

Discipleship Training Course

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MSG	The Message © 1993, 2002, 2018 Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress.
NASB1995	The New American Standard Bible © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NHEB	New Heart English Bible, Edited by Wayne A. Mitchell 2008-2026, Public Domain
NIVUK	The New International Version® Anglicized © 1979, 1984, 2011 Biblica, Inc.®
NKJV	New King James Version® © 1982 Thomas Nelson
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- The Old Testament tetragrammation name of God (derived from the four Hebrew letters translated into English as YHWH) has been rendered LORD unless translated Jehovah or Yahweh
- Pronouns referring to the Trinity and some specific terms relating to the Trinity (such as Name and Word) have been capitalized
- Speech marks around entire quotes and at the beginning of new paragraphs have been omitted
- Anglicised spellings have been used
- All quotes begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop
- Some weights, measures and times have been replaced with easier to understand terms given in the footnotes using square brackets
- All verse numbers, footnote numbers and symbols have been removed
- Poetry has been indented and only new sentences start with a capital letter

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Chapter 3. You must be born again

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1. Introduction

1.1 Key Scripture

Jesus encouraged Nicodemus that he needed to be born again through the Holy Spirit:

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jewish people. The same came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, **"Truly, truly, I tell you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."** Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Jesus answered, **"Truly, truly, I tell you, unless one is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."** Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I tell you, we speak that which we know, and testify of that which we have seen, and you do not receive our witness. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man. **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.**"*

John 3:1-15 (NHEB)

1.2 Other supporting Scriptures

According to Paul's letter to Titus, rebirth is through the Holy Spirit:

*Remind them to be in subjection to rulers and to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all humility towards all men. For we were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Saviour and His love towards mankind appeared, not by works of righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy, **He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out on us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This saying is faithful, and concerning these things I desire that you affirm confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*

Titus 3:3-8 (WEBPB)

According to James, rebirth is through the word of truth (i.e. the word of God):

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*Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **He chose to give us birth through the word of truth**, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created.*

James 1:16-18 (NIVUK)

This was repeated by Peter:

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, **since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable**, through the living and abiding word of God; for*

*"All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
but the Word of the LORD remains for ever."*

And this Word is the good news that was preached to you.

1 Peter 1:22-25 (ESVUK)

John saw new birth as a sign of God's great love towards us:

*See how great a love the Father has given to us, **that we should be called children of God!** For this cause the world doesn't know us, because it didn't know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God. It is not yet revealed what we will be; but we know that when He is revealed, we will be like Him; for we will see Him just as He is. Everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.*

1 John 3:1-3 (WEBPB)

He also described new birth as receiving God's seed within us which causes us to stop sinning:

***Whoever is born of God doesn't commit sin, because His seed remains in him**, and he can't sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the devil. Whoever doesn't do righteousness is not of God, neither is he who doesn't love his brother.*

1 John 3:9-10 (WEBPB)

*We know that **everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning**, but He who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 5:18-20 (ESVUK)

He also stated that loving others was an indicator of someone being born again:

*Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and **everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God**. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

1 John 4:7-8 (HCSB)

Finally, he stated that believing in Jesus being the Messiah causes someone to be born of God:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1 John 5:1-5 (ESVUK)

2. New Birth and New Beginnings

New birth is a sign of a new beginning. When God wants to start a new work He will often send a child. Most of these examples are miraculous, emphasising the miraculous nature of being born again:

- Abraham and Sarah and the birth of Isaac (Genesis 15:1-6, 17:1-18:15, 21:1-7) – Sarah was barren
- Moses (Exodus 2:1-10, Hebrews 11:23)
- The birth of Samson (Judges 13) – Manoah's wife was barren; the Lord used Samson to avenge Himself on the Philistines despite Samson's weaknesses
- Hannah and the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1-2:11) – Hannah was barren
- The birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80) – Elizabeth was barren
- The birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25, 2:1-12, Luke 1:26-56, 2:1-21) – Mary was a virgin

3. Adoption and Sonship

Adoption is closely associated with rebirth in Scripture. Adoption in Roman and Greek culture meant that the adoptee had equal rights as the child born naturally. Our new (spiritual) birth is sometimes also likened to adoption:

*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but **you have received a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

Romans 8:14-17 (NASB1995)

*For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our **adoption as sons**, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope*

Romans 8:22-24a (NASB1995)

*But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*

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*Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, **that we might receive the adoption as sons**. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" **Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.***

Galatians 3:23-4:7 (NASB1995)

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. **In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.*

Ephesians 1:3-6 (NIVUK)

Paul described God's relationship with Israel as adoption:

*I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. **Theirs is the adoption to sonship**; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. **Theirs are the patriarchs**, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen.*

Romans 9:1-5 (NIVUK)