

word heart, as it is used in the Greek New Testament, means “inner self ... intellect” (Dictionary of Biblical Languages). It is the reasoning and thinking part of us that is created in the image of God. To love God with all our heart means that we love Him with all of our inner being – emotions, intellect, etc.

The word soul basically means “the vital force which animates the body....” But it is also used in the New Testament to mean “the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions...” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary). It is not only that part of man that gives physical life (Genesis 2:7), it is also what God has given man to function as a “living being.” We, mankind, have being like the God who created us in His image. He is the living God! (Matthew 16:16), and the God of the living (Matthew 12:27).

The word mind means “the psychological faculty of understanding, reasoning, thinking, and deciding” (Louw & Nida Greek-English Lexicon). Again, it emphasizes that a living God, an intelligent and rational being, created us.

When Jesus said that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind, He was emphasizing that we are to love God with everything we are – with our entire being. However, for the purposes of our discussion about the idea of man having a “sinful nature,” we should be impressed by the fact that our human nature – our heart, soul and mind – came from God. How could that which was created in the image of God be sinful? The human nature is not sinful; it is created in

the image of the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), in whom is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

When we choose to sin, which we all do (Romans 3:23), we are acting contrary to our God given nature (Galatians 5:16-18). It was not man’s nature that was corrupted by sin; it was the nature of the world in which man lives that was corrupted (Romans 5:12).

Our spirit is given by and returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Therefore, it is not the spirit of a sinful nature. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, we are God’s marvelous work (Psalms 139:14). Man’s nature is wonderful and marvelous, not sinful. We are the offspring of God (Acts 17:29). God’s offspring does not have a sinful nature.

In summation, we are born into this world with a pure and innocent spirit (nature). However, because the knowledge of sin is in our world, we all eventually sin and become sinful (1 John 1:8-10). We are forgiven of our sins and restored to our original innocent state when we obey the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 3:19; et. al.). We are born again, i.e. made innocent and pure in newness of life (1 Peter 1:22-23; John 3:3-5; Romans 6:3-4). Man does not have a sinful nature.

## Watch Bible Q-n-A LIVE!

Mondays at 7pm EST on YouTube  
[YouTube.com/PreacherNorm](https://www.youtube.com/PreacherNorm)

Visit The Church of Christ, Northside  
Online @ [NorthsideLaGrangeChurch.org](https://www.NorthsideLaGrangeChurch.org)

## Bible Q-n-A

# Do People Have A “Sinful Nature”?

*Andrew P. asks, “You said that we don’t have a sinful nature. Could you explain that to me in more depth?”*

To understand the idea of “sinful nature” it is first important to know from where that idea comes. It is most closely associated with the doctrine of Total Depravity, which teaches that people are born with inherited sin all the way from Adam. It says that when Adam sinned, his nature became corrupted and that corrupted nature got passed on to all Adam’s offspring. However, that is not what the Bible says.

The most often used passage wrongly used to teach “total depravity” is Romans 5:12-21 (especially verse 12). It is claimed that we inherit Adam’s sin and that’s why we all die. But, again, that’s not what it says. It says, “sin entered ***the world, and death through sin.***” Prior to sin there was no knowledge of rebellion and disobedience. After sin entered the world there was the knowledge of rebellion and disobedience to God’s law. When you compare what Paul says in Romans 5 with the events he is referring to from Genesis 3 it becomes clear that it was ***the knowledge of sin*** that corrupted our world. The tree that Adam was forbidden to eat from was the tree of ***knowledge*** of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). The penalty for violating that command was

death (cf. Rom. 5:12). The serpent lied to Eve, making her believe that God was hindering man by not allowing them to *know* what He knew about good *and evil* (Gen. 3:4-5). Up to that point there was no knowledge of evil, only good. The only thing Adam and Eve knew was obedience and fellowship with God. However, after disobeying God the knowledge of evil had entered into man's world and everything was changed. He *knew* he was naked (Gen. 3:7). They *hid* themselves from God (Gen. 3:8). Now they *knew* evil – disobedience and broken fellowship with God (Gen. 3:11), fear (Gen. 3:10), sorrow and pain (Gen. 3:16), curse (Gen. 3:17) and death (Gen. 3:19). They were separated from the tree of life and began to know what the curse of death was (Gen. 3:24). It is only in Christ that we have our access to the tree of life restored (Rev. 22:2).

Even when we begin to see the consequences of sin's knowledge being present in the world, in Genesis 4, it is not described as an inherited "sin nature" but a matter of choice. Cain *chose* to be the way he was, he wasn't born that way (Gen. 4:6-7). Cain could choose to "rule over" sin's desire. He chose not to and murdered his brother out of hatred and envy. The clear message throughout the Bible is that we can choose to rule over sin, not that we are born in sin.

This is not to say that we can live our lives and never commit a sin. Paul makes it very clear that we all do sin (Rom. 3:23), as does the apostle John (1 Jn. 1:8-10). No matter how diligent we may be to "rule over" sin's desire, there are times when we sin because we don't know that what we're doing is a sin or we are weak in the face of temptation and give in to that desire (James 1:12-15). But, again, that isn't because we're born sinners, it's because we live in a sin sick world. "Sin entered *the world*, and death through sin" (Rom 5:12).

There are many, many passages in Scripture showing that man is not born sinful, i.e. with a sinful nature. For example, the word "converted" in Acts 3:19 means "to return to a point or area where one has been before" (Louw & Nida Greek-English Lexicon). So, when Peter says "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." he is telling them to return to a spiritual condition they had once had. If they were born sinful – with

***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10, NKJV)***

a "sinful nature" – what would that "point or area where one has been before" be? They would have never had a point in their lives prior to this when they were spiritually innocent with God. However, if they did not become guilty of sin until they chose at some point to do wrong on purpose - like Adam and Eve did – then they would have become sinful at that

point. Their being "converted" would mean returning to the spiritual innocence they had before sin entered their lives. We call the time in a person's life when they know the difference between right and wrong and choose to do wrong anyway, the age of accountability. It is at that time that we become guilty of sin, we are not born sinners with a sinful nature.

The prophet Ezekiel explicitly says that the son does not bear the guilt of the father (Ezek. 18:19-20). Jesus said we have to be converted and become as little children – humble and innocent – to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:13). Does that mean to be converted and become wicked little sinners? Of course not! Children are innocent and pure, they do not have a sinful nature.

The Bible says that we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). When the

very first chapter of the Bible says that we are created in "His own image," it isn't talking about our physical bodies. Jesus said that a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), and God is Spirit (John 4:24). So, if a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones and God is Spirit,

then our flesh and bones isn't what is being referred to when the Bible says we are created in the image of God. Rather, it is our spirit – our soul – that is created in His image.

It is our "heart, soul and mind" that is created in the image of God (Matthew 22:37). The