

1 John – God is Love: Week Five

What it Means to Have Faith

Day Two: Understanding the New Birth

Today our focus is on what it means to be born again and the role faith plays in the new birth.

Read 1 John 5:1-5, 2:29, 3:9 & 4:17

This week on Day One we learned that John said in his Gospel, “*These things were written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing you may have life** in His name.*” John 20:31

Before you go any further, ask God to give you spiritual eyes to see what He is saying to you. Take your time, talk to your Father, and remember that He wants you to know Him better. Fellowship is His idea.

Here is a sample prayer:

Father, I praise you because you have chosen to give me new life through Your Son, Jesus. Thank you that because of Your great love for me, I can now learn to love others through Your Spirit. You amaze me Lord! My faith is in You alone. Lord Jesus, I want to understand what you have done for me. Grant me the ability to see what Your Word says today about being born again. And give me the desire to choose to live for You and through You. I love You, Lord. Amen.

A Conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to see Jesus at night and said to Him, “*Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.*” John 3:2

Nicodemus was hoping Jesus would help him solve the issue that he and other religious leaders were facing. The issue was what to do with Jesus! He didn't fit into their religious system of rules and regulations. Jesus had healed people, there was no denying it. He also had proved to be a good teacher. But, everything He did was according to His own way, not the way of their Jewish traditions. He encouraged the people to follow Him, instead of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin. He made the religious leaders look bad! Jesus actually rebuked them and said that they were hypocrites! What was Nicodemus to do? He truly wanted God's will in His life. Maybe Jesus could shed some light on it.

Read John 3:3-21 Answer the following questions.

1. (v.3) What is impossible for people to see unless they are born again (or born a 2nd time)? _____
2. (v.5) What two things need to be reborn, if we are to have access to God's kingdom?
 - We must be born of _____
 - We must be born of _____
3. (v.12) Jesus said, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you _____?"

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, he was teaching him essential things that pertain to God's kingdom. But Nicodemus wouldn't get it, because the only people that can understand are those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus told Nicodemus that for starters, his heart needed a good cleaning! To be washed with water, is symbolic for the forgiveness of sin. Nicodemus needed his sins forgiven and removed. John the Baptist told the people to repent and be water baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is an outward symbol of our repentance and washing or purifying of our hearts. We can only be forgiven because Jesus has paid for our sins and offers us grace rather than punishment. Remember, Jesus is the Propitiation for our sin. As you and I study the Word of God, we are continually being washed clean from our sinful habits and anything that needs to be purified.

*"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our **bodies washed with pure water.**" Hebrews 10:22*

*"that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the **washing of water with the word**, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing..." Ephesians 5:26-27a*

Secondly, Nicodemus needed the indwelling of the Spirit of God. So, since the Holy Spirit will only dwell in a Most Holy Place, we needed to have our sins dealt with first. Once our sins are removed, The Holy Spirit will place God's laws in our minds, and write them on our hearts, and we will be transformed into His image. We will experience rebirth, or regeneration. This is what it means to be born again.

“I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Hebrews 8:10b

*“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” Acts 2:38*

So first, we need to believe in Jesus and repent of our sins, and He promises to forgive us because of His great mercy and grace. This is called **justification**. Then, because we are forgiven, God adopts us into His family, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our spirit, planting a seed of God’s own eternal life-giving Spirit in us. This is called, **sanctification**.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a new way for mankind to have fellowship with God and His Spirit was now made possible through faith. It was not through the temple sacrifice of lambs and goats or the traditions of man. The access was only through the Son of Man. JESUS is the Way. Whoever would place their faith in God’s Son would *“not perish but have eternal life”* John 3:16b.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:44-54 Answer the questions.

1. (v.44) If there is a natural body there is also a _____.
2. (v.45) The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a _____.
3. (v.47) The first man is from earth, earthy; the second man is from _____.
4. (v.49) Just as we have born the image of the earthy, we will bear the image of the _____.
5. (v.52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (when Jesus returns); for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised _____, and we will be changed.
6. (v.53) For this perishable (body) must put on the _____ (body) and this mortal must put on _____.

One day our heavenly Father is going to give us imperishable bodies made in His image to go along with our transformed spirit and soul. This is part of our inheritance! Won’t that be so cool? Just imagine an imperishable body- no fear of pain, or sickness, or death!

Our bodies are temples.

1 Corinthians 3:16 says, “Do you not know that you are a **temple** of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” The structure of God’s temple will help us visualize the three parts (and functions) of our body.

The temple has three distinct parts.

- The outer court - corresponds to our outer body made of flesh. This is the part people see.
- The Holy Place - corresponds to our soul or heart/mind. This is our personality, our will, emotions, and intellect.
 - the will is where we make decisions, judgments, choices
 - the emotions are where we feel love, hate, fear, peace, kindness, etc.
 - the intellect is the mind where we think and store knowledge
- The Most Holy Place - corresponds to our spirit. This is the place in each man and woman that seeks to know God and to worship Him. Our conscience is part of our spirit. Our conscience will let us know when we are going in the wrong direction. Our conscience is like intuition. There is a “quiet understanding” that we get when God is speaking to us, so that we know something is right or wrong.

Let’s think about what all this means. When you made the wise decision to believe and trust in Jesus, your spirit was born again, you were actually **born of water (your sins were washed away)** and **born of the spirit (the Holy Spirit entered your spirit)**. You were restored to the way Adam and Eve were in the garden before they ate the forbidden fruit.

Read Genesis 2:8-9 & 15-17

The first Adam made a bad decision when he ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He wanted to be wise in his own eyes, and independent from God. He wanted to have control over his own life. You could say that Adam’s bad decision (sin) brought spiritual death to his spirit - the Most Holy Place inside of him. He would no longer be walking in the Light and led by the Spirit of God. Instead, he would have to learn to live a new way - controlled by his own soul. His thoughts, his emotions, his will, his intellect - these would control him from now on. His own soul (or heart) was placed on the throne of Adam’s life, and his spirit no longer communicated with God’s Spirit.

Instead of the agape love of God, he would produce a reduced model of love (phileo) generated from his own selfish desires. He would allow his flesh to rule over him. The Serpent was smiling, because he knew that when a human is controlled by his own

selfish desires, he is actually under the control of the god of this world. Satan deceives us into thinking we have control, but its “sin” that rules over us.

Read Romans 5:17

“For if by the transgression of the one, _____ reigned through the one (Adam), much more those who receive the abundance of _____ and of the gift of _____ will reign in _____ through the One, _____.”

Thankfully, the second Adam (Jesus) made a better choice than the first Adam. Jesus chose to deny his flesh, and to walk by faith, trusting in His heavenly Father for all things, and not walking by sight. The devil tried to tempt Him, but He refused to love the world and himself more than God. In fact, He willingly lived a life of total obedience to God, loving God and loving His people. And He chose to lay down His life. Jesus had a human soul (or heart or flesh) just like we do. But he made sure his own desires came second and God’s came first. Jesus was controlled by His spirit, not His flesh.

Read Romans 6:4-14

1. (v. 6) If our old self was (symbolically) crucified with Jesus, what are we no longer slaves to? _____.
2. (v. 8) If we _____ with Christ, we _____ that we shall _____.
3. (v.9) Why does death no longer have mastery over Him?
_____.
4. (v.11) What are we to consider ourselves to be?
_____.
5. (v.14) Why shouldn't you and I let sin be master over us anymore?
_____.

When we are born again, we receive the “abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness” which enables us to “reign in life”. And this isn't just any life. This is the incorruptible, immortal seed of the Living God. It's what transforms us into His image. We are eating from the Tree of Life.

Read Revelation 22:1-5 Answer the following questions.

By our new birth, we have a great inheritance and a great future! In Revelation, John saw a vision of the throne of God and of His Son, Jesus (the Lamb).

1. What was coming out of God's throne? _____
2. What was on each side of the river? _____
3. What is supernatural about the tree's fruit? _____
4. What will there no longer be? _____
5. What will His people (bond-servants) see? _____
6. How long will they reign? _____

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

Read 1 John 5:4-5

(v.5) Who is the one who overcomes the world? _____

In your own words, describe why you are an overcomer, and have overcome the world.

It's up to you to exercise your faith - just as you did when you believed in Jesus Christ and were born again. God makes everything available to us, to walk in newness of life, as a regenerated, born again child of God. We have the overcoming power, when we believe we have it. Remember, faith empowers your new life.

(v.4) For whatever is _____ overcomes the _____;
and this is the _____ that has _____ the world - our _____.

Faith is the key! Place your life in His capable trustworthy hands. He will never let you down. Remember, you are born of God, your spirit is alive and filled with His Holy Spirit. You are made in His image. You are walking in a new and living Way, made possible by our Savior, Jesus! Praise His Name!

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit....Therefore since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” 1 Peter 3:18, 4:1-2

Now let's turn our attention to one more passage in 1 John chapter 5.

Read 1 John 5:14-17 Answer the question.

What is the confidence that John tells us we have (because we are God's children)?

You can come to know the things that are God's will as you study the Scriptures. For example, one thing we know about God is that God is love. So, if we are asking God for something that will show His love to others, we know that it would be His will. God wants us to have confidence when we pray. Know that He hears you. Know that He wants to give you whatever you are praying for. You are His child, and you are abiding in Him.

A sin unto death.

1 John 5:16-17 tells us that there is a sin that leads to death and we are not to pray for someone who is committing this particular sin, but he doesn't tell us what the sin is! Here is what some of the commentaries say about this unforgivable sin:

- John Gill's commentary says, "It is a willful denial of the truth of the Gospel, particularly that peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life and salvation that are by Jesus Christ alone - and this joined with malice and obstinacy so that there is no more sacrifice for such a sin."
- The Geneva Study Bible says, "The sin which is never forgiven, or the sin against the Holy Spirit, that is to say, a universal and willful falling away from the known truth of the gospel."
- The Cambridge Bible says, "It is the deliberate preference of darkness to light, of falsehood to truth, of sin to righteousness, of the world to the Father, of spiritual death to eternal life. The soul may go on refusing offers of grace until the very power to receive grace perishes."
- The Pulpit Commentary says, "It is when the human will have been firmly and persistently set in opposition to the Divine will. A willful and obstinate rejection of God's grace and persistence in unrepentant sin".

I hope these commentaries help you determine whether someone has committed a sin that leads to death. I wonder why John didn't tell us clearly what the "sin that leads to death" is! Maybe he didn't want us to know. Maybe he thought it would be an incentive to stay close to Jesus! My own thought is that I will pray for anyone, until the Lord shows me clearly otherwise, since John didn't tell us when not to pray. This verse also shows us that our prayers matter! Your prayer changes things. We need to pray about everything. Talking to God in prayer a lot will help you to keep your focus on Jesus and not on the world.

So, go ahead and ask away. Your Father in Heaven wants you to pray and then wait - expecting to hear an answer in God's perfect timing!

It's all about faith.

Hang in there, one more day!!! You can do it!

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:3-4*