



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 4/21-22/18

“A New Birth”

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Family Activity: This week, take time together to head outside and look for signs of new birth. During the season of spring we can see a lot of indication that new life is coming. Take pictures or draw the things you can see that show new life.

Discussion Questions:

- What did you find that showed you new life is coming?
- How do you think God shows new life in people? (hint: Galatians 22-23)

Monday, 4/23/18

“Born Again”

John 3: 1-5 (NIV)

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 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.” Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” “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!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

- Growing up, I always heard about “born-again Christians.” I thought that it was all kind of weird, mainly because I didn't understand what it meant to be a born-again Christian. At that time in my life, I could definitely identify with Nicodemus. It wasn't until I had experienced that new birth that I understood what Jesus was talking about here. What does being born again mean to you?

- This is the first time we encounter Nicodemus in the Gospel of John. The last time we encounter him is in chapter 19, when we read about Nicodemus helping Joseph of Arimathea prepare and bury Jesus. Nicodemus' story goes from skeptical unbelief, to faithful service to the Lord. Nicodemus had experienced a qualitative shift in his life, and was then able to see the kingdom of God. He had been born again. What do you think it means to "see the kingdom of God"? Have you experienced a major shift in your life? If so, how has your life changed?

Prayer: Holy God, I thank you for your presence in my life. By your grace, I pray that I would live into the newness of life that you offer, and be able to see your kingdom. Help me to live as one, born again, and walk in your footsteps throughout this day. Amen.

Tuesday, 4/24/18

"New Creation"

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- New birth is all about relationship. It has to do with our relationship with God, but also with our relationship to the world. Paul makes the point that if we are following Jesus by faith, we have been reconciled to God and have experienced the new creation. He goes on to make the point that, because of this changed relationship, we are now Christ's ambassadors; being made righteous so that we may be God's vessels of reconciliation with the world. What Paul is saying is that, having experienced new birth/reconciliation with God, God wants to use us in bringing the rest of the world back in right relationship with himself. Have you ever thought of yourself as being used by God in this way? Why or why not?
- What would it look like for you to be an ambassador of Jesus' reconciliation in your day-to-day life? At home? At work? At the grocery store, etc.?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the reconciliation and relationship with you that you offer. Strengthen my faith today, that I would be able to live as an ambassador of your reconciliation, witnessing to the love you have for all people. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, 4/25/18

“The New Self”

Ephesians 4: 22-24 (NIV)

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

"My false and private self is the one who wants to exist outside the reach of God's will and God's love." — Thomas Merton, 20th century monk

What Paul calls the old self is what Thomas Merton calls the false self. This is the part of us that seeks, primarily, our own wants and desires apart from God. When we give ourselves over to our old or false selves, we miss what we are all created for: to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. In what ways have you experienced this tension between your own desires, and the life of righteousness that God wants for you?

- Paul is calling the Ephesians, and us, to set aside our own deceitful desires in order to be made new in the attitudes of our minds. He calls us to put on our true, new selves, living lives of righteousness and holiness. What do you think it means to live a life of righteousness and holiness? How can you take steps to live in a more righteous and holy way?

Prayer: Lord, you have made me to be holy and righteous like you. I confess that I too often get caught up in my own selfish desires and neglect the new person you created me to be. Help to make me new and to live a life of righteous and holiness, following in your footsteps. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday, 4/26/18

“Made Alive”

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

- New birth, or being made alive, is a work that God does in us by his mercy and grace. Mercy is the withholding of just punishment that is deserved. Grace is the undeserved favor we are shown by God. In what ways have you experienced the undeserved favor of God? How has this shaped your life?
- The mercy and grace that God gives us comes from his great love for us. What does it mean, to you, to be loved by God? As a new person, made alive in Christ, what are some ways that you can reflect the love of God to the many people you encounter today?

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for loving me. Thank you for offering me your mercy and grace. Help me to joyfully receive the love that you offer, and to be a vessel of your great love throughout today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, 4/27/18

“Give Thanks”

Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26 (NIV)

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

To him who alone does great wonders,

His love endures forever.

who by his understanding made the heavens,

His love endures forever.

who spread out the earth upon the waters,

His love endures forever.

who made the great lights —

His love endures forever.

the sun to govern the day,

His love endures forever.

the moon and stars to govern the night;

His love endures forever.

He remembered us in our low estate

His love endures forever.

and freed us from our enemies.

His love endures forever.

He gives food to every creature.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love endures forever.

- This is a psalm of praise for all that God is and has done. The psalmist know that all good things come from God, and so knows that it is God who restores our relationship with him and makes us new by his mercy and grace. God is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving. Praise and thanksgiving are far from being simply thoughts or words; our whole lives are to be lived in praise and thanksgiving to our God, as people made new. What are some simple things you can do to express your praise and thanksgiving to God today? What acts of love can you take on throughout your life as a means of expressing your praise to God?

Prayer: Let the words of Psalm 136 be a source for your prayer today.

**This week's devotional was written by Pastor Jake Schneider
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