

Church School Lessons
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A New Way To Change Our Lives

Bishop Rudolph W. MCKISSICK, Jr.
Senior Pastor
Bishop Rudolph W. MCKISSICK, Sr.
Senior Pastor

BETHEL'S VISION:

To empower disciples to always practice kingdom presence and principles in their daily living.

OUR MISSION:

To make disciples and equip them for spiritual maturity

Elder Robert E. Dotson, Th.D.
Executive Pastor and Christian Education Director
Email: bmitdean@bellsouth.net
With
The Bethel Discipleship Advisory Council

Change Comes With A New Life

Sunday, January 8, 2012

How can we have new life now?

Matthew 1:

21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

The hope of new life begins with Jesus. Jesus means "the Lord saves." Jesus came to earth to save us because we can't save ourselves from sin and its consequences. No matter how good we are, we can't eliminate the sinful nature present in all of us. Only Jesus can do that. Jesus didn't come to help people save themselves; he came to be their Savior from the power and penalty of sin. Thank Christ for his death on the cross for your sin, and then ask him to take control of your life. Your new life begins at that moment.

Romans 6:

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

The hope of new life is guaranteed by Jesus' resurrection. We can enjoy our new life in Christ because we are united with him in his death and resurrection. Our evil desires, our bondage to sin, and our love of sin died with him. Now, united by faith with him in his resurrection life, we have unbroken fellowship with God and freedom from sin's hold on us. (For more on the difference between our new life in Christ and our old sinful nature, *Ephes. 4:21-24 and Col. 3:3-15.*)

Colossians 2:

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

The hope of new life is freedom from bondage to sin. Before we believed in Christ, our nature was evil. We disobeyed, rebelled, and ignored God (even at our best, we did not love him with all our heart, soul, and mind). The Christian, however, has a new nature. God has crucified the old, rebellious nature (*Romans 6:6*) and replaced it with a new, loving nature (*Col. 3:9-10*). The penalty of sin died with Christ on the cross. God has declared us not guilty, and we need no longer live under sin's power. God does not take us out of the world or make us robots—we will still feel like sinning, and sometimes we will sin. The difference is that before we were saved, we were slaves to our sinful nature; but now we are free to live for Christ (*Galatians 2:20*)

Why are we Saved?

John 3:16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

How are we Saved?

Rom 10:9, That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Can God's People Really Change?

Sunday, January 15, 2012

Genesis 44:

33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

God can help people change. When Judah was younger, he showed no regard for his brother Joseph or his father, Jacob. First he convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave (Genesis 37:27); then he joined his brothers in lying to his father about Joseph's fate (Genesis 37:32). But what a change had taken place in Judah! The man who sold one favored younger brother into slavery now offered to become a slave himself to save another favored brother. He was so concerned for his father and younger brother that he was willing to die for them. When you are ready to give up hope on yourself or others, remember that God can work a complete change in even the most selfish personality.

Joshua 11:

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

Change doesn't usually happen quickly. The conquest of much of the land of Canaan seems to have happened quickly (*we can read about it in one sitting*), but it actually took seven years. We often expect quick changes in our life and quick victories over sin. But our journey with God is a lifelong process, and the changes and victories may take time. It is easy to grow impatient with God and feel like giving up hope because things are moving too slowly. When we are close to a situation, it is difficult to see progress. But when we look back we can see that God never stopped working.

Numbers 10:

13 So they started out for the first time according to the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

God helps us handle change. Those who travel, move, or face new challenges know what it is to be uprooted. Life is full of changes, and few things remain stable. The Israelites were constantly moving through the desert. They were able to handle change only because God's presence in the tabernacle was always with them. The portable tabernacle signified God and his people moving together. For us, stability does not mean lack of change, but moving with God in every circumstance.

John 4:

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."

God can change the worst in us. The Samaritan woman immediately shared her experience with others. Despite her reputation, many took her invitation and came out to meet Jesus. Perhaps there are sins in our past of which we're ashamed. But Christ changes us. Often, those things for which we are most ashamed become the very changed areas that catch other people's attention. As people see these changes, they become curious. We can use these opportunities to introduce them to Christ.

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How Can God's People Change?

Sunday, January 22, 2012

Matthew 15:

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

God desires to change people on the inside. We work hard to keep our outward appearance attractive, but what is in our heart is even more important. The way we are deep down (where others can't see) matters much to God. What are you like inside? When people become Christians, God makes them different on the inside. He will continue the process of change inside them if they only ask. God wants us to seek healthy thoughts and motives, not just healthy food and good exercise.

2 Corinthians 5:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

God's changes are complete. Christians are brand-new people on the inside. The Holy Spirit gives them new life, and they are not the same anymore. We are not reformed, rehabilitated, or reeducated—we are re-created (new creations), living in vital union with Christ (Col. 2:6-7). At conversion we are not merely turning over a new leaf; we are beginning a new life under a new Master.

Matthew 3:

8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

Inward changes should lead to outward changes. John the Baptist called people to more than a mere assent to words or performance of ritual; he told them to change their behavior. God looks beyond our words and religious activities to see if our conduct backs up what we say, and he judges our words by the actions that accompany them.

Do your actions match your words?

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There Must First Be A Spiritual Change

Sunday, January 29, 2012

John 3:

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Spiritual rebirth allows us to enter God's kingdom. "Of water and the Spirit" in **John 3:5** could refer to:

- (1) the contrast between physical birth (water) and spiritual birth (Spirit), or
- (2) being regenerated by the Spirit and signifying that rebirth by Christian baptism. The water may also represent the cleansing action of God's Holy Spirit (**Titus 3:5**). Nicodemus undoubtedly would have been familiar with God's promise in **Ezekiel 36:25-26**. Jesus was explaining the importance of a spiritual rebirth, saying that people don't enter the kingdom by living a better life, but by being spiritually reborn.

Spiritual rebirth is the Holy Spirit's work. Jesus explained that we cannot control the work of the Holy Spirit. He works in ways we cannot predict or understand. Just as you did not control your physical birth, so you cannot control your spiritual birth. It is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit (**Romans 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:10-12**).

Spiritual rebirth involves accepting a priceless gift—eternal life. John's entire Gospel comes to a focus in **3:16**. God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets the pattern of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love someone dearly, you are willing to pay dearly for that person's responsive love. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us the new life that he had bought for us. When we share the gospel with others, our love must be like Jesus'—we must be willing to give up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

John 3:

36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Spiritual rebirth begins a life that will never end; its alternative is worse than death. Jesus says that those who believe in him have (not will have) eternal life. To receive eternal life is to join in God's life, which by nature is eternal. Thus, eternal life begins at the moment of spiritual rebirth.

John, the author of this Gospel, has been demonstrating that Jesus is the true Son of God. Jesus sets before us the greatest choice in life. We are responsible to decide today whom we will obey (**Joshua 24:15**), and God wants us to choose him and life (**Deut. 30:15-20**). The wrath of God is God's final judgment and rejection of the sinner. To put off the choice is to choose not to follow Christ. Indecision is a fatal decision.

Romans 7:

4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Spiritual rebirth means dying to the old life. When a person dies to the old life and belongs to Christ, a new life begins. An unbeliever's mind-set is centered on his or her own personal gratification. Those who don't follow Christ have only their own self-determination as their source of power. By contrast, God is at the center of a Christian's life. God supplies the power for the Christian's daily living. Believers find that their whole way of looking at the world changes when they come to Christ.<<

1 John 3:

9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

Spiritual rebirth gives a new significance to sin. True believers do not make a practice of sinning, nor do they become indifferent to God's moral law. All believers still sin, but they are working to gain victory over sin. True believers do not make a practice of sinning, because God's new life has been born into them.

Spiritual rebirth presents us with a brand-new life. We are "born into God's family" when the Holy Spirit lives in us and gives us Jesus' new life. Being born again is more than a fresh start; it is a rebirth, receiving a new family name based on Christ's death for us. When this happens, God forgives us and totally accepts us; the Holy Spirit gives us a new mind and heart, lives in us, and begins helping us to become like Christ. Our perspective changes too because we have a mind that is renewed day by day by the Holy Spirit (***Romans 12:2; Ephes. 4:22-24***). So we must begin to think and act differently

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