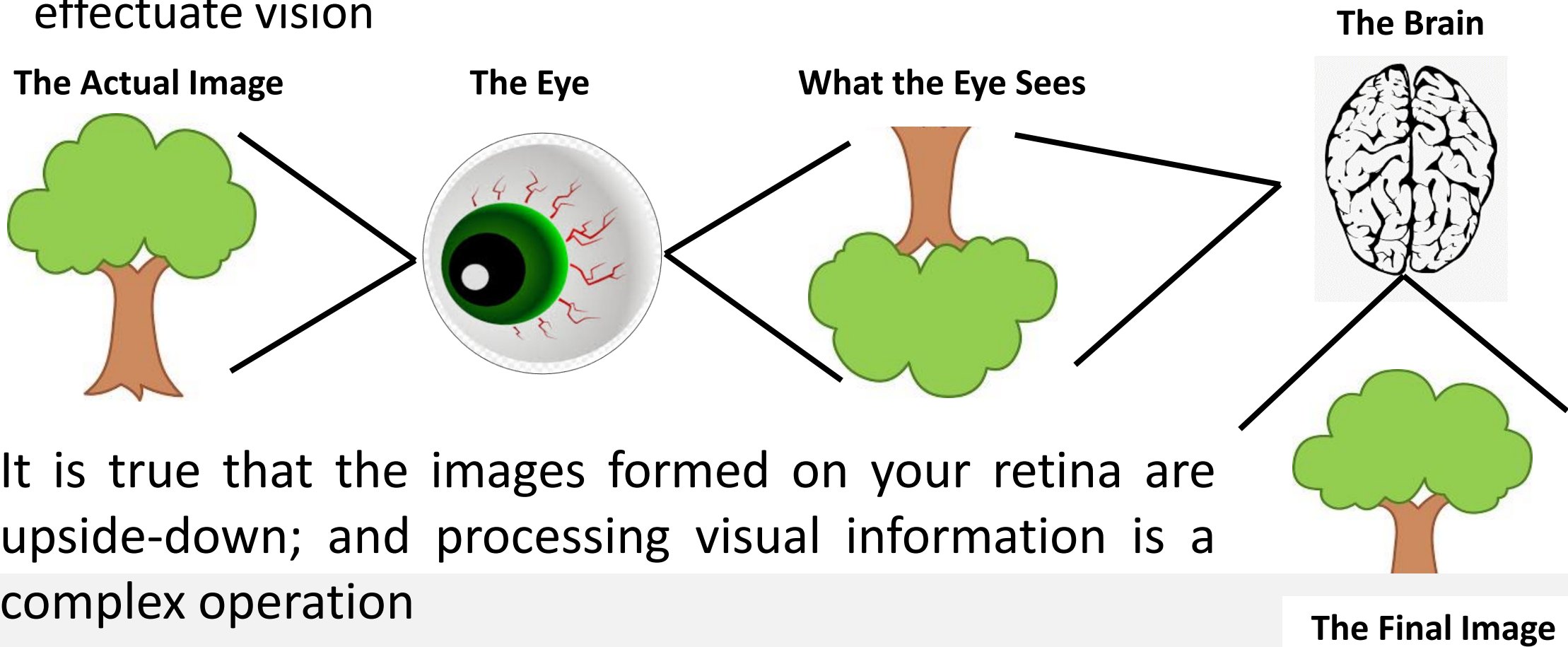
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Lesson 5

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

There are two realities with our vision that come into play when we speak of inverted imagery:

- a) Although we have two eyes, they do **not work independently** seeing two different images.
- b) The **images we see are inverted** when they are formed on our retinas to effectuate vision



It is true that the images formed on your retina are upside-down; and processing visual information is a complex operation

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But one of our most remarkable tools - the brain - is hard at work assisting us in the task of seeing.

Science indicates that it takes a relatively large portion of the brain is utilized in this process compared to what is used for the other senses.

- This is because our brain performs several tasks to make images 'easier' to see.

One operation is accomplished in the **corpus callosum** (*the tiny part where the two brain hemispheres are joined together*) where the images viewed by each eye are combined into one.

Another brain function is handled in the **optic part** of your brain itself, and part of its job is to make images right-side-up.

It does this because our brain is so accustomed to seeing things upside-down that it eventually adjusts to it.

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After all, adaptively, it's a lot easier to flip the image over than it is to try and coordinate our hands and legs with an upside-down world!

Because of the complexity of these two brain functions, it is believed that for the first few days, **babies see everything upside-down**, because they have not become used to vision.

Nevertheless, our brains can be retrained as proven by a psychological study in which participants were asked to wear inverting lenses - lenses that invert the image.

These lenses inverted the image before they got to the eye so that when the eye inverts it, it's right-side-up.

- At first, everything appeared upside-down to the participants.
- But, after a few days, people began to report that everything appeared right-side-up

As a second part of the study, the people were asked to take the glasses off, and because they were now used to the lenses, their normal vision appeared upside-down.

- Within a day, though, their vision returned to normal.

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- The reason you don't see everything upside-down, then, is simply because it's easier to think about right-side-up!

[<https://www.physlink.com/education/askexperts/ae353.cfm>]

The truth is, technically and medically, we see whatever we observe in our field of vision not only upside down, but backwards.

And in the middle of your brain the two optic nerves cross and somehow the polarity of the incoming photons are inverted and a 'picture' is displayed in the visual cortex.

In actuality, the light that reflects off the top of the object we are looking at shoots a straight line to the bottom portion of our eye and the bottom of the object shoots a straight line to the top of the eye so the retina sees a flipped image.

- **Therefore, we are not seeing with our eyes, but with our brains.**

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And NO, nothing on the earth is opposite of what we see, but it is within the process of human vision.

That's how everyone who have declared and decreed that Christ is their Savior have been able to navigate and course through this upside-down world.

And it has been determined that we are made this way because of the structural balance of the mechanistic functionality of the brain, as it balances the outer world with other brain functionalities in the ear.

- I.e., spiritually we must balance what our ears hear God say and the visions we see

It is no coincidence that John's dissertation about the world is replete with admonition to "**behold**" (**horaō – hor-ah-o** – stare at ; discern; perceive; experience)

- **I John 1:1** ".....which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon...."
- **I John 1:2** "..... and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you...."
- **I John 1:3** "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you..."

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- **I John 3:6** “..the one who continues sinning hasn’t seen him *with discernment* or known him *by intimate experience*.”
- **I John 4:20** “..... for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

The Greek word Blépō also means "to see" with a stronger emphasis on the **function of the eye**, so that it serves as the opposite of "**to be blind**."

- It is also used for intellectual or spiritual perception, and in the absolute for insight.

We closed last week noting that heresy, whether on the part of saved or unsaved people always unmasks a **fundamental disharmony** with the spirit and doctrine of the apostles.

- A man in touch with God will submit to apostolic instruction (I John 4:6).

God’s people will always be well fortified against antichrists, because they have **an anointing from the Holy One** (i.e., from God; I John 2:20-21).

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- **I John 2:20-21** “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

God reveals Himself to us in His Word, which is the Truth (John 17:17); consequently, we cannot ***believe lies, tell lies*** and ***fellowship with liars*** and have fellowship with God.

John warns about the anti-Christian teachers already in the world, and he gives us their characteristics so we can identify them:

- (1) they have **left** the **fellowship of the truth** V. 19
- (2) they **deny** that Jesus **Christ is the Son of God** come in the flesh V.22
- (3) they try to **seduce believers** V. 26

John agrees with what Peter describes in II Peter 2, that these false teachers once were in the church, but then departed from the truth they professed to believe.

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This is where the Holy Spirit comes in: He is our heavenly **unction** (chrisma – anointing; *medically it is a healing ointment*) who teaches us the truth.

- The **Spirit of God** uses the **inspired Word of God** to communicate God’s truth to us.
- V 20 “You know all things” should read “and you all know.”
- V 27 supports the principle that believers must be personally Spirit-taught

A person in fellowship with God will daily read the Bible and be taught by the Spirit; and as his/her understanding is increased they are feeding their souls (*daily bread—manna*)

In V 28–29, John suggests that false doctrine and false living go together. If we believe the truth with our hearts and commit ourselves to it, then we will live holy lives before men.

And surely, one of the greatest incentives to holy living is the imminent coming of Jesus Christ; yet tragically, those who have not been abiding (fellowshipping) with Christ will be ashamed when He returns.

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Assuredly there will be details in these chapters that we will have to overlook, but the main lesson is clear: If Christians desire to have fellowship with Christ, they must ***obey the Word, love God's people, and believe the truth.***

- Whenever sin enters, the Christian must immediately confess it and claim God's forgiveness.

We must spend time in the Word, learning the truth and letting the truth take hold of the inner person.

Or, from a negative viewpoint, the Christian who deliberately disobeys the Word, neglects the Word, and cannot get along with God's people because they are out of fellowship with God and in the dark.

- It is not enough to talk about the Christian life; we must practice it.

So the "unction" is no doubt the Holy Spirit Who is conceived of as a Person; and Jesus Himself was "anointed" with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38).

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As a result of their “anointing,” the readers (*perhaps primarily church leaders*) had adequate instruction in **the truth** of God.

John had written to church leaders **because** their apprehension of **the truth** was essential and **because ... the truth** should never be confused with a **lie**.

- The antichrists are liars for they deny **that Jesus is the Christ**, that is, God’s Son and the appointed Savior (John 4:29, 42; 20:31) – a denial that also involves denying **the Father**.
- Any claim they might make to having the Father’s approval is false.
- **One** cannot have **the Father** without **the Son** -- to reject One is to reject the Other.

The profession of these antichrists is an attack against the physical existence of Christ and clouds the understanding of the nature of man’s existence.

So in summary, I John chapters 1 & 2 deal with man’s fellowship with God, and there are some basic things we can do to have a closer relationship with God.

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- I. **Make a daily habit of confessing our sin to Him.** If sin is the barrier in our relationship with God, then confession removes that barrier.
- When we confess our sins before God, He promises to forgive us (1 John 1:9), and forgiveness is what restores a relationship that has been strained.
 - We must keep in mind that confession is more than simply saying, “I’m sorry for my sin, God.” It is the heartfelt contrition that our sin is an offense to a holy God.
 - It is the confession of one who realizes that his sin is what nailed Jesus Christ to the cross.
 - It is the cry of the publican in Luke 18 who said, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” As King David wrote, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

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II. Listen when God speaks. Many today are chasing a supernatural experience of hearing God's voice.

- But the apostle Peter tells us that we “have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (II Peter 1:19).
- That “more sure prophetic word” is the Bible. In the Bible, we “hear” God's voice to us. It is through the “God-breathed” Scriptures that we become “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17).
- So, if we want to grow closer to God, we should read His Word regularly. With the word, we can listen to God speak through it by His Spirit who illuminates the Word.

III. Be faithful in speaking to God through prayer. If reading the Bible is listening to God speak to us, speaking to God is accomplished through prayer.

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- The Gospels often record Jesus secreting away to commune with His Father in prayer.
- Prayer is much more than simply a way to ask God for things we need or want.
- Consider the model prayer that Jesus gives His disciples in Matthew 6:9-13.
- The first three petitions in that prayer are directed toward God (may His name be hallowed, may His kingdom come, may His will be done).
- The last three petitions are requests we make of God after we've taken care of the first three (give us our daily bread, forgive us our debts, lead us not into temptation).
- Another thing we can do to revive our prayer lives is to read the Psalms.
- Many of the Psalms are heartfelt cries to God for various things.
- In the Psalms we see adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication modeled in a divinely inspired way.

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IV. Find a body of believers with whom we can regularly worship. This is such a vital component of spiritual growth.

- Too often, we approach church with a “what can I get out of it?” mentality.
- We seldom take the time to prepare our hearts and minds for worship.
- Again, the Psalms show us many calls from God to His people to come and worship the Lord (e.g., Psalm 95:1-2).
- God invites us, commands us, to come into His presence for worship. How can we, His people, fail to respond?
- Not only does regular church attendance give us an opportunity to come before the Lord’s presence in worship, but also to fellowship with the Lord’s people.
- As we come into the house of the Lord in worship and fellowship with His people, we can’t help but grow closer to the Lord as a result.

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V. Finally, a closer relationship with God is built upon a life of obedience.

- Jesus told His disciples in the upper room, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:23).
- James tells us that as we submit ourselves to God through obedience, resist the devil, and draw near to God, He will draw near to us (James 4:7-8).
- Paul tells us in Romans that our obedience is our “living sacrifice” of thanksgiving to God (Romans 12:1).
- We must keep in mind that all biblical exhortations to obedience are presented as our response to the grace of God we receive in salvation.
- We don’t earn salvation through our obedience; rather, it is the way we show our love and gratitude toward God.

So, through confession, Bible study, prayer, regular church attendance, and obedience, we can develop a closer relationship with God.

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It seems rather simple, if not simplistic. But consider this: how do we develop a closer relationship with other human beings?

We spend time with them in conversation, opening our hearts to them and listening to them at the same time.

- We acknowledge when we've done wrong and seek forgiveness.
- We seek to treat them well and sacrifice our own needs to fulfill theirs.
- It's not really that different with our relationship to our Heavenly Father.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/closer-relationship-with-God.html>

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