

When God tabernacles with us, we become new. The old is gone, and a new birth has taken place. The bible calls this being born again, and when I was a kid, this became a cringy distinction about what type of Christian you were. If you were a serious Christian, you were a born-again Christian. People then divided into camps, with some saying they wanted to be Christians, but not born-again Christians, because those born-again types were a little too intense and weird. The bible doesn't make this distinction, but instead makes the point that to be a Christian at all is to be born-again.

Day 1

Things Unseen

This rebirth is not a physical reality but a spiritual one. You do not see people get younger physically, but instead you see them become transformed spiritually to have a new mind, a new heart, and a new way of seeing and hearing the voice of God. This transformation is very real, even though it cannot be recognized by the world (1 John 3:1). Although the world cannot recognize this new birth, in heaven it can be recognized and is celebrated with great enthusiasm (Luke 15:10). This great rejoicing takes place because of the importance and implications of this new birth. God values people, and he does so for good reason. He has made us to bear his image, and has paid us the glorious compliment of reflecting the most valuable thing that exists. When someone has been born again, they go from resembling their old father the devil, to resembling their new father, the king of kings and lord of lords. Do you see the transformation going on in your life of rebirth? Do you know how important it is? Do you see it and rejoice over it in others? Do you strive to help them to be reborn?

Verses: John 3:5-8, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 1:12

Prayer Topics: New Sight, Awareness, Perspective

Day 2

Rebirth is Eternal

If you were to plant an oak tree, you could watch it grow for the rest of your life and not be particularly impressed with it when you died, depending on how long you lived after you planted it. An oak tree can be alive for up to 300 years, so it's possible that you have seen a tree that was around when the Declaration of Independence was signed. At this point, that tree would be pretty impressive. The volcano sponge can live for up to 15,000 years (they say), meaning some alive right now could have been around before the time of Moses. These things, while very long lived, are not eternal. We tend to think of things like cultures and nations as being close to eternal, but in reality, it is people that will live forever. These people that live forever will spend those eternities coming to resemble the glory of God more and more, or coming to resemble his glory less and less. The person who is reborn is reborn to glory, and that project is an eternal one. You might get impatient from time to time with the pace of progress, but trust God to complete the work that has been begun in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Be patient, for that is a quality that resembles the glory of God.

Verses: John 5:24, Ecclesiastes 3:11, John 17:3

Prayer Topics: Timelessness, Endurance, Transformation

Day 3

God's Work

We did not find God, and our re-birth is not the result of our own efforts. The word of God creates all things, and so we are created by His word. We cannot be our own father, and we cannot be the word that creates. We have no ability to give ourselves new life, any more than we had the ability to give ourselves our first life. What we can do, is to respond to the word of God that we hear, and repent of our old lives. We can cooperate with the work of the spirit in our life, and we can worship the one who has redeemed us. We can strive to take more joy in Him each day, and we can become more worshipful every year we are alive. We can trust more and more in Him, and participate in the work that He is accomplishing in us. What does this look like? How often do you have anxiety over your life? How often do you get frustrated with the circumstances that you find yourself in? How often do you wish for things to be easier in your life? Do you trust that God is working in all these things to grow your new life in the spirit into Christ-likeness? Do you cooperate with the Spirit, knowing that God is working in all the circumstances in your life to give you the opportunities you need to grow up into Him who is the Head of the body? Do you take every opportunity to ask yourself how you can be like Christ in whatever is happening in your life? God is at work in you, but you must trust Him.

Verses: Hebrews 4:12, Matthew 4:4, Isaiah 55:11

Prayer Topics: Repentance, Submission, Heart-Change

Day 4

Variation

When babies are born, they are different right off the bat. Tyler smiled almost right away. I can clearly remember seeing his eyes as we turned off the lights and closed the door, as he would lay awake and not be crying or upset. Erik, on the other hand, was always in a bad mood when he was young, always grunting in anger, or crying for you to fix what was going on. We later learned that Erik had some digestive issues that made him uncomfortable almost all the time, so his development was far different than Tyler's. In the same way, when we are born again our path, our development, will not look exactly like everyone else's. Some hit the ground running with joy and thankfulness, while others struggle with guilt and regret. Some grow like crazy very quickly, and others are more slow and thoughtful. Some are very emotional, and some are very intellectual. Whatever the case, the point is that God is at work in our lives to help us grow into spiritual maturity, and this cannot be compared to other people. Even within our own lives, we cannot compare one season of growth to another, as we will face different challenges at different times. The ultimate question is, are we growing in love for the Father? Are we more trustful of Him? Are we growing in joy and in the other fruits of the spirit? If we don't seem to be making any progress, or haven't in a long time, what needs to happen? How can we get back on the track of making progress toward maturity?

Verses: 2 Corinthians 10:7-18, Galatians 6:4, Romans 12:2

Prayer Topics: Trust, Contrasting Situations/Skills, Responsibility

Day 5

Process

There seems to be a process for growth in the Christian's life, and that process seems to involve truth, emotion, and discipline. First, all things must start with truth. If the Christian is not being fed a steady diet of truth, there will be lots of problems over the long haul. You cannot just listen to the things you like to hear, or base what you think about God on what is popular with the culture. Next, we must learn to love the truth, and have appropriate emotions in response to it. There are many things that are true

that I don't particularly like, but I must learn to like them if I am to grow. God is good, and his creation reflects that goodness. If I don't like some aspect of Him or what He has done, the problem is with me, not God. Emotions are necessary for growth, but there is another ingredient needed if growth is to be sustained over the long term, and that is discipline. I must learn to have my actions guided by truth even during those times when I don't really feel strong emotions about that truth. If it is good and right, I must endeavor to do it even when my motivation is low. My emotions will ebb and flow, but in order to continue to grow in my new life, I must make progress even when my emotions leave me.

Verses: 1 Corinthians 15:58, Philippians 1:9, 2 Timothy 1:7

Prayer Topics: Self-Restraint, Will, Evolution