

# LOVE THE LORD



## Lesson One - What does it mean to be renewed?

August 2023

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### Summary of key points

- Renewal is not simply about behaviour modification.
- God doesn't want to just upgrade our internal operating system, He wants to replace it.
- Our hearts are deceitful, we cannot trust our hearts with all its self-made values, beliefs, desires, emotions.
- God calls us to first die to ourselves, there are powerful benefits to dying.
- God is good to His children and gives us Himself, the Holy Spirit, to help us in our renewal.
- We need faith to obey the Holy Spirit, because what He wants for us is opposite to our sinful nature.
- God is faithful and will complete the work that He begins in us.

### Watch the lesson online

[https://youtu.be/\\_g4ZlHvrV8U](https://youtu.be/_g4ZlHvrV8U)

### Transcript

Welcome to the first lesson of Love The Lord, where we look at what it means to be renewed and to reflect God's image more and more.

Let's begin today's lesson by inviting God to speak to us personally through the study.

Please follow along as we pray together. Feel free to click pause at any time if you need more time as we pray.

First let's start by thanking God for His wonderful character and for His will for our lives.

Next, please tell Him about all the things that have been stressful and ask for His peace and His guidance.

We often carry around a burden of sin, whether it's the sin that people have committed against us or the sins that we have committed against other people. Let's take this time to put down these burdens. Ask God

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for His forgiveness for the ways you have sinned against others and forgive other people for the ways you have sinned against you.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, “In Jesus’ name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen.”

Let us begin the lesson for today. “What does it mean to be renewed?” Perhaps we have to start by looking at why we need to be renewed in the first place.

Jesus has said that unless we are born again, we cannot see the Kingdom of God. The idea of a rebirth means that something has to die first. That “something” is us! Many people have the misconception that being Christian means that we are people with higher morals.

*John 3:3 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” (NLT)*

While this may be true, it is only a consequence of a renewal that goes much deeper than our outward appearances, it is a renewal that goes deep into our hearts — into our motives.

*1 Samuel 16:7 ... The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (NLT)*

Renewal is not simply about behaviour modification. God doesn't just look at what we do, but also why we do them. He is wise enough to judge our hearts, not just our words or actions.

*1 Corinthians 4:5 So don’t make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due. (NLT)*

We will experience God’s presence when we seek Him with the right motives and attitudes in our hearts. That is why God always does open-heart surgery on all His children, because this draws us closer to Him.

*Jeremiah 29:12-13 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (NIV)*

God isn’t simply after a system upgrade, He wants to replace our internal operating system altogether. The Bible describes this as dying and being buried with Christ at baptism and being raised to new life by the glorious power of God’s Spirit.

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*Romans 6:4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. (NLT)*

God wants us to die and be crucified, so that Jesus can come live inside of us. We are to trust Jesus, not our own hearts or minds. To help us to see this from God's perspective, let's go through a few exercises.

*Galatians 2:20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (NLT)*

Do you consider yourself a good person? Please rate yourself, with 10 being perfect and 0 being hopelessly imperfect. What score would you give yourself?

Rate how good you are:
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Now, let's examine ourselves.

- Have you ever told a lie?
- Have you ever thought someone was a fool?
- Have you ever hated or despised anyone?
- Have you ever looked lustfully at someone?
- Have you desired to have what other people have?

How many did you say yes to? Have you done all five? Now, let's take an honest look at what the Bible says about each of these things.

- The Bible shows us that anyone who lies is a child of the devil, not a child of God. | *John 8:44 For you are the children of your father the devil ... for he is a liar and the father of lies. (NLT)*
- If we have ever thought that someone was a fool or an idiot, we are in danger of being brought before God for judgement. | *Matthew 5:22 But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. (NLT)*
- We may not consider ourselves murderers, but the Bible tells us that anyone who has hated or deeply despised others is a murderer at heart and will not have eternal life. | *1 John 3:15 Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them. (NLT)*

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- And that just looking at someone with lustful imaginations is as good as committing full-fledged adultery. | *Matthew 5:28 But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (NLT)*
  - And lastly, if we covet and desire what other people have, we have already broken one of God's commandments. | *Romans 13:9 For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." (NLT)*

So, how would you rate yourself now?

The Bible says that the human heart is the most deceitful of all things and desperately wicked. We are very poor judges of our own hearts and intentions. We are often misled by our self-made beliefs, values, desires, and emotions.

*Jeremiah 17:9 "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? (NLT)*

We tend to think our ways are right, but God examines our hearts.

*Proverbs 21:2 People may be right in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their heart. (NLT)*

God sees that the intentions and thoughts of our hearts are continually evil, even when we try our best to do what's right on the outside. This breaks His heart.

*Genesis 6:5-6 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. (NLT)*

We are all born with a sinful nature. Before God's eyes, all of us have the same rating. We are all stuck at zero. No one is better than another person. It is not about who has more sin or less sin. The very sinful nature of our hearts is what disqualifies us.

*Proverbs 25:26 If the godly give in to the wicked, it's like polluting a fountain or muddying a spring. (NLT)*

To help us understand this, Proverbs chapter 25 verse 26 puts it this way; if any of us gives in to any hint of wickedness, it is as if we have polluted a pristine fountain. Just one tiny drop of poison is enough to make its water undrinkable.

Here is another analogy. Let's say that someone gave you a delicious freshly baked chocolate brownie and told you that there was a tiny piece of dog poop in it. Would you still eat it or serve it to someone else? You will most likely throw the entire brownie away and start afresh with a new one.

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*Romans 6:11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. (NLT)*

Similarly, we need to die to our sinful nature and start afresh, with a mindset that is entirely centred on God's will, not our own will.

*Luke 9:23 Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. (NLT)*

This is why God calls us to take up our cross daily and crucify our ways, even the things we consider to be good. We cannot trust our own hearts to know what is truly good or not. Even a tiny speck of sin in our hearts can lead us astray.

And we should not be afraid of dying to ourselves, because

- A dead body cannot be tempted to sin.
- A dead body cannot be kept in bondage to fear.
- A dead body cannot be hurt by vicious words.
- A dead body cannot be offended by false accusations.

We all need to receive a new birth and a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. This new life is the result of God's mercy towards us, it is not because of anything good we can do because all of us are sinful by nature.

*Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. (NLT)*

God wants to give us a new heart as well as His Spirit in order to equip us to obey His sovereign and righteous rule in our lives.

*Ezekiel 36:26-27 And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. (NLT)*

Renewal is not about

- becoming a better version of our old selves
- finding quick solutions to our problems
- finding friendships in Christian circles
- supernatural experiences

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- escaping hell

All these motives miss the point. They all still centre on us. Renewal is about being put back into a right relationship on a heart level. The focus is on God.

Without a right relationship and heart before God, we may see Jesus one day and call Him, “Lord Lord,” only for Him to reject us from entering heaven. What a terrible shock that would be.

*Matthew 7:21 Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (NLT)*

God knows that we cannot get right with Him on our own so He gives us the gift of Himself, the Holy Spirit, to come to live in us. God’s Spirit will personally teach us everything we need to know about living a godly life — that is such good news!

*John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (ESV)*

Following God, however, takes faith because His ways are counter intuitive to our sinful nature’s. In fact, what the Holy Spirit wants is usually just the very opposite of what our flesh wants to do.

*Galatians 5:17 The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other... (NLT)*

Faith will say, “I will follow You, even if ...

- ... I don’t understand everything.”
- ... I can’t see the end result.”
- ... I don’t have the resources I think I need.”
- ... I don’t feel entirely comfortable.”
- ... I will be rejected or persecuted.”

When we follow the Holy Spirit, we will no longer listen to or be misled by our sinful nature or our fears.

*Romans 8:3-4 ... And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. (NLT)*

To receive the Holy Spirit, we need to repent of our sins, turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

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*Acts 2:38 ... Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (NLT)*

To repent is to count everything we have held on to as worthless. We need to discard everything, like how we throw out the garbage, and count it all as dead to us.

*Philippians 3:8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. (NLT)*

Then we can start to be transformed into new people. Our old lives are gone, and we can receive a new life — as you will hear from the testimony that has been recorded for today's lesson.

*2 Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (NLT)*

This transformation is radical, just like how a chair can be remade into a bench or how a pot is remade into an oven. We are no longer recognisable. Only God, our Creator, can re-create and re-programme us this way.

Faith in God's Word and His Spirit will renew our heart, our soul, our strength, and our mind

- In terms of our heart, this involves our values, beliefs, desires, and emotions.
- In terms of our soul, this involves our eternal personhood, who we are.
- In terms of our strength, this involves our endurance, determination.
- In terms of our mind, this involves our thought patterns.

Let's take a pause here and consider all the work that God will need to do. Aren't we thankful that we have the Holy Spirit to help us? He is gentle, patient and kind to us. He will encourage, comfort, heal, convict, and guide us.

Only with the Holy Spirit's help can we love God like Jesus did — with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind — and therefore fulfil the first and most important commandment in God's Law.

*Luke 10:27-28 "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ... "Do this and you will live!" (NLT)*

Being made new with God's help, however, requires our full cooperation. It does not happen overnight. Renewal is daily and ongoing. It is a lifelong process.

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There are many aspects of our old sinful nature that we need to consciously strip off and count as garbage, and choose to put on a new nature with God, day by day.

*Colossians 3:9-10 ... you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him. (NLT)*

It can feel both exciting and overwhelming to go on such a journey of renewal, but it is a journey best taken together with God, as well as with other like-minded believers.

God is good and faithful! We can be certain that He who began the good work in us will continue His work until it is finished.

*Philippians 1:6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (NLT)*

In future lessons, we will discuss some of the things that can block our renewal so that we can repent and turn away from them.

In the meantime, let us reflect on what we have discussed today with the questions provided. Please prepare your answers to the questions before you meet with your discussion group. We pray that you will also be blessed by the testimony for this lesson. See you next time.

### **Time for reflection**

1. What are your results for the test with the 5 questions?
2. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit? Do you believe He will renew you and give you a new heart?

### **Watch the testimony for this lesson**



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**Personal notes**