

born of the Spirit

John 3:3-15

How do I become acceptable to God? How do I make it into His kingdom?

These are the questions that Nicodemus probably had when he went to see Jesus late at night. Jesus told him that no one becomes acceptable to God on his own. A person has to be born twice, once physically and once spiritually.

Read the following passages and talk about the questions.

▶ Read John 3:3-4

- ▶ Why was Jesus' statement so shocking to Nicodemus?

▶ Read John 3:5-8

In this section, Jesus defines what it means to be born again. Tackle the meaning of His words by focusing on these items:

- ▶ **Verse 5.** What does Jesus mean by "born of water" and "born of the Spirit"? What is the difference between these two?
- ▶ **Verse 6.** To explain what you think Jesus means here, compare and contrast *Flesh* and *Spirit* on a piece of paper.
- ▶ **Verse 7.** What's surprising about the need to be born again?
- ▶ **Verse 8.** The word that the people in Jesus' time used for spirit is *pneuma*, which means breath or wind. Why is this aspect of nature a good way to describe the Spirit of God?

▶ Read John 3:9-12

- ▶ There seems to be a tone of rebuke in Jesus' response to Nicodemus. Why did Jesus express frustration here?

▶ Read John 3:13

- ▶ What is Jesus saying about Himself here?

▶ Read John 3:14-15

In verse 14, Jesus refers to a story about Moses and the rebellious people of Israel in Numbers 21. The people started to speak against God, so He sent venomous snakes against them. God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole and lift the snake up where people could see it. If the people looked up to the snake, they would live.

- ▶ Why does Jesus compare Himself to this symbol of healing?
- ▶ What does it mean to believe in Jesus to have eternal life?

John 3:3-15

³Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

⁴"How can someone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?" ¹¹Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

daily devos faith

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Titus 3:3 lists those things *from which* people need to be saved—being foolish, enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures, malice, envy, and hatred. Left to themselves, these traits develop into a spiritual cancer from which no one can recover. Ask God to show you how these traits may have planted themselves in your heart.

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If you could make a list of the righteous things you have done, what would be included? Do you think these things would be enough to get you into heaven? This verse says that we cannot be saved on the basis of our works. Talk with God about what you're really depending on to save you.

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Every religion, except Christianity, expects you to earn your salvation by sacrifice or by good deeds. Jesus earned your salvation for you through His perfect life and death on the cross. Thank God today for providing this way of salvation for you.

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Because we can never do enough good to get into heaven, God extends His mercy to us. Thank God for His compassion toward you.

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The washing and rebirth of the Holy Spirit happens when we turn from our sin and trust Jesus to save us. Have you ever done this? If you haven't already, ask God to save you. If you are a Christian, think about the way your life is blessed because you are in the Kingdom.

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When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit dwells within you and creates a new life. This is what is meant by renewal. Praise God for this new life He has made available to everyone who believes in Him.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

—Titus 3:5

Cocoon Time with God

For a caterpillar to become a butterfly, it has to spend cocoon time with its Creator. That in-between stage is required in order to make the change from wormy to wonderful. Can you relate?

The journey through adolescence into adulthood can seem like a long "worm" phase. Especially when the time comes for you to transition from a middle school mindset into high school hierarchy—a full four years of inching your way up the social flower stem from freshman to sophomore to junior to senior. And when you factor in all the physical changes and emotional stress that come along with super-sizing your life, there are bound to be moments when you'll want to scream at someone!

However, if you're serious about following in the footsteps of Jesus, He's counting on you to set a Christlike example for those who are morphing around you. But He doesn't expect you to do it alone. Jesus promised His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that's where "cocoon time with your Creator" comes in.

As you set aside time to be alone with God and read His Word, the Holy Spirit (a.k.a. "the Counselor") is ready to help you when you're mega stressed or your temper flares. He'll remind you that the fruit of the Spirit includes gentleness and peace. And you can take a

nourishing bite of His Word any time!

It's hard to know exactly what's happening inside a cocoon. But you can be sure that when the time is right and the process is completed, God will reveal to the world His beautiful creation...you.





Beautiful Feet

It takes more than pedicures and painted toenails to create what the Bible calls “beautiful feet.” The apostle Paul quoted the prophet Isaiah when he said, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” (Rom. 10:15). Feet that carry the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ are called “beautiful.”

Some people choose to be specifically trained to go to foreign lands for the express purpose of sharing that good news. They receive specialized training in Bible studies, often from a Christian university. They also study the language and culture of the country they have selected for their work.

However, all Christians are called to be missionaries in our neighborhoods, workplaces, families, and schools. We are to shine the light of the good news that Jesus saves those who are willing to turn to God and have their sins washed away. Every time we share this good news, our feet become more beautiful.

*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written,
“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”*

— ROMANS 10:14-15



grace

Okay, God, here I am—confident that I can come to You and not be turned away or rejected. I made my way to Your throne and I've come now and I'm waiting for Your mercy. The kind that keeps me from just giving up and helps me persevere. You have a purpose for every mountain and bump in the road. You give me strength and a reason to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

I know You have forgiveness and unmerited grace, ready and waiting for me. I'm looking to receive that grace, the kind that covers my sins and lets me start over, though I don't deserve it. You will bring me the help I need, just at the right time, for You are never too late and never too early.

Thanks, God, I needed that reassurance. Amen.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

—Hebrews 4:16