

# **MR. MOODY'S BIBLE CLASS**

A Twelve-Part Study in the Doctrines of the Christian Faith

by

Dwight Lyman Moody



“Mr. Moody’s Bible Class” was a special feature published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, a popular women’s magazine of the 1890s. For twelve months beginning in November 1896, evangelist D.L. Moody published Bible studies that defined the principles of the Christian faith and encouraged readers to engage in daily Scripture reading.

Mr. Moody designed these studies for both individual reflection and group discussion. Whether you’re studying alone or with others, take time to read the Scripture passages referenced and answer the reflection questions honestly before God.

These studies are ideal for personal devotions, small group Bible studies, Sunday school classes, or anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of foundational Christian doctrine.

The Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[Click here](#) or visit [www.IsabellaAlden.com](http://www.IsabellaAlden.com) to access all twelve lessons in this series and discover more resources about Isabella Alden and Christian literature of the late 1800s and early 1900s.



## **LESSON FIVE**

# **THE NEW BIRTH**



## THE NEW BIRTH

Had Christ's mission ended with the atonement, the work of redemption would have been incomplete. Forgiveness for the past was not, in itself, a safeguard against the future, and there would have been little relief for man's condition if pardon alone had been offered him. There was need for a nature that would not respond to temptation, to keep the penitent soul from transgressing God's law.

And this is exactly what God gave man, when He made him to become a "partaker of the Divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) In the memorable interview between Christ and Nicodemus, Christ not only showed that this new nature was the privilege of man, but insisted that the only entrance into the Father's kingdom was through a spiritual birth. When a man is born into this world he inherits his parents' nature; but when a man is born of God he receives a Divine nature.

"When a man is born into this world he inherits his parents' nature; but when a man is born of God he receives a Divine nature."

The Divine requirement of a new birth, for entrance into God's kingdom, is not so much an arbitrary demand as an absolute necessity. God may well restrict those who dwell in His holy presence to whomsoever He will. We Americans have provided in our constitution that our Chief Executive must be native-born. And I have never heard anyone, at home or abroad, criticize that restriction. And so we might expect that God would make such conditions as He deemed best for entrance to His kingdom.

"The Divine requirement of a new birth ... is not so much an arbitrary demand as an absolute necessity."

But the only condition He imposes is, in itself, an absolute necessity. I do not believe that an unregenerate man could endure Heaven. If a man cannot enter into Christian worship on earth, he will not enjoy it in Heaven. If here a man hates godly people, he will not love them beyond this world. Death will never change a person's moral character. If a soul is not regenerated on this side of the grave, be assured that there will never be any fellowship with those who are pure in heart. Heaven, as someone has said, is a prepared place, for a prepared people.

"Heaven ... is a prepared place,  
for a prepared people."

## TAKING THE WRONG BOAT

A Methodist minister, on his way to a camp-meeting, through some mistake boarded the wrong boat. He found that, instead of being bound for a religious gathering, he was on his way to a horse-race. His fellow-passengers were betting and discussing the events, and the whole atmosphere was foreign to his nature. He besought the captain that he would stop his boat and let him off at the first landing, as the surroundings were so distasteful to him.

The story also relates how, on the same occasion, a sporting man, intending to go to the races, by some mistake found himself on the wrong boat, bound for the camp-meeting. The conversation about him was no more intelligible to him than to the man in the first instance, and he, too, besought the captain to stop and let him off the boat.

Now what was true in these two cases is essentially true for everyone. A true Christian is wretched where there is no fellowship, and an unregenerate man is not at ease where there are only Christians. A man's future will be according to what he is here prepared for. If he is not regenerate, Heaven will have no attractions for him.

## WHAT IS REGENERATION?

There is so much that is mistaken for Regeneration that it may be helpful first to define it negatively. And first of all, it is not church ordinances. These Divinely-appointed means of grace are requisite for the church, but in themselves cannot give spiritual life. They are but symbols of truths, and, as such, are to point us to things invisible.

For instance, baptism is not Regeneration. Zaccheus became a new or regenerate man after a few moments' conversation with Christ, but it was probably some time before he was baptized.

The thief on the cross died a regenerate man, although he was not privileged to commune with Christ's disciples on earth. Church-going is not being born of God. The evil one himself regularly attends church, diverting the thoughts of the congregation and arousing the evil spirit of criticism.

Philanthropy, self-sacrifice, death itself can never re-create a man. That must be done by a power outside of himself, and only by being "born from above." (John 3:3)

### "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION"

Regeneration is a gift. No amount of human effort can earn it. It is well worth labor and toil and privation; but these cannot buy it. Man works from the cross, not to it; he works from gratitude, but not for salvation. It was to the saints at Philippi that Paul addressed the words: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12) They could not work out what they did not possess; but because they had salvation he admonishes them to work.

"Regeneration is a gift. No amount of human effort  
can earn it."

By the second birth there is given to man a nature which is Divine in its desires and unselfish in its character. Let a man who is controlled by his ambitions and has no interest in Heavenly things accept God's gift of the new birth, and there is a complete revolution in his life. New purposes will lay hold of him and new interests will absorb him.

Everywhere and in all ages there have been abundant proofs of the reality of the transforming power of Regeneration.

## THE STRUGGLE IS NEVER OVER

I do not believe that many people feel they are living as God intended them to. Of course there are many self-satisfied people, but their neighbors' testimony would give good reason to question their confidence in their own perfection.

The Master disclosed to His early disciples the only means for self-examination when He said: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:16 and Matthew 7:20)

Paul, in writing to the Galatians, enumerates the virtues of the true Christian in the passage: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."  
(Galatians 5:22)

If a man has none of these virtues, or if they are not increasing in his character, he may well doubt the reality of his Regeneration. If there is no love for those who are overcome by sin, and no joy in the return of a wanderer, be assured there is no life from above in the heart. If there are no pangs of grief for yielding to sin and no victory over temptation, his religion is vain.

It is a great mistake to believe that the gift of the new birth does away with the old nature. I well remember how I thought that when I was converted the struggle was over, and how, resting on my oars, I should be carried through life with no more effort on my part. But I soon learned my error. I saw that life was one long voyage against the undercurrent of my old nature.

"I saw that life was one long voyage against the  
undercurrent of my old nature."

I believe that it is all wrong to teach that man's old nature is ever dead, or that a state of sinless perfection is attainable on earth. Paul's words, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin," are often quoted to teach this doctrine. (Romans 6:11) To me, however, it is a sufficient proof that Paul knew that the old nature was not dead by using the word *reckon*. That which is truly dead falls out of reckoning.

## STRUGGLING AGAINST TEMPTATION

**[Editor's note:** The following story reflects the historical context of the post-Civil War American South. While the dynamics may be uncomfortable for modern readers, Mr. Moody's theological insight remains valuable. The story addresses a critical question many Christians struggle with: *"If I'm truly born again, why do I still face temptation?"*]

There is a story of an old Christian slave in the South whose master was an infidel. One day the master went duck shooting with his slave, and turning on him suddenly he said, "How is it, Uncle, that the devil

never tempts me, but always worries you? Why should he tempt a Christian more than an infidel?"

Before the slave could find an answer a flock of ducks came within range and the master fired into them. He then directed the slave to hurry and secure the wounded birds first and let those that were dead wait till last. When the slave returned to his master, he had found his answer:

"You see, Master, I reckon it is this way about the devil. He thinks I'm only a poor, wounded soul that he wants to make sure of first, but you are surely his, and so you can wait."

There was a great deal of theology in the old man's reasoning. When a man is truly born again, it seems as if every influence of evil is arrayed against him, and unless the work is genuine he will not stand.

I know of a certain temperance lecturer who was once a poor, wretched drunkard. A short time after his conversion he was asked to speak in his native town, and when he came on the stage it was found that liquor had been sprinkled about the floor in order that its fumes might tempt him to drink again.

In every regenerate man there are two natures, and if the Divine nature were not supreme, we could never resist the influences which appeal to our old natures. "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world." (1 John 5:4)

"In every regenerate man there are two natures."

## BEING BORN AGAIN

The new birth is not a gradual development, but a gift to be accepted or rejected. Some people teach that it must be a gradual process, but you will find that the conversions recorded in the Bible were immediate.

The life of Saint Paul affords as striking an example of a complete and sudden conversion as any in Scripture. There was probably not a young man in Jerusalem who bore a more enviable reputation than Saul of Tarsus, as he was then known. The privileged scholar of one of the greatest religious teachers of his age, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"—this young man was destined to become a leader in the religious thought of the day. He was familiar with the Scriptures, and scrupulous in his observance of all the exacting demands of the Jewish ritual. No high-caste Brahmin was ever more observant of forms and ceremonies than this Jewish divinity student. But with all his learning, and in spite of the strictest obedience to religious forms, we read that he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9:1)

See him as he rides through the streets of Jerusalem. There is not a particle of heresy about him, but he sits so erect that one wonders that he does not fall over backward. As he passes out through the city gate

and rides forth upon the Damascus road, he carries with him letters for the arrest of such disciples of Christ as he may find.

A few weeks before he had witnessed and encouraged the martyrdom of Stephen, and now, filled with zeal for the ancient worship of his fathers, he becomes the foremost in persecution. Intolerant bigotry and fanaticism are never the fruits of Christ's spirit, no matter how orthodox and religious a man may be. For God judges man according to a different standard from that by which men judge themselves. In that rebellious heart, still filled with unbelief, He sees as much need of Regeneration as in the case of the vilest sinner. Could anything be more inconceivable than Saul of Tarsus associating in Heaven with such poor, reclaimed souls as the woman of Samaria, or the publican Matthew?

"Intolerant bigotry and fanaticism are never the  
fruits of Christ's spirit."

As the party journeys on its way, that wondrous appearance comes, brighter than the noonday. Henceforth, righteous Saul, the blameless scholar of Gamaliel, disappears from sight, and we have "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." (Romans 1:1)

Now if this orthodox Pharisee, blameless in the observances of the strictest sect of God's chosen people, needed to be born of God, will God demand less of us?

This was a sudden and complete conversion. From a haughty teacher he became a humble disciple, willing to learn from those whose earthly wisdom was less than his own.

The religion of Regeneration is what the world needs today. Shams are even entering into the Church of God. A religion that does not reach below the exterior is worthless. A piety that is worn, like Sunday clothes, only on certain occasions, is acceptable neither to God nor to man. A Christianity that does not enter into business transactions is worse than none.

## AS WE STAND IN GOD'S SIGHT

In conclusion, I would again emphasize the fact that it is not so much what we seem or profess as what we truly are. If a man lives a respectable life and has an honorable exterior, he may still be lacking in God's sight, and may not have met the Divine condition of accepting the gift of Regeneration. Because a man is kind and generous in his disposition, it will not be an acceptable substitute for a new heart.

"It is not so much what we seem or profess as what  
we truly are."

Some time ago a criminal, who was serving a long sentence in one of our large Eastern penitentiaries, escaped and fled from justice. After a few years he returned to the East with a wife and family, and, settling down in Brooklyn, he opened a drug store. One day, when he had become well established in his business, an officer entered his store and placed him

under arrest. Before going to the jail the officer accompanied him to his home in order that he might take a farewell of his family. The wife was entirely ignorant of her husband's past history, and in breaking the news to her he asked her if his home life had not been what it should have been.

“Have I not been a kind husband?” he asked.

“Yes, you have been all that,” came the reply.

“And have I not been a loving parent?”

“Yes.”

Then he went on to tell how he had been a convict, that he escaped and was now under arrest and on his way back to jail. Now here was a man who was all right with his family, and all right with his fellows, but all wrong with the State.

And so the question with us is not how we stand with our family, nor how popular we are in society, nor how much esteem we may earn in business. The question of the ages is:

Have I been regenerated through the atonement made on my behalf?



## READ MORE ABOUT ...

Mr. Moody illustrates the doctrine of Regeneration through powerful biblical examples—from Nicodemus' nighttime inquiry to Saul's dramatic Damascus road conversion. Study these passages to see how God's gift of a Divine nature brings immediate transformation, creating new creatures with new desires, new purposes, and new character.

- Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in which he explains what it means to be "born again" in John 3:1-21.
- Zacchaeus' life-changing encounter with Jesus in Luke 19:1-20.
- The regeneration of the thief upon the cross in Luke 23:39-43.
- The conversion of Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle in:
  - Acts 9:1-22
  - Acts 22:6-21
  - Acts 26:12-18
  - Galatians 1:11-24
  - Philippians 3:4-7

## **PERSONAL APPLICATION**

Mr. Moody teaches that regeneration is “a gift to be accepted or rejected,” resulting in a Divine nature that transforms desires, purposes, and character.

But he also warns that “it is not so much what we seem or profess as what we truly are.” Use the following questions to examine honestly whether you have been born of God, and to assess whether the Divine nature is supreme in your daily life.











# COPYRIGHT

## ABOUT THIS EDITION

The core text of this Bible study—Mr. Moody's teaching on the new birth and regeneration—was originally published in *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1897. As a work published over 125 years ago, Mr. Moody's original text is in the public domain and free for anyone to use. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version, also in the public domain.

## ABOUT THIS TEXT

This edition faithfully preserves D.L. Moody's original teaching. We have made minimal edits for modern clarity—correcting obvious errors, updating a few archaic terms, and adjusting occasional grammatical inconsistencies—while keeping Mr. Moody's voice and meaning completely intact.

## WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION

This 2025 edition includes:

- Updated formatting for modern readers
- Reflection and study questions
- Organized Scripture references
- Introductory paragraphs to sections titled “Mr. Moody’s Bible Verses,” “Read More About ...,” and “Personal Application”

These additions are original content © 2025 by Anglocentria, Inc. and are protected by copyright.

## HOW YOU MAY USE THIS EDITION

You're welcome to:

- Print copies for personal study or small group use
- Share the PDF with friends or your church community
- Quote brief excerpts with proper attribution

Please do not:

- Reproduce this entire edition for commercial purposes
- Remove this copyright notice

- Claim authorship of the reflection questions, introductory paragraphs, or format

## Connect With Us

To learn more about this 12-part series, Isabella Alden, and Christian literature of the late 1800s and early 1900s, visit [www.IsabellaAlden.com](http://www.IsabellaAlden.com)