

# Teaching children about Salvation

There is much confusion today about what it means to be a Christian. It is very important that what we teach children about their relationship with God is accurate. When we just teach children that salvation is “being friends with God” or “having Jesus as their best friend” we are not exactly presenting the full scope of what being a Christian really is. I can be friends with you, but it does not change my life for eternity. It does not give me eternal life. Yes, Jesus should be our best friend and we need to develop our relationship with God but that is a byproduct of the change that occurs in our heart when we are born again.

Some misconceptions in our society about being a Christian are that going to church makes one a Christian, praying and reading the bible makes one a Christian, being born in a Christian family or attending a Christian church makes one a Christian. Or even being religious, following a church's statement of faith, rules, or regulations, or just being a good person makes one a Christian. Most of these things are good and help us grow spiritually, but do not make one a Christian.

When a religious leader came to Jesus in John chapter 3 he asked Jesus what I must do to enter your kingdom. Jesus did not say belong to a certain church, obey more rules, or become more religious. He told Nicodemus you must be born again.

Now there has been a lot of confusion about what exactly being born again is. Is it just a decision to follow Christ, or is it a transformation of the heart of a person? If it is no more than making a decision to follow Christ without a change on the inside being a Christian is no different than being a Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim. It is simply just a religion that we have joined.

What sets Christianity apart from all other religions is the supernatural change that takes place in our spirit man. This is the good news. We do not have to serve God in our own power. He changes us on the inside and gives us his very life and nature so that we can serve him. It's not just rules and regulations he puts the law in our heart when he puts his love in our heart. Rom. 5:5 says that the love of God has been put in our heart by the Holy Spirit. The bible also says that Love is the fulfillment of the law. If we love God and our neighbor we have fulfilled the law.

In Ezek 36:26-28 Ezekiel prophesied *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”* Here Ezekiel was talking about the change that would take place in the lives of believers after Jesus came and paid the price for our salvation.

I know the term “born again” was over used a few years ago when everyone from presidential candidates to movie stars said they were born again Christians. The term got drug through the mud and no one really knew what it meant, so we quit using it. The world asked what does “Born Again Christian” mean and no one knew, so we came up with terms like having Jesus in our heart and being friends with God.

When Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and disobeyed God something happened to Adam. He died. Not physically because we know from scripture that he lived for many years after the fall. He died spiritually. He was separated from God. When this happened he laid the foundation for all man kind to be born separated from God or dead spiritually.

That’s why the bible calls him the first Adam and calls Jesus the second Adam in 1 Cor. 15:45. In 1 Cor. 15:22 the bible says as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

As in the word of the Christian rapper, Tripp Lee “The bad news we were born in sin, The good news we can be born again.”

In order to be restored to the place where God had created us to be we needed a total transformation of our spirit man or be born again. When we receive Christ we are born into God’s family. We are not just adopted but born into it.

The Bible says in 1 Cor. 1:13 that we were delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God. Or in other words, we are taken out of the kingdom of darkness and put into the kingdom of God. When I see this word translated I always think of the transporter room in the old Star Trek program. We were taken from one place and put into another into another.

The bible also says in 2 Cor 5:17 that if we are in Christ we are a new creation. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. This does not simply sound like a decision to follow Christ or being friends with God to me. It sounds like a total transformation of the heart.

With out this change in our spirit man we have simply became religious or joined a religion. Without the supernatural element of being born again we have a form of Godliness but deny the power. We have dead religion that we have to strive to be good enough and follow the rules and regulations. When the good news is that Jesus paid the price with his blood on the cross for our salvation, and all we have to do is receive the free gift that God offers us.

Without the blood of Jesus being shed we cannot be born again. Today, we live in a bloodless society. We don’t even see our meat being processed any more. We only see the pre packaged meat that we buy in the store. But Christianity is a

bloody religion. From the sacrifices of the Old Testament that God commanded to cover the sin of Israel to the Blood of Jesus being shed to take away our sin in the New Testament. The Bible says in Heb. 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no remission or taking away of sin.

Now, I am not talking about being graphic and gory with children. I would never scare a child for anything. But we cannot leave the blood out of our faith or teaching. It is the very basic element of our faith. That's why Jesus commanded us to take the Lord's Supper or communion was to put us in remembrance of his sacrifice for us.

I am not a huge fan of the term "having Jesus in our heart" either. The Bible says that Jesus is at the right hand of the father making intercession for us in Romans 8:34. I understand what we mean when we say that Jesus is living in our heart but Jesus himself is not living in us. His life and nature is in us. His character is in us. The love of God is in us. The 1 Cor. 13 kind of love is what is in us.

I realize that some of this is quit technical and is not presented on a Child's level. Instead of talking about our nature being changed from sin to love, I talk about when Adam disobeyed God he received a sinful heart. We all are born with a sinful heart because of Adam's disobedience. He represented all of us. When we are born again we receive a clean heart. I then explain what this means on a child's level.

I had heard the terms Jesus died on the cross for our sin, born again, being saved, and all the other Christian terminology that is thrown around lightly my entire life growing up as a pastor's child. But I did not understand it, until I became an adult and researched it out for my self. Sadly to say that many people grow up in our churches hearing these terms and never fully understand it. Then walk away from the faith because it was not presented in a way that made sense to them when they were older. It was presented like a fairy tale or Santa Claus and when they were old enough to think for their selves, they realize it did not make sense and walked away from the faith.

We as the body of Christ need to get back to teaching what "being born again is" so that the children and teens growing up in our churches understand it. If not when they become adults they will see no difference in Christianity, Buddhism, or Hinduism and will walk away from their faith and the church.

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