

LESSON 15 - REGENERATION

What Does It Mean To Be A Born Again Christian?

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What does it mean to be a born again Christian? This lesson we'll briefly survey what the Bible says about how God designed humans and how we're broken because of sin. Then we'll examine what changes in our nature after we decide to put our trust in Jesus.

1. We're Made in God's Image. Genesis 1:26-27 says God made humans in His image and likeness. God doesn't have a physical body, like we do, so this doesn't mean we physically look Him. It means we have the same *type* of attributes that God has, just to a lesser degree. These include our own unique identity, intelligence, emotions, desires, talents, and abilities. These attributes, including all of our memories, make up our souls. A soul isn't something we have; it's something we are. It's what makes you one of a kind. In John 4:24 Jesus said, *"God is spirit."* Perhaps the way we're *most* in God's image and likeness is that we also have a spirit nature. Our spirit is the part most like God. It's where the conscience is, which is the Law of God written onto the human heart. It's also the part of us that can access God, other spirit beings, or have spiritual experiences. Every human is a soul, united with spirit and body. Our spirit is God's breath that gives life to our soul and body. Our spirit and soul united together is our immaterial self (like God). Our physical body is our material self. The condition of each of these three parts directly affects our relationship with God. Paul acknowledges these distinctions in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 saying, *"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

2. We're Born Dead in Our Sin. The phrase "dead in sin" comes from Ephesians 2:5. It means we're dead/dying, and separated from God because of sin. The reason 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says God *Himself* needs to sanctify every part of us so we're blameless is because all are born broken, impure, and sinful. Every human is a descendant of Adam and Eve and all of us are born with the curse of sin and death and a fallen nature. Sometimes this is called original sin. You might hear it more accurately described as the fallen nature, the sin nature, or as human depravity. These are just different ways to describe our broken condition and what caused it. All brokenness is caused by the consequences of the sin of our ancestors, as well as our own sins. This doesn't mean we're guilty for what others did, just that because God is righteous and just, *all sin* has consequences that negatively affect the rest of creation. Our brokenness doesn't mean that we don't have a conscience (we do, though it's broken too), or that we're incapable of recognizing and doing good (we can, though it's broken too). It just means all three parts of us (soul,

spirit, and body) are dead/dying, are broken by sin, and have a pervasive sin nature that has wicked desires and it misleads and harms us. The rest of the world is sinful too. King David acknowledges in Psalm 51:5 saying, *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* Romans 5:12 says, *“sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”* Romans 3:23 says, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Romans 3:10 says, *“There is no one righteous, not even one.”* In Luke 18:19 Jesus said, *“No one is good—except God alone.”* However, through Jesus and the Gospel we *can* be good—even perfect and righteous! This is through faith in Him, in what He accomplished on the cross, and in the new birth.

3. We Need To Be Born Again. A “Born Again Christian” isn’t just another Christian denomination. It’s a phrase that identifies a belief in a very important biblical truth. It has to do with our regeneration, or our “spiritual rebirth.” In other words, being “born again” refers to a specific, exact moment in time, within a believer’s life, where God permanently transforms a part of them. Remember how we are body, soul, and spirit? And remember how all three parts are broken, corrupted by sin, separated from God, and dying? Well, when a person is “born again” the dead-dying spirit of a person is made alive again by the power and presence of God’s Spirit! This spirit part that was dying is regenerated and brought back to life—eternal life! 1 Peter 1:23 says, *“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”* And this isn’t optional. It must happen. No one can be saved or have eternal life without this happening. In John 3:3-7 Jesus says, *“No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again... no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit... ‘You must be born again.’”* The Spirit spoken of here is the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Living God. The Holy Spirit both *revives* our old, dead-in-sin spirit nature, and makes us a brand new spiritual creation and then comes to live inside of us Himself! Romans 8:14-15 says, *“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.”* We then become the temple of God with permanent direct access to God. In Christ, we’re spiritually adopted and become a child of God the Father. The indwelling Holy Spirit guides, leads, delivers, sanctifies, heals, and empowers us in every way to walk in newness of life, to understand spiritual truths, and to think, feel, and live in ways pleasing to God. Romans 8:11 says, *“if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”* God alone decides if He will adopt us and cause the new birth, but He desires this for everyone. 1 Timothy 2:4 says “[God] *wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” What’s needed from us is faith and surrender to Jesus. John 1:12-13 shows it’s faith in Jesus that initiates God’s response to cause our spiritual rebirth: *“To all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”*

Let’s pray. Father God, I believe in, receive, and give my life to Your Son as my Lord and Savior. Increase in me a deeper faith and confidence in my spiritual rebirth and adoption. In Jesus’ name. Amen.