

Beginning the Spiritual Life



Our Daily Bread University

This course was developed by

Our Daily Bread University

I. Does God Want to Know Me?

At the core of the Christian faith is the belief that there is one God who has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ and through the pages of the Bible.

In fact, the Bible records God's grand story of history, from its beginning in the book of Genesis to its consummation in Revelation. A story that can be divided into four broad movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

The first movement is found in the first two chapters of Genesis with the Creation of all things, which God pronounces "good."

The second movement occurs in Genesis 3:1–7 with the Fall of mankind, an event caused by the rebellion of Adam and Eve who acted against God's command and ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, resulting in the separation of humanity's ability to relate to God.

The third movement, Redemption, includes all events following the Fall through Christ's ministry on earth, His resurrection, and His ascension back to Heaven. God worked through the nation of Israel and gave the promise to raise up the One Who would defeat sin (Genesis 3:15) and bless all nations (Genesis 12) through His redemption offered to all people.

The fourth movement, Restoration, refers to the culmination of the biblical narrative in which God brings all things to their end. Judgment is rendered and salvation is realized.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God has made it possible for all people to be restored to a healthy relationship with Him. Jesus came to earth to give us new life by offering His life as a sacrifice for our sins. He has saved us from sin's destructive power,

I. Does God Want to Know Me?

Core Belief:

There is **one God** who has revealed Himself in the person of **Jesus Christ** and through the pages of the **Bible**.

I. Does God Want to Know Me?



enabling us to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into the beings He intended. This transforming process is made available to anyone who accepts God's gift of salvation and is born again to a new life.

John 1:12 teaches that "to all who receive Him, who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." In believing and trusting that Jesus died for our sins we will be saved and given the promise of eternal life.

It's important to understand that while family and church connections such as church membership and the practice of baptism are important parts of the Christian life, these experiences don't make a person a Christian.

Centuries ago, a religious leader named Nicodemus approached Jesus to find answers to his own spiritual questions.

Nicodemus said, "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." (John 3:2 NIV). Jesus' response seems surprisingly unrelated to Nicodemus' comments.

He replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3 NIV).

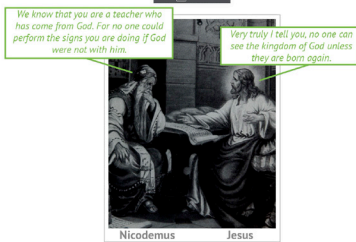
Their conversation underscored the contrast between physical and spiritual life. In the Garden of Eden, when God began to commune with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, they had not yet disobeyed God. They were in a state of complete innocence.

But after they disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit, a fundamental change took place. A great barrier to fellowship between God and man damaged their relationship. When they heard God walking in the garden as He had done in the past, they showed an awareness of their disobedience by hiding (Genesis 3:8–10).

Sin created an insurmountable chasm where once there had been an intimate union between God and man. The same alienation has persisted since that fateful day. All of us were made for fellowship with our Creator, but we have chosen to go our own way.

The Bible says that "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the

I Does God Want to Know Me?



iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6 NIV).

The tragic result of this rebellion against God is spiritual death. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit he died spiritually. Although he lived on physically for many years, his ability to fellowship with God had been damaged by the consequences of sin.

That’s why Jesus’ words to Nicodemus were such good news. Jesus told him that anyone could be made alive again on the inside. God’s Holy Spirit can come inside us and restore our fellowship with God. But how does this happen?

In his *Pensées*, Blaise Pascal, the great mathematician and deeply committed Christian, described the emptiness of inner man in this way:

What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace?

This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself. (#425)

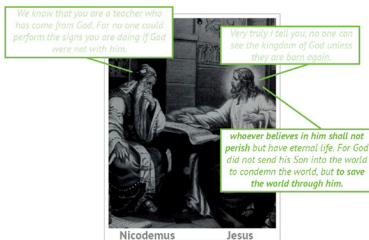
The Lord is eager to forgive our sin, restore our fellowship with Himself, and give us the gift of eternal life. But there are some biblical requirements.

First, we must admit that we are sinners and cannot save ourselves. The Bible tells us: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 NIV).

Second, we need to recognize the seriousness of our sin. Our human tendency is to rationalize and grade on a curve by comparing ourselves to others. But God sets a standard of perfection in which no one can please Him based on self-effort. The Bible says, “Our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6 NIV).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 NIV). The good news is that Christ suffered the consequences of our sin, making it possible for us to have eternal fellowship with Him. The apostle Paul wrote, “God demonstrates His own love toward us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 NIV). This means

I. Does God Want to Know Me?



I. Does God Want to Know Me?

How can my fellowship with God be restored?

1. Admit that we are sinners and cannot save ourselves.
2. **Recognize the seriousness of our sin.**

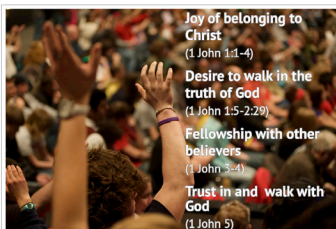
All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.
Isaiah 64:6 NIV

I. Does God Want to Know Me?

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8 NIV



I. Does God Want to Know Me?



that Jesus Christ, Who never did anything wrong, gave His own life on the cross so that the penalty of sin could be paid and His righteousness applied to us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Third, it's not enough just to know that Christ died for us. We need to act on that knowledge by receiving Him as Savior and Lord. The Bible says, "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12 NIV).

If you haven't made a decision to follow Jesus then we invite you to pray a prayer like this:

Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. Thank You for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin. I now receive You as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life and make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you have the assurance that Christ is in your life. John wrote, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13 NIV).

This verse of assurance is near the end of a letter written by the apostle John. This marvelous New Testament book outlines the evidence of growth that can be seen in believers' lives when their faith in Christ is genuine. Over time, they experience a supernatural joy of belonging to Christ and His redeemed family (1 John 1:1-4). Inside, they feel a desire to walk in the truth of God's Word as it lights their path (1 John 1:5-2:29). A new sense of kindred spirit draws them to fellowship with other believers (1 John 3-4). Finally, their own experience is characterized by trusting and walking in relationship with God (1 John 5).

II. What Does it Mean to Be Born Again?

Experiencing salvation, however, should not be viewed as an event that occurs as a point-in-time but as a point-of-beginning. Once salvation is part of our lives, we are called to grow in that salvation in which we become more like Jesus.

For example, in the same way babies are not meant to stay small and helpless, neither are we to remain in a state of neediness and immaturity as new believers in God's family.

II. What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?



Think back to a time when you were about ten years old. Do you remember how much you wanted to be “grown up”? How you wanted to be able to drive or to do the other things that older kids could do? That longing is what we sometimes feel spiritually as well. We don’t want to remain as spiritual children. We want to grow up. As we learn to know and please our Father, we want to have the responsibilities of a family member. And just as growing up physically takes nourishment, exercise, learning, and time, so our development as Christians is a process as well.

The process of becoming more and more like Jesus in our attitudes, characteristics, thinking, and actions is called spiritual formation.

Spiritual formation, also known as spiritual growth or discipleship, is not an isolated event within believers’ lives but is connected to every aspect of daily living.

For example, our health, family relationships, finances, occupation, social issues, and death are all aspects of living that should be affected by our spiritual identity in Christ.

The spiritual life should overflow and affect everything we do. In addition, as believers, our spiritual walk with God is part of the grand story of the Bible since we are His representatives, or ambassadors, at this point in time to serve as witnesses of the life-changing power of salvation.

It’s important to understand that the lessons that make up this course are more than mere academic exercises. You can certainly complete all of the objectives of this course and learn more about the spiritual life but that misses this course’s primary purpose, which is to develop as followers of God and grow in our relationship with Him (1 John 1:3). In the end it’s not enough to simply believe in Jesus; we are called to so much more. We are called to live, act, and think like Jesus.

III. How Do We Start Growing in Christ?

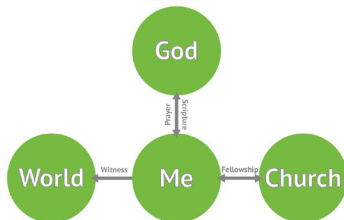
A whole new world opens up before us once we are born into God’s family and know that we will live forever with Him. We want to explore our new spiritual life as we begin to grow up as God’s children. Just as an appetite is a sign of health for a baby, an appetite for the things of God is a sign of spiritual health.

II. What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Spiritual Formation



III. How Do We Start Growing in Christ?



In order to experience the fruitful life of growth in Christ, we will examine four areas of spiritual communication. One, how God speaks to us through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16); Two, how we speak to God through prayer (Philippians 4:6–7); Three, how we speak to other believers about Christ (Hebrews 10:24–25); and Four, how we speak to unbelievers about Christ (Romans 1:16). As we grow in these four areas, we will experience spiritual changes that make us more like Christ (Romans 8:28–29).

The apostle Paul described it this way: “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV).

This spiritual transformation will take place not because we are trying harder. It will happen because we are in a place where God, in His love and grace, can work within us as we consistently surrender our selves, our wills, and our time to Him.