Reaching the Hurting and Lost
Necessity of New Birth • Message 3
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March 1, 2026

Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- **Thank God for the gift of salvation.**
- **Ask God to help you to point those who are hurting to Him.**
- **Pray to live every day as people who are loved, forgiven, and made new in Christ.**

Scripture Reading:

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."
John 3:1-3 (NLT)

A. Introduction

(Mark 8:36-37. C/R: John 3:3)

This message series is entitled *Reaching the Hurting and Lost.* (3rd on vision).

1. Our church is committed to serving the needs - spiritual, emotional and practical - of our congregation and community through numerous groups of different kinds - that's been true throughout our history; it's part of our identity and displays our character.
2. But the major motivation for our efforts is evangelistic, to create opportunities to introduce people to Jesus. [Emphasized by Bryan when he sowed seeds on you last week.]
3. Jesus declared the *Necessity of New Birth* (today's title) when He said at **Mark 8:36-37 (NLT)** -*"And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?"* [We are trying to help save people's souls.]
4. Mike read our theme verse: **John 3:3 (NLT)** - *Jesus replied* [to Nicodemus and to us]*, "...unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."* [now and eternity]

Life's most important question:

B. How can I be born again?

(John 3:1-16)

[Jesus answers this all-import Question]

- Saved, regenerated, converted, reborn, new birth, mean the same thing as born again.

First, we must know...

1. **Acknowledging Jesus' <u>IDENTITY</u> is not sufficient.**
   (John 3:1-4. C/R: John 5:39-40; Ephesians 2:4-5; James 2:19)

1. **John 3:1 (NLT)** - *There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader* [member of the Sanhedrin] *who was a Pharisee* [Jewish religious party].
2. The Sanhedrin was the 71-member ruling council of Israel who exercised wide-ranging powers under the Roman government, including capital punishment of criminals by crucifixion. (Traced to 70 elders who helped Moses; Numbers 11:16-17.)
3. Pharisees ("separated ones") were an influential religious party primarily from the middle class, who strictly obeyed the law of Moses and followed oral traditions (applications).
4. Pharisees memorized the Pentateuch (1st 5); some Pharisees memorized the entire Old Testament.
5. They were strict in their practice of religion; not all were hypocritical, but they were misdirected about how to obtain righteousness. [John 5:39-40]
6. **John 5:39–40 (NLT)** -*"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life."*
7. **John 3:2 (NLT)** - *After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus.* [For anonymity and more time to speak; representing himself, not the Council.] *"Rabbi"* [means "*teacher,"* title recognized expertise in interpreting Scriptures]*, he said, "we all* [pl.] *know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."*
8. Nicodemus knew Jesus wasn't trained as a rabbi, but recognized God was the source of His teaching and miracles, so he addressed him respectfully, was supportive, didn't attack.
9. He didn't share the suspicion and hostility of other religious leaders toward Jesus.
10. Jesus' response was a bit surprising: **John 3:3 (NLT)** - *Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again* [or *born from above*]*, you cannot see* [!] *the Kingdom of God."*
11. Nicodemus was being supportive, but Jesus seems dismissive (almost insulting).
12. Jesus was already facing opposition, especially from Pharisees, but He didn't embrace this man or try to recruit him into becoming a follower, rather, he challenged Nicodemus.
13. But wasn't Nicodemus saved? I don't think so according to Jesus' reply.
14. He accepted Jesus' identity as from God - but that's not sufficient for spiritual birth.

15. **James 2:19 (NLT)** - *You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.*
16. Nicodemus was striving to enter the kingdom of God by practicing human righteousness - by being a descendant of Abraham, obeying the law of Moses, and observing religious rituals (particularly circumcision), so he didn't understand the requirement of new birth.
17. **John 3:4 (NLT)** - *"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"* [Shocked? Offended? Confused?]
18. Physical rebirth wasn't possible and he was unaware of the possibility of spiritual birth.
19. APP.: Do you understand what "born again" means? Do you know how it happens?

I ask again, *How can I be born again*?

2. A <u>SPIRITUAL</u> birth is required.
(John 3:5-13. C/R: Romans 8:14-16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)

1. **John 3:5-7 (NLT)** - *Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit* [Gk. *pneuma,* means "spirit, breath or breeze]*. Humans can reproduce only human life* [Gk. *sarx = flesh; born of water*=amniotic fluid]*, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life* [Gk., *what is born of the Spirit is spirit*]*. So don't be surprised* [Nicodemus was!] *when I say, 'You must be born again.'"*
2. Jesus explained the operation of the Holy Spirit by comparing Him to the wind.
3. **John 3:8 (NLT)** -*"The wind* [also Gk. *pneuma*] *blows wherever it wants. 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."* [Jesus: "Nicodemus, you aren't in control of this."]
4. Only the Spirit can produce the spiritual birth required for entrance into God's kingdom.
5. It is receiving a new life, a new existence, that is a supernatural transformation which creates a spiritual awareness and an everlasting spiritual existence.
6. The Spirit of God regenerates you, convicting you of sin (He's holy!), convincing you of truth, confirming that you have been born again by His continual, permanent presence, which enable your communication with God. (Romans 8:14–16; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; Ephesians 1:13–14)
7. **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)** - *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!* [You are changed! Transformed!]
8. Like wind, the Spirit is beyond our control, but proof of His work is apparent, undeniable. [ILL.: Seen by significant changes in lives of people who possess the Spirit.]
9. **John 3:9 (NLT)** - *"How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.* [Confused!]

10. **John 3:10-13 (NLT)** - *Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you* [religious teachers and other Israelites] *won't believe our testimony. But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things* [like becoming born again]*, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things?* [Such as the relationship of Father and Son, God's kingdom, eternal plan of redemption.] *No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven.* [So He knows!]
11. Nicodemus was attempting to fit Jesus and His message into the human religious system he already knew and had pursued diligently as a Pharisee; his efforts were misdirected!
12. ILL.: I was like Nicodemus: Raised in church. Believed what the Bible said about Jesus. Thought I understood the gospel. Made a profession of faith, been baptized, rededicated a few times, but my efforts were human and inadequate; not experienced a spiritual birth!
13. Being born again is an experience that happens to you, not by you; it's a gift of grace!
14. Correct beliefs, religious practices, and good works, can't cause you to be born again.
15. **Ephesians 2:8–9 (NLT)** - *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*
    [also, Titus 3:5]
16. APP.: Have you been born again spiritually?

Being born again includes…

3. Accepting the necessity of Jesus' <u>SACRIFICE</u>.
(John 3:14-16. C/R: Numbers 21:4-9; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 4:9-10)

1. Jesus referenced an event from Israel's forty years of wilderness wandering (found at Numbers 21:4-9) as an analogy to explain how spiritual birth happens.
2. **John 3:14-15 (NLT)** - *And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.*
3. In that passage, when the people grew impatient with the long journey, they started complaining against God and Moses and criticizing their food (Manna) and water.
4. What was God's response? He sent poisonous snakes which bit the people and they died!
5. The people panicked, they confessed to Moses their sin against God and him; they asked him to pray for God to remove the snakes, so he did - and God answered!
6. Did He tell the people how to poison or catch and kill the snakes? Did he send a mob of mongooses to eradicate them? Did He provide a venom antidote? Let's see...

7. **Numbers 21:8-9 (NLT)** - *Then the LORD told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!* [The people only looked!]
8. Nicodemus, a scriptural expert, would know this event which displayed God's judgment against the people's sin and His mercy to heal, but how did it relate to being born again?
9. Looking acknowledged their need: they were poisoned and would die because of sin.
10. Looking was an act of desperation; there was nothing they could do for themselves!
11. They were totally dependent on the grace of God to save their lives - and He did!
12. As the bronze snake was lifted up on a pole, Jesus was lifted up a. [Gk. word *hupsŏō,* = to lift up, used by Jesus to refer to His own crucifixion at John 8:28; 12:32-33.]
13. When we believe that Jesus received the punishment for our personal sin in His crucifixion [2 Corinthians 5:21], we can be forgiven by the Father.
14. That belief [Gk. *pistĕuō*] is complete trust and reliance, utter dependence, full faith and confidence, because we can do nothing to heal ourselves from sin that is poisoning us.
15. By our belief, we have our sins forgiven, are born again, and receive eternal spiritual life.
16. **John 3:16 (NLT**) - *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*
17. Was Nicodemus ever born again? There was strong evidence he was at John 19:38-42, he openly identified with Jesus when he aided Joseph of Arimathea to prepare Jesus' body for burial following His crucifixion and lay Him in a garden tomb.
18. APP.: Do you want to see the kingdom of God? You can by believing! Trusting! Relying!