

100 BIBLE LESSONS

Give these lessons to people you visit, youth groups, hospital patients, church visitors and new members. Use them in Sunday School, bus ministry, jail services, nursing homes, Christian schools, small discussion groups and many other places. God's Word will answer your questions and help solve your problems.

LESSON 49 – THE OLD NATURE AND NEW NATURE

The terms “old nature” and “new nature” never appear in Scriptures. They were adopted by theologians to refer to concepts which are presented in God's Word.

The apostle Peter declares that God's divine power has granted to Christians everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). This is Peter's way of saying that God has given believers all the equipment necessary to live a godly life. One aspect of that equipment has been called by theologians “the new nature.”

This lesson deals primarily with the Christian's new nature. It develops a number of concepts concerning this significant subject. Among these are the following:

1. The new nature and the old nature are opposite dispositions toward God.
2. The old nature is a disposition of enmity against God.
3. Enmity against God is sin, the Bible calls the old nature “sin,” (Rom. 7:23) and some theologians have called it “the sin nature.”
4. The “new nature” is a favorable disposition toward God and it consists of the law of God written in the human heart. The Holy Spirit places it inside the believer at the moment of regeneration.
5. The new nature is the internal, and therefore superior, way of God administering His eternal moral absolutes with human beings in contrast with the old covenant or Mosaic law, which was the external way of God administering those absolutes.

When man rebelled against God in Eden, he became an “old man” (an unregenerate man). In addition, he willfully took to himself the old nature, and his total being became enslaved by this disposition of enmity against God. In this state of total depravity fallen man received the position of slave to the old nature, and the old nature gained the position of master over him. This condition of slavery obligated unregenerate man to obey the dictates of the old nature.

When a person trusts Jesus Christ to be his Lord and Savior, several major changes happen to him.

Firstly, he ceases to be an “old man” (an unregenerate man).

Secondly, he loses his position as slave to the old nature, and the old nature loses its position of master over him. This means that he is no longer obligated to obey the sin nature.

Thirdly, he becomes a “new man” (a regenerate man).

Fourthly, he receives the new nature (a new, favorable disposition toward God consisting of the law of God in his heart).

Fifthly, he receives the Holy Spirit as his permanent indweller.

All of these changes provide the believer with great potential for living a very different kind of life from that of his unregenerate days.

Although the old nature loses its position of master over the born-again person at the moment of regeneration, it does not leave the believer during his lifetime. It continues to dwell in him until the believer is present with the Lord (Rom. 7:23). The old nature actively tries to exercise controlling power over the Christian, in spite of the fact that it no longer has the right to rule him.

The believer always has the potential for internal, spiritual struggle, because he has these two opposing forces dwelling in him: the old nature, which he inherited from Adam through his natural birth, and the new nature, which he received from the Holy Spirit through his supernatural birth (regeneration). The old nature, because it is a disposition of enmity against God, tries to control the believer in opposition to God’s rule. The new nature, because it is a favorable disposition toward God (the law of God in the heart), prompts the believer to concur with and will to obey God’s rule. It does not, however, give the believer the power necessary to overcome the power of the flesh. The Christian, therefore, needs more than the new nature, if he is to do God’s will.

Whenever the believer relies upon the old covenant (Mosaic) law or himself for the power necessary to overcome the power of the flesh, he is defeated. The flesh takes him captive against his will (Rom.7:14) and prevents him from doing the will of God. This does not mean, however, that the believer is doomed to be continuously defeated. At the moment of regeneration the Holy Spirit permanently indwells the believer. He is the source of power necessary to defeat the power of the old nature (the flesh, or sin) in the believer.

Because the Holy Spirit permanently indwells, His power is constantly available to the believer. That power will not operate in the Christian life, however, unless he personally appropriates it by faith. Moment by moment he must trust the Holy Spirit rather than himself to empower him for victory over the power of the flesh.

It is hoped that this study will remove much of the mystery associated with the new nature and give believers a fresh understanding of the radical difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate person.

Adapted from the teachings of Renal Showers & Lee Turner. For Bible study purposes. Not to be sold.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The terms “old nature” and “new nature” are terms adopted by theologians to refer to concepts presented in the Bible. True or False
2. What does 2 Cor. 5:17 say you are the moment you are saved?
3. What happened in Rom. 6:1-2 to make us stop sinning?
4. What was crucified with Christ in Romans 6:6?

Note: The New International Version translated “flesh” (Gk. *sarkos*) in Romans 7-8 as “sinful nature.” The problem with calling the flesh the sinful nature, or the old nature, is that most people associate it with the old nature we had before the old man was crucified. The Christian no longer has the old nature, but the law of sin still dwells in the flesh. A person can use the term sinful nature if he doesn’t associate it with the old nature (but many do).

A definition of the body of sin could be: “The physical body dominated by indwelling sin.”

A definition of the flesh could be: “The human personality under the domination of indwelling sin.

I hope these definitions help clarify some of the things stated in this lesson. Not all theologians agree on terms used in the Bible that refer to indwelling sin.

5. What do these scriptures say we are to do about the old self? Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10.
6. Examine and discuss how the word “sin” is used in relation to the body from the following scriptures. Rom. 6:6; Rom. 7:14; Rom. 7:17, 20; Rom. 7:23; Rom. 8:2; Rom. 8:3.
7. What were we by nature before we were saved? Eph. 2:3.
8. What are we by nature after we are saved?
9. Who did you formerly belong to? Jn. 8:44.
10. What were we delivered from and to? Col. 1:13.