

Spirit Soul and Body

Intro (4 min): God wants wholeness, not fragments

TRUTH: God sanctifies the whole person—spirit, soul, and body.

- We can live like we're only **bodies**—driven by appetite, fatigue, and pressure.
- We can live like we're only **minds**—driven by thoughts, plans, and worries.
- We can try to be “spiritual” while ignoring where habits, stress, and pain show up in daily life.
- **Good news:** God's salvation is not partial; it is whole.

SCRIPTURE: Read the key texts, then summarise in one sentence.

READ 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Paul is not giving a medical chart—he is praying a pastoral prayer: that God would sanctify the *whole person*. Today we're going to ask: what does it look like for Christ to lead my **body**, renew my **soul**, and bring my **spirit** fully alive to God?

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV): “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

READ Hebrews 4:12. God's Word can “divide” soul and spirit—not to break us apart, but to help us *discern* what is driving us, so God can heal and lead every part. A helpful summary is: **you are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body.**

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV): “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

1) Body (6 min): a gift to steward, not a master to obey

TRUTH: The body is a gift to steward; it must not become your master.

- The body is not evil—but it is not meant to be in charge.
- If the body leads, it will choose what is easiest, fastest, and most comfortable.
- If the body leads long enough, devotion becomes: “when I feel like it.”

APPLICATION: surrender habits, appetites, and rhythms of life to Jesus.

- **Scripture (READ/Reference):** Romans 12:1 — “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices.”
- **Meaning:** worship reaches into ordinary life—what we watch, what we eat, how we rest, how we handle stress, how we use our time.
- **Example:** You start to pray and your mind runs to food and errands; you plan to get up early, but your body negotiates: “ten more minutes.”

Romans 12:1 (NIV): “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

- **Scripture (Reference):** 1 Corinthians 3:16 — your body is God's temple.
- **Application:** care for your body (sleep, food, discipline) as stewardship—neither vanity nor shame.
- **Pastoral reminder:** whichever is stronger—spirit-led faith or soul-led self—will often be what the flesh obeys and manifests.

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NIV): “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?”

2) Soul (7 min): mind, will, emotions—meant to be renewed

TRUTH: God renews the soul (mind, will, emotions) so you can live from the Spirit, not from

old patterns.

- • **Soul = inner life: mind, will, emotions.**
- • Mind runs on information; will chooses (often for self-preservation); emotions respond (often shaped by wounds).
- • Many people aren't choosing sin with a raised fist—they're reacting from an unhealed soul.

APPLICATION: submit your thought-life, choices, and emotions to Scripture and the Spirit for healing and renewal.

- • **Scripture (Reference/READ as needed):** 1 Corinthians 2:14 — without the Spirit, the things of God feel like foolishness.
- • **Warning:** knowledge alone can still miss Jesus (reference John 5:39–40).
- • **God's plan:** not just new information, but transformation—renewing the mind (Romans 12:2), saving the soul by the implanted Word (James 1:21), restoring the soul (Psalm 23:3).

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV): “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”

Romans 12:2 (NIV): “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

James 1:21 (NIV): “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

Psalm 23:3 (NIV): “He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.”

1 Corinthians 2:16b (NIV): “But we have the mind of Christ.”

- • **Hope:** you can belong to Christ and still have areas that need healing and renewing.
- • Over time, Scripture, prayer, obedience, and wise counsel reshape thought patterns, steady emotions, and strengthen the will.
- • **Key line:** “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16b)—and we learn to think with him.

3) Spirit (8 min): made for God—made alive by the Holy Spirit

TRUTH: Your spirit was made for God; new birth by the Holy Spirit is the foundation of the Christian life.

- • **The deepest part of you was made for God.**
- • **Reference:** John 4:24 — God is Spirit.
- • **Core truth:** Christianity is not first self-improvement; it is **new life**.
- • **READ** John 3:3–7 — entrance into the Kingdom is being “born of the Spirit.”
- • **REFERENCE** Ezekiel 36:26–27 — a new heart and a new spirit.
- • **REFERENCE** Romans 8:16 — the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children.
- • **Foundation line:** we don't reach God through the body, and not merely through the soul; we come to God through a spirit made alive by the Holy Spirit.

John 3:3–7 (NIV): “Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’ ‘How can someone be born when they are 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.””

Ezekiel 36:26–27 (NIV): “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

Romans 8:16 (NIV): “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

RESULT: as the spirit grows strong, the soul is renewed and the body becomes a willing servant.

- • **How the spirit grows:** communion with God — Word, prayer, worship, obedience, fellowship.
- • **Reference:** John 6:63 — Jesus’ words are Spirit and life.
- • **Result:** as the spirit grows strong, the soul is renewed and the body becomes a willing servant.
- • **Reference:** Romans 8:5–6 — setting the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

John 6:63 (NIV): “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.”

Response (5 min): let God bring his order and wholeness

INVITATION: respond to God in your body, soul, and spirit (repentance, healing, and fresh surrender).

Response moment: take a minute to be honest before God.

- • **Body:** Where has my body been leading me instead of serving love and obedience?
- • **Soul:** What patterns in my mind, will, or emotions need renewal and healing?
- • **Spirit:** Have I been born of the Spirit—and if I have, am I feeding my spirit or starving it?

(Pause for 20–30 seconds.)

Prayer: God of peace, sanctify us through and through. Where our bodies have ruled, teach us surrender. Where our souls have been wounded or distorted, restore and renew us by your Word. Where our spirits have been cold or dead, make us alive by your Holy Spirit. Keep our whole spirit, soul, and body blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Theme: God’s desire is not partial change but whole-person sanctification—*spirit, soul, and body*—so that we can live blamelessly and fruitfully as we await Jesus’ return (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Key Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:23. (Optional supporting text: Hebrews 4:12.)

Introduction: God cares about the whole you

Many of us live as if we are only bodies—managed by appetites, fatigue, and pressure. Others live as if we are only minds—solving, reasoning, planning, and worrying. Still others try to be “spiritual” while neglecting the very human places where temptation, trauma, habits, and exhaustion show up. But Scripture speaks with a wiser and more hopeful vision: God made us whole, and God saves us whole.

When Paul prays, “May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless,” he is not giving us a technical anatomy chart—he is giving us a pastoral prayer for integrated discipleship. And when Hebrews says the Word of God is able to divide “soul and spirit” (Hebrews 4:12), the point is not to detach parts of us, but to help us *discern* what is driving us, so Christ can heal and lead every part.

A simple way to say it is: **you are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body.** God’s

transforming work includes (1) bringing our **spirit** to life in Christ, (2) renewing our **soul** day by day, and (3) teaching us to offer our **body** as a living sacrifice.

1) The Body: a gift to steward, not a master to obey

Our bodies are real, physical, and limited. Genesis reminds us we are formed from the dust (Genesis 2:7), and Scripture is honest that our bodies are vulnerable to weakness and temptation. Yet the Bible never calls the body worthless. In Christ, the body becomes something sacred: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

So Paul says, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices...this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1). A living sacrifice is not a moment—it is a daily surrender: what I watch, what I consume, how I rest, how I handle stress, how I use my sexuality, how I manage my time and energy.

Here’s a simple test: how quickly can your body interrupt your devotion? You start to pray—and suddenly your mind runs to meal plans and errands. You plan to rise early to seek God—and when the alarm rings, your body negotiates: “just ten more minutes.” None of this is meant to produce condemnation; it is meant to produce honesty. Discipleship includes training the body so it can serve love.

Paul could say, “I discipline my body and keep it under control” (1 Corinthians 9:27). That is not self-hatred; it is wise stewardship. Caring for sleep, food, exercise, and rhythms of work and Sabbath can be deeply spiritual, because we are presenting our bodies to God. At the same time, the gospel frees us from both vanity and shame: we do not worship our bodies, and we do not despise them—we *offer* them.

Pastoral reminder: Whichever becomes strongest—spirit-led faith or soul-led self—will often be what the body follows. The body tends to manifest what it is trained to obey.

2) The Soul: mind, will, and emotions—meant to be renewed

The Bible uses “soul” language in rich ways, but pastorally it’s helpful to speak of the soul as our **inner life**—our **mind** (how we think), **will** (how we choose), and **emotions** (how we feel and respond). These dimensions are deeply interwoven. That is why spiritual growth is not only about “trying harder,” but about God healing patterns of thought, strengthening holy desire, and restoring what has been wounded.

The mind feeds on information—education, news, opinions, and experience. **The will** makes decisions, often shaped by culture, family patterns, and self-preservation. **Emotions** can be shaped by joy and love, but also damaged by disappointment, grief, abuse, betrayal, and fear. Many people are not rebellious; they are simply reacting from an unhealed soul.

Scripture says, “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God...because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). That does *not* mean Christians should despise learning. It means that information alone cannot produce communion with God. There is a kind of knowing that can still miss Jesus—like the Pharisees who searched the Scriptures yet refused to come to Christ for life (John 5:39–40).

Paul warns, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). The goal is not less truth, but deeper transformation. God renews the soul by his Word and Spirit: “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). James adds, “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). And David testifies, “He restores my soul” (Psalm 23:3).

This is why a believer can be truly saved and yet still be in a serious battle: our **spirit** can be made alive in Christ, while our **soul** still needs ongoing renewal. Over time, Scripture, prayer, wise counsel, and obedience reshape the mind, steady the emotions, and strengthen the will. “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16)—and we learn to think with him.

But none of this renewal is possible if we start in the wrong place. Christianity is not first about self-improvement; it is about **new life**. That brings us to the spirit.

3) The Spirit: made for God—brought to life by the Holy Spirit

To understand our spirit, we start with God: “God is spirit” (John 4:24). In Genesis, the Spirit of God hovers over creation (Genesis 1:2), and God says, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). We are not gods—but we are created for relationship with God, with the capacity to know him, worship him, and respond to him from the deepest place within.

God formed the human body from dust, but life came when God breathed into him (Genesis 2:7). Job echoes this: “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). James says, “As the body without the spirit is dead...” (James 2:26). Our bodies have value because God gives life; and when physical life ends, “the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

When humanity sinned, the deepest damage was not first physical—it was spiritual. We were made to live in fellowship with God, but sin brought separation and death (see Genesis 3; compare Ephesians 2:1). That is why Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again...born of the Spirit” (John 3:3–7). The gospel is that God does not merely advise the old life; he raises the dead: “Even when we were dead...[God] made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4–6).

God promised, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you...and I will put my Spirit in you” (Ezekiel 36:26–27). When we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit bears witness “with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16). Peter says we have been “born again...through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). This is why we say: we do not reach God through the body, and not merely through the soul, but through a spirit made alive by the Holy Spirit.

How does the spirit grow strong? The body grows through food and rest; the soul grows through information and experience. But the reborn spirit grows through **communion with God**: the Word, prayer, worship, obedience, and fellowship. Jesus said, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life” (John 6:63). As we feed on Scripture and stay close to Christ, our inner life becomes steadier—and the soul and body learn to follow what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5–6).

Conclusion: sanctified through and through

God’s will is not that you be fragmented—spiritual on Sunday, anxious on Monday, and exhausted by Friday. His will is wholeness. That is why Paul prays for your *whole* spirit, soul, and body to be kept blameless (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The Father wants to make you alive in Christ by the Spirit; the Son wants to shepherd and restore your soul; and the Holy Spirit wants to empower obedience in your everyday embodied life.

Response: (1) What is currently leading you—body appetites, soul patterns, or the Spirit of God? (2) Where do you need restoration—in your thinking, your choosing, or your emotions? (3) Have you been born again—have you received new life by the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: God of peace, sanctify us through and through. Breathe fresh life into every place that has been deadened by sin, pain, or weariness. Renew our minds, steady our emotions, and strengthen our wills to obey you. Teach us to present our bodies as living sacrifices. Holy Spirit, lead us into truth and make Christ beautiful to us. Keep our whole spirit, soul, and body blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

1 Thessalonians 5:23