

WARM UP

1. When's your birthday?
2. How many times did you eat today (or yesterday)? (meals, snacks, etc.)
3. What is your favourite food to eat? What is your favourite food to make/cook?

WORD

Key Scripture: **John 3:1-7**

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ² After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."

³ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

⁴ "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

⁵ Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. ⁷ So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'

According to Jesus, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again (born anew, born from above). Much like how we contributed nothing to our physical birthdate (human life), Jesus expresses that only the Holy Spirit can give birth to spiritual life—our being born anew into God's Family. If we have no contribution to our spiritual birth what evidence is there that we have been spiritually birthed—or born of the Spirit, born again? Today's lesson will explore three characteristics that become evident in someone's life once they've been regenerated—experienced the birth of spiritual life (v.6).

1: They have a Hunger for God and His Word.

*Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as new born babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. – 1 Peter 2:1-3*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. – Matthew 5:6

If we do not have a hunger (longing) to know God more this could be an indicator that we may not be spiritually born. One of the ways God has made himself known to humanity is through the recording and preservation of the Bible, which is considered to be the Word of God. Similar to when we skip a lot of meals or eat very little we can become malnourished, if we do not eat

God's spiritual milk of the Word, and his food, we will be spiritually malnourished (a type of spiritual anorexia).

Do you enjoy reading the Bible? Why or Why not? Do you find it difficult or easy to read?

The Apostle Paul, saw that the Corinthian church lacked an appetite for God, His Word, and His righteousness. He wrote:

*Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. **I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger.** And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. – 1 Corinthians 3:1-3a*

This leads us to the second characteristic of someone who has been born again:

2: They experience conviction of sin.

*Those who have been **born into God's family** do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God. – 1 John 3:9-10*

If someone can wilfully and knowingly do something they know to be wrong (ie. sin) and not feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit that what they (a) are about to do, (b) are doing, or (c) have done hurts God's heart, then they are in a dangerous place. They've become numb to the Holy Spirit's prompting. Conviction drives us to God when we have done something wrong, we are sorrowful, and we want to make up for our error somehow.

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. – 2 Corinthians 7:10

If we are simply sorry we got caught for doing something wrong, that is worldly sorrow, which does not lead to lasting change (i.e. repentance). When we are born of the Spirit and discover we are doing something wrong, we experience godly sorrow because the deposit of the Holy Spirit in us brings conviction to our heart and mind, which leads us to God, His word, and His people. Condemnation can make us want to run away and hide; but as God's children, we can always come before him. This brings us to point three, those who are born again:

3: They want to live a holy life.

"...be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." - 1 Peter 1:15-16

This is not a requirement for perfection, but a desire to live a holy life, to be holy because God is holy, and we're part of His family when we are born again. Just like we may share physical characteristics with our natural family, we will begin to share characteristics with God who spiritually birthed us.

What are some characteristics of God that can develop and grow in our lives? (Let people in the group give some options.)

"...the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. " – Galatians 5:22-23

Once we are born again, the fruit of the Spirit should begin to grow in our life. They help us in our effort *"to live at peace with everyone and to be holy."* (Hebrews 12:14a) It is a holy lifestyle that allows other people to have hope that there really is a God. (*"...without holiness no one will see the Lord. - Hebrews 12:14b*)

APPLICATION

1. What's something you learned and what do you think God would like you to do about it this week?
2. What is your regular physical food diet like? How does this compare to your spiritual food diet? What is Spiritual food, and how consistent are you at eating spiritual food?
3. Who's watching your life? What adjectives would they use to describe your life, and why? (Is holy one of them?)

Prayer

- Father, thank you for the invitation to join your family. Help us to recognise these qualities in our life so we can know for sure whether we are or are not born again, by your Spirit.
- Grow in us a hunger for your Word. Thank you Jesus for being the Word made flesh, as it states in the gospel of John. Thank you for encountering every type of temptation, but never giving in to it. Help us to remember we can ask you for help when the struggle to choose between right and wrong is real.
- Holy Spirit grow your fruit in our life so we can live holy lives. Convict our hearts of anything that offends you, so we can turn away from it, and towards what you deem as holy.

(Apart from that, please remember to pray for each other and any church/ministry needs)