

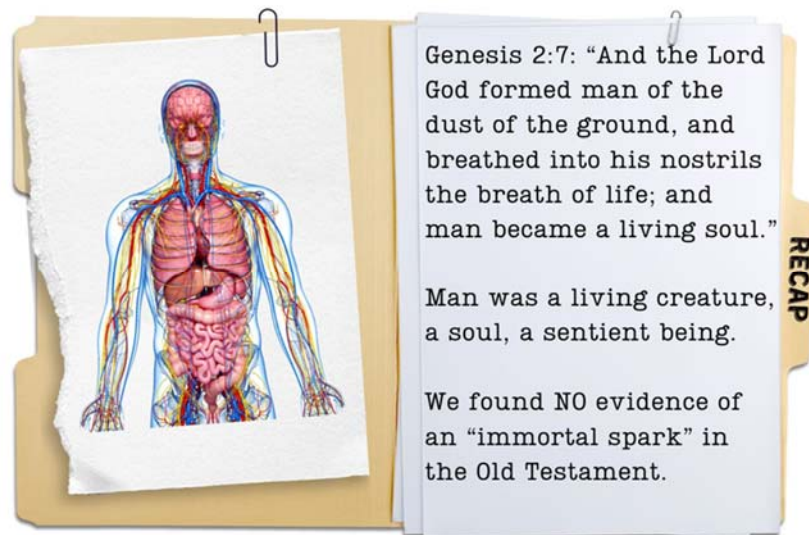
Do I Have an Immortal Soul? (Part II)

Romans 6:23: (KJV) *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*



In Part I, we examined how the Old Testament defines the human soul. In that discussion, we saw clear scriptural evidence defining the soul as life on a mortal level. The same word for “soul” or “life” was consistently used to describe both animals and humans. As we proceed with this second part of our series, we now focus on the New Testament. The big questions here are simple: Did Jesus teach us that human souls are mortal in the same way we concluded the Old Testament taught? Did he in some way elevate and change that conclusion?

Many people have been taught that humans are born with a little divine spark inside of them, and that spark can’t die. It never ceases to exist. They call that spark your “soul” or “spirit.”



What about in the New Testament?

The best place to start is with Jesus quoting an Old Testament verse so we can compare the Hebrew and Greek words used for *soul*.

We can clearly see how what he quotes in Greek lines up with the Hebrew counterpart:

Matthew 22:36–37: *36 Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 And he (Jesus) said to him, YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL <5590>, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.*

Deuteronomy 6:5: (KJV) *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul <5315>, and with all thy might.*

One effective Bible study method is to match New Testament texts with their Old Testament counterparts.

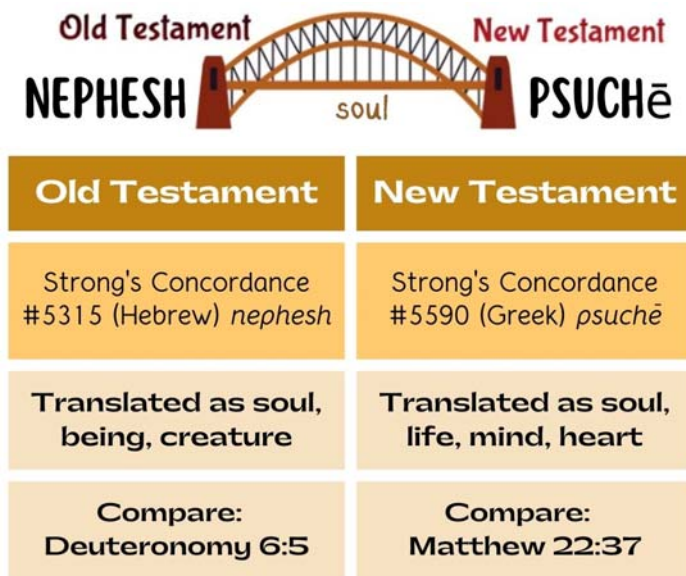
When Jesus translated the Hebrew word *nephesh* into the Greek of the New Testament, he used the word *psuchē*, meaning “breath.” Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance defines the word as “the animal sentient principle only”—in other words, a breathing creature, a sentient being. *Psuchē* and *nephesh* exactly correspond.

Old Testament: Soul: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #5315 *nephesh*; from #5314; properly, a breathing creature

New Testament: Soul: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #5590 *psuchē*: from #5594; breath, i.e. (by implication) spirit, abstractly or concretely (the animal sentient principle only; thus distinguished on the one hand from #4151 (the New Testament word translated *spirit*—in other words, *psuchē* specifically doesn’t include “spirit,” which is the Greek word *pneuma*. In the New Testament, the soul is not interchangeable with the spirit), and on the other from #2222, which is mere vitality, even of plants: these terms thus exactly correspond respectively to the Hebrew #5315, #7307 and #2416)

The King James Version translates #5590 as “soul” 56 times, “life” 41 times, “mind” three times and “heart” once

It is important to note that *psuchē* does not include the “spirit,” which is *pneuma* in Greek. We will get back to this soon. The *soul* is not the *spirit*—they are not interchangeable.



Jesus directly quoting an Old Testament verse gives us the biblical authority to conclude that what is in the Old corresponds with the New. He is not changing the meaning of the words in the Old Testament; he is only translating them into Greek.

Acts 27:21–22: *21 When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. 22 Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of **life <5590>** (*psuchē*—being or soul) among you, but only of the ship.*

If the verse read, “...for there will be no loss of soul,” it would seem odd. *There will be no loss of life—no loss of being—makes sense.*

It makes sense to translate *psuchē* as *life* here because a shipwreck might very well cause your sentient being to die. *No loss of life among you* means the loss of life was a possibility. But remember, this is the word used for *soul* as well. This means your “soul” can die.

We use *soul* and *life* interchangeably today. When there’s an accident at sea or from a plane crash, we hear, “100 souls were lost.” We know this means people died.

Another example:

Acts 15:25–27: *25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their **lives <5590>** (*psuchē*—being or soul) for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.*

If we substitute *souls* for *lives* in this context, we reach a different interpretation if we use traditional thinking on the subject. These brothers risked their human lives. The Apostle Paul explains the men put their lives on the line for him and for the gospel. **They did not risk their ultimate reward or their spirituality in the service of their Lord Jesus.** If anything, such dangerous service enhanced their chance for that ultimate reward! It had nothing to do with their eternal, spiritual lives—their physical lives, their beings, were at stake.



They weren’t risking their “spark of divinity” that would end up going to heaven. It was about living and dying as a human being. *Life and soul* are scripturally interchangeable.

immortal soul ~~LIFE = SOUL~~ THIS FINITE LIFETIME THAT DIES
 mortal soul ~~LIFE = SOUL~~ - OUR "FOREVER" ETERNAL LIFETIME
 mortal soul LIFE = SOUL - THIS FINITE LIFETIME THAT DIES

The New Testament also refers back to the original sentence for sin given in the Garden of Eden:

1 Corinthians 15:20–22: *20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all **die <599>** (to be dead), so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

Die: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #599 *apothnēskō*: to die off (literally or figuratively):—be dead, death, die, lie a-dying, be slain

Dying, the lack of existence of the sentient being, is contrasted with the miracle of resurrection.



You don't need Christ to "make all alive" if there's a part of you that never dies. You don't need a resurrection of the dead if no one is really dead. You would only need a reunion!

We are being meticulous about following biblical definitions to understand what the Bible is telling us. *As in Adam all die*—all become lifeless. All lose the life they were given. God told Adam he would return to the dust, and this extended to all mankind. The result of sin is death. In Christ, all will be made alive. This is a harmonious and faith-strengthening teaching.

The Apostle Paul lays out the unfolding of this consequence in detail as he contrasts living in sin and living under the benefits of Jesus' gift of life:

Romans 6:20–23: *20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death <2288>. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death <2288>, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Noun:

Death: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2288 *thánatos*: from #2348; (properly, an adjective used as a noun) death (literally or figuratively):—deadly, (be...) death

Verb:

To die: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2348 *thnḗskō*: a strengthened form of a simpler primary word (which is used for it only in certain tenses); to die (literally or figuratively):—be dead, die (the process of dying)

The Greek word here for *death*, *thánatos*, means "death." It comes from the verb form, *thnḗskō*, meaning "to die." It describes the process of dying. Very simple.

Here's the challenge: When describing #2288 *death*, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon that we often quote from, interprets this to mean: "The death of the body, i.e.. that separation (whether natural or violent) of the soul from the body by which the life on earth is ended with the implied idea of future misery in the state beyond... In the widest sense, death comprising all the miseries arising from sin, as well physical death as the loss of a life consecrated to God and blessed in him on earth, to be followed by wretchedness in hell."

This source reads into a word that simply means "death," "the ceasing of existence," adding all this "separation," "misery" and a wretched life beyond death in hell.

Usually, Thayers does a wonderful job of interpreting Greek words in context of their use and is very helpful. But sometimes it expands a traditional viewpoint without a scriptural basis.

In this case, *thánatos* simply means death, as we can see from reviewing every time *thánatos* occurs in the New Testament. It is important to recognize when we are doing our own research that some of the available study materials have theological biases. We have to go back to the word of God as the final word!

James deepens the power of this gift of life and how we can apply it to our everyday lives:

James 1:19–22: *19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls <5590> (your psuchē, your life). 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*



But some people might read into this thinking it means that if we turn away from sin and ungodly behavior, our souls—an eternal spark—will end up in heaven. How do we know this interpretation is not correct?



Because it is saying that to be in accordance with God’s will, we must actually live His word, not just hear it. We must put *aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness*. He is able to save your souls—save them from what? From living our earthly lives in the misery of sin. We don’t want to read into scripture meanings that are not there.

Where did this concept of an indestructible, immortal soul come from? Greek philosophy. These Greek ideas profoundly influenced early Christian theology and Western philosophy. The concept of an immortal soul was integrated into Christian doctrine, blending with biblical teachings. **See Bonus Material.**

What’s the difference between the soul and the spirit?

Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul <5590> and spirit <4151>, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Before we explain this verse, we have to look at what *spirit* means, as *soul* and *spirit* are two different things.

We already know our “soul” is our being which is founded in our physicality. The New Testament word for *spirit* shows us something far less tangible:

Spirit: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4151: *pneuma*; a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze

This word for *spirit* carries the sense of an unseen power, a current of air. We use this prefix in modern English. For example, pneumonia is a lung infection affecting breathing. Pneumatic tires are filled with air.

The word inherently means an unseen power, an unseen influence of some kind.

The Old Testament begins with a very dramatic use of spirit as an unseen but mighty power:

Genesis 1:2–3: 2 *The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the *spirit* <7307> of God was moving over the surface of the waters.* 3 *Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.*

Spirit here is *ruach* in Hebrew. It means wind, breath, exhalation. It is mainly translated into English as *spirit*, *wind* or *breath*. It most commonly means wind, but applies to any invisible power. We can't see the wind, but we can see its power. In tornadoes, the wind can chop the tops off trees! It is unseen but very powerful.

Spirit: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #7307 *ruach*; from #H7306; wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figuratively, life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension, a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (including its expression and functions):—air, anger, blast, breath, × cool, courage, mind, × quarter, × side, spirit(-ual), tempest, × vain, (whirl-) wind(-y)

(“×” denotes a rendering that results from an idiom peculiar to the Greek or Hebrew)

The King James Version translates this as “spirit” 232 times, “wind” 92 times, “breath” 27 times, “mind” 5 times, “blast” 4 times, “vain” 2 times, “air” once, “cool” once, “courage” once, miscellaneous 6 times

We can imagine the powerful *spirit of God...moving over the surface of the waters*, stirring up creation. This is a clear reference to God's unseen power being able to change things according to His will.

Just like both the Old Testament Hebrew, *nephesh*, and the New Testament Greek, *psuchē*, meant *soul*; here the Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma* are the corresponding words for *spirit*.



Let's look at how *pneuma/spirit* is used in the New Testament.



God’s power and influence:

John 1:32: (KJV) *And John (the Baptist) bare record, saying, I saw the spirit <4151> descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.*

God’s spirit, His power and influence (in this case, represented as a dove), descended upon Jesus at his baptism. This is how God’s spirit informed Jesus to do things. In **John 12:49**, Jesus assured us, *For I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.* It was the Father’s influence working through Jesus that enabled him to perform miracles and prophesy as he did.



Human power and influence:

Romans 1:9: (KJV) *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit <4151> in the gospel of His son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.*

The Apostle Paul is stating, *When I serve with my spirit, my influence, as God is my witness, I pour my influence into what is important. When I pray, when I act, when I use my influence, it is backed by the spirit of Jesus.*



Multiple powers and influences—multiple “spirits”:

Romans 8:14–16: (KJV) *14 For as many as are led by the spirit <4151> of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit <4151> of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit <4151> of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The spirit <4151> itself beareth witness with our spirit <4151>, that we are the children of God:*

The word *spirit* is broadly applied. We see the *spirit of God*—the power or influence which God exerts, either upon animate or inanimate things. We understand having a “spirit of fear,” a “spirit of love” or “spirit of wisdom.” We might speak of someone being “mean-spirited.” “Spirit” beings are invisible and powerful.

The *spirit of bondage* refers to the captivity of being under Adamic sin. We receive the *spirit of adoption* by accepting the call to Christ.

We use the word *spirit* in our everyday lives. For example, we understand if someone were to say, “We’ve really lost the spirit of Christmas.” It means we have lost its true meaning, its influence to do good. We have lost the spirit of what should drive its remembrance.

So, what’s the difference between *soul* and *spirit* in this verse?

Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul <5590> and spirit <4151>, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

The power and influence of God’s word—the spirit of God’s word—is able to divide who we are from what we listen to, *soul* and *spirit*. Dividing between *soul* and *spirit*...*both joints and marrow...able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart*, the Apostle Paul is telling us we must always go back to God’s word, where, if we are truly honest and allow it to penetrate our lives, the influence of God’s word will reveal our true intentions.

God’s spirit (influence) can work in our souls (our very beings—everything that makes us who we are).

The power of God’s word can and will reveal who we as human beings, our souls, are following. It will reveal the unseen influences, the unseen “spirits” or authoritative suggestions that *actually* guide us versus those that *should* guide us. The intentions of our human lives should first and foremost be driven by God’s influence.

Recognizing the true meaning of *soul* in the Bible helps us to more deeply appreciate all that Jesus did for us:

John 15:12–13: *12 This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his **life <5590>** for his friends.*

This is the night before the crucifixion. To his closest followers he is saying, “Love one another. Let me explain what that looks like—there’s no greater love than someone laying down his life—his *psuchē*—for his friends.”

John 15:14: *You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

Jesus DID lay down his earthly life—his soul—for them and for all of humanity in direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy:

Isaiah 53:10–12: (KJV) *10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his **soul <5315>** an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his **soul <5315>**, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his **soul <5315>** unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Verse 10: Jesus’ life given as an offering for sin.

Verse 11: Jesus would have trials and difficulties in his life but would be victorious.

Verse 12: He poured out his soul—his life—unto death. His soul (life) was an offering for sin. It was a painful, difficult circumstance that cost him everything, but Jesus gave this gift to us.

We know God brought Jesus back from the dead—and Jesus was actually dead for parts of three days—and now Jesus is at the right hand of God, forever and ever.



If the soul isn’t immortal and the spirit isn’t immortal, how do humans get to be immortal? The Bible definitely speaks about immortality as a reward for the faithful.



Please listen to Episode #1382: “Can I Inherit Immortality?” We explore this question in great detail.

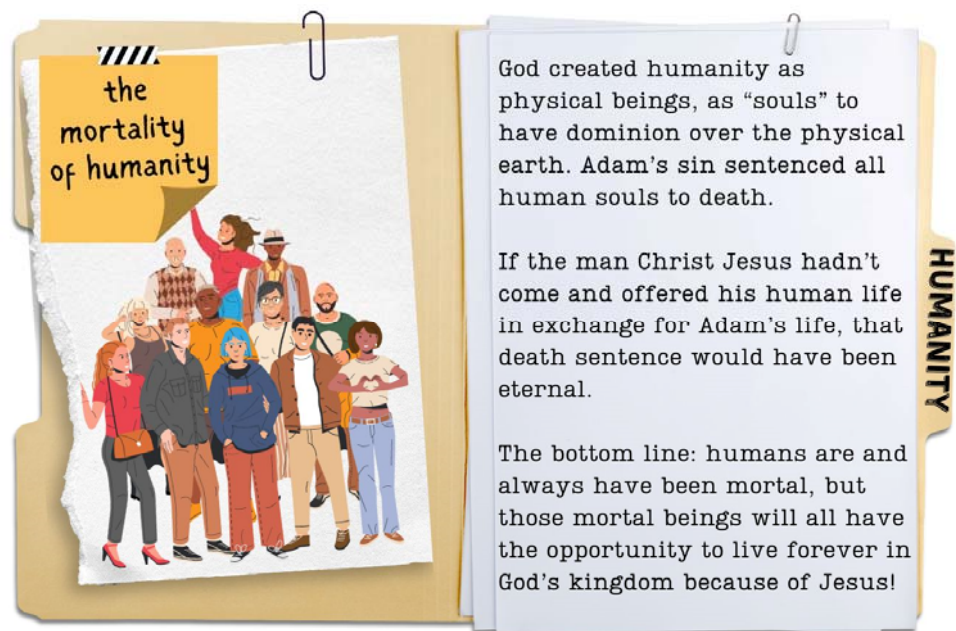
In summary, God created humanity as physical beings—as souls (lives)—to have dominion over the physical earth. Adam's sin sentenced all human souls (lives) to death—the cessation of existence—to return to the dust of the ground.

If the man Christ Jesus hadn't come to earth and offered his human life in exchange for Adam's life, then the death sentence given to Adam would have been eternal for all of humanity.

Humans are and always have been mortal, but those mortal beings will all have the opportunity to live forever in God's kingdom because of the sacrifice of Jesus taking the place of Adam.

Learning about the human soul helps us understand the gift of Jesus' life on a much higher, more profound level, to see how God's plan unfolds. While we recognize that those who are called to follow Jesus do receive a heavenly reward, we have been looking at the general concept of the soul and what it means for humanity.

Those souls will be resurrected. Let's respect the integrity of the Old Testament and the New Testament working together to define who and what human beings are—mortal souls.



**So, do I have an immortal soul?
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...
...Think about it!**

All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.



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Bonus Material and Study Questions

Recommended additional study:

Ep.1227: Where Do the Human Soul and Spirit Go When We Die? (Part I)
Defining what the human soul is and is not, and its destiny at death
<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1227-soul-spirit/>

Ep.1228: Where Do the Human Soul and Spirit Go When We Die? (Part II)
Defining what the human spirit is and is not, and its destiny at death
<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1228-soul-spirit/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

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The concept of an indestructible, immortal soul in Greek philosophy is deeply rooted in the works of influential thinkers like Plato and Pythagoras, and it significantly shaped later theological and philosophical traditions.

1. **Plato's Influence:** Plato, in works like *Phaedo* and *Republic*, argued that the soul is immortal and exists independently of the body. He viewed the soul as the true essence of a person, capable of existing before birth and after death. Plato's dualistic view separated the soul (immaterial and eternal) from the body (material and perishable), emphasizing the soul's journey toward ultimate truth and goodness.
2. **Pythagorean Contributions:** Pythagoras and his followers believed in the transmigration of souls, or metempsychosis, where the soul undergoes a cycle of rebirths. This idea reinforced the notion of the soul's immortality, as it suggested that the soul persists beyond physical death and continues its existence in new forms.
3. **Orphic Mysticism:** The Orphic tradition, a mystical religious movement in ancient Greece, also contributed to the idea of an immortal soul. Orphism taught that the soul is divine and trapped in the physical body, seeking liberation through purification and spiritual enlightenment.
4. **Impact on Western Thought:** These Greek ideas profoundly influenced early Christian theology and Western philosophy. The concept of an immortal soul was integrated into Christian doctrine, blending with biblical teachings to form a dualistic understanding of human nature.

Greek philosophy's exploration of the soul provided a framework for understanding human existence, morality and the afterlife.

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1379: Do I Have an Immortal Soul? (Part II)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1379-immortal-soul-part-ii/>

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

1. How does Jesus' quoting from the Old Testament help us understand the meaning of the Greek word *psuchē*, often translated as "soul" into English? (Matthew 22:36-37, Deuteronomy 6:5)
 - a. Compare the Hebrew *nephesh* and Greek *psuchē*.
 - b. How do Acts 15:25-27 and Acts 27:21-22 explain what a soul is?
2. What is the consequence of Adam's sin? Who does Adam's sin apply to? What is the result of Christ's death? (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) How do Romans 6:20-23 and James 1:19-22 confirm this?
3. What is the word for "spirit" in the New Testament? What is the word for "spirit" in the Old Testament? (Hebrews 4:12, Genesis 1:2-3) How are they used? Give examples:
 - a. John 1:32, John 12:49
 - b. Romans 8:14-16
4. How should our souls respond to God's spirit? Quoting from Hebrews 4:12, what are the "thoughts and intentions" of your heart? Be honest to yourself and to God in your evaluation of your motivations.
5. What did Jesus actually do for us? (John 15:12-13, Isaiah 53:10-12) Summarize why this was necessary:
 - a. What was God's purpose in creating humanity?
 - b. What was the comprehensive result of Adam's sin?
 - c. Why did Jesus come to earth as a human being? Why did he have to give up his spirit nature to become a man?
 - d. What is the opportunity given to all men because of Jesus giving up his human life in exchange for Adam's?
 - e. If we believe mankind is born immortal, that they have the spark of divinity within them, how does that negate the sacrifice of Jesus?
6. After this episode, do you believe you have an immortal soul? Why or why not?