We begin our study in this lesson with the creation of humanity as recorded in Gen. 2:7. The text contains three successive ideas. First, God composed the physical body from the dust of the ground (cf. Isa. 64:8). Next, He infused the breath of life into the nostrils of the lifeless body. Finally, when body and breath came together, Adam became a living soul. Thus, according to the creation account, God did not give Adam a soul, and Adam did not have a soul—Adam was a soul. The soul was not some pre-existent entity that God implanted in the body of Adam. The soul was Adam in his totality—physically, mentally, and spiritually. The soul is not a part of a person; it is the total person.

The words soul and spirit were common in the Greek world, and the same words appear frequently in the New Testament (NT). However, they do not necessarily carry the same meaning in the NT as they did in the Greek world. That is to say, we must not determine the meaning of these words by how Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates understood them, but rather by their cognate Hebrew words in the Old Testament (OT). When we study the doctrine of the state of the dead, the connotation and meaning of words matter. Therefore, in this lesson, we will study three OT Hebrew words and their cognate Greek words in the NT. The OT words are nephesh ("soul," “life,” “person”), ruach (“spirit”), and neshamah (“breath”), and their NT cognates are psyche (“soul,” “life,” “person”), pneuma (“spirit”), and pneue (“breath”).
Read Genesis 2 from the translation of your choice. Write out Genesis 2:7. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
**BREATHE, SPIRIT, AND SOUL**

The “spirit” (ruach) or “breath” (neshamah) is the life force that makes the body operational. These OT words sometimes appear in synonymous parallelism such as in Job 27:3, where the word breath in the first line is parallel to spirit in the second. God gives “breath” to people on the earth and “spirit” to those who walk on it (Isa. 42:5). Both “spirit” and “breath” are in the nostrils through which we breathe (Gen. 2:7; Isaiah 2:22; Job 27:3). When God takes away the “breath,” people die and return to their dust, but when He sends forth His “Spirit” they are created (Ps. 104:29, 30).

The NT word “spirit” (pneuma) parallels the cognate word (ruach) in the OT. The body without the “spirit” is dead (James 2:26); therefore when Jesus gave up His “spirit,” He died (John 19:30). When the beast from the abyss slew the two witnesses, the “spirit” (pneuma) came into their lifeless bodies and they lived (Rev. 11:7–9, 11). The uncommon NT word pnoe (Acts 17:25) means “breath.”

The OT word “soul” (nephesh) is translated “soul,” “life,” and “person.” Jacob took seventy persons to Egypt (Gen. 46:27). The life of the flesh is in the blood, because the blood takes the life-giving oxygen to the entire system (Lev. 17:11). Elijah complained that Jezebel was seeking to take his life (1 Kings 19:10). David pleaded for God to deliver his life from the sword (Ps. 22:20). At the resurrection God will redeem the life from the power of the grave (Ps. 49:15). The word soul appears four times in Ezekiel 18:4, and a proper translation would be, “Behold, all lives are Mine; the life of the father as well as the life of the son is Mine; the person who sins shall die” (literal translation). The soul is not immortal, because it can die! It goes down to the grave or pit at death, not to heaven (Ps. 30:3).

We use the word in the sense of “person” when we say, “Not a soul showed up for the meeting,” “We baptized one hundred souls,” and “I pity that poor soul.” In the Bible, the word immortal never qualifies the words soul and spirit, and not once is consciousness apart from the body attributed to them.

Memorize your favorite verse in Genesis 2. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

Why is an accurate understanding of these terms so important?

How does the larger culture today confuse these terms?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead02-3
“SOUL” TEXTS

Because Genesis 35:18 (KJV; cf. 1 Kings 17:17, 21, 22, KJV) states that Rachel’s soul (nephesh) departed as she died, some Christians assume that Rachel’s immortal soul departed to heaven. This is not what the text says, however. Contemporary versions better explain the meaning of the expression “as her soul departed.” The NIV translates “as she breathed her last,” and the NET has it, “with her dying breath.” It would be proper to translate it thus: “as her life departed.”

The Bible teaches that the human person is a unity capable of physical, mental, and spiritual development. The Greek philosophers were renowned for creating dichotomies. In contrast, Scripture is holistic, teaching that the human person is an indissoluble unity of three inseparable dimensions that function together in harmony, each dependent upon the other. First Thessalonians 5:23 seems to teach that humanity is “spirit, soul, and body”: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (emphasis added).

Does 1 Thessalonians 5:23 really teach that the human person is composed of three separable parts, two of which can live independently from the body? No. Paul did believe that the human person has three dimensions. The text does not say, however, that one part can function independently of the others. The emphasis falls on the wholeness of the person. The physical brain makes it possible to develop mentally, and the mind makes it possible to develop a deep spiritual relationship with the Lord.

There is no reason for this text to confuse us. No one denies that human nature has three dimensions—physical, mental, and spiritual. Nowhere does the Bible tell us, however, that one can function or live independently of the others. Nowhere does any text say that the soul or spirit dimension is conscious and immortal and leaves the body at death. The emphasis is on wholeness, as indicated by the words “completely” and “whole.” The human being needs a physical brain to think, and with the physical brain he or she is able to develop a strong relationship with the Lord.

Ellen White was a firm believer in the unity of the person, and yet she could speak of three dimensions in human nature: body, soul, and spirit. “Ignorance, pleasure loving, and sinful habits, corrupting soul, body, and spirit, make the world full of moral leprosy; a deadly moral malaria is destroying thousands and tens of thousands” (The Adventist Home [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952], 329, emphasis added). The Seventh-day Adventist university in Medellín, Colómbia, has a triangular monument in front of the administration building, and one word appears on each side of it: “hand,” “mind,” and “heart.” Thus, true education is “the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and (cont. on p. 21)
inSpect

What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

- Ecclesiastes 12:7
- Job 27:3; 33:4
- Ezekiel 18:4
- Acts 2:25–27, 31, 32
- 1 Kings 17:17, 21, 22
- Acts 5:1–10

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Genesis 2:1–23?

Review your memorized verse from Genesis 2.

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the *spiritual powers*” (Ellen G. White, *Education* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903], 13, emphasis added).
GAIN THAT IS LOSS

A comparison of Matthew 16:26 with Luke 9:25 reveals that the soul does not reside in a person but rather is the person. Thus, while the Gospel of Matthew warns a person not to gain the whole world and lose his “soul,” Luke warned against gaining the whole world and losing oneself. The comparison indicates that the soul is “yourself.”

Jesus once told the story of a farmer who built ever-larger barns to store what he perceived to be his goods. Instead of sharing, he hoarded his wealth, looking forward to years of prosperity and leisure (Luke 12:16–21). God told him that, on that very night, his soul would be demanded of him. The use of the word soul three times in the KJV is better rendered in the NIV with the words myself, you, and life: “And I’ll say to myself [KJV: “my soul”], ‘You [KJV: “soul”] have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life [KJV: “soul”] will be demanded from you’ ” (vv. 19, 20, NIV).

In our materialistic world, people are obsessed with the accumulation of material wealth, but what can they take with them at death? Can they give houses, lands, money, stocks and bonds, cars, clothing, and adult toys in exchange for their life? The Bible portrays the sad result of selfishness. Ananias and Sapphira held back the money they promised to give for the Lord’s work, and as a result they gave up their “soul” or “life” (Acts 5:5, 10; cf. Acts 12:23, KJV). The KJV translates the word exepsychen as “gave up the ghost,” but the NKJV more accurately renders it as “breathed his/her last.” It is perfectly proper to translate exepsychen as “gave up his or her life.” What a contrast they make with Paul and Silas, who risked their life for the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26).

Hebrews 11 describes the “honor roll” of faith. One of the notable figures on the list is Moses, who as a young man was in line to be the Pharaoh. Moses preferred to be reproached for Christ’s sake than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward” (Heb. 11:24–26, emphasis supplied).

If Moses had chosen to remain in Egypt He would be a mummy in an Egyptian sarcophagus. Instead, he is now in heaven. The apostle Paul wrote that “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:19). Paul wouldn’t have made such a statement if he believed that humans have eternal “souls.” What we have in this life is temporal, but what we will have in the future life with Christ is eternal (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16–18).
THE SOUL THAT SINNETH

It has been shown me that every church among us needs the deep movings of the Spirit of God. O, we would point men to the cross of Calvary. We would bid them look upon Him whom their sins have pierced. We would bid them to behold the Redeemer of the world suffering the penalty of their transgression of the law of God. The verdict is that “the soul that sinneth it shall die.” [Ezekiel 18:4.] But on the cross the sinner sees the only begotten of the Father, dying in his stead, and giving the transgressor life. (Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* [Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894], 95.)

Satan commenced his deception in Eden. He said to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” This was Satan’s first lesson upon the immortality of the soul, and he has carried on this deception from that time to the present, and will carry it on until the captivity of God’s children shall be turned. I was pointed to Adam and Eve in Eden. They partook of the forbidden tree, and then the flaming sword was placed around the tree of life, and they were driven from the garden, lest they should partake of the tree of life, and be immortal sinners. The fruit of this tree was to perpetuate immortality. I heard an angel ask, “Who of the family of Adam have passed that flaming sword, and have partaken of the tree of life?” I heard another angel answer, “Not one of the family of Adam has passed that flaming sword, and partaken of that tree; therefore, there is not an immortal sinner.” The soul that sinneth, it shall die an everlasting death—a death from which there will be no hope of resurrection; and then the wrath of God will be appeased. (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882], 218.)

The only one who promised Adam life in disobedience was the great deceiver. And the declaration of the serpent to Eve in Eden—”Ye shall not surely die”—was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul. Yet this declaration, resting solely upon the authority of Satan, is echoed from the pulpits of Christendom and is received by the majority of mankind as readily as it was received by our first parents. The divine sentence, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20), is made to mean: The soul that sinneth, it shall not die, but live eternally. We cannot but wonder at the strange infatuation which renders men so credulous concerning the words of Satan and so unbelieving in regard to the words of God. (Ellen G. White, *Darkness before Dawn* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1997], 14, 15.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

According to Isaiah 64:8, what is the body composed of (cf. Gen. 2:7)? Why cannot the body function independently of the “spirit” or “breath”?

How does a comparison of Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4, 5 help us understand the meaning of the word soul?

What are examples where we use the word soul as a synonym for a person?

The Bible teaches that animals are souls and have a spirit. What is the difference between animals and humans? (Hint: a refrigerator and a computer are both material objects and have a common power source, but they different).

How important is it to care for the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of human nature? What are the dangers of removing these dimensions to human identity?