

**your new**

**LIFE**

*Alex Garro*

*Iglesia Comunidad Transformadora*



# INTRODUCTION

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We welcome you to this study and reflection process called "**Your New Life.**" Its purpose is to provide you with the information you need to understand the spiritual implications of your decision to believe in Jesus as your Savior and accept him as the Lord of your life.

We are going to use the Bible as the primary source of information and as the foundation of this study process. Although the Bible appears to be a book like any other, in reality, it is not. The Bible is a unique book for many reasons, including It was written by 40 authors from all kinds of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds for about 1,600 years. Also, it was written on three different continents; Africa, Asia, and Europe, and in 3 different languages; Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

Although all this is surprising, the characteristic that makes the Bible a book without equality is that God inspired it. This means that God divinely influenced the authors to write it. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Bible contains a single coherent message from beginning to end. We can affirm that God has made himself known through the Bible and that he has made known His Eternal Plan. That is why we will use it to understand who we are in Him and our role in that Eternal Plan.

This is then the first decision you must make: Do you accept that the Bible will be, from now on, the leading resource to know God, to understand who you really are in HIM, and especially to receive guidance on how to live your life?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Before beginning this process, you must have a printed copy of the Bible. We recommend that you get a New International Version Bible. This Bible has contemporary language and an excellent level of accuracy. Although there are digital options, you must first become familiar with the paper Bible. In addition, you can use it to underline, take notes, make comments, etc.

Finally, a more mature Christian must accompany you throughout this process. While you could simply study this material on your own, if you involve someone else, you will be able to clarify any doubts you have and especially learn faster how to apply the principles you will learn practically.

**How to use this material?** You can read this material before meeting with the person accompanying you in the process, or you can read it with that person at the time of the meeting. You will find a small homework you must complete at the end of each session before the next session.

# SESSION 1

## *The new birth*

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Perhaps you have wondered, “*what exactly do they mean when they tell me that I now have a new life? After all, I am still as alive as I was before*”.

We are going to let the Bible answer that question. Look in the New Testament for the Gospel of John. Let's read in chapter 3, from verses 1 to 21. (John 3:1-21)

This passage narrates the conversation between Jesus and a religious leader named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was one of the most important and respected teachers of the Jewish religion at the time of Jesus. It is very striking that Nicodemus sought out Jesus to talk with him. Throughout the history of Israel, dozens of street teachers have appeared, proclaiming themselves prophets or messiahs. Most of these ended in discredit and shame for being unable to prove indeed who they said they were.

The Israelites lived in hope that, at some point, the Messiah would appear; a savior sent by God to free his people from the moral and spiritual misery into which they had fallen and, especially, free them from the Roman Empire. Apparently, Nicodemus saw the possible Messiah in Jesus and visited him to confirm it.

By this time, the 30-year-old Jesus had not only begun to preach the Good News about the Kingdom of God but had also proven his words to be true by confirming them with the manifestation of God's power; healing the sick, freeing people from demonic oppression, and performing miracles never seen before.

However, Nicodemus did not know that Jesus was the promised Messiah, not just a military savior who would free the Jews from the Roman Empire but the Savior of the entire world. Savior of what, you ask? Savior of the spiritual death in which humanity lived. A death resulting from the fact that, at the beginning of human history, Adam and Eve, the first human beings, according to the Bible, had revealed themselves and chosen a life separate from God the Father.

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, in this way, death came to all people because all sinned. Romans 5:12*

Jesus, whose name literally means "God saves," was more than just a man sent by God; Jesus is God himself incarnate, the one through whom everything that exists was made, and all things are sustained.

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:15-17*

Nicodemus had no idea that this Jesus he was going to meet was nothing more and nothing less than the Only Begotten Son of God, the light of the world. John had already described the nature of Jesus in an extraordinary way in chapter 1 of his Gospel:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.... The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth... No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. John 1:1-5, 9, 14, 18*

*"The Word became man!"*

This is perhaps one of the most important statements found in the Bible. God did not send an angel to solve the problem of spiritual death. He also did not send a human being to help us. God Himself came to save us, and He did it through His Son. Although no one has ever seen God, He made Himself known through His Son. Through Jesus, God the Father was providing humanity with the opportunity to get out of the state of darkness (death) in which they lived and experience His Grace and Truth.

Let's go back to the story of Nicodemus... **Reread verses 1-3.**

Although Nicodemus recognized the power of God operating in the life of Jesus in a unique way, he still saw him as a teacher and not as the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Remember, Nicodemus was one of the greatest and best-trained teachers of the Jewish religion in the Old Testament Scriptures. However, he was unable to see the Kingdom of God through Jesus.

You may wonder *what the Bible means when using the expression "the Kingdom of God."* Simple. The Kingdom of God is the realm where God the Father exercises his influence, authority, and government. Just as the King of England exercises his authority and rule over 15 countries on 3 continents, God exercises His influence, authority, and rule over every person and place he allows. The Kingdom of God was the central theme of Jesus' preaching and teaching.

*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23*

*Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:14-15*

That is why they are called "Good News" or "Good News" ("gospel" in Greek); now humanity has the opportunity to be free from the slavery of sin and death and to return to having communion (relationship) with God the Father that Adam lost in Eden due to his disobedience.

According to what Jesus told Nicodemus in verse 3, what is the only way the Kingdom of God can be experienced? ...

Exactly! You have to be born again.

### **Read verses 4-8.**

Of course, Nicodemus's immediate reaction was, "*and how can this be possible? Can a person enter his mother's womb again and be born again?*"

Immediately Jesus explains that he is not referring to being born again in material or human terms but to being born again in the spirit.

Do you remember when we read that, due to sin, all of humanity has died spiritually? In the spiritual context, the word death in the Bible refers to the separation between man and God the Father. It is the absence of fellowship (relationship) between the Creator Father and His created sons and daughters. Being born again is the possibility of eliminating that separation (death) between God and human beings due to sin to get to know Him and have fellowship with Him.

In the conversation, when using the expression "born of water and the Spirit," Jesus refers to a passage from the Old Testament that Nicodemus knew well and that would help him understand the new birth:

*For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36:24-27*

In this promise, God the Father assured humanity that the day would come when He Himself would transform the "heart of stone" (a dead heart) into a heart sensitive to His voice, capable of communion with Him. We all had to be cleansed with "pure water" to achieve that communion. That "water" is the Word of God that Jesus preached. In addition, we would receive the Spirit of God within us. That Spirit is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). Through the Holy Spirit living within us, we can have fellowship (relationship) with God the Father.

Jesus explains to Nicodemus that this new birth is not a natural matter but a spiritual birth that, like the wind, which is not physically seen, produces evident effects wherever it passes. A person who is born again does not undergo an immediate physical, intellectual, or emotional change. However, the new life in their spirit will begin to manifest more and more in their behavior and daily life. A person knows that they were born again, not because they are part of a religious group, but because they experience the action of the Spirit of God in their lives, touching the mind, the emotions, and the will. Then they experience the Kingdom of God (His influence, authority, and government) in all areas of their life.

## Read verses 9-15.

Apparently, Nicodemus accepts that the new birth is something spiritual produced by God. However, he asks a question that perhaps you have asked yourself: "How *is this possible?*"

It is a very valid question. What Nicodemus is basically asking is, "what must I do to experience the new birth"? To answer him, Jesus refers back to the Old Testament, to a chapter in the history of Israel well known to Nicodemus.

*"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man also be lifted up, 15 so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*

Perhaps you ask yourself, "What does a snake have to do with the new birth?". To understand it, you have to read the situation to which Jesus is referring:

*They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people, and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived. Numbers 21:4-9*

What was the only thing the Israelites had to do not to die?...

Exactly! Look at the snake.

Nicodemus could not understand this then, but he understood it a short time later when he saw Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God, being lifted up like that serpent, in full view, on a cross. Just as the serpent saved the Israelites from death, human beings would be saved from spiritual death simply by acknowledging and believing that Jesus was paying the price for our salvation by dying on the cross.

This is what John meant in chapter 1 of his Gospel:

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:9-13*

Having studied this, answer: What is the only thing needed to experience the new birth?

Exactly! Just believe.

Those who have genuinely believed in what Jesus did for us on the cross have experienced a new birth; we have been born again. How do we know? Through the constant action of the Holy Spirit in our life. We begin to hear the voice of our Heavenly Father in our hearts, and our desire to do His will increases. Put another way; we experience His Kingdom, love, influence, authority, and government.

Perhaps the new birth is not immediately evident; our thoughts and feelings are apparently the same. However, we will begin to experience the transformation process in which the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ.

### **Read verses 16 and 17.**

Why does God the Father give us this wonderful gift of a new life without requiring anything except that we receive it and believe in what Jesus did for us on the cross?

The answer is clear: because He loves us. His love for us stems from the fact that we were created in His image and likeness. We are His sons and daughters. We are the only beings capable of reflecting His character on earth. In addition, we have a unique purpose that contributes to the fulfillment of His Eternal Plan.

What did God the Father do so that we could experience this new life?

The answer is clear: he gave His Only Begotten (only) Son. By saying that he gave it, it means not only that he sent him to earth to allow us to interact with Him but that He made it so that He is the substitute for the human being at the moment of judgment and punishment of the sin that had separated us from God.

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person, someone might dare to die. But God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him? For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:6-11.*

What a great love! God the Father was willing to sacrifice his own Son so that, through his blood, we would be justified, made just, blameless, and without sin before Him. Furthermore, we went from being enemies of God to being sons and daughters of God. We are reconciled with Him in that we can now enjoy an unrestrained fellowship (relationship) with Him.

Pay close attention to this; God the Father and His Son did all this for us when we were still in a state of spiritual death due to sin. That is called GRACE, an undeserved gift given to us instead of giving us what we deserve.



**Read verses 1, 8, and 21.**

Faced with this wonderful Grace, the human being must make a decision; Either you believe in what Jesus did on the cross for us and receive new life, or you do not believe and choose to remain in darkness, in a state of spiritual death.

So, does God condemn someone to eternal death?

No, condemnation is the result of having rejected the Grace of God, Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. The cause of condemnation is that the light (Jesus) came into the world. Still, people choose darkness (death-separation) to continue living according to their desires and will instead of living according to the will of God the Father.

Then, what is the lifestyle that those of us who have received the new life live?

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A person who has been born again lives in the light; they practice the truth, submit, and obey God's will for their life.

The story tells that Nicodemus not only managed to understand what is the new birth but also experienced it personally and became a faithful disciple of Jesus.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the new birth?

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2. What did God do so that we could have the opportunity to be born again?

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3. What must the human being do to experience the new birth?

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4. What does it mean that, through Jesus' sacrifice, we were justified and reconciled?

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5. Do you have any questions about what you read today?

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**Assigned reading:** Read chapters 1, 2, and 3 of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, read each chapter 3 times.

## SESSION 2

### *From Death to Life*

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*"Very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. John 5:24*

We studied what it means to be born again in the previous session. To be born again is basically to pass from the state of spiritual death or separation from God as a result of sin to experience spiritual life that is full communion with God the Father.

*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:11-12*

Salvation (eternal life) or condemnation (eternal death) are the only two spiritual options for the human being. God the Father provided us with salvation, that is, the opportunity to experience His Life through Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. All we have to do is believe in Jesus and accept that sacrifice. A saved person is one who has appropriated, through faith, that new life in Christ. Whoever rejects this gift of Grace will then reject salvation and, therefore, eternal life.

Perhaps you have asked yourself: " *What is the difference between the state of spiritual death and the state of spiritual life?... after all, it seems that there is not much difference, especially when you see so many people who -without having a relationship with God- they live good lives and are happy.*"

Again, we're going to let the Bible answer that question.

#### **Read Ephesians 2:1-10.**

Spiritual death is the result of sin. **Look again at verses 1 and 2.**

Contrary to what many people think, sin is not doing morally wrong things or things contrary to the ethical statutes of a religion or doctrine. Reading the story of Adam and Eve, we see they did not do something morally wrong like stealing, adultery, or lying. Nor did they break a religious rule, as there was no religion. They transgressed the instruction that God had given them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To transgress means to act against a norm, law, or agreement. Adam and Eve knowingly and deliberately acted against the will of God the Father by eating from the tree that He had told them not to eat.

Adam and Eve listened to the devil's voice and voluntarily submitted to it, thus rejecting the authority and government of God the Father. The passage from Ephesians says that, in the state of spiritual death, we lived according to the ruler of darkness, the devil. It further explains that the devil exercises power over all who live in disobedience. Obedience to God's will was how men and women would remain in communion with God the Father. On the contrary, disobedience would break that communion and allow the entry of sin and, consequently, spiritual death.

By listening to the devil's voice and acting on what he told them instead of what God had told them, Adam and Eve renounced the government of God the Father. To put it another way, they declared themselves independent of God. That is a sin!

The word sin in the Bible literally means: to miss the mark, to stray or stray from a fixed direction. Sin, more than a moral transgression, is the deviation of the human being from the Eternal Purpose of God. A person is in sin when they have strayed from God's perfect will for their life, whether or not that stray results in morally wrong actions. From this point of view, a sinner is one who lives a destructive life full of bad actions, and one who lives a good life, without doing apparently bad things but who is outside of God's perfect will. In both cases, the person is in sin and spiritually dead.

**Verse 3** shows the 2 “natural” manifestations of a person dead for sin:

1. A spiritually dead person lives by his sinful desires. Another version says, "passions of the flesh." When God the Father created us, he endowed us with a series of natural impulses that allow us to achieve goals, enjoy life and feel pleasure. By allowing sin in, those impulses and pleasures ceased to be a means and became an end in themselves. Its original purpose became distorted and corrupted.

The clearest example of this is sexual desire and pleasure. God the Father created us with that desire and pleasure for our enjoyment. Within His perfect will, they are a blessing for couples. However, those desires are insatiable, uncontrollable, and even destructive outside of God's will.

*For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 1 John 2:16*

These distorted or corrupted impulses and desires govern a spiritually dead person. It is precisely here where "sins" appear in the sense of morally harmful and destructive actions. We could say that sin is the state of straying, that is, life outside the will of God, while sins are the behavioral manifestations of that state of separation from God.

2. A spiritually dead person lives according to their own will and purposes. Remember what we read in chapter 1 of Genesis, verses 26-28, to understand this. After having created everything that exists, God decides to create the human being:

*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image; in the image of God, he created them; male and female, he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Genesis 1:26-28.*

Notice that God wanted the human being (man and woman) to be a reflection on earth of who He is; that is what the expression image and likeness refers to. That has been His will from the beginning; God the Father wants to make Himself known on this earth through us, His sons and daughters. There is no other being in all of creation that possesses these qualities; the image and likeness of God.

Do you remember that in the previous session, we mentioned that the central theme of Jesus' message was the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven)? Jesus preached and taught so much on the subject because it has to do with God's original purpose for the human being (man and woman). Notice what it says in Genesis 1:26 after God said: "*Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness*"; immediately, God said, "*so that they may rule over (have dominion).*"

God the Father did not want us to be only the reflection of who He is, but rather that we were His legal representatives on earth. God the Father is the King of the Heavenly Kingdom, an invisible Kingdom. We human beings would then be the "princes and princesses" (children of the King) in charge of governing the earth, the visible kingdom, according to the principles of the Kingdom of our Father. To put it another way, we would be the ones in charge of "colonizing" this land with the character, culture, values, and principles of our Father-King.

That is God's Eternal Purpose: to make himself known on this earth through us. His will is that we reflect and represent Him on this earth. For this, and as verse 28 of Genesis 1 says, He blessed us with five powerful governmental capacities: be fruitful, multiply (increase in number), fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion (rule).

Now let's remember what you read in Genesis 2:

*Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden was the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.*

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."*  
*Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17*

After God formed man out of dust and "breathed" His spiritual life into him, He placed him in a garden called Eden to cultivate and till. That garden was the initial territory from which the man and the woman would develop the process of filling the earth with the Kingdom of Heaven. This was through the image and likeness they possessed and through the specific purpose that God the Father had designated for each of the children that Adam and Eve would have.

The man and the woman were perfectly designed and enable to fulfill God's purpose. We were created to fulfill His purpose and will, not to define a purpose for our lives and live according to our will. In other words, our existence only makes sense if we live according to the purpose and will that the Father has for each one of us.

Now, doing God's will and living according to His purpose had to be a choice for the man and woman. They were not forced or "robot programmed" to do so. They had to choose to do God's will and submit to His purpose. This is called "free will," the ability given by God the Father to men and women to choose what to do. Free will is the most valuable and powerful gift that God the Father gave to human beings.

This is why God put those two trees in the center of the Garden of Eden; the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If the man and the woman chose the Tree of Life, they would remain obedient and submit to God the Father, allowing God to make himself known through them. God could fulfill His Eternal Purpose and do His perfect will through His sons and daughters. If, on the contrary, they chose to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would be choosing not to be dependent on God the Father. They would be choosing not to make Him the center of their life. Basically, they would be choosing themselves.

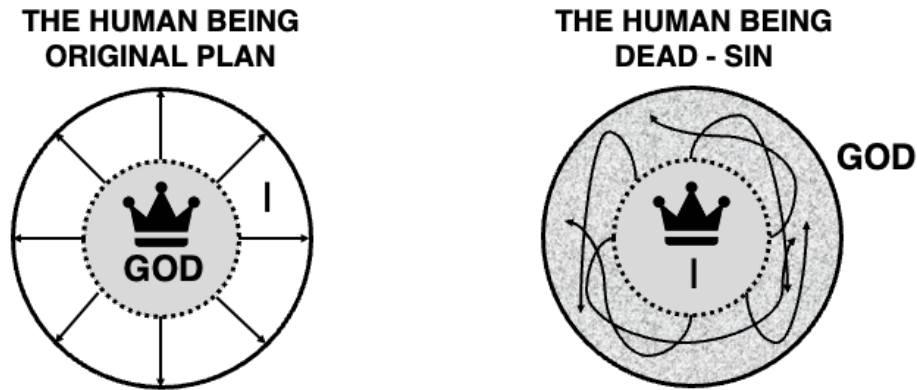
As you read in Genesis 3, sadly and catastrophically, the man and the woman chose themselves over God the Father and used their free will to eat from the forbidden tree.

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3:6*

That day, and through that act of rebellion, disobedience, and independence, Adam and Eve chose to live according to their own will and purpose. Since then, the human being has lived confused concerning the true reason for their existence and how they should live. By disconnecting from our origin, we fell into terrible confusion and life in darkness. Just as the bird's life finds meaning only in the air and the fish's life finds meaning only in the water, we only understand the reason for our existence in our Heavenly Father. In the one who created us, in the one who has the "blueprints" of our life.

Only in God the Father, our creator, can we answer the existential questions that have given rise to all the philosophies that govern human thought and behavior: Where do I come from? Who am I? Why am I here? What can I do? Where am I going? A spiritually dead person (separated from God) will live looking for a reason to live, trying to find their purpose in their own soul that lives in darkness, and what is worse, they will live centered on themselves, a self-centered person. Instead of bringing you satisfaction and fulfillment, that self-centeredness will bring more dissatisfaction, confusion, and darkness to your life.

We can understand this reality much better through this diagram:



**Read verses 4-7**

What did God the Father do when we were still spiritually dead, that is, separated from Him?

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Why did God give us life in Christ despite our condition of spiritual death?

The answer is found in 3 essential expressions found in this passage:

1. *"God, who is rich in mercy."* Mercy is the compassionate attitude of God the Father towards human misery resulting from sin and spiritual death. Contrary to what would have been expected before the rebellion and disobedience of the human being, the reaction of God the Father was not hatred or rejection but compassion and mercy. Experiencing sin and death, Adam and Eve feared God, hid and covered their nakedness with fig leaves. However, before applying the consequence of their disobedience and sin and removing them from the Garden of Eden...

*The Lord God made garments of skin for the man and his wife and clothed them. Genesis 3:21*

Unlike the fig leaves, the garments of skin required a sacrifice. In the same chapter of the Bible where Adam and Eve's disobedience is described, God's mercy is described by providing a sacrifice to cover their sin. These clothes made of leather are a symbol of the sacrifice that Jesus would make on the cross of Calvary for us.

2. *"For his great love for us."* The word love here does not refer to an emotional love seeking retribution or reciprocity. The word love in this text is the Greek word "*agape*," which describes unconditional, selfless, and sacrificial love. It is the type of love that pursues the well-being of the other without expecting anything in return.

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10*

His agape love caused the Heavenly Father to send His Son to earth so that, when the time was up, He would go to the cross to die unjustly for all of us who deserved God's judgment and punishment. On the cross, and out of love, Jesus took our place.

3. *"By grace, you have been saved."* The word "grace" means benevolence, favor, or benefit received without merit, that is, for free. The Greeks frequently used this word in the ethical-legal context to describe the forgiveness of a debt or the declaration that someone's life had been spared.

*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:22-24*

Grace reveals our inability to save ourselves. There is no work or sacrifice we can do to deserve it. Being saved by grace means that we do not participate in the process of salvation; we only enjoy its result.

**Finally, read verses 8-10.** These verses summarize everything we have studied today.

### Discussion Questions

1. In your own words, what does it mean that we have passed from death to life?

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2. What are the 2 "natural" manifestations of a spiritually dead person?

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3. What does it mean, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."*?

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4. Why is mercy, love (agape), and grace such vital terms?

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5. Do you have any questions about what you read today?

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**Assigned reading:** Read 3 times the 15th chapter of Luke, the third book of the New Testament.

## SESSION 3

### *The love of God the Father*

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*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon, and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet. Psalm 8:3-6*

King David, who in his youth was a shepherd, musician, and poet, and who became a national hero of Israel for having defeated the giant Goliath with just a slingshot and a stone, recorded in one of his psalms the most beautiful truths about the value of the human being for God.

In Psalm 8, after asking, *"What is mankind that God is mindful of them and care for them?"* he responds that the human being is valuable because he was made *"a little lower than God."* This is because we are the creation that best resembles God in characteristics and essence; we were made in His image and likeness. Furthermore, God the Father has "crowned" (literally surrounded) us with glory and honor. "Glory" refers to the admiration, influence, and effect our personal characteristics, capabilities, abilities, and talents, have on other people. "Honor" refers to the dignity we possess and deserve just because we are His sons and daughters. Honor has to do with the recognition of personal worth and the pride of being sons and daughters of God.

As if that were not enough, David adds that human beings are also valuable because of our role as government representatives and the authority of our Eternal Father here on earth. The expression *"You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet"* establishes that, from the beginning, God has intended that human beings, men and woman, be His legal representatives. To put it another way, the human being and not God are directly responsible for creation. The world's current condition is the result of the government and administration of the human being of everything that God the Father gave him at the beginning of creation.

As you can see, the value of the human being for God lies both in their essence and function. We are valuable because we have His image and likeness and because we are His representatives on earth.

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

What a wonderful reality this is! Our God and Heavenly Father, Himself, and with His own hands, created and formed us to make Himself known on this earth through us. The expression "created in Christ" establishes two principles; God the Father has centralized His plan in His Son, and that Son is the measure and standard of love and character for the rest of His sons and daughters, meaning us.



Notice that we were not created to be mere "ornaments" of the creation; instead, we were created to do a job and fulfill an assignment and a purpose here on earth. God the Father created us not only to reflect His image and likeness but to carry out the "good works" that He defined before the creation of the world so that each one of us could complete them in the time that He gave us.

Don't have the slightest doubt; We are God's most valuable creation because we are His sons and daughters and because we possess the ability and potential to carry out His work on earth. This explains His love for us and the reason for everything He did through His Son to get us out of the state of spiritual death in which we found ourselves.

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

*But God demonstrates his love for us in this: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8*

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4-5*

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10*

Clearly, God the Father loves us with an incomprehensible and indescribable love. It is also clear that we are unimaginably precious to Him. Why else, if not for His love, would He send His Son to earth in the form of a human being and sacrifice Him for us on the cross?! This is, without a doubt, the greatest love story of all.

All this will allow us to understand the assigned reading even better; Luke chapter 15. What do the three stories in Luke 15; the sheep, the coin, and the son have in common? What do you think is the underlying message that God wants us to understand as we read these stories?

### **Read verses 1-2 of Luke 15.**

For 3 and a half years, Jesus dedicated himself to sharing the Good News (Gospel) with all the people who, despite their condition of spiritual separation (death), were willing to listen to Him. Jesus explained to them that God wanted to reestablish communion with human beings in such a way that it was no longer a distant and religious relationship between a "god" and human beings but between a Father and His spiritual sons and daughters.

This message tremendously angered the religious people of the time. Contrary to what one might expect, those who presented the most resistance to the message of Jesus were not sinners but professionals in the Jewish religion, those who knew more about the Old Testament Scriptures.

The religious people did not accept that Jesus affirmed that He was the Son of God, that is, God Himself incarnate. Nor did they accept that Jesus said that the God they had revered for centuries in the temple with rituals and sacrifices now wanted a Father-son relationship with human beings. For them, God "lived" in the temple and only associated with ritually pure and holy people. Only people like them could get closer to God.

This is why the story of Luke 15 begins by describing the anger and resentment felt by those religious people when they saw that Jesus, instead of being inside the temple, being like one of them, went through the streets and towns of Israel preaching the Good News to them. But He shared the Good News with people who were not "holy" and "pure" according to religious standards. It infuriated them, even more to see Jesus sitting and eating in the houses of sinners. Religion had prevented them from seeing the Messiah for whom they themselves had been waiting for centuries. What a contradiction!

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus clearly defined His mission on this earth:

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day, he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16-21*

This was what the religious did not understand; Jesus had come to solve the problem of sin and spiritual death definitively. Jesus had come to free sinners from their state of separation from God and to heal and restore them from all the consequences resulting from that state of spiritual death: misery, poverty, captivity, disease, confusion, guilt, demonic oppression, loneliness, and lack of help, and lack of true freedom.

What other consequences of the state of spiritual death did you experience before believing in Jesus?

If you remember the story in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree that God told them not to eat, they experienced spiritual separation.

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 3:6-7*

The nakedness they became aware of is not physical because they were both already naked. Nakedness here describes the state of lack of continuity in the realm of blessing and protection of God the Father. Many Bible scholars affirm that the man and the woman were clothed in His glory and His Light in their state of perfect communion with God.

When the communion with God the Father was broken, the man and the woman were left out of that scope (environment) of blessing and protection. This resulted in a man being exposed to every physical and emotional calamity you can imagine.

As a human response to this spiritual reality, Adam and Eve covered themselves with fig leaves. This became a pattern in the human being: we all look for the human way to cover up or cover the damage caused by sin and try to reestablish some kind of relationship with Him. That is precisely the essence of religion. Religion is the human attempt, based on its own strength and actions, to reconnect to God.

This is why the religious leaders of Jesus' time could not accept that Jesus related to sinners instead of connecting to them, the "saints" and knowers of God. Despite being professionals in the Old Testament Scriptures and knowing much about God, they didn't really know God the Father personally. These Pharisees, scribes, and teachers of the law were as lost as those with whom Jesus ate and shared, with the difference that at least the latter heard the Good News (Gospel) while the religious did not.

*But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*  
*Luke 5:30-32*

This explains why Jesus did not spend His time on those who considered themselves righteous. They thought their rituals and religious practices were enough to make them right before God. They thought their "fig-leaf aprons" were sufficient to keep God from seeing their sin. But they forgot that God took those aprons off Adam and Eve and clothed them with skins from a slaughtered animal. He clothed them with grace. That was the Good News that Jesus preached to sinners.

Perhaps you are wondering, "Who are the sinners?"

The word "sin" and "sinner" have been misused, especially by the religious people. For a religious person from the time of Jesus, same as the present, sin is doing bad things contrary to the rules and statutes of religion. Therefore, a sinner is a person who "behaves badly," does "bad things," or does not follow religious rules and traditions. For them, sin is a matter of misconduct.

Based on what we studied in the previous session, do you remember what sin is from a biblical point of view?

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Exactly! Sin is a state rather than a behavior. It is the state of separation and independence in which a person lives according to their own criteria. Sin describes the state of a person who constantly fails to live according to the perfect will of God the Father.

From this point of view, a sinner is any person separated from God and living outside the government of God the Father. For the religious people of Jesus' time (and many today), a sinner is someone who does not live according to the moral norms defined by religion. For God, the Father, a sinner is someone who lives according to their own will, purposes, their own desires, and impulses, lives independent of God, and is spiritually dead.

### **Read verses 3-10**

What happened to both the sheep and the coin?

Exactly! They both got lost. The sheep and the coin were separated from their owner for some reason and therefore were lost. Note that in both situations, the owner goes looking for them. For both the sheep and the coin owner, it is a high priority to find what they have lost. For both, the lost "object" has great value.

In the first case, the sheep's owner searches for the lost one and searches until he finds it. When he finds the sheep scared, malnourished, and possibly injured, he picks it up on his shoulders and brings it back home. In the second case, the coin owner lights the lamp, sweeps the house, and carefully searches every corner until she finds the coin.

Both stories reveal three critical things:

- 1- The value that both the owner of the sheep and the owner of the coin had assigned to each one. Clearly, the value assigned (emotional) by each owner goes far beyond the actual value of the sheep and the coin. That given value is the reason for the intense search. Both owners were willing to invest time, resources, and effort into the search.
- 2- Although the sheep's owner had 99 more sheep and the woman had 9 more coins, none of them hesitated to look for the lost one. Both numbers, 99 and 9, are symbolic; represent the concept of completeness. Upon finding the lost sheep, its owner would have 100, meaning his flock would be complete. Upon finding the lost coin, the woman would have 10 coins; that is, her wealth would be complete.
- 3- In both cases, something happens that has no apparent logic; both the owner of the sheep and the owner of the coin gather their friends and neighbors and celebrate having found what was lost. Who would do this for a sheep or a coin?! Only someone for whom the value of that sheep or coin goes beyond its natural value.

Using these two stories, Jesus explains that when a sinner repents, believes in Him, and surrenders to the will of the Father, there is a celebration in heaven because the Father "found" the lost son or daughter. God the Father is constantly looking for His lost children, those who are separated from Him, and He does it through His children who have already been "saved" (rescued).

According to Jesus, repenting is the only requirement for a person to be saved.  
In your opinion, what is repentance?

The word repentance in the Bible does not have the same popular and religious meaning often used. For many, to repent is to have a strong feeling of sadness originating in the conscience for having done something they shouldn't have done and to feel sorry.

In the Bible, the word repentance is the Greek word "*metanoia*," which literally means a change of mind. Describes a person who, despite having had a way of thinking that defines his purpose and governs his actions, decides to renounce that way of thinking to submit to a new one, consequently changing his purpose, direction, and behavior.

Repentance is not an emotion of sadness that generates tears and "words of forgiveness" but does not produce changes in mind and behavior. That's remorse, not repentance. Remember what Jesus said: *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. The only way a sinner (human being separated from God) can experience salvation is through repentance.

True repentance happens when the person, beyond their emotions and feelings, recognizes in their mind and heart that their way of thinking about God and themselves is wrong and accepts Jesus's words as the only truth. The evidence that a person has genuinely repented is not the feelings of remorse but the daily attitudes and actions that lead them more and more to be under the government of God the Father and His Word.

The third story in Luke 15 provides a clear example of repentance.

### **Read verses 11-19**

What is the difference between the first two stories and the third?

Exactly! In this story, the father does not look for the son, who decides to leave. Although the central theme of the 3 stories is the love of God the Father and His joy in recovering His sons and daughters who were separated from Him by sin, the third story describes a son or daughter who intentionally separated Himself from God the Father. The sheep and the coin were lost, but the son consciously left home.

Here Jesus is no longer talking about a sinner who lives far from God, in a state of independence, separation, and spiritual death without being aware of what He is doing. In this story, Jesus is describing someone who, despite being aware of the goodness of God the Father and the benefits of staying in the "Father's house," decides to turn away from God.

After having experienced the benefits of being in communion with God and receiving His blessings, it is a son or daughter who chooses to separate from Him to live a supposed freedom that would allow them to enjoy the pleasures and opportunities that the world offers them. He is a son who mistakenly believes that the world is much better than "Father's house."

The result is the same!

Whether a person has lived their whole life apart from God out of ignorance or has turned away from Him intentionally, they will always end up experiencing the consequences of sin in their life; destruction, misery, lack of purpose, mental and emotional captivity, lack of fulfillment, loneliness, broken relationships, addictions, emptiness, etc. It is a life of misery, wishing for "the food of pigs."

In the case of this rebellious son, the separation from his father even affected his identity: "*I no longer deserve to be called your son.*" This is perhaps the worst of the effects that occur in the heart of someone who, after having known God, decides to turn away from Him; they begin to think that, because of what they have done with their life, God the Father no longer loves or values them in the same way.

At what point do you think the son genuinely repented?

This young man "came to himself"... he reconsidered.

That is the first sign of your repentance. Observe that beyond the sadness and misery in which he was, he had a change of mentality, he changed his way of thinking about his state. He accepted that he was wrong to think he could live a better life away from his father. That change in his way of thinking, acknowledging that he was wrong, moved him to change direction. Instead of staying where he was, he got up, left his miserable situation, and walked towards the "Father's house." This is the undeniable sign of the repentance of a person who has turned away from God: they take responsibility for the state of their life and does not blame God or others for what they are experiencing.

Immediately after "he came to himself," he started walking in the direction of his father's house. Because he was the one who separated from the father, he was the one who had to return. That is, in fact, another of the definitions of the word repentance: change of direction resulting from a change of opinion. People have genuinely repented when walking "in the direction of God the Father."

Maybe this is your case. Perhaps since you were little, you knew God, and you knew that He was your father. Perhaps you grew up in some sort of religious background and became involved in a church. Maybe, and for whatever reasons, you decided to separate from your Heavenly Father, thinking that the world offered you a better life than the life "in the Father's house." Maybe that worked for a while, but then you realized you had made a mistake. Perhaps you are reading this material because you wonder if God still loves you. Maybe you have believed that, even if you return to God, everything that happened in your life or what you did while you were away permanently negatively marked you or forever changed your value to him. Perhaps you think, "I am no longer worthy of being called his son."

**Reread verses 20-24.**

What do you think of the way the father received his son?

Why, even though the son rejects the father, goes away, and wastes everything, the father runs to receive him, hug him, kisses him, puts new clothes on him, puts a ring on him, and throws a party?

Exactly! Because he has never stopped loving him... he never stopped being his son!

This son passed from death to life: *“For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate”*. Through this story, we confirm what we have been studying; sin is the state of separation that the human being chooses voluntarily when deviating from the Eternal Purpose of the Father, and spiritual death is the terrible consequences inherent to that state.

When a dead child repents and returns to the “Father's house,” he finds the eternal, unconditional, unshakeable, and faithful love of Heavenly Father. As Jesus said, every time a sinner repents and comes back under God the Father's realm of government, there is a celebration in heaven.

Think for a moment when (on what date) you were "found" by the Father or "came to your senses" and decided to return to the "Father's house" and write it in such a way that every year you celebrate that day, as the day you passed from death to life. Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean the phrase: *“the value of the human being for God lies both in their essence and function”*? (it's on the first page of this session)

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2. What was the mission of Jesus according to Luke 4:16-21?

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3. What is and what is not repentance?

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4. How do you know that you genuinely repented from your past way of living?

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5. Do you have any questions about what you read today?

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**Assigned reading:** Read again Genesis chapters 2 and 3 and Romans chapter 5

## SESSION 4

### *Redeemed*

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*So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'*

*So they began to celebrate. Luke 15:20-24*

What an explicit and graphic description of what happens when a man or woman who has been spiritually dead experiences salvation. It is the description of a sinner who, after realizing that an independent life far from God the Father only produces an emptiness in the heart. Then "comes to his senses" when he reconsiders and repents, deciding to return to the father's "home." It is also the description of the inexplicable love of God the Father, who is capable of "running" towards those who have genuinely decided to change the direction of their lives and "walk" towards Him. Above all, it is an almost unexplainable and overwhelming description of complete forgiveness. A forgiveness that not only cancels any debt and accepts the person regardless of their rebellion but also redeems and restores a person to their original value.

Notice carefully that, despite everything the son had done, the father, who had been waiting for him day and night, ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. Also, notice that even though the son had disqualified himself as a son, the father ordered him to be dressed in the best clothes, to put a ring on his finger, and to put sandals on his feet. Symbolically, Jesus is explaining to us how that son experienced the grace of God.

Do you remember that we said grace is the undeserved favor or gift that human beings receive, not because of their works or merits, but because of God's kind and merciful character? That young man deserved nothing more than to be accepted as a worker without rights. However, the father restores him to his position as a son, as if nothing had happened. In other words, the father redeemed him. The word redeem has two powerful meanings that you should know:

First, redemption is the act of rescuing or freeing a person from a state of misery or slavery for the payment of a price. The person who pays the price is the redeemer. This redeemer is usually a relative who assumes the responsibility of freeing the family member who is enslaved or in a deplorable condition.

In ancient history, it was prevalent for a person, due to their bad administrative or "financial" decisions, to get into debt to the point of turning themselves in as a slave to the person who had lent them the money. Sometimes the debt was so great that the debtor and his entire family remained enslaved, even for several generations.



It is here where a free friend or family member and with the necessary resources, became the redeemer by paying all the debt in such a way that the person and their family would be completely free from slavery and consequently be able to get out of the state of misery in the one they lived.

This was one of the main reasons why God the Father sent his Only Begotten Son to earth. Look what the following passages say:

*For not even the Son of man came to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45*

*In, Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of grace. Ephesians 1:7*

*He freed us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption [through His blood], the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14*

Perhaps you are wondering, "What do these passages mean when they mention that the price with which Jesus freed (or redeemed) us from the slavery of sin was His blood?"

To understand this, we must remember what we read in Genesis, chapters 1 to 3.

- God created the human being in His image and likeness to make Himself known on this earth through him. We were then created with the same "essence" and characteristics of God. That is God's Eternal Purpose: to make himself known through His sons and daughters.
- Although the human being was formed from dust in Genesis 2, his origin is spiritual; we were created in the Son before the foundation of the world. "*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*" Ephesians 2:10
- The human being is composed of two parts; the material part, whose origin is dust, and the immaterial part, whose origin is God. "*Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*" Genesis 2:7
- God the Father and the human being had a perfect communion; they were "connected" directly through the Holy Spirit, who permanently indwelt the human being. The spirit of the human being was the dwelling (room) of the Spirit of God.
- The human being was established as the legal representative of God on earth. God the Father, the King of the Eternal Kingdom, would extend His Kingdom on earth through His sons and daughters, the princes and princesses. "*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."* Genesis 1:27-28

- Adam and Eve were placed in an area (territory) of blessing and development called Eden. From there, they had the responsibility of extending the Kingdom of God through their work and specific assignment, that is, through the particular purpose of each one.
- God the Father would make Himself known through His sons and daughters as long as they voluntarily remained in obedience and submission to His authority and government. For this, God the Father established a single commandment: *"And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die." Genesis 2:16-17.*
- Using their free will, Adam and Eve chose to listen to the devil's voice and ate from the tree that God had commanded them not to eat. Although they did not die physically, they died spiritually; that is, they lost their direct communion with God the Father. *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Genesis 3:8-10.*
- The Holy Spirit withdrew from them when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate from the tree. More specifically, the Holy Spirit came out of the human spirit. That is why Adam and Eve stopped hearing the voice of God within them and were scared to listen to it outside of them.
- Adam and Eve's rebellion, disobedience, and independence allowed sin to enter their lives and, therefore, the rest of humanity. Remember that we define sin not only as bad moral actions but as the state of separation between God and human beings. In this state, the human being constantly fails to fulfill the Eternal Purpose of God because now he is the center of his life and conduct, not God.
- The entry of sin brought with it spiritual death. *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" Romans 5:12.* In Adam, all human beings are spiritually dead. Put another way, we were all "born dead," that is, we were all born separated from God and slaves to sin.
- Adam and Eve were not only dead, that is, separated from God the Father, but they not only developed a fear of that loving Father; they not only felt spiritually orphaned but were also subjected to the devil's dominion by listening to and obeying his words. This caused another "kingdom" to appear on the earth; the kingdom of darkness. *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" Ephesians 2:1-2*

- Despite this terrible situation, God the Father immediately puts His plan of salvation into action. The human being's rebellion, disobedience, and independence did not take God by surprise. From eternity, and before everything was created, the Son had already offered himself as the one who would come to solve the problem of sin and death of the human being. *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."* 1 Peter 1:18-20
- In the same chapter 3 of Genesis, where the act of rebellion, disobedience, and independence of the human being is described, the plan of salvation is described to us. *"So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* Genesis 3:14-15. God himself is prophesying, or setting the end of the devil's rule. He describes how a descendant of Eve, a human being, will "crush her head," that is, he will put an end to her illegal domain. That descendant is Jesus, who will enter human history almost 4,000 years later.
- In the same chapter 3, he describes how the grace of God the Father would take care of the "nakedness" of the human being, that is, the physical, moral, and spiritual consequences of sin and death. *"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."* Genesis 3:21. As we studied before, God establishes how He would solve the problem of sin and death of human beings through sacrifice. A sacrifice that would serve as the ransom payment for those lost children, separated from Him and slaves to sin.

When you read the Old Testament, you will realize that, symbolically, God established a system of animal sacrifices as the only way the human being could receive the temporary forgiveness of their sins. People went to the temple every time they committed a mistake or transgressed one of the commandments God had given to Moses. There, a priest would take the animal and sacrifice it on an altar.

Once a year, the head of the priests, called the High Priest, took a lamb and sacrificed it for the sin of all the people of Israel. The High Priest took the blood of that lamb and poured it over a box-shaped piece of furniture called the Ark of the Covenant. Inside that piece of furniture, several elements represented the people of Israel. By sprinkling the blood on the lid of that piece of furniture called the mercy seat, God forgave the nation's sins for one year. Instead of seeing the people and their sins, God saw the blood of the sacrificed animal.

*He (the high priest) shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain (Holy of Holies) and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover (the top of the Ark of the Covenant) and in front of it. Leviticus 16:15*

This system of temples, priests, sacrifices, and forgiveness of sins through the blood was an image, an illustration, and a figure of what the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus, would come to solve once and for all: sin and death, spiritual death. Look how the New Testament explains it:

*"But when Christ came as high priest ... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!... But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him"...*  
*Hebrews 9:11-14, 26-28*

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. *1 Peter 1:18-19**

*"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness..."*  
*Romans 3:23-25*

Can you see the symbolism and understand what Jesus did for you?

Do you now understand why Jesus is known as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?

Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God, came to earth to make known to us the merciful and compassionate love of the Father. Furthermore, He became the only, last, and perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is the price that the "kinsman redeemer" had to pay, that is, Jesus, to redeem us, to free us from the slavery of sin and spiritual death.

*In ,Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. *Ephesians 1:7**

Now it becomes clear why Jesus had to come to earth, not as God but as one of us. One of us (Adam) allowed sin and death to enter humanity. Adam was the one who put us in debt to God. Therefore, it had to be another "Adam" who would solve the problem.

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people because all sinned... But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the one man's trespass, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!...*

*Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so did one righteous act that resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man, the many will be made righteous... where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:12-21*

It's very clear, right?

This explains why Jesus died on the cross. Someone of the same human nature had to pay the price of our redemption. Instead of paying for it -which obviously we could not have done- Jesus took our place, took charge of the debt that the human being had with God, and that had turned him into a slave of sin, and paid with His blood the price of our salvation.

*...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:20*

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. Colossians 2:13-14*

Jesus redeemed us by dying on the cross!

Now, through his sacrifice of love, and only through his shed blood on the cross, we have the right to enjoy the same fellowship and relationship with God that Adam and Eve had before they allowed sin and death to enter our lives (humanity). The death of Jesus on the cross is the most critical moment for fallen humanity, lost sinners, and sons and daughters dead in their sins. On that cross, and through the blood of Jesus, all of humanity has the possibility of experiencing eternal life and the presence of God within.

*Jesus left carrying His cross to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, with him two others, one on each side and Jesus in the middle.*

*"Father," Jesus said, "forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

*From noon to midafternoon, the whole earth was left in darkness. After this, as Jesus knew that everything was over and for the Scripture to be fulfilled, he said: —I am thirsty. There was a jar full of vinegar there, so they soaked a sponge in the vinegar, put it on a reed, and held it up to his mouth. When Jesus tasted the vinegar, he said: — "it is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up the spirit. At that moment the curtain in the temple sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. Taken from Matthew 27, John 19, Mark 15, Luke 23*

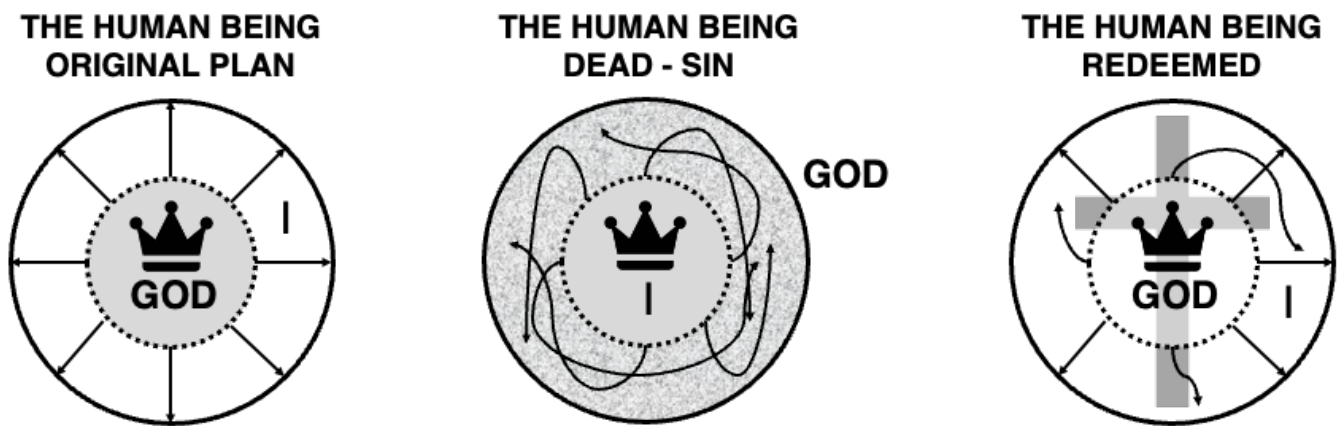
The expression "it is finished" is the Greek word "tetelestai" that was legally used when declaring that a debt had been altogether canceled. That word was also used when a servant finished the work that his master had entrusted to him.

The detail recorded in the Bible that "At that moment the curtain of the sanctuary of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" is powerfully striking. That curtain separated the public part of the temple from the part where only the high priest could enter once a year to sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the Ark of the Covenant. At the precise moment Jesus died, God tore the curtain from top to bottom. In this way, the presence of God was accessible to every human being who wanted to get closer to Him through the recognition of the sacrifice of Jesus.

*Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary. Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*  
*Hebrews 10:17-22*

We have been redeemed through the blood of Jesus, which means that, on the cross, He paid the price of our debt, freed us from the slavery of sin, and gave us a new life, defeating death or spiritual separation in that we were

We can understand this reality much better through this diagram:



Remember how we said that the word redemption had two meanings?

We have studied the first meaning in detail; redemption is the act of rescuing or freeing a person or thing from a state of misery or slavery for the payment of a price.

The second meaning of the word redemption adds to the first definition an element that is simply wonderful. In addition, to be the act of rescuing or freeing a person or thing from a state of misery or slavery in exchange for the payment of a price, redemption is the act by which that person is restored or restored to the position they had in the family before becoming a slave. And not only to the position but to all the rights, privileges, and resources they possessed.

*"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. Luke 15:22-24*

1. *"Bring the best robe and put it on him."* The new garments are a symbol of justification and sanctification. In justification, God the Father declares us accepted through the sacrifice of Jesus. It describes restoring our identity, dignity, and honor before Him. In sanctification, God the Father declares us His, set apart for His purposes and plans. God the Father redeemed us to the place, value, and purpose we had from the beginning.
2. *"Put a ring on his finger too."* The ring is a symbol of authority. The ring was used to seal legal documents and make commercial transactions. God the Father redeemed us to the same governing, dominating, and representing authority He had initially given to Adam and Eve. Our authority as His representatives was restored. Furthermore, because of Jesus' victory on the cross, we were freed from the rule and dominion of the devil.
3. *"...sandals on the feet."* The sandals symbolize that a person owns a property or territory. Enslaved people and servants always went barefoot. God the Father freed us from slavery, poverty, and misery and restored our "Eden,"; the personal area of development and prosperity. Now, we can fulfill His assignment.

How wonderful! Through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the shedding of His blood, we were redeemed: freed from the slavery of sin, rescued from the misery brought on by death, and restored to our position, worth, and authority as sons and daughters of God.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What does it mean for a person to have been redeemed?

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2. How did Jesus save us and redeem us?

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3. Why was it necessary for Jesus to shed His blood for us?

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4. What is our position and relationship with God the Father after Jesus redeemed us through His blood?

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5. Do you have any questions about what you read today?

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## ***Now, what's next?***

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Congratulations on completing these 4 sessions. We are sure that you now have a better and greater understanding of what it means to be born again. Now you better understand what Jesus did for you to save you from sin and to redeem you as a child in the "Father's house."

We want to invite you to continue this process of spiritual growth through the following material called "**Your Life in Christ.**" In this material, you will understand what it means to be a child of Heavenly Father even better. You will also learn the basic concepts that will help you mature as a child so that you can better manage all that He has given you and make Himself known even more through you.

Ask the person who accompanied you in this 4-session process where you can find the material "**Your Life in Christ.**"

Meanwhile, what can you do?

1. Take time each day to talk with your Heavenly Father. Prayer is a simple and honest conversation with HIM. There is no format or requirement to pray. Just thank Him for all He gives you daily, surrender to His Will for your life, and ask Him to reveal His assignment for you. In addition, you can present your needs and intercede for others. Always remember to take time to be silent and listen to Him. At first, you could be distracted by your thoughts; however, the more you practice listening, the better you will be able to hear the voice of God the Father.
2. Take time every day to read your Bible. Remember to use an understandable version; we recommend the New International Version or the New Living Translation. Here we propose this reading plan (check the books that you are completing):
  - The Gospel of John.  1, 2 and 3 John.  The Gospel of Matthew.  The Gospel of Mark.
  - The Gospel of Luke.  Acts of the Apostles.  Romans.  1 and 2 Corinthians.
  - Galatians.  Ephesians.  Philippians.  Colossians.  1 and 2 Thessalonians.
  - 1 and 2 Timothy.  Titus.  Philemon.  Hebrews.  James.  1 and 2 Peter.  Jude.
3. Take time each week to interact with other mature believers. This is the determining factor in the spiritual growth and maturity of a child of God. Make sure you attend the weekly church meetings but especially make sure you meet with one or two people more mature than you so that you stay accountable for your process and receive ongoing support and direction.