

# Born Again

## Lesson 5

## John 3:1-8

### Opener

Have you ever known a person who thinks they have life figured out? Maybe they are well-educated, or have a lot of money or many friends. Maybe they have moved up to a high position in their job, or have received many awards for some accomplishment. But then something happens that makes them question who they are and why they are here. They realize how little they really know.

Maybe you have thought you had life figured out. You have searched for meaning and fulfillment in having a good time, making money, or the approval of others. But something is still missing. What can fill that emptiness you feel inside? Drugs can't. Alcohol can't. Other people can't. Seeking pleasure will only last so long, and then you are back where you started. Empty.

Who or what can fill the emptiness and give you the answers to life's questions?

### Scripture

**After dark one evening, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to speak with Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you."**

**Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."**

**"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"**

**Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."**

**vv. 1-4**

### Discussion

Nicodemus thought he had what it took to be accepted by God. He was one of the most elite and well-respected of the Jewish leaders. He had worked his way up to become a Pharisee (the ruling religious leaders) and a religious teacher. Who could be more acceptable to God than that?

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However, something was missing in Nicodemus' heart. Why else would he have gone to this controversial teacher to talk to him?

Nicodemus' words sound complimentary. He recognizes that Jesus was "sent" from God. But he falls short of acknowledging that He is the Messiah. His words make Jesus sound more like a prophet.

Yet Jesus does not hesitate to get straight to the point. He knew all about Nicodemus and what was missing in this life. So he immediately states that he must be "born again" to enter the Kingdom of God.

Nicodemus was not prepared for the answer Jesus gave. He had worked hard all of his life to achieve salvation, and now this strange man was telling him he had to be "born again"? It seems ironic that a religious leader would be baffled by the words of the Son of God. Many times, God chooses to humble those who think they have all the answers. I Corinthians 1:27 says, "God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise." This is exactly what Jesus does with Nicodemus in this dialogue. He wants Nicodemus to realize his need for God.

**Ask: Do you realize your need for God?**

We all need God. And He will do whatever it takes in our life to make us understand that. Some people wait until there is a crisis in their life before they turn to God. But we need God ALL THE TIME, whether in good times or bad.

Recognizing our need for God is the first step toward salvation. Matthew 5:3 says, "God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them."

Nicodemus thought that following all of God's laws and being well-respected was enough. But it is the attitude of our heart God is concerned with.

**Ask: Do we try to do things to PLEASE God, but we don't KNOW God?  
What pleases God more than anything is a heart desiring to KNOW Him.**

**Ask: Do you know the steps to being born again?**

1. **Realize you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.**
2. **Confess your sin to God.**
3. **Commit your life to God.**
4. **Ask Him to come into your heart and reign.**

vv. 5-8

Jesus continues to explain what it means to be born again to Nicodemus. He describes the two types of birth in verse 5: physical birth ("born of water") and spiritual birth ("born of the Spirit"). Then in verse 6 he describes the origin of these two births: physical life comes from human reproduction; spiritual life comes from the Holy Spirit.

To help understand these two types of birth, you may think of a butterfly. Butterflies are born as caterpillars. Then they go through the metamorphosis process and change into butterflies. Similarly, humans are born. Then when they give their lives to Christ, they undergo a metamorphosis process by becoming a spiritual being, in tune with Christ's Spirit, which dwells within them. The difference is that you can see the change in the butterfly, whereas the appearance of a new believer doesn't change. However, their attitude and actions change as they become more like Christ.

This is hard for some people to accept because for them, "seeing is believing." They only believe in things they can see. How much they miss out on! Jesus gives the example of the wind in verse 8 to explain a person who has the Holy Spirit in them. You cannot see the wind, yet you can see the effects of the wind on trees and anything in its path. Similarly, you cannot visibly explain being born of the Spirit, but you can see its effects on the life of the person.

### Application

**Ask:** Have *you* been born again? If so, can you see the results in your life?

Jesus says that "by their fruits you will know them." See if you are growing in the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Are you becoming more like Christ in your actions, thoughts and attitudes?

Have you never been born again? What is holding you back? Maybe you are like Nicodemus and thought you had life figured out. Don't wait for a crisis in your life to turn to him. Realize your need for him today! Only God can fill the emptiness in your heart you have been trying to fill with other things.

In the words of Anne Graham Lotz, "you need the basic Necessity for real life. You need Jesus. He makes change possible when life isn't enough."