

## Physics Integration Lesson 22 – Image and Identity

S. Gollmer (2020)

Working with lenses and mirrors, we are constantly dealing with an object, focus and image. The object is the source of light that interacts with an optical element: a lens or a mirror. The optical element has a focus, the distance from the lens or mirror at which parallel rays of light converge to a point. The image is a representation of the object that is projected from the optical element. If the object and optical element are present, an image exists, although it may not be seen. In order to see a clear image of the object, a screen must be placed at the proper distance from the lens, the image point. If the screen is close to the image point, the image is recognizable, but blurry in appearance.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *tselem* (צלם) is translated image. It comes from a root word that means shade or illusion. This word first appears in Genesis 1:26 where God says “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Genesis 5:3 states that Adam “begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.” Interestingly, this statement is made neither of Cain nor Abel. Although discussion continues through present time about what is the “image of God,” it is clear that it is valuable given the penalty for murder from Genesis 9:6.

There are other words in Hebrew that are translated as image. These remaining words are translated as graven image, cast image, pillar and figurine. These images are representations of false gods and objects of idol worship, which is forbidden in the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 20:4 the word likeness also appears. However, it is a different word than the likeness that refers to God or to Adam. To prevent us from drawing to fine of distinction between words, it needs to be acknowledge that *tselem* is use to describe the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Daniel 2) and the idol he commanded everybody to worship (Daniel 3).

In the New Testament the most common word translated image is *eikon* (εἰκών). Just as it sounds, this word is translated as icon, statue, profile or representation. This word is used in both the positive and negative sense. Positive uses include Christ being the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4) and Christians bearing the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:49). Negatively, this word refers to idolatry. One unique word, *charakter* (χαρακτηρ), is translated as image and means ‘exact copy.’ This refers to a description of Christ with respect to God the Father (Hebrews 1:3).

In modern English we use the terms self-image and identity to describe ourselves. Self-image tends to express how we think about ourselves and identity is who we think we are. Dr. White’s chapel series during the 2018/19 school year was “iD: in Christ” and focused on the book of Ephesians. The point of the series was that those who are saved by Christ, have their identity in Christ. As we live in light of that identity, the Holy Spirit transforms our thinking and actions (Ephesians 4:22-24) and we become conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

1. The root word for *tselem* means illusion, which gives the impression that something is not real. However, *tselem* is used to convey something very significant, the image of God. What things have you heard people say when explaining the concept of “image of God?” Are these things illusion or are they real? Explain.
2. Although it might not have struck you as significant while performing the lab this week, many people marvel the first time they see an image form when using a lens. This is especially true

when you move out of the lab and image something in real life, which is moving and in color. If you used a lens to grab the attention of fourth and fifth graders in a Sunday school class, what spiritual lesson would you want them to remember and how would you connect it to your demonstration?