



WEEK 7

1ST SEMESTER · FOUNDATION & IDENTITY

The Radical Change

Repentance and the New Birth

SPIRITUAL THEME

Repentance & New Birth

PERSONAL THEME

Turning from sin – leaving old patterns behind

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Spiritual Theme: Repentance and New Birth **Personal Theme:** Turning from Sin – Leaving Old Patterns Behind **Main Bible Texts:** John 3:1–21; Ezekiel 36:25–27; Colossians 3:5–10 **Audience:** Bible students in Uganda **Language:** Simple English **Theological Direction:** Bible-faithful, evangelical, Christ-centered **Bible Translation Used:** World English Bible, public domain

Teacher's Note

This lecture is written in simple English. It is meant to be taught slowly. Read the Bible texts aloud. Then explain them with simple words, examples, questions, and personal application.

The main message is this: A true Christian is not only a religious person. A true Christian is a person whom God has made alive. He has been born again by the Holy Spirit. He has turned from sin to Christ. His life begins to change from the inside out.

1. Introduction – Why We Need a New Heart

Dear students, today we speak about one of the most important truths in the Christian life. We speak about repentance and the new birth.

Many people call themselves Christians. They go to church. They sing. They give some money. They know Christian words. But during the week, their lives may look the same as the lives of people who do not know God. A man may sing in church and then speak cruelly to his wife. A leader may pray in public and secretly steal money. A young man may carry a Bible and still live in sexual sin. A person may say, "Praise the Lord," but when fear comes, he still runs to witch doctors or spiritual powers outside of Christ.

So the question is not only, "Do I go to church?" The deeper question is: **Has God changed my heart?**

The Bible teaches that our biggest problem is not only outside. It is not only bad habits, poverty, lack of education, or bad friends. These things can influence us, but the deepest problem is the human heart.

If the water source is dirty, the cups will keep receiving dirty water. You can wash the cups many times, but the water will still be dirty. In the same way, people may clean the outside of their lives. They may dress well, use religious language, and behave well when people are watching. But if the heart is not changed, the old sin will continue to come out.

That is why Jesus said, "You must be born again." Christianity is not only a club, a title, or a family tradition. True Christianity is a miracle of God. God gives spiritual life. God gives a new heart. God brings a sinner from darkness into light.

This lesson is serious, but it is also full of hope. If God commands new birth, God is also able to give new birth. If God calls us to repentance, He is also able to give grace.

2. Bible Reading: John 3:1–21

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to him by night, and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered him, 'Most certainly, I tell you, unless one is born anew, he can't see God's Kingdom.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he can't enter God's Kingdom. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don't marvel that I said to you, "You must be born anew." The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but don't know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus answered him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel, and don't understand these things? Most certainly I tell you, we speak that which we know and testify of that which we have seen, and you don't receive our witness. If I told you earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him. He who believes in him is not judged. He who doesn't believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only born Son of God. This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and doesn't come to the light, lest his works would be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God.'" (John 3:1–21)

3. Teaching: Jesus and Nicodemus

Nicodemus was not a public sinner. He was not known as a thief, drunkard, or violent man. He was a religious leader. He was a Pharisee. He knew the Scriptures. People respected him.

But Jesus looked deeper than people looked. People saw Nicodemus' religion. Jesus saw his need. Nicodemus came with respectful words, but Jesus went straight to the heart: "Unless one is born anew, he can't see God's Kingdom."

This is shocking. Jesus said this to a religious teacher. That means no one is safe because of religion alone. A pastor's child must be born again. A church elder must be born again. A choir leader must be born again. A Bible student must be born again. A person who grew up in church must be born again.

Jesus did not say, "You need more religion." He said, "You must be born anew." The new birth is not optional. Without it, a person may know Christian words, but he does not have spiritual life.

Nicodemus did not understand. He thought about physical birth. But Jesus was speaking about spiritual birth. Physical birth gives us life in this world. Spiritual birth gives us life from God.

Jesus said a person must be born of water and Spirit. Nicodemus should have remembered God's promise in Ezekiel 36. God promised cleansing, a new heart, and His Spirit. The new birth is not only outward religion. It is inward transformation.

Jesus also compared the Spirit to the wind. We cannot see the wind itself, but we can see what the wind does. We see trees moving. We feel the air. In the same way, we cannot see the Holy Spirit with our physical eyes, but we can see His work in a changed life.

When the Spirit gives new birth, a proud man begins to humble himself. A liar begins to speak truth. A harsh husband begins to become gentle. A thief begins to return what he stole. A sexually immoral person begins to flee from secret sin. A person who trusted witchcraft begins to trust Christ.

These changes do not save us. Christ saves us. But these changes show that God is working in us. A living tree produces fruit. The fruit does not make the tree alive. The fruit shows that the tree is alive.

John 3 also shows us the center of the gospel. Jesus says that the Son of Man must be lifted up. This points to the cross. Jesus died so that sinners may live. Whoever believes in Him receives eternal life.

But Jesus also says that people love darkness rather than light. This is why many people do not want true repentance. They do not want sin to be exposed. But the person who comes to Christ comes into the light. He says, "Lord, You see me. You know my sin. Cleanse me. Forgive me. Change me."

4. Bible Reading: Ezekiel 36:25–27

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. You will keep my ordinances and do them." (Ezekiel 36:25–27)

5. Teaching: God Gives a New Heart

In Ezekiel 36, God speaks to people who were spiritually unclean. They had sinned. They had followed idols. They had dishonored God's name. Their problem was not small. They needed more than advice. They needed cleansing and a new heart.

Notice how often God says, "I will." God says, "I will sprinkle. I will cleanse. I will give. I will put. I will take away." This shows us that the new birth is God's work. A dead sinner cannot make himself alive. A stone heart cannot make itself soft. God must work.

A heart of stone is hard. It hears God's Word but does not care. It makes excuses for sin. It hurts people but does not feel true sorrow. It can sit in church for years and remain unchanged.

A heart of flesh is soft before God. It receives correction. It confesses sin. It wants to obey. It is not perfect, but it is alive. When it sins, it is troubled. When it hears God's Word, it wants to respond.

Think about soil. If the ground is hard, seed does not go deep. But if the soil is soft, the seed can enter, grow, and bear fruit. In the same way, God makes the heart soft so that His Word can bear fruit.

Ezekiel also says that God puts His Spirit in His people and causes them to walk in His ways. This means grace does not leave a person in slavery to sin. Grace forgives, but grace also changes. We are not saved by obedience, but saved people begin to obey.

6. True Repentance – More Than Feeling Sorry

Now we must understand repentance. Many people think repentance only means crying. Sometimes a repentant person may cry. But tears alone are not repentance. A person may cry because he was caught, because he is ashamed, or because he fears punishment.

Other people think repentance means saying, "I am sorry." But words alone are not repentance. A husband may say sorry many times and still continue to insult his wife. A young man may say sorry for sexual sin and still keep the secret relationship. A church leader may say sorry for stealing money but refuse to tell the full truth.

True repentance is deeper. It means turning from sin to God.

First, repentance changes the mind. A repentant person agrees with God about sin. He stops making excuses. He does not say, "I stole because I was poor." He says, "I stole because my heart was greedy, and I sinned against God." He does not say, "I committed adultery because my wife did not understand me." He says, "I sinned because my heart was full of lust and selfishness."

Second, repentance changes the heart. Before repentance, sin may taste sweet. A person protects it and hides it. But when God works in the heart, sin begins to taste bitter. The person begins to hate what God hates and love what God loves.

Third, repentance changes the direction. Imagine a man walking toward a dangerous swamp. If he cries but keeps walking toward danger, he has not turned. True repentance turns around. It says, "I was going the wrong way. By God's grace, I now turn toward Christ."

We must also understand the difference between remorse and repentance. Remorse is mainly sorry because of consequences. Repentance is sorry because I have sinned against God. Remorse says, "I hate the shame." Repentance says, "I hate the sin." Remorse hides. Repentance comes into the light.

Judas had remorse after betraying Jesus, but his sorrow led to despair. Peter denied Jesus, but he wept and was restored. True repentance returns to Christ.

7. Bible Reading: Colossians 3:5–10

"Put to death therefore your members which are on the earth: sexual immorality, uncleanness, depraved passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. You also once walked in those, when you lived in them; but now you must also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and shameful speaking out of your mouth. Don't lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator." (Colossians 3:5–10)

8. Teaching: Taking Off the Old Clothes

Paul speaks to believers and says that because they belong to Christ, their lives must change. He uses the picture of taking off old dirty clothes and putting on new clothes.

Imagine a man working all day in the field. His clothes are dirty with dust, sweat, and mud. If he goes to a wedding, he should not wear those same dirty clothes. He should take them off and put on clean clothes.

Paul says the old sinful life is like dirty clothing. It does not belong to the new person in Christ. But Paul uses even stronger words. He says, "Put to death." This means we must not play with sin. Sin is not a friend. Sin is an enemy.

In real life, this must become specific.

A man of God must put to death sexual immorality: secret girlfriends, adultery, pornography, sexual jokes, and using women for pleasure. He cannot say he follows Christ while keeping a secret life of sexual sin.

He must put to death greed. Greed takes church money. Greed cheats in business. Greed uses ministry to become important. Greed makes a leader see people as a way to get money instead of

sheep to love and serve.

He must put away anger, harsh words, slander, and lies. Many men excuse anger and say, "This is just how men are." But biblical strength is not cruelty. A man who frightens his wife and children is not showing Christ. Jesus is strong, but He is not sinful. He is holy, truthful, gentle, and full of self-control.

But the Christian life is not only saying "No" to sin. It is also saying "Yes" to Christ. If a man stops lying, he must learn to speak truth. If he stops stealing, he must learn to work and give. If he stops harsh words, he must learn words of grace. If he stops pride, he must learn humility.

A born-again person becomes different in private, in family, in church, and in the community.

9. Leaving Old Patterns Behind

Every culture has patterns. Every family has patterns. Every tribe has patterns. Some patterns are good, such as respect for elders, hospitality, and care for family. But every culture also has sinful patterns. No culture is perfect. Every culture must be tested by the Word of God.

When a person is born again, he begins to ask a new question. He does not only ask, "What does my family do?" He asks, "What does God say?" He does not only ask, "What does my tribe expect?" He asks, "What pleases Christ?"

This may bring conflict. If a man stops going to witch doctors, relatives may mock him. If he stops drinking with old friends, they may laugh at him. If he becomes faithful to one wife, other men may call him weak. If he stops insulting his wife, people may say, "Your wife controls you."

But Jesus is Lord above culture. We honor our families, but we do not obey family above God. We respect elders, but we do not obey elders when they command sin. We love our people, but we do not follow traditions that deny Christ.

Leaving old patterns can be painful. Sometimes repentance means ending a sinful relationship, returning stolen money, asking forgiveness, deleting sinful things from a phone, or losing old friends. But Jesus is worth it. The old life promises pleasure but leads to death. Christ calls us to deny ourselves, but He gives life.

10. The Testing Ground – Where Change Becomes Visible

It is easy to look spiritual in church. It is easy to say "Amen" when others listen. But the new birth is tested in real life.

First, it is tested in private life. What do you do when no one is watching? What do you watch on your phone? What do you do with money when no one checks? A born-again person learns to fear God more than people.

Second, it is tested in family life. Many men look holy in public but are harsh at home. They smile in church but shout at their wife. So ask yourself: If my wife and children were asked privately, "Is this man truly a man of God at home?" what would they say?

Third, it is tested in our reaction to sin. Christians are not perfect. But when a born-again person sins, he cannot remain peaceful in darkness. He confesses, turns back to God, and seeks to make things right.

Fourth, it is tested in community life. Are you honest in business? Do you keep your promises? Do people know you as trustworthy? The gospel must not only change Sunday. It must change the whole week.

11. Common False Ideas

Some people say, "I am born again because I once repeated a prayer." But repeating words without true faith does not save.

Some say, "I am born again because I was baptized." Baptism is important because Jesus commanded it, but water on the body cannot replace the Spirit in the heart.

Some say, "I am born again because I speak spiritual language." But words like "Praise God" and "Amen" are not the same as spiritual life.

Some say, "I am born again because God blessed me materially." But money, land, children, or success do not prove new birth. The true evidence is faith in Christ and a changed life.

Some say, "Repentance is only for the beginning." But the whole Christian life includes repentance. We do not get born again again and again, but we continue to turn from sin as God shows us what must change.

12. Call to Respond

Dear students, today the Word of God has spoken clearly. Jesus did not say, "You must become more religious." He said, "You must be born again."

If you know that you have only been religious, do not hide. Come to Christ. Confess your sin. Stop defending yourself. Ask God for mercy. Look to Jesus, who died on the cross and rose again. Believe in Him.

If you are born again but old patterns are still holding you, do not make peace with sin. Bring it into the light. Repent. Ask for help. Put off the old clothes. Put on the new life in Christ.

If you are a leader, remember this: You cannot lead others into a life you do not know yourself. A man who has not repented cannot teach repentance with power. A man hiding in darkness cannot lead others into light.

Christ is full of mercy. He receives sinners. He forgives. He cleanses. He changes. He gives the Spirit. He gives a new heart.

So come to Him.

13. Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jesus speak about the new birth to Nicodemus, a religious teacher?
2. What are signs that a person is only religious but not truly born again?
3. What is the difference between remorse and true repentance?
4. Why is it dangerous to blame other people for our sin?
5. What are some "old clothes" that men and women in our communities must take off?
6. Which family or cultural patterns must be tested by the Word of God?
7. Why is private life an important test of true faith?
8. What should a Christian do when he falls into sin?
9. How can believers encourage one another when old friends mock them?
10. What visible effects of the Holy Spirit should people see in a born-again person?

14. Short Group Exercise

Divide the students into small groups. Give each group one situation and ask: What would false repentance look like? What would true repentance look like?

Situation 1: A church leader is gentle in church but shouts at his wife at home. **Situation 2:** A young man says he loves Jesus but keeps a secret girlfriend. **Situation 3:** A woman attends church but secretly goes to a witch doctor when her child is sick. **Situation 4:** A treasurer uses church money for personal needs and says, "I planned to return it." **Situation 5:** A Bible student knows many verses but is proud and refuses correction.

15. Closing Prayer

Father in heaven,

We thank You for Your Word. We confess that religion without a new heart cannot save us. Church attendance without new birth cannot save us. Good reputation without Christ cannot save us.

Lord, give us true repentance. Remove hard hearts. Give us hearts of flesh. Cleanse us from sin. Put Your Spirit in us. Help us to leave old patterns behind. Help us to put off sexual immorality, greed, anger, lies, pride, witchcraft, bitterness, and hypocrisy.



Teach us to walk in the light. Make us faithful in private, gentle in our families, honest in the church, and holy in the community.

We look to Jesus Christ, who was lifted up for sinners. We believe that He died and rose again. We ask for mercy, cleansing, and new life.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.