



## Week 1 – Whole Spirit

The goal of this discussion is to understand what it means to be ‘born again’ and to then pursue spiritual growth and helping others be born again.

*<sup>23</sup>May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*  
**1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)**

This series theme verse (it will be on every week’s discussion guide), describes the ‘tri-partite’ nature of man, spirit, soul, and body. Our body is made up of our physical body with its 5 senses that make us aware of the physical world. Our soul is made up of our mind (thoughts, memories), will (decisions, convictions), and emotions (feelings) and makes us aware of our self, and other people. Our spirit makes us aware of God. When we are born again, God starts to make us alive starting with our spirits. This is what we know as salvation.

Salvation can be seen as having 3 phases, each relating to part of mankind’s nature.

1. SPIRIT – Your spirit comes alive at the initial stage of salvation (this is being ‘born again’). It is a one-time completed work. This is also known as JUSTIFICATION. Your spirit is the God-conscious part of you that is completely saved at the point that you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth.

### **Romans 10:9–10 (NIV)**

*<sup>9</sup>If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."*

### **Luke 7:50 (NIV)**

*<sup>50</sup>Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”"*

### **John 5:24 (NIV)**

<sup>124</sup>"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."

**Titus 3:5 (NIV)**

<sup>15</sup>"he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,"

2. SOUL – We'll discuss this next time. Our souls are in the process of being saved. This is known as SANCTIFICATION. Your soul is the human-conscious part of you, your mind, will, and emotions.

**1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup>"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

**Philippians 2:12 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup>"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,"

3. BODY – We'll cover this in two weeks. Our bodies will be saved at the end of time when the mortal will be exchanged for the immortal. This is known as GLORIFICATION. Your body is the physical universe-conscious part of you.

**Romans 13:11 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup>"And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

**1 Corinthians 15:51–54 (NIV)**

<sup>51</sup>"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—<sup>52</sup>in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup>For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup>When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory.""

St. Irenaeus, one of the early church Fathers said this, "The Glory of God is many fully alive."

**CONNECT**

- Is there anything in your life you wish you could do over again? If so what would it be?
- What were you first told about where babies come from and when did you learn the truth? What stories have you heard about your birth?

## WORD

<sup>1</sup>"Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." <sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." <sup>4</sup>"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup>You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" **John 3:1–7 (NIV)**

## THOUGHT

Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, sought out Jesus under the cover of night in an effort to figure out who Jesus truly was. This is often referred to as the original 'Nick at Night.' In response to Nicodemus revelation that he and the other Jewish religious leaders recognize that Jesus came to them from God, Jesus shares with him that the only way to connect with God's Kingdom is by being 'born again.' Nicodemus didn't understand this second birth, so Jesus broke it down for him. In today's discussion we'll take a look at what it means to be 'born again' and why it is essential to being a part of God's Kingdom.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. What do you think drew Nicodemus to Jesus? What first drew your attention to Jesus?

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You might want to separate the following two questions. The first is largely theoretical and impersonal. Easy for people to get involved in the discussion without much self-revelation. The second question is a lot more self-revealing. Give time for people to think before responding. Don't worry if they don't respond right away. If your group is not ready for a lot of self-revelation and the question comes across as awkward (which could especially be true if you have many who are new to the group or who are not yet committed Christians), give a few moments for people to at least pose the question to themselves and consider it, you can then simply remark, 'hmm, that might be a pretty loaded question, let's move on for now' or you could give a big smile and say, 'I guess that question gets a bit personal, maybe we won't all answer right now, but it's a great question for some honest self evaluation. In the meantime, let's move on to the next question.'

### 2. Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? How do you respond when others criticize Christianity, like Nicodemus, keeping your relationship with Jesus secret, or like the other leaders, admiring Jesus privately, but opposing him publicly?

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### 3. Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be 'born again' in order to see God's Kingdom. This confused Nicodemus who thought Jesus was referring to a second physical birth, but Jesus was referring to a spiritual birth. How would you describe what it means to be born again?

You may get all kinds of responses here. That's great. You want people to truly consider what it means to be born again. It would be great, though not essential, for the discussion to wind up with the fact that birth leads to a whole new life, in the words of the Disney song, a whole new world. Imagine what it's like for a baby to be born, we've all experienced it, though few of us recall it. God's desire in salvation is to give us a fresh start, a chance to start all over again every time that we mess up.

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**4. Nicodemus was a religious leader and yet Jesus told him he needed to be born again. What's the difference between being religious and being born again?**

This is a great discussion point and a great opportunity to share the Gospel with those who've never heard and for those who've already heard to get a better understanding of salvation. Some may even discover that although they've been 'christians' all of their lives, they've never been born again. The greatest part of being born again is that we discover our heavenly father and the joy of being his son or daughter. Christianity is a relationship, not a religion. Hence we are birthed into a family we perhaps never even knew existed and meet our heavenly father.

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**5. Jesus described being born again as being born of water and of the Spirit in *John 3:5*. He was referencing *Ezekiel 36:25-27* which says, "<sup>25</sup>*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*" This indicates that being born again should result in both cleansing our lives from sin (born of water) and following after God (born of the Spirit). What are some of the ways that you've left sin behind since being born again? What are some of the ways that you have started following God since being born again?**

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**6. Our theme verse for the series, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says that we are spirit, soul, and body. Ever since Adam and Eve fell in the garden, we are born with sin-slain spirits. In John 3, Jesus is making the point that God wants to save our spirits from death by giving us new life, our spirits being born again. When did you begin to see God as wanting to save you, establish a relationship with you, and give you a new start instead of condemning you?**

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**7. Just like physical birth, being born again spiritually is only the beginning of the life God intended for us. How would you describe your current spiritual life stage?**

- ☐ *Not yet conceived*
  - ☐ *Growing but still in the womb*
  - ☐ *About to bust out*
  - ☐ *Still in infancy*
  - ☐ *Steadily growing and maturing*
  - ☐ *Other \_\_\_\_\_*
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## PERSONAL APPLICATION

- Take a moment this week to write down some of the ways your life has changed since being born again. Sins you've left behind. Ways you have followed God. If you haven't yet been born again, write down the potential benefits of being born again and the potential negatives.
- In a four sentences or less, write down your salvation testimony. Include what life was like before salvation, what brought you to Jesus, and how your life has changed. Share your testimony with someone else this week.
- What steps can you take this week to either find out more about Jesus like Nicodemus did, or to help your spirit continue to grow and mature in the Spirit?

## PRAYER

- Prayer, reading the scripture, and Christian fellowship are three ways we grow spiritually. Ask God for the grace to make time every morning to read and pray, and to seek out consistent Christian fellowship.
- What areas of your life need saving right now? Ask God for help.
- Ask God to give you a fresh perspective on how much he loves you.
- Ask God to show you who you can share your 'born again' testimony with and perhaps arouse a curiosity in them to seek out Jesus.

## NOTES

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