

What Is Conversion?

Matthew 18:3 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;"

What Is Conversion?

1 Quick Answer

2 It is turning from the carnal things of this world and turning to God. It
3 is a change of heart. It choosing to go a different direction in life.

4

5 "True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and
6 bent of the heart should be turned and life become new again in
7 Christ." {4T 16.4}

8

9 Bible Answer

10 Psalms 51:13 "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
11 and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

12

13 Matthew 18:3 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be
14 converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the
15 kingdom of heaven."

16

17 Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may
18 be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the
19 presence of the Lord;"

20

21 John 3:1-16 "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a
22 ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto
23 him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no
24 man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3
25 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
26 Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4
27 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?
28 can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5
29 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born
30 of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6
31 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the
32 Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born
33 again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound
34 thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is
35 every one that is born of the Spirit. 9 Nicodemus answered and said
36 unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto
37 him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11
38 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify
39 that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 If I have told
40 you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell

41 you of heavenly things? 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven,
42 but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in
43 heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even
44 so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in
45 him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the
46 world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in
47 him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

48

49 Matthew 9:9 "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man,
50 named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto
51 him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him."

52

53 Inspired Answer

54 What Is Genuine Conversion?

55 "If there is nothing more in all the Scriptures which point out
56 definitely the way to heaven [John 3:1-16 had just been read by Mrs.
57 White], we have it here in these words. They tell us what conversion
58 is. They tell us what we must do in order to be saved. And, my friends,
59 I want to tell you that this strikes directly at the root of the surface
60 work in the religious world. It strikes directly against the idea that you
61 can become a child of God without any particular change. There is a
62 decided change wrought in us if the truth of God has found a place in
63 our hearts, for it has a sanctifying power upon life and upon character.
64 When we see the fruits of righteousness in those who claim to have
65 advanced truth, as we claim to have it, then there will be a course of
66 action which testifies that we have learned of Christ. {FW 63.2}

67

68 "Genuine conversion is a grand and noble thing. It means leaving
69 childish things behind, and being a man, one with Christ as Christ is
70 one with the Father, the faith clinging to Christ, the friend of sinners.
71 When you acknowledge Christ as your very best friend, when you are
72 entirely satisfied with Him, you will be a happy man. You will put
73 away childish things." {Lt66-1899.6}

74

75 "Genuine conversion is transformation of character. New purposes,
76 new moral tastes are created. Defects of character are overcome.
77 Truth, with its sanctifying power, brings the entire man into obedience
78 to Christ." {TSA 30.2}

79

80 "True conversion is a change from selfishness to sanctified affection
81 for God and for one another." {1SM 115.1}

82

83 "Real conversion is a decided change of feelings and motives; it is a
84 virtual taking leave of worldly connections, a hastening from their

85 spiritual atmosphere, a withdrawing from the controlling power of
86 their thoughts, opinions, and influences."—Testimonies for the
87 Church 5:82, 83 (1889). {1MCP 349.2}

88

89 "There are few really consecrated men among us, few who have
90 fought and conquered in the battle with self. Real conversion is a
91 decided change of feelings and motives; it is a virtual taking leave of
92 worldly connections, a hastening from their spiritual atmosphere, a
93 withdrawing from the controlling power of their thoughts, opinions,
94 and influences. The separation causes pain and bitterness to both
95 parties. It is the variance which Christ declares that He came to bring.
96 But the converted will feel a continual longing desire that their friends
97 shall forsake all for Christ, knowing that, unless they do, there will be
98 a final and eternal separation. The true Christian cannot, while with
99 unbelieving friends, be light and trifling. The value of the souls for
100 whom Christ died is too great." {5T 82.5}

101

102 "Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small
103 matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to
104 understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace,
105 and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with
106 divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he
107 understands these things, his former life appears disgusting and
108 hateful. He hates sin, and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces
109 Christ as the life and joy of the soul. He renounces his former
110 pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will;
111 his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. The lust of the flesh, the
112 lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which have heretofore been
113 preferred before Christ, are now turned from, and Christ is the charm
114 of his life, the crown of his rejoicing. Heaven, which once possessed
115 no charms, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates
116 it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who
117 hath redeemed him by His precious blood. {2T 294.2} The works of
118 holiness, which appeared wearisome, are now his delight. The word of
119 God, which was dull and uninteresting, is now chosen as his study, the
120 man of his counsel. It is as a letter written to him from God, bearing
121 the inscription of the Eternal. His thoughts, his words, and his deeds
122 are brought to this rule and tested. He trembles at the commands and
123 threatenings which it contains, while he firmly grasps its promises and
124 strengthens his soul by appropriating them to himself. The society of
125 the most godly is now chosen by him, and the wicked, whose
126 company he once loved, he no longer delights in. He weeps over those
127 sins in them at which he once laughed. Self-love and vanity are

128 renounced, and he lives unto God, and is rich in good works. This is
129 the sanctification which God requires. Nothing short of this will He
130 accept. {2T 294.3}

131

132 "When the sinner sees Jesus lifted upon the cross, dying that he might
133 not perish but have everlasting life, he realizes something of the
134 enormity of sin, and longs for pardon for all his transgressions, and for
135 the favor of God. As the Holy Spirit impresses his mind, he prays
136 most earnestly, and believes that if he asks he shall receive. {Ms40-
137 1894.23} He presents the promise, "If we confess our sins, he is
138 faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all
139 unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9.] He rejoices in the pardoning love of
140 God, and his sincerity in the service of God, the reality of his
141 conversion, is made manifest by the vigor of his endeavor to obey all
142 of God's commandments. The soul who has found the Lord will
143 renounce every evil work, will cease to do evil and learn to do well,
144 because Christ is formed within the hope of glory." {Ms40-1894.24}

145

146 "A man is no sooner converted than in his heart is born a desire to
147 make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus;
148 the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. The
149 Spirit of Christ illuminating the soul is represented by the light, which
150 dispels all darkness; it is compared to salt, because of its preserving
151 qualities; and to leaven, which secretly exerts its transforming
152 power."—Testimonies for the Church 4:318, 319. {PaM 154.3}

153

154 "Candidates who have grown to manhood and womanhood should
155 understand their duty better than do the younger ones; but the pastor
156 of the church has a duty to do for these souls. Have they wrong habits
157 and practices? It is the duty of the pastor to have special meetings with
158 them. Give them Bible readings, converse and pray with them, and
159 plainly show the claims of the Lord upon them. Read to them the
160 teaching of the Bible in regard to conversion. Show what is the fruit of
161 conversion, the evidence that they love God. Show that true
162 conversion is a change of heart, of thoughts and purposes. Evil habits
163 are to be given up. The sins of evil-speaking, of jealousy, of
164 disobedience, are to be put away. A warfare must be waged against
165 every evil trait of character. Then the believing one can
166 understandingly take to himself the promise: "Ask, and it shall be
167 given you." Matthew 7:7.544 {CCh 297.3}

168

169 "One of the strongest evidences of true conversion is love to God and
170 man. Those who accept Jesus as their Redeemer have a deep, sincere
171 love for others of like precious faith. Thus it was with the believers at

172 Thessalonica. "As touching brotherly love," the apostle wrote, "ye
173 need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to
174 love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which
175 are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase
176 more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own
177 business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;
178 that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye
179 may have lack of nothing." {AA 262.3}

180

181 "True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and
182 bent of the heart should be turned and life become new again in
183 Christ." {4T 16.4}

184

185 "Thorough conversion is necessary among those who profess to
186 believe the truth, in order for them to follow Jesus and obey the will of
187 God—not a submission born of circumstances, as was that of the
188 terrified Israelites when the power of the Infinite was revealed to
189 them, but a deep and heartfelt repentance and renunciation of sin.
190 Those who are but half converted are as a tree whose boughs hang
191 upon the side of truth, but whose roots, firmly bedded in the earth,
192 strike out into the barren soil of the world. Jesus looks in vain for fruit
193 upon its branches; He finds nothing but leaves." {4T 155.3}

194

195 Is Conversion A Daily Matter?

196 "None are living Christians unless they have a daily experience in the
197 things of God and daily practice self-denial, cheerfully bearing the
198 cross and following Christ. Every living Christian will advance daily
199 in the divine life. As he advances toward perfection, he experiences a
200 conversion to God every day; and this conversion is not completed
201 until he attains to perfection of Christian character, a full preparation
202 for the finishing touch of immortality." {2T 505.1}

203

204 "Stand in God, work with full confidence in God. Daily a genuine
205 conversion is needed. Unite your heart with God by clinging faith. He
206 is the friend of sinners. You are invited to join your weakness to His
207 strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your nothingness to His
208 merits, your frailty to His enduring might. Will you do this?" {Lt92-
209 1896.5}

210

211 "Genuine conversion is needed, not once in years, but daily. This
212 conversion brings a man into new relation to God. Old things, his
213 natural temper, natural passions, and hereditary traits of character pass
214 away, and the man is renewed, converted, sanctified. But this work

215 needs to be continued, or else the heart will become estranged from
216 God, for just as long as Satan lives, he will make an effort to carry out
217 his will. The human agent will constantly encounter a strong
218 undercurrent. His heart needs to be barricaded by faithful
219 watchfulness and unceasing prayer, else the embankment will give
220 way, and like a mill stream, the undercurrent of natural and cultivated
221 tendencies will sweep away the safeguard. Then the old objectionable
222 traits of character will assert their sway. No renewed heart can keep in
223 a condition of sweetness and grace without the application of the salt
224 of the Word. Divine grace must be applied daily, else no man will stay
225 converted." {Lt97-1896.56}

226

227 Is Conversion An Ongoing Work?

228 "Let no one suppose that conversion is the beginning and end of the
229 Christian life. There is a science of Christianity that must be mastered.
230 There is to be growth in grace, that is constant progress and
231 improvement. The mind is to be disciplined, trained, educated; for the
232 child of God is to do service for God in ways that are not natural, or in
233 harmony with inborn inclination. Those who become the followers of
234 Christ find that new motives of action are supplied, new thoughts
235 arise, and new actions must result. But they can make advancement
236 only through conflict; for there is an enemy that ever contends against
237 them, presenting temptations to cause the soul to doubt and sin.
238 Besides this ever vigilant foe, there are hereditary and cultivated
239 tendencies to evil that must be overcome. The training and education
240 of a lifetime must often be discarded that the Christian may become a
241 learner in the school of Christ, and in him who would be a partaker of
242 the divine nature, appetite and passion must be brought under the
243 control of the Holy Spirit. There is to be no end to this warfare this
244 side of eternity, but while there are constant battles to fight, there are
245 also precious victories to gain, and the triumph over self and sin is of
246 more value than the mind can estimate. The effort put forth to
247 overcome, though requiring self-denial, is of little account beside the
248 victory over evil. {CE 122.1}

249

250 "Until the heart is surrendered unconditionally to God, the human
251 agent is not abiding in the True Vine, and cannot flourish in the Vine,
252 and bear rich clusters of fruit. God will not make the slightest
253 compromise with sin. If He could have done this, Christ need not have
254 come to our world to suffer and die. No conversion is genuine which
255 does not change both the character and the conduct of those who
256 accept the truth. The truth works by love, and purifieth the soul"
257 (Letter 31a, 1894). {5BC 1144.2}

258

259 How Do We Experience Conversion?

260 "Now, God wants His converting power to come on this occasion.
261 There are some that come to our meetings—they will sit all through
262 the meetings; they have borne a few words of testimony now and then;
263 they have gone home and done just exactly [the same as], if not worse
264 than, before. Why? Because they had not the new heart. What is the
265 new heart? It is the new mind. What is the mind? It is the will. Where
266 is your will? It is either on Satan's side or Christ's side. Now it is up
267 to you. Will you put your will today on Christ's side of the question?
268 That is the new heart. It is the new will, a new mind. "A new heart
269 will I give thee." Then let us begin right here. {1SAT 210.1}
270 Conversion is simple, very simple. Let us commence right here to
271 come into the kingdom of heaven. How? As a little child. Just as
272 simple as simple can be. You may get all your mysteries of the new
273 birth, and you cannot make anybody understand it, or understand it
274 yourself. But the best way for you is to give your mind to Jesus Christ.
275 And the mind is the will to put it on, and do just as Matthew did.
276 {1SAT 210.2} The Lord Jesus came to Matthew. He was in a very
277 unpopular business, and all the Jews looked upon them [publicans, as
278 people] to be despised, and Christ said to Matthew, "Matthew, follow
279 Me." Did he say, "O Lord, when I get good enough I will follow
280 you"? Did he say, "O Lord, when I have this agony, this awful agony
281 for my sin, then I will come"? {1SAT 211.1}

282

283 "Now, we want at this meeting, if it is possible to understand what
284 true conversion is. It is simply taking God at His word and it is
285 following out the teachings of Jesus Christ, lest you should make a
286 mistake, to follow His Word, study it with your family, study it with
287 your children, lest some of your children shall not understand it."
288 {Ms130-1909.21}

289

290 Who Brings About Conversion?

291 "Christ gave His life to redeem transgressors, to save men from
292 Satan's power, to enable them, by obedience, to vindicate the
293 immutability of the law of Jehovah. He designed them to declare, by
294 lives of consecrated service, that the law of the Lord is perfect,
295 converting the soul. He died to make it possible for them to be
296 partakers of the divine nature. To them He gave the privilege of being
297 sons and daughters of God, joint-heirs with Christ to an immortal
298 inheritance. He pledged Himself to conform the nature of fallen man
299 to the laws and authority of the kingdom of God. When in faith and
300 love man submits to Him, He will fill his heart with His divine life. He
301 will make him one with Himself, so that the thoughts and aims will be

302 identical with the thoughts and aims of the Saviour. The man will be
303 born again, not of flesh, but of the Spirit, and to obey will be to carry
304 out his own will. {Ms37-1900.3}

305 This work of conversion is a work which Christ alone can do. "Other
306 sheep I have," He said, "which are not of this fold; them also I must
307 bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and
308 one shepherd." [John 10:16.] {Ms37-1900.4}

309

310 What Is Our Role in Conversion?

311 "Let us not forget that in his conversion and sanctification, man must
312 co-operate with God. "Work out your own salvation with fear and
313 trembling," the Word declares; "for it is God which worketh in you,
314 both to will and to do of His good pleasure." [Philippians 2:12, 13.]

315 {Ms131-1903.5} A man sees his danger. He sees that he needs a
316 change of character, a change of heart. He is stirred; his fears are
317 aroused. The Spirit of God is working in him, and he works for
318 himself, seeking to find out his defects and to see what he can do, with
319 fear and trembling, to bring about the needed change in his life. His
320 heart is humbled. By confession and repentance he shows the sincerity
321 of his desire to reform. He confesses his sins to God, and if he has
322 injured any one, he confesses the wrong to the one he has injured.

323 While God is working, the sinner, under the influence of the Holy
324 Spirit, works out that which God is working in mind and heart. He acts
325 in harmony with the Spirit's working, and his conversion is genuine.

326 {Ms131-1903.6} ... Let the sinner co-operate with His Redeemer to
327 secure his liberty. Let him be assured that unseen heavenly agencies
328 are working in his behalf. Dear souls in doubt and discouragement,
329 pray for the courage and strength that Christ waits to give you. He has
330 been seeking for you. He longs to have you feel your need of His help.

331 He will reach out His hand to grasp the hand stretched out for aid. He
332 declares, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." [John
333 6:37.] Let mind and heart be enlisted in the warfare against sin. Let
334 your heart soften as you think of how long you have chosen to serve
335 your bitterest foe, while you turned from Him who gave His life for
336 you, who loves you, and who will accept you as His, even though you
337 are sinners. Step out from under the rebel flag, and take your stand
338 under the bloodstained banner of prince Emmanuel. Instead of feeling
339 ashamed that you are standing under the banner of loyalty, you should
340 feel that you are highly honored in being allowed to serve the Lord of
341 the whole earth. He owns the world. All the gold and the silver are
342 His. "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee," He says; "for the world
343 is mine, and the fulness thereof." [Psalm 50:12.] {Ms131-1903.8}

344

345 Is Partial Or False Conversion Possible?

346 "Unless painstaking efforts are made, every new revival will bring
347 into the church converts whose conversion is a spurious one, who
348 have a form of godliness without the power. Earnest educational work
349 needs to be done for these souls, that they may know what it means to
350 be a Christian; for unless the foundation is laid in faith and practice of
351 the truth, storm and tempest, beating upon their house, will cause it to
352 fall. The character of such is like a bowing wall and a tottering fence."
353 {Lt80-1907.4}

354

355 "There should be a solemn importance attached to the testimonies the
356 Lord gives His messenger to bear concerning the Word which calls us
357 to come out from the practice of the world and be separate. A half
358 conversion is only a snare to betray other souls into the same divided
359 service. Every truly converted soul shows a transformation in
360 character, and a marked change takes place." {Ms173-1903.19}

361

362 "We shall be brought into close places in religious matters. Discord
363 among church members is one of the most difficult things to deal with.
364 Pride of opinion, selfishness, ambition enfeeble spirituality. There are
365 those who seek for as much power as possible. The difference
366 between true and false conversion is continually being shown right in
367 our institutions. Day by day character is being tested, and cases are
368 being decided for eternity. The Lord Jesus is weighing moral worth."
369 {Ms107-1908.32}

370

371 Is Reconversion Ever Necessary?

372 "Those who suppose that they are cemented to the man who brought
373 them the truth, and tie up in separate bundles, need a reconversion as
374 soon as possible, else their claimed conversion is a stumbling block to
375 sinners." {Ms130-1901.25}

376

377 How Should We Share About Conversion?

378 "The more plain and simple the truth in regard to true conversion is
379 made to appear, and the oftener it is repeated, the greater power you
380 will have with the people. We must make them understand their
381 relation to the law of God. This is a vital question." {Lt44-1900.5}

382

383 "Ministers need to have a more clear, simple manner in presenting the
384 truth as it is in Jesus. Their own minds need to comprehend the great
385 plan of salvation more fully. Then they can carry the minds of the
386 hearers away from earthly things to the spiritual and eternal. There are
387 many who want to know what they must do to be saved. They want a

388 plain and clear explanation of the steps requisite in conversion, and
389 there should not a sermon be given unless a portion of that discourse is
390 to especially make plain the way that sinners may come to Christ and
391 be saved. They should point them to Christ, as did John and with
392 touching simplicity, their hearts aglow with the love of Christ, say,
393 “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.”
394 Strong and earnest appeals should be made to the sinner to repent and
395 be converted.”—The Review and Herald, February 22, 1887. {Ev
396 188.1

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398

399

Further Study

400

401 Key Words For Further Study

402 "true conversion," "true conversions," "superficial conversion,"

403 "superficial conversions," "genuine conversion," "thorough

404 conversion,"

405

406

407

408 *This discussion document was compiled by Dan Augsburger of*

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