

Lost in Translation | Week 31 | John 3:1-13

Introduction	Notes
What if understanding one biblical word could change everything about your relationship with God? In the comic strip <i>Peanuts</i> , Lucy fears a thunderstorm might flood the world, but Linus reassures her by explaining God's promise to Noah and the rainbow as a guarantee. Lucy says Linus has really reassured her, and Linus says, "Sound theology has a way of doing that." Indeed, the church desperately needs sound theology today, especially about salvation—what the entire Bible is all about. In our "Lost in Translation" series, we're defining key biblical words that many Christians don't really understand. Today's topic emerges in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, a highly religious Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council, to whom Jesus delivered a shocking message: "You must be born again." This conversation reveals where salvation begins—with regeneration, the miracle where God gives spiritually dead people spiritual life.	
Key Points	
1. Perceive the Reality of the New Birth	
Why would the most religious person in town need to be born again? Nicodemus was one of only 6,000 Pharisees. These were five-star Jews of biblical scholarship who kept every religious rule, and one of only 70 members of the Jewish Supreme Court. In other words, if you could bet on anyone being right with God, it was this man. But when he approached Jesus respectfully, Jesus immediately responded, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3, NIV). Jesus was saying that even someone with the religious pedigree of Nicodemus needed to begin again with the new birth. For the first time in his life, Nicodemus heard, "Your best won't do, your works won't work, and your religion won't cut it." Religious behavior can't earn God's favor. That means you don't just need a new life; you need the new life only God can give. Just as we had no part in choosing our physical birth,	

spiritual birth is given without any effort on our part.

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No amount of religious activity or moral goodness can substitute for the new life only God can give through spiritual birth.	Notes
2. Believe the Requirements of the New Birth	
What makes the new birth absolutely non-negotiable? Jesus made clear that regeneration isn't optional: "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7, NIV). When Adam and Eve disobeyed in the Garden, they died immediately in their spirits, and every human since has been born spiritually dead on arrival. A dead person doesn't need religion or a behavior modification plan; they need life. Whatever you think you were born with doesn't change this truth: You must be born again. You don't just need to become a better you; you need to become a new you. And only God can issue the spiritual birth certificate needed to make you alive now, giving you life that never ends. Spiritual death affects everyone in the same way, and only God's regenerating power can give us the new life of His kingdom.	
3. Receive the Results of the New Birth	
How can you know whether you've been born again? When Nicodemus asked, "How can this be?" his real problem wasn't lack of understanding but lack of belief. When you are born again, you become a brand-new person, not just an improved version of your old self. Just as children bear their parents' characteristics, when God becomes your Father through spiritual birth, you will display His nature. According to Jesus, your eternal destiny depends on how many times you've been born. If you've only been born once, you'll die twice—physically and spiritually forever. If you've been born twice, you'll die only once—physically.	

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Trust that when God regenerates your spirit, the results will be evident in a transformed life that reflects His character.	Notes
Key Takeaway	
Your life depends on this one decision: whether to be born again. While many things in life are optional, if you want a relationship with God and to enter His kingdom, regeneration is required.	



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1.	Like Nicodemus, have you ever assumed that being religious or being a morally upright person is enough to be right with God? What does Jesus' conversation with this respected religious leader teach you about the importance of spiritual rebirth?
2.	Jesus explained that spiritual birth comes "from above," with our decision to accept God. How does this truth change your understanding of what it means to have a relationship with God?
3.	The results of being born again should be evident in a transformed life that reflects God's character. What evidence of spiritual birth do you see in your own life, and where do you need God's continued transformation?
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Lost in Translation | Week 32 | Luke 13:1-5

Introduction	Notes
What if the one word that can save your life is the same word most people refuse to hear? When Tiger Woods held his first professional press conference in 1996, he spoke two words that changed golf forever: "Hello World!" But what if they had press conferences back in Jesus' day? What would be His first words? Well, we don't have to wonder. The Gospel of Matthew tells us, and it was a shocker. He did have a word for the world, but it wasn't "Hello." Here is the very first word that He publicly uttered: "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'" (Matthew 4:17, NIV). This forgotten and forsaken word appears 969 times in Scripture, yet today it's rarely heard from pulpits across America because it implies people have something they need to repent of—and no one wants to hear that. But certain words, doctrines, and beliefs are at the core of the Christian faith, and it is imperative that unbelievers hear these truths and that believers truly understand them.	
Key Points	
1. We Are Commanded to Repent	
Why does Jesus link repentance to life-and-death situations? Two tragic events had recently shocked the community at the time. First, Pontius Pilate had brutally killed some Galileans while they were offering sacrifices at the temple, even mixing their blood with their offerings. Second, a tower in Siloam had collapsed and killed eighteen people. When people told Jesus about these tragedies, they wondered what these victims had done wrong to deserve such terrible deaths. Back then, people believed that if something bad happened to you, it must be because you had done something bad. Jesus corrected their thinking by asking, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suf-	

fered this way?" (Luke 13:2, NIV). His point was simple: Bad things happen to good people and bad people alike. Disasters don't pick and choose based on how religious or righteous you

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are. The real issue isn't when, why, or where you die; it's that you will die and face God. That's why Jesus repeated His command twice: "But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:3, 5, NIV). This wasn't a suggestion but a direct order from Christ Himself.	Notes
Recognize that repentance isn't optional; it's Christ's command for anyone who wants a relationship with God.	
2. We Are to Commit to Repent	
What exactly does it mean to repent, and why is it truly a life-or-death decision? In this passage, Jesus used the word "perish," which doesn't just mean physical death but spiritual and eternal death. Many people misunderstand repentance, thinking it's about conviction of sin. Others think it's just confession. But true repentance is not just turning from something; it is turning to Someone. It is realizing that you are just as much a sinner as a murderer on death row. You need the grace of God just as much as anyone else, and the only one you can rely on to clean you up is Jesus. Repentance is when you realize only Jesus can clean you up and you turn to Him. Then you learn the process of repentance: conviction (realizing you've sinned), confession (agreeing with God about your sin), contrition (feeling what God feels about sin), and conversion (turning from sin to Christ). Repentance is true remorse over our sin, a determined renouncing of our sin, and a sincere resolve to forsake our sin and follow Jesus. Don't try to clean up your life before coming to Jesus. Turn to Him, trust Him completely, and let Him lead you through the process of genuine transformation.	



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3. We Are to Continue to Repent	Notes
Why does repentance need to be a one-time action and a continuous attitude? The word "repent" in Luke 13:3 and 5 is in the present tense, which indicates continuing action. That is, initial repentance brings salvation and dismisses sin's penalty, but sin's presence remains. When you turn to Christ, you declare war on the devil, sin, and the world; and they declare war on you. While you'll ultimately win the war, you'll sometimes lose battles and need ongoing repentance. Initial repentance establishes relationship with God; continual repentance maintains fellowship with God. As Martin Luther wrote in his first thesis at Wittenberg: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." I've done more repenting since getting saved than when I got saved, because salvation makes us more aware of sin. There's no sin so small you don't need to repent of it and no sin so great you can't repent of it. Practice daily repentance to maintain close fellowship with God, knowing that every day you delay repenting means	
more sin to repent of and less time to do it.	
Key Takeaway	
Repentance is Christ's non-negotiable command that trans- forms your present life and your eternal destiny. Without it, even the death, blood, and cross of Jesus cannot save you.	



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1.	When you think about Jesus' first public word being "repent," how does this challenge your understanding of what it means to follow Him?		
2.	Repentance is more than just feeling sorry; it requires turning from self and sin to the Savior. What area of your life needs this kind of complete turnaround?		
3.	Since repentance should be both a one-time action and a continuous attitude, how could you build daily repentance into your relationship with God?		

Lost in Translation | Week 33 | Acts 9:1-20

Introduction	Notes
Mike used to avoid me at neighborhood parties because he wasn't interested in spiritual things. But when Mike was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, I visited him and shared the Gospel, and he accepted Christ. Everything about Mike radically changed from that day. If you asked what happened to him, I could tell you in one word: conversion. But what in the world is conversion? It's a term you had better know and experience because Jesus said, " unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3, NKJV). So we need to ask ourselves, "Have I ever truly been converted, and what does 'conversion' mean?" There's no greater story of complete conversion than the Apostle Paul's Damascus Road experience—the most famous conversion in history, explained three times in Acts and occupying more space in the New Testament than any event except Christ's crucifixion. While conversions aren't one-size-fits-all, there are three common marks found in everyone who is truly converted.	
Key Points	
1. See the Light of Truth	
I wonder if you've ever encountered someone so hostile to faith that their conversion seemed impossible. That was Saul. A zealous Pharisee " breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1, NIV), determined to wipe Christianity from the earth. A hitman on a 150-mile journey to Damascus, he had "WANTED DEAD" posters out for every Christian. Then " suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him" and he heard, "'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:3, 5, NIV). The game changer wasn't the virgin-born Jesus or even the crucified Christ; it was the resurrected Lord. We have that same light today through God's Word, which is " a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). When He saw the light of truth, not only did every-	

thing change about Saul, but everything changed in Saul.

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I experienced this while watching a movie about Christ, when the darkness of that theater was illuminated by spiritual light brighter than the noonday sun. Whether through God's Word, a movie, a sermon, or a quiet conversation, that same trans- forming light is ready to illuminate your life too.	Notes
When you see the light of truth that Jesus is the resurrected Lord, not just a crucified Messiah, your entire perspective on God, Jesus, and the church will change.	
2. Share the Life of God	
How does seeing God's light lead to receiving His life? After being blinded by the light, Saul was led to Damascus. God sent him a man by the name of Ananias, and despite his reluctance to approach Christianity's greatest enemy, he obeyed God's command. "Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul be filled with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 9:17, NIV). The Holy Spirit is God. When you receive the light of God's Son, you receive the life of God's Spirit. Three things happened to Saul: He saw the light, gained his sight, and received God's might. For the first time, Saul understood that religion isn't the way to God; it can actually be an obstacle to Him. Instead, God wants a relationship, not religion. Religion alone will never change your life; only a relationship with God will do that. This reveals why conversion is so vital: Genuine change must start from the inside out, and that only happens through conversion.	
True conversion means receiving God's Spirit and understanding that He wants a relationship with you, not religious performance.	



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3. Surrender to the Lord of Heaven	Notes
How can you know if your conversion experience was genuine and lasting? "At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20, NIV). The test of Paul's conversion wasn't the dramatic experience but the change in his life. Saul, the man of hate, became Paul, the man of love, immediately bearing fruit. Conversion is literally a turning around, a moral and spiritual reversal. It's not about feelings or just having an experience; it's about real transformation. But that transformation means more than just believing certain facts. You're not converted just because you believe Jesus lived or was a good teacher. Hindus and Muslims believe that. True conversion means total surrender to Jesus as Lord. I heard a pastor say it this way once, "If you are not different after you meet Jesus than you were before you met Jesus, then you never met Jesus." I think of Eleanor's story—a Jewish woman who felt out of place in church but kept coming back until she realized Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and it completely transformed her life. Genuine conversion shows itself not in what you say with your words but in what you show with your life through complete surrender to Christ's lordship.	
Key Takeaway	
Conversion is total transformation by the only One who can transform any life—the risen Lord Jesus. It means seeing the light of His truth, sharing His life through the Holy Spirit, and surrendering completely to His lordship.	



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1.	"If you are not different after you meet Jesus than you were before you met Jesus, then you never met Jesus." What specific changes do you think demonstrate your conversion experience?
2.	Paul immediately began preaching that "Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20, NIV). How has your surrender to Christ's lordship shown itself in your words and actions?
3.	Who in your life seems like "the least likely person" to be converted? How might God use you to share the light of truth with them?

Lost in Translation | Week 34 | Philippians 1:6; 2:12–13

Introduction	Notes
What if God's will for your life could be summed up in one word? In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul spells it out succinctly: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified" But what does it actually mean to be "sanctified"? In our "Lost in Translation" series, we're dealing with big biblical words that many of us struggle to understand and apply. Sanctification is one of the most important words in the Bible, yet we don't hear much about it anymore. Sanctification literally means "to be set apart," but the problem is, most Christians today aren't set apart at all. Like the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin that looked so much like a quarter, it confused everyone and had to be removed from circulation, Christians today often look so much like non-believers that no one can tell the difference. A recent Barna survey showed that born-again believers were just as likely as unbelievers to gamble, gossip, lie, steal, visit pornographic websites, drink excessively, and use illegal substances. But God calls His children to be holy, to look like Him through His transforming work of sanctification.	
Key Points	
1. God Commences His Work of Sanctification in You	
Do you know why you can be completely confident about your spiritual future? The moment you became a believer, God began a work that He will never abandon. " being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NIV). That word "began" is a compound verb meaning "to begin in" used only twice in the New Testament, both times referring to God's work of salvation starting inside us. Too often we focus on what we want God to do for us, but God is focused on what He wants to do in us. As Charles Stanley told young pastors, "God is more interested in building you than He is in building His church." Salvation is just God getting started with you; the work of sanctification begins the moment God's Spirit enters	

your life.

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Trust that God's work in you is as certain as His character—what He starts, He will finish.	Notes
2. God Continues His Work of Sanctification with You	
How do you access everything God has placed within your Christian life? Salvation isn't the end; it's just the beginning of God's work with you. " continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12–13, NIV). Paul doesn't say work for your salvation but work out your salvation—like working in a mine to extract gold, silver, and precious jewels. You get out of your Christian life exactly what you put into it through worship, discipleship, serving, and being sent. God works in you to create both the desire and the ability to do what's right. Like the farmer who told his pastor, "You should have seen this farm when God had it all by Himself," sanctification is a partnership requiring both God's power and your participation.	
Actively participate in God's transforming work by consistently walking with God through spiritual disciplines and obedience.	
3. God Will Complete His Work of Sanctification for You	
What hope do you have when you fail to live up to God's standards? You may feel discouraged by your failures and shortcomings, but remember this truth: What God starts, God finishes. " he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NIV). The phrase "carry it on to completion" means "to fully complete." God never leaves any job half-finished. You can't finish what God starts; only God can finish what God starts. You will never be completely what you're going to be in Heaven, but you can obediently be what God wants you to be on earth. Like	

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a piano duet where one person plays perfectly while the other struggles with the notes, God takes your imperfect efforts and turns them into a masterpiece when you walk with Him. Rest in God's promise that His work in you is guaranteed to be completed, while continuing to faithfully do your part.	Notes
Key Takeaway	
God has begun an unstoppable work of sanctification in every believer, which He will faithfully complete. While you're called to actively participate in this process, your confidence rests not in your performance but in God's unchanging character and His commitment to finish what He started in you.	



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1.	Looking at your daily life, would others be able to tell you're a Christian by how you live, or do you blend in with the culture around you the same way the Susan B. Anthony dollar did with quarters?
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2.	In what specific areas of your spiritual life do you need to "work out your salvation" more intentionally through consistent worship, Bible study, service, or witnessing?
3.	How does knowing that God will complete His work in you change the way you view your current struggles with sin or spiritual growth?