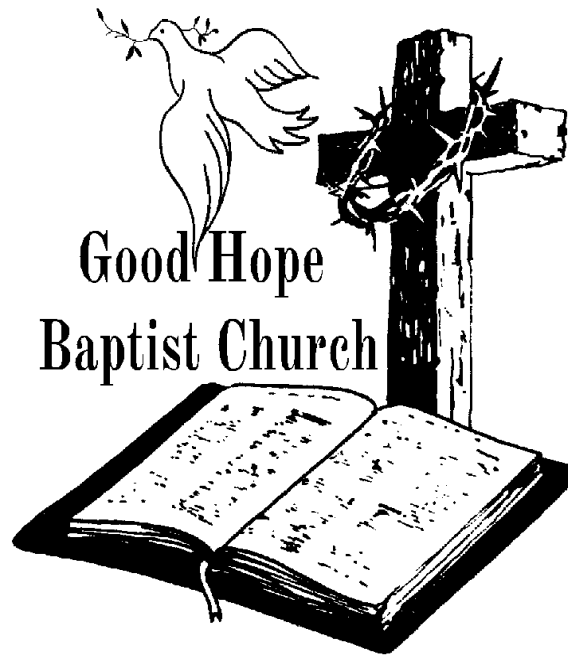


You Must Be Born Again

John 3:3



Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Responsively John 3:3 ^(KJV) ... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Opening Illustration A little boy attended Church for the first time, and afterward someone asked him how he liked it. He said, "The music was nice ... but the commercial was way too long!"

The preaching of God's Word isn't a "commercial" or a sales pitch. When **John the Baptist** preached he said "**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand**" (Matthew 3:2). What that means is "**Turn from the world, turn to God, and be saved - for you could leave this life any day!**" God has made a way to save your soul - turn to Him and be saved. When Jesus came preaching He cried out "**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**" (Mark 1:15) Translation? God has finally revealed His Way unto Heaven Turn from the way of the world, and turn to Him and be saved.

Preaching is to inform, to impart the truth of the Word of God, and to warn that God has provided a Way to be saved - and that Way is only found by a committed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not too long ago Apple and Pixar Films founder **Steve Jobs** passed from this life. Mr. Jobs made a serious impact on the world in his lifetime, and was known as the *Leonardo da Vinci* of our times. He brought digital technology to the masses, and his software programs

made an impact on the fields of *sports, criminal justice, government, education, and personal information management*. The I-Pod, I-Pad and I-Phone are words we're all familiar with, whether we own the technology or not. Of course when Steve Jobs died at age 56 - a visionary leader - newspapers and political cartoonists all assumed he went to Heaven. One cartoon depicted Jobs standing at the Pearly Gates of Heaven (something derived from Christianity) and, as **Saint Peter** fumbles through the Book of Life looking for his name Jobs says **"I have an app for that!"**.

You know what the most interesting thing about all that is? **Steve Jobs was a Buddhist**. He named his company, **Apple**, after the music company **the Beatles** founded, a group that was also immersed in **Eastern Religions**. **Buddhist Monk Kobun Chino** presided over his wedding. Buddhists do not believe in a Supreme Being or the concept of God. Buddhists certainly don't believe that they will one day stand before Saint Peter, the Angel Gabriel, or even the Lord Jesus Christ. Buddhists do not believe in resurrection, but in reincarnation. If Steve Jobs and the Buddhists are right, he is coming back as a bug, a cow, or a higher evolved human. But he's not in Heaven - and that's according to his own faith.

How does one get into Heaven? Jesus preached **"you must be born again"**. Jesus wasn't talking about Buddhist reincarnation - the Bible doesn't support nor even suggest such a thing. Jesus was talking of a *spiritual birth* where God the Holy Spirit comes into your life and makes all things new.

The *born again* are given new eyes, a new mindset, a new heart as those Christians walk in newness of life.

When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and *in surrendered faith receive Him as He is* then God causes you to be born again. The natural state of the supernatural Christian is that we are all **born again**.

Dr. Adrian Rogers once remarked:

"Do you know what we have done? We have begun to talk about Christians in categories. We say, "Well, he's a born-again Christian." May I tell you very plainly that saying "born-again Christian" is redundant and besides, that's the only kind there is! It's like saying *female woman* or *tooth dentist*. Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

1 **You will not get into God's Heaven on your own credentials.** There are a lot of great families in this Church building today, a lot of great family names. I happen to think that my family - though not rich by any means - is a great family name. We have a proud tradition. But I want you to understand this: **No matter who you are, or what you've done in this life, the best place you'll get in eternity on your own credit will be a lake of fire that burns forever!** You are not - within yourself - important enough to get into God's Heaven.

Context John 3:1 ^(KJV) **There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:**

There were two groups of important people in the Jewish world, the **Sadducees and the Pharisees**.

The **Sadducees** were **liberal religious people**, but they were also people who were **born to affluence**. The Chief Priests were Sadducees - they were VIPs - Very Important People. The **Pharisees** on the other hand were **conservative, self made people**. They had worked hard for what they had, and were well to do because of it. **Nicodemus** was a **Pharisee**. But the Bible tells us that, more than just being a Pharisee, he was **a ruler of the Jews**. At this time in Jewish history Israel was ruled by a committee of 70 men called **The Sanhedrin**. Nicodemus was one of the 70 rulers - a very important man. Notice what the Bible says next:

Context **John 3:2** ^(KJV) **The same came to Jesus by night ...**

Nicodemus didn't come to Jesus by day. **He came to Jesus by night**. Why? Because Nicodemus was a *very important person*, and Jesus was - quite frankly - not well loved by the other members of the Sanhedrin. **Pastor Kyle Idleman** wrote in his book *not a fan*:

"At night no one would see him. At night he would avoid awkward questions from the other religious leaders. At night he could spend time with Jesus without anyone knowing. If he could speak with Jesus at night when no one was around, maybe he could begin a relationship with Jesus without having to make any real changes. Here is the reality that

Nicodemus is about ready to have impressed on him: There is no way to follow Jesus without Him interfering with your life.... Following Jesus always costs something. For Nicodemus it would cost him a powerful position. It would cost him the respect of his co-workers. It would cost him the source of his income and livelihood. It would cost him friendships. It would cost him family relationships."

When Nicodemus came to Jesus at night the Lord didn't water the message down. He didn't congratulate Nicodemus for coming. Jesus said:

Focal **John 3:3** ^(KJV) **... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

2 **The most important relationship you will ever have is to be a member of the Family of God, and you enter this Family by New Birth!** No one can see the Kingdom of God until they have been born into the Family of God. Jesus said **"Verily, verily I say unto you"**. Jesus literally said, **"Amen and Amen!" Amen and Amen Nicodemus. Unless you are born again, you will never SEE the Kingdom of God!**

Nicodemus held his relationship with the Sanhedrin to be dearer to him than his relationship with Jesus Christ. This is why he came to Jesus by night. The lost always put Christ in second place!

With a few exceptions, most children are born into this

world with varying degrees of *physical sight* but absolutely no *spiritual sight*. We are all born the first time *spiritually dead but physically alive*. We are all sinners at first birth, separate from God because of our sin nature. The Bible says:

Romans 5:12 ^(KJV) **Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**

Everyone is born into this world physically alive but spiritually dead. They do not understand the things of God. The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 2:14 ^(KJV) **But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.**

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he was curious and perhaps drawn to the Master - but not enough to step out on faith. Jesus tells us **"Your first birth, your position, your great knowledge, none of these things matter. You must be born again."**

3 When we are born again it is God Who does a radical work in us. Being "born again" doesn't mean to work harder at being good. God did not give the Old Testament Law to Nicodemus and the Pharisees to save them, no more than He gave His Law to us to save us. The Bible says **that the Law could not save us because it was weak because our flesh is weak (Romans 8:3)**. We are all sinners in need of the Savior.

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Law was our Teacher:

Galatians 3:24-26 ^(KJV) **... the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**

The Pharisees - along with Nicodemus - believed that they were right with God because they kept the Law. But as sinners they always failed in one point. The Bible says:

James 2:10 ^(KJV) **For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all.**

The Law is an all or none proposition. We must be born again! We must come to God for salvation and, calling on Jesus, trust that He will save. A pastor friend wrote:

Illustrate "Years ago, when I worked at the produce department of an A&P supermarket, we had one-way glass in the fruit stands. One day when I was working, a mother left her small child in a shopping cart right next to a mountain of cherries. This child couldn't have been old enough to talk, but when his mother was out of sight, he looked around to make sure no one was watching him, then he grabbed one of those cherries and put it in his mouth. Just as he did that, I knocked on the glass. It startled him so much that he swallowed the cherry and just about choked on the seed. But that big pile of cherries kept calling to him. He looked at the mountain of cherries

and then he looked all around again to make sure that no one was watching him. He put his hand in the pile of cherries again and when he got it right to his mouth, I knocked again. This time he dropped it and burst into tears. His mother came running down the aisle, wondering what had happened to him. "

This child had two things that we're all born with. The child had an Old Sin Nature that made him want to steal cherries - and a conscience that spoke to him, even as young as he was, telling him that what he was doing was wrong. God gave us the Law as well, telling us *exactly* what the thrice Holy God expects of us. But this Law doesn't fix a thing, it just points us to Christ. When we are born again the Lord says

Hebrews 8:10-11 (KJV) ... I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: ...

Born once, and you will die twice. You will die physically, and enter eternal death in hellfire. Born twice, you will die only once. You will die physically once, but enter into life everlasting.

Context John 3:5-7 (KJV) Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.
Jesus said "Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God".

Here He speaks of *two births*. The first birth is to be *born of water*. That's not a reference to water baptism, by the way. We are told in **Romans**

Romans 6:3 (KJV) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

When we as Christians are baptized that baptism *symbolizes death, not birth*. When we go under the water we are publicly professing that we have surrendered to Christ and that we are in His arms, dead to this world. When we are raised from that water we are symbolizing that we are resurrected creatures, now walking in newness of life. **Baptism does not save, but is a required profession of faith for every believer in Christ. Jesus commanded our baptism (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) and was Himself baptized by being placed under the water (Matthew 3:16). If you are saved you should be baptized if possible. If you are like the thief who professed Christ while hanging from the Cross (Luke 23:43) you need not be baptized. But if there is water - and faith - you should do so!**

Those who are "born again" want to obey the Lord Who saved them *in all things*. The willfully disobedient may perhaps still be woefully without Christ!

The "**born of water and of the Spirit**" that Jesus speaks of is your *natural birth* and your *spiritual birth*. Those who see Heaven are those who are *born twice* - once of a

mother, and once of the Spirit of God. Jesus clearly explained this when He said "**that which is born of the flesh is flesh - but that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. You must be born again (a second time)**".

Those who are born again love the Lord, and want to do His will! The Bible says ...

Titus 3:3-5 ^(HCSB) **For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. 4 But when the goodness of God and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us — not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration {the New Birth} and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**

4 We are not born again until we make a surrendered commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. God looks on the heart of a person (**1 Samuel 16:7**), and Jesus Christ is surely God. **John 1:1** tells us that **the Word was God**. Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God, and He was with God from the beginning, and is God. *Jesus Christ is Creator God.* **John 1:3** tells us that **all things were made by Him**. *Jesus Christ is the God Who Gives Life.* **John 1:4** states that **in Him was life**. *Jesus Christ is Manifest and Revealed God.* **John 1:14** tells us that **the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us**.

Jesus looked at this sincere Nicodemus, a high ranking Pharisee and Ruler of Israel and, seeing his heart, says

"you must be born again". Jesus looks at Nicodemus - coming to visit by night - and says **"You must be born again"**.

I want to say this very clearly: salvation is a free gift from God. But there is no salvation without surrender. There is no forgiveness without repentance. There is no life without death. God offers you the free gift of salvation, but you must give Him all of you.

The Christian follows the Lord Jesus, regardless as to what the world thinks. Jesus said:

Matthew 10:32-39 ^(KJV) **Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. 34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes [shall be] they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.**

Jesus did not commend a Nicodemus who came to Him by night. Jesus told him - **"Nicodemus, you need to be**

born again. You're not where you'll ever see the **Kingdom of God.**" Jesus demands of all His Sheep that we follow Him and do as He commands. Jesus said:

John 10:27-28 ^(KJV) **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.**

That's a package deal! Jesus said:

My sheep hear My voice
(You have to be near Him to do that)

I know them and they follow Me.
(You have to be part of the flock for this to be true)

And I give unto them eternal life.
(Who is the "Them" but the following sheep?)

And they shall never perish.
(Because they are in proximity to Jesus)

If you believe in Jesus then you will follow Jesus. Jesus required of His followers that they believe in Him, and of those that believe in Him that they follow Him.

Seventeen times in the Gospels Jesus commanded "**follow Me**". One of the most telling occasions is recorded in:

Luke 9:59-62 ^(KJV) {Jesus} said unto another, **Follow**

me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. **60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.** **61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.** **62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**

Jesus called to one man, "**Follow Me**", but he wanted to put off following until he had buried his father. According to the commentaries I read this was a reference to an elderly parent who needed the support of that son. Jesus said, "**Let the dead bury the dead, but go and preach the Kingdom of God**". Following Christ is to take preeminence even over normal, non-sinful duties. The second person said "**I'll follow, but want to tell my folks goodbye**". Again, Jesus demanded absolute allegiance, surrender to Him. **Follow Me.**

Those who are "**born again**" are committed to Christ, obedient to His Will.

5 Once we are born again, as believers God begins to change our lives. We become His workmanship. We stop being the world's "Muppets" and start living our lives for our Lord Jesus. The Bible says:

1 John 5:1-4 ^(HCSB) **Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him. 2 This is how we know that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commands. 3 For this**

is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden, 4 because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.

When Nicodemus first came to Jesus, the Bible says **he came at night**. He didn't want to let others know that he was seriously considering the claims of Jesus. He was *ashamed*. But something happened that night he met Jesus. I believe he gave his life to Jesus. How do I know? Because the Bible tells us a little later on the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin were plotting against Jesus. Rather than be part of the crowd we read:

John 7:50-51 ^(KJV) **Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 Doth our law judge [any] man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?**

This was the same Nicodemus because the Bible says that **he came to Jesus by night**. But he defends Jesus. What does he get for doing this? They mock him, saying **"Are you also from Galilee?" (John 7:52)** That was like saying, **"Oh you hillbilly! Is Jesus your home boy?"** Nicodemus stood up for Jesus. He also stood up for Jesus again, after our Lord was crucified. The Bible tells us that a rich man by the name of **Joseph of Arimathea** along with Nicodemus:

John 19:38-40 ^(KJV) **And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave [him] leave.**

He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound [weight]. 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

We don't see the name of Nicodemus mentioned again in the Bible. An unbeliever would look at this and sneer. **"Look at Nicodemus, a VIP and once a member of the Sanhedrin, he gave up everything to be a mortician for a crucified Jew."**

Can I tell you this: if you're born again, you want to serve the Lord in any capacity He calls you. Jesus said **"If you love Me, you will do what I say" (John 14:15)**

Illustrate Those who are born again into the Family of God each have a calling, each have something they need to do for the Lord. Nicodemus' calling was to bury the body of Christ, whereas Peter's calling was to preach about the Risen Savior. Joseph of Arimathea gave Jesus an empty tomb to rest his body in, whereas Joseph of Nazareth found the baby Jesus the embrace of a manger in Bethlehem. As **Pastor Francis Chan** said, **"We have a God Who is a Creator, not a duplicator."** If you're born again you have a job to do for Jesus.

Just the other day my wife had a birthday, and I decided to bake her a cake. In order to do that I went in the

cabinet drawers looking for measuring cups. I needed a cup, a cup and a quarter, and a third cup measures. I found *four 1 cup measuring cups, no third cup measures, and no fourth cup measure*. Even in the kitchen drawer everybody wants to be a full cup.

Your cup is full when you are what Jesus wants you to be. If you're born again, find your place in the Family of God and do it with all your heart. If you're not born again, *come repenting to Jesus Christ and be saved*.

May God touch your heart with His Word.



FOCAL Read Together John 3:3 ^(KJV) ... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15

1 You will not get into God's Heaven on your own credentials. (John 3:1; John 3:2; John 3:3)

2 The most important relationship you will ever have is to be a member of the Family of God, and you enter this Family by New Birth! (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 2:14)

3 When we are born again it is God Who does a radical work in us. Being "born again" doesn't mean to work harder at being good. (Romans 8:3; Galatians 3:24-26; James 2:10; Hebrews 8:10-11; John 3:5-7; Romans 6:3; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Matthew 3:16; Luke 23:43; Titus 3:3-5)

4 We are not born again until we make a surrendered commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Samuel 16:7; John 1:3; John 1:4; John 1:14; Matthew 10:32-39; John 10:27-28; Luke 9:59-62)

5 Once we are born again, as believers God begins to change our lives. We become His workmanship. We stop being the world's "Muppets" and start living our lives for our Lord Jesus. (1 John 5:1-4; John 7:50-51; John 19:38-40; John 14:15)
