

# Vital Truth

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala emphasizes the necessity of being born again to experience true life and joy in Christ.*

**Duration:** 23:28

**Topics:** "Truth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for a personal transformation through Jesus Christ. He encourages the audience to recognize their limitations and surrender to Jesus, allowing Him to change their hearts and minds. The speaker assures that with this transformation, individuals will experience new friendships, instincts, peace, and joy. He also highlights the importance of making a decision about Jesus, as being neutral is not an option. The sermon concludes with a call to action, inviting those who desire a new beginning or have strayed from their path to stand up and seek prayer.

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## Transcript

So there's lots of truth in the Bible, 66 books full of truth, but not all truth is equal. There are some doctrines and teachings that are more secondary than they are primary. Doesn't mean they're not in the scripture and we shouldn't talk about them and study them.

But for example, certain truths about prophecy and what will happen when Christ returns, before he returns, a secret rapture, no secret rapture, what will heaven be like? Are we going to live in condos? Is it going to be houses, apartments? How did Lucifer fall when there was no one to tempt him? There's lots of things in the Bible that are there, but they're secondary. But I want to give you today, briefly, because so much has already happened, the most vital truth. In fact, if you know this and don't know the rest of the Bible, which you should obviously begin to learn, but if you know this, you know it.

And if you don't know this, you could do what some people in the Iron Curtain countries have done. They were sent to Siberia. And did you know that certain Christians who were persecuted, they memorized the entire Old Testament? Did you hear what I said? The entire Old Testament and New Testament, books of the Bible, all those genealogies.

They had nothing to do but spend 20, 25 years away from everyone. But this is the most important of all. So let's read it from John 3. Now, there was a Pharisee, that's a religious sect, very legalistic, a man named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, that means teacher. We know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him. Jesus replied, very truly, I tell you, no one can see or experience or be part or enjoy the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

How can someone be born when they're old? Nicodemus asked. Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born. Jesus answered, very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God.

Unless they are born of water and the spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. The word there for wind is the gentle breeze that you can hear, not a prolonged, steady hurricane kind of wind. But the wind blows wherever it pleases.

You hear it sound in the trees, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit. And then the most famous verse, probably in the New Testament.

Let's say it together. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

So Nicodemus was, along with Joseph of Arimathea, two of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council that seemed to be open to Jesus. Or find him mysterious enough to investigate with an objective mind. He comes to him by night, probably because he was afraid to get caught.

Jesus was not a very popular person among the religious elite. And he comes and he says, listen, I don't know what anyone else thinks about you, but I know and we know who the we is. It's unsaid.

But we know that you are a teacher. You're an excellent teacher. In fact, you're sent from God.

You're a teacher that's been sent from God. Because nobody could do the miracles that you've been doing unless God were with him. And then Jesus abruptly, it seems there, jumps way ahead of Nicodemus, just bypasses any kind of preliminary talk about teaching and the word of God and understanding and the sacrificial system.

And he just jumps ahead and says, listen, listen, here's the truth. Nobody can see the kingdom of God unless they're born again. You can never experience eternal life.

You can never live with God forever in heaven. Unless you're born again. You can never understand the peace that God has for you.

You can never have the joy and experience. Joy is called unspeakable unless you're born again. I mean, this is just like a howitzer shell coming at him.

Now the word born again there, the Greek experts tell us it can mean born from above or born from heaven or born again from heaven or born from heaven again. Nicodemus took it in the natural sense. And he said, well, wait a minute.

That makes no sense. I'm already a grown man. You had to be a grown man to be on the Sanhedrin.

You couldn't be a youngster. How could a grown man go back in his mother's body? And Jesus said, no, unless a person is born of the water and of the Spirit, capital S, the Holy Spirit, they can never enter and enjoy and even understand the kingdom of heaven. The commentators disagree about what the water and the Spirit.

The Spirit is definitely the Holy Spirit, capital S, which the King James does not have, but definitely that's what he was speaking of. The water, does it mean the water of baptism? Probably not, could be. Does it mean a combination? The water, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, or could it mean, as I tend to believe, could it mean natural birth? Because the next thing Jesus says is flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit, capital S, gives birth to spirit.

So unless you're born twice, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven. We're all born biologically once, but that won't make it. You have to be born from above.

You have to have a miracle happen in your life. So what does this all mean to us? This is the most important thing. It reminds us of the futility of religion.

82% of Americans, supposedly, the last polling I saw, believe they're going to go to heaven because they try to live a good life. That is totally a contradiction of what Jesus said. Most people feel that if you join a church and go there on Sundays, you're in good standing with God.

Totally contradicted by Jesus. Some feel that if you have a Bible and you read it occasionally, even memorize some verses, be faithful in church, or do service, or give money to poor people, that that will give you enough merit points with God where he will then embrace you and welcome you into his kingdom. Jesus said, no, none of that's true.

You can be religious to the nth degree and be totally not ready for the kingdom of God. These are solemn words, but hopeful words. You need a miracle to happen to you.

You need something from heaven to come into your life through faith in Jesus Christ. Then you'll be able to experience what God wants us all to experience, his life. Eternal life is not just long in terms of ages with no end.

You know everybody here, look at me, one billion years from now, one billion years from now, we're all gonna be somewhere. Dying won't end a thing when it comes to your soul. One billion years from now, we're either gonna be with Jesus or we're gonna be away from Jesus.

That's a given if Jesus is the true son of God and honest teacher and preacher that we find in the word of God. But it's not just a length of time, it's a quality of life. Let's talk about that for a second.

There's plant life, you know. There's a fern, a tree, grass, weed, that has life in it. It grows, it dies, has a seed that started it.

But way above plant life, if this was real, it's not. That's plant life. Then there's animal life.

Animal life is way above plant life. They both have life in them, but of a different kind. Animals, whether they be a one-cell amoeba or a lion or a deer or a bear or a cat or a dog or a gorilla, they have a life that far transcends plant life.

They have an intelligence of a kind. They make plans to kill, to lay in wait for prey. But way above animal life is human life.

There's plant, then there's animal, but then there's another thing living called human beings. And they're the ones who really plan. Animals can't plan much, although they know the seasons and they store food and the bears get ready for a long winter and all of that.

But now there's human life. Intelligence, will, desire of a humankind to be able to write symphonies, to invent computers, to devise something that took people to the moon, to invent bombs, to discover cures for disease. I just think how different human life is from animal life.

You don't see any animal say to another animal, stop, I don't like the way you look. Let's go to the hospital and check things out. Animals don't do that.

But humans do that. But way above human life, far transcending it, is something called eternal life. God's life, the very life of God that he imparts through the Holy Spirit.

That gives you a new heart. It gives you a new mind. It gives you new desires.

See, life has desires. Plants look up hoping rain will come. Animals go hunting so they can get food.

Humans go to McDonald's or someplace and say I want food. But no, this eternal life, this spiritual life, it has its own set of desires. It desires to be right.

You see, if you're here and you're not born again and you don't want to go that way because your conscience tells you don't go that way, don't ruin your marriage, don't ruin yourself, don't do that, only divine God's life can give you the power to say no, I'm not doing that. It gives you new desires. You wake up in the middle of the night not wanting something from the refrigerator.

You'll be hungry for the word of God. You'll want to read it because it's like food for you. See, now, without being born again, you have no concept what Christianity is about.

You might sit here and critique me or look at the people or critique other preachers and unless you've been born again, you don't even know what we're talking about. Jesus said unless a person's born again, they can't even experience the kingdom of God, the peace, the joy. Why do you think sometimes you see the choir singing or Karen singing and you see them get emotional and you see people lift their hands and you're probably wondering, what are they getting excited about? I don't even get it.

We know you don't get it, but we get it because we have eternal life. Come on, can we say amen to that? Why would this girl that I met in Pasadena, California, why would she leave the American dream and now right now she's embedded in some dangerous area in the Middle East sharing the gospel with Muslim women? Why would you do that? No human life would tell you to do that. Plant life wouldn't tell you.

Animal life, no. But God's life in you, that changes everything. So this is the most important thing.

If you don't know this, then you and I are really at a loss. And if you know this, you gotta hang on to it. Don't let the devil rob it from you.

You must be born again. One of the few times Jesus said you must, few times he used that tense. You must be born again, not an option.

I don't know, I'm gonna check it out. I'm not sure. No, no, no, you must.

No, but my mom and dad were Christians back in Trinidad. No, that won't cut it. My parents were Christians, but I had to be born again.

I had to come to a place where I accepted God's love and his sending Jesus for me, for my sins. I had to let him in my life. I had to put my trust in him.

I cannot save myself. I'm a sinner. I've messed up.

I messed up royal. God, forgive me of my sins. And you know the song that God used for me? You know, it talks about here, as I close, the wind blows where it wants.

You know, nobody can predict the wind. Now we have instruments that can tell us when it's gonna be windy, what direction the wind will come from. But you know, you ever been somewhere where just a puff of wind will come, then it disappears? Where did it start? Where did it end? Where did that wind come from? Jesus said there's a mystery about the whole thing.

And as a young man, God woke me up with this song. What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. See, I wanted, in a way, I knew it's right.

Jesus is the real deal. He's the son of God. He's the savior.

But then to work that out in life with friends who would mock you, and I wanted to play basketball and shake and bake people, and that was my life. And then my dad was a drunkard, and I was bitter a little bit about that. So I was very confused.

What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be. You can't be on the fence. There is no fence.

You're either with Jesus or you're not. You're either born again or you just have one birth, biological. What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be.

One day your heart will be asking, what will he do with me? That got my attention. Now, it's not hard to be born again. You know why? Because God wants everyone in this building to be saved.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, they massacred Jesus so you and I could be forgiven. They punished him so that we would be set free. He died so we could live, not just live biologically.

That's what the Bible means when it says whoever has the son has life, not biological life. Everyone here today has biological life, but there's another kind of life. And some of us who are religious and have gone to church, we still have had that elude us.

We think because we grew up in America and in a church system, just try hard to be good and God will look down and say, well done. It's not like that. You must be born again.

And he'll do it in a second. He'll give you a new heart, a new mind. He'll give you peace like you never even imagined.

Listen, there's a peace of God. Peace in the human sense means tranquility, an absence of turmoil. But the peace of God has nothing to do with what's going around you.

Chaos can be all around you, but when you have God's peace, you're just like, yes, thank you, Lord. How many say amen to that? We can have the peace of God. You can have joy.

Listen, you can be crying over the loss of a loved one, but deeper underneath the tears, you can have joy. You have a new beginning. Isn't that what somebody wants here today, a new beginning? A new beginning, but with different equipment.

I tried to turn over new leaves because I knew my life was messed up. I turned over more new leaves, you've heard me say, than Central Park. But it didn't change anything because Jim is Jim and he's a mess.

You got to get to the end of yourself and say, I can't make it unless Jesus comes in my heart, in my life. Change my mind. Give me new desires.

He'll give you new friends. You'll have new instincts and you'll have his peace and his joy and you'll know that your sins are forgiven. And a million years from now, you'll be gathered in heaven with the rest of us and we'll be singing real praise and worship.

We're just fumbling at it now. But when we see him face to face, what a day that will be. Could you bow your heads with me? Anybody here, the wind is blowing in your life.

Maybe some sentence I said. Maybe something that just happened recently or a song you thought of or a verse or a friend said something. Or the circumstances of life are showing you like, you're not gonna make it.

Oh, you can make it, but I mean, it's not living. That's the wind. That's the Lord drawing you, saying I love you.

I didn't come to condemn you. I want you to know today, Jesus is not here in this room to condemn anyone. He came to save people, not criticize and condemn them.

Is there anybody here who needs a new beginning? Or has anybody got off the tracks? You were once serving the Lord, trusting him, but now somehow you lost. He's not the center anymore. All this stuff has come in, distractions, discouragements, the cares of life, all kinds of stuff.

Or maybe you're running with a posse of people who pull you down every day. Jesus not only gives you a new heart, a new mind, he'll give you new friends. But remember, unless you change, there'll be never be a different result.

Unless you change your approach. And the approach he says to us is believe. Confess your need and believe.

Just believe. Anybody here today that I could pray with before you leave? Just stand up right where you're sitting. Just stand up and say, pastor, pray for me.

That message was for me. I want a new beginning or I left the track. But I want to be born again and I want to get back where God wants me to be.

Just stand up right where you are. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Just stand up wherever you are on the balcony downstairs.

Just arise. Just stand. Don't be embarrassed.

Don't let pride get the best of you. Just stand up. He died publicly, was smitten, spit upon publicly for us.

It's no big thing for us to stand and say I need Jesus. That's it. Just stand where you are.

I know this is a Sunday service. It's mostly Christians. But I have found you can be here and have lost your way or you could be here and be religious or you've never heard about this Jesus.

I'm just saying, just trust him. Open your heart to him and see what he will do in your life. Everybody standing, come up out of your seat and stand here in the front.

Everybody else be praying. Come on, let's pray. Come on, if God's talking to you, don't make any excuse.

Come, come, come down from the balcony. Come on, I'm gonna wait for you from the balcony. I got something for all of you that come forward.

It'll help you grow in Jesus, be in Jesus. Just stand right there in the front. Come right up to the edge of that first step.

I'm gonna wait for you from the balcony. This is a gospel meeting. Don't miss it, don't miss it.

Come on, don't miss it. You must be born again. Anyone who believes in the son will never die.

You'll have eternal life. Your sins will be gone. You'll lay in bed at night without guilt, without fear of dying.

That's natural life. Fear of death and afraid of the judgment to come. But when you have God's life in you, you have joy and peace.

Come on, he'll give you joy and peace. Please, if you're here today and have left the path or if you've never really received Christ as your savior, I charge you in the name of God, in the love of Jesus Christ, just come out of your seat and come up here. Even if you didn't lift your hand, you come.

I'm gonna pray and now, and the folks are gonna pray with you, okay? We're gonna pray out loud. You're all serious, right? Look at me and just nod so I can know. You're all serious, right? And I don't care if you joined the church.

I don't want your money. I don't want a thing from you. I just want you to know the Jesus that we know here.

He's a life changer, life changer. Are you ready to pray? Congregation, would you help me? Let's close our eyes. Repeat after me.

You here in the front and everyone in the building. Dear God. Thank you for your love.

Forgive me of my sin. I make no excuse. I need you as my savior.

I believe in my heart that you died on a cross 2,000 years ago. You shed your blood so that I could be forgiven. You love me that much.

And they buried you in a tomb. But on the third day, you rose again with resurrection life. Let the life of God come into my life today.

Jesus, come in. I trust you. I believe in you.

I surrender to you. Give me a new heart. Give me a new mind.

Give me a new way of living. Change me from the inside out. To the person you want me to be.

I thank you for your love. I praise you for your mercy. And I receive your word today.

I receive Jesus. The savior of the world. As my Lord and savior.

In Jesus name. And everyone said not only amen, but let us clap our hands together as we say amen.  
Greet one another in the name of the Lord.

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