

SPIRIT OF LIFE
'GOD IS' SERIES - WEEK 2
Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is so good to see you here this morning. Please turn in your Bibles to John Chapter 3 where we are going to be this morning. Last week we had a great kick off to our new series on the Spirit of God and we will be talking about the Spirit of life this morning. Last week Pastor Dan kind of gave an introductory of the Holy Spirit to us, like who He is, and His role in our lives. He talked about so many wonderful things the Holy Spirit does in our lives. And over this entire series we are going to talk about how the Spirit indwells in us, how the Spirit comforts us, how the Spirit helps us, and all the empowering works the Spirit does in our lives.

But here is what I know - many times all these benefits of the Spirit cannot be experienced by us if we do not first have a genuine relationship with Him. So we will have to talk about the starting point of this relationship. One of the points that Dan talked about last week was that the Holy Spirit is personal. He is personal, but what does that mean?

When I think about a personal relationship the first person I think about is my wife. We are going to be celebrating 22 years of marriage this May and I am super excited about that. (*Applause.*) And I can tell you the story of the first time I saw my wife across the quad at college. She had long blonde hair and blue eyes, and I wanted to go meet that girl right then. I remember the first time I asked her out on a date. That probably sounds very antiquated nowadays to have to ask for a date, but we actually did that back then. I had to go up to this girl and ask her if she wanted to go out with me on a Friday night. And it was a scary thing.

I could tell you that I know where I was when I decided I wanted to marry this woman. I could tell you about when I asked her to marry me. I could tell you the story of our first knock down drag out fight after marriage. Do you remember those times, guys? We think when we get married it is all going to be wonderful, right? I could tell you story after story of moments of my life with Liz and how our relationship has deepened with experiences we have shared.

Why do I remember these things? It is because I have a relationship with my wife. I could stand up here all morning long talking about different stories in my almost 22 years of marriage, but the question we have to ask ourselves is this - do I have stories to tell about my relationship with God? Do I have similar things I can talk about when it comes to my relationship with God?

And when we talk about the Holy Spirit we remember He is the third person of the Trinity. And when we talk about having a relationship with the Holy Spirit we need

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to remember He is the main presence of how God relates to us as human beings. So when I say we need to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit and a relationship with God it is the same thing. And the question is - do you have that same story? I think one of the tragedies that can happen in a church like this, and in our world today, is that we can be around religious things. You can grow up in church, you can attend church regularly, you can study the Bible, and you can do all these external things, be very active in religious life, but still have no personal relationship with God.

So we are going to look at someone who almost missed it. You can miss out on this relationship even being around some of the most godly of environments. The person we are going to look at today is a man by the name of Nicodemus. We are going to read through John Chapter 3 and verses 1 through 15. Now Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels, and they are very similar. They have a lot of the same style and a lot of the same stories are found in them. The gospel of John is very unique. This is a gospel that was written a couple of decades after the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

And John really focuses on very personal intimate and private conversations that Jesus had with individuals or with groups of people. Whereas the following of Jesus' life is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke as well as the grand stories, John has snapshots of these moments Jesus had with individuals. And Nicodemus is an example of one of those moments.

Let's read about Nicodemus and his encounter with Jesus. *"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with Him.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into mother's womb and be born?'"*

"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

"Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you

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do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”

We are going to talk about this fascinating story, and whether you grew up in church or not, whether you are new to church or now, this is one of my favorite stories because it is the story about someone who was a lot like me. I grew up in a very religious household. It says right here that, “*There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*” Do you know what that meant? It meant that Nicodemus was a Type A person, he was an achiever in his life. He was the kind of guy that was both a Pharisee and a ruler, which would mean he was from two different groups of people. Pharisees were the people who knew the Law of Moses and took them very seriously. They believed all 613 commandments of Moses and they tried to keep all of them. They even built laws and rules around those 613 commandments. Nicodemus was a strict person who was doing everything he could to prove himself as a holy individual to the people.

It also says Nicodemus was a ruler which means he was a part of the Sanhedrin and that meant he was a political leader as well. Nicodemus was really covering his bases by trying to make sure he was good with God by obeying all the commandments and he was trying to make sure he was good with everyone else by being a ruler in the Sanhedrin. This was super achiever Nicodemus, making sure he had all his bases covered.

Then he goes to see Jesus at night. Why do you think he would go to see Jesus at night? Some people might think it was because Jesus was really busy during the day and Nicodemus wouldn't want to interrupt Him. No, the reason why Nicodemus went to Jesus at night was because Nicodemus cared about his own reputation. He was a Pharisee, and a ruler and he was afraid of being seen talking with Jesus who was not very popular among Nicodemus' peeps. He knew if he was seen talking with Jesus he would get a lot of questions, but because he had questions of his own he came to Jesus by night.

So he comes to Jesus and he says, ‘*Okay, here is the deal. We know that you are from God. Behind the curtain we know that the miracles that you are doing are supernatural and no one could do these things unless they were from God.*’ Nicodemus is trying to show Jesus a lot of respect. He calls Him ‘Rabbi,’ and says, ‘We know you are from God.’ And Jesus told Nicodemus he was missing it. He says, “*Unless you are*

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born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.” All the things that Nicodemus was doing did not matter.

But Nicodemus does not understand what being born again means. He asks Jesus if he has to enter back into his mother's womb again. Now we need to understand what Jesus was doing. Especially in the gospel of John, Jesus uses phraseology that is physical in nature to explain a spiritual reality. So when Jesus talks about being born again He is talking about something very spiritual. He uses different words for different people. For example - when He is talking to the woman at the well at John Chapter 4, He doesn't tell her she must be born again. No, He tells her she needs to drink from the water that He can give her that will give her eternal life.

He meets people where they are and in the different issues that they are experiencing. And He uses these analogies with different people. The woman in Samaria asked for the water so she could drink it. She didn't get the spiritual nature of Jesus' conversation and neither did Nicodemus. Later on Jesus is talking to a group of people who want to be fed again. And Jesus tells them they have to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Does He mean the physical? No, He is talking spiritually.

So what does He mean to be born again? He explains to Nicodemus that he needs to not just be born of the water, or physically born, but he needs to be spiritually reborn. He is telling Nicodemus that all the things that he is trusting in don't matter. All the faith and trust he had in his own works, his obedience, his status and position in life did not matter to God. And one of the things that we need to understand is in order for us to have a dynamic relationship with Jesus we have to be born again. A dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit begins with being born again. And that is what Jesus is talking to Nicodemus about. He is introducing him to this idea of spiritual rebirth.

Jesus told Nicodemus that the Spirit, and He uses the word 'wind' moves whatever He wants. Nicodemus may have thought he was in control of his life, that he had it all figured out, but Jesus is telling him it is about trusting in Him and in His plan. So then Nicodemus is frustrated and is still not getting it. He says, ***“How can these things be?”*** And Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he can't understand the Bible unless he understands who He is and what He came to do.

One of the things that I think can happen to us just as it happened to Nicodemus is we can run on the treadmill of religion. We can lean a ladder on the house of what we are trying to climb and think we are doing it for God, but we can miss Him. And we need to realize that the entry point for a relationship with God and with the Holy Spirit is always about being born again. We cannot move ahead in life, we can't get a deeper

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understanding of who God is unless we first begin with the understanding of being born again.

Maybe you are sitting there and thinking, *'I get that, but how do I do that? How does someone become born again, because you said the Spirit moves as He wills? So do we just stand around and wait for Him to come to us?'* Then, *'oh, oh, oh, I'm born again.'* Is that what happens? What happens in the process of how God gets us to the place where we are born again? I believe Jesus was taking Nicodemus through this journey, through this starting point. *'Nicodemus, you have a lot to be proud about for yourself, but unless you come to me, unless you are born again, you are going to miss me completely.'*

The first thing we have to do in order to have this dynamic relationship and being born again is we have to have the humility to start over. And that is hard, isn't it? Think about starting over in life and knowing how difficult that would be. I remember playing a game with my children when they were very young. And this is probably one of the first games we always play with our children - Candyland. How many remember playing Candyland?

Now the reason why we start with Candyland as the first game we play with our kids is because it takes zero strategy. You pull the card and if it is purple you go to the purple square. It is not that difficult, but there is something beautiful about that game because you might have that stack of cards and you pull up that certain card and it is ice cream. *'Oh yes, I got the ice cream first.'* And that means you can skip the entire board and go right up almost to the end. You are almost clear because you are only about five spaces from the Candyland. And then you pull a card and it is the candy cane forest. And you have to go all the way back down. Right?

And remember the look on your kids' face when they get that card to the candy cane forest. Now listen, as an adult playing that game we are like, *'Whatever.'* Or I am hoping you are like that, okay? I know some of you probably cheat in that game. *'I have never beat my dad at Candyland.'* But starting over in a game like Candyland is really no skin off our back, right?

But what would happen if you lost all of your retirement income this afternoon? How would that feel? How would you feel if all the investments you had made over all the years, your 401k, 403b, Roth Ira's and whatever you had just was gone? How would that feel about starting over from that? That would be hard. That is a lot harder when you think about the humility you would feel about starting over.

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Now think about Nicodemus. He was a man who felt like he had achieved a lot. He was a Pharisee, he was a ruler of the Jews, and he thought he was doing everything right. And the reason why Jesus used this analogy, "***You must be born again,***" is He was saying, '*Nicodemus, you have to start all over again. You have to start over because all of the status, the position you have, all the things you are trusting in won't work. You have to have the humility to realize that those things don't mean anything to God.*'

Our good deeds, our righteous accomplishments, our positions of power, whatever we have built in our lives don't mean anything to God. God is saying that we have to have the humility to realize it is not about our own works, or our own achievements. God always wants us to meet Him on His terms and not our own terms.

Maybe the disconnect between you and God for most of your life has been because you have been saying, '*Okay God, I will do this but it has to be on my terms. I will follow you at a distance on my terms.*' And Jesus tells Nicodemus that if he wants to come to Him he must let the Holy Spirit take control. He has to come to Jesus on His terms.

I think one of the things that God does is He confronts every single one of us. He confronts our pride, He confronts what we are holding on to, and He confronts the things that mean the most to us. When God says we have to be born again He is saying, '*I want all of those things. Give me your status. Give me your power. Give me those relationships.*'

I can tell you that one of the things that keep people from starting over is the fear of what other people might say. '*What would my parents say? What would my spouse say if I had to put away all these things and say I was going to purely follow Jesus? It is Christ alone. To start over I am putting away all of the things in my life. The only thing that matters is what Jesus leads me to do. The only thing that matters is my faith in Him.*'

We have to confront that pride. We have to confront the strongholds in our life of where we are saying, '*This is more important to me than God is.*' Jesus was confronting that in Nicodemus. '*You came to me by night because you are scared of what people might think about you. You are holding on to your position as a Pharisee and as a ruler. I am just telling you this, Nicodemus, if you want the kingdom of God, if you want to know me, if you want to be right with God, you have to start over. You have to do it my way.*'

And I can tell you that doing in God's way takes a lot of humility. It takes humbling ourselves and saying, '*All right God, I am not going to interfere, I am not*

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going to try a make a deal with you of 50 percent your way and 50 percent my way.'
That doesn't work with God. It has to be 100 percent His way or it doesn't work.

I think one of the ways that this affects us even as believers is understanding that we must be born again is the beginning point, it is the entry point. And one of the things that we can forget, even as people who have been born again, and even as people walking with Jesus for years, is the mistake we make when we look back in our lives and forget where we were. We see the growth and maturity that has transpired or taken place and the good decisions we have made since we have known Christ. We may have overcome addictions or stopped sinning the way we used to. And many times I think as Christians we start getting more proud in where we are today as Christians because we have forgotten where we were. We forget how we started. And Christians, followers of Jesus, should be some of the most humble people on the face of this planet. We need to remember that anything good in our lives, any accomplishments, any overcoming, any power that we have seen God do in our lives is all from Him. It is not us; it is Him.

Even as a believer we need to come back to this idea of remembering when we were born again, and it should blow us away. We need to remember if it wasn't for the Spirit of God working in our lives, we would be just as proud as Nicodemus. We would be holding onto something, and we would be lost, dead in our sins.

So the first step we need is the humility to start over. Are you willing to do that? Some of you are still holding on to something. Maybe it is that you are holding onto your church attendance, or you are holding onto your confirmation, or you are holding onto some good works. Maybe you believe in Jesus, but if Jesus were to ask you why should He let you into heaven, what would your answer be? *'I believe in you as well as something else.'* And that is not the answer. The answer is Jesus alone, and that starts with saying you put all of your faith and trust in Him.

Our second point is this - we not only have to have the humility to start over, but we must be willing to turn it all over to God. We have to have the faith to come over to Jesus. Now one of the things in this conversation is I believe Nicodemus was loving being able to talk with Jesus personally. ***"You must be born again."*** *'Oh really, what do you mean by that? Explain this to me.'* I am sure Nicodemus was really enjoying this theologically rich conversation.

Have you ever known someone who just loves to argue and debate? They just love to sit there and talk for two hours. They are not going to get anywhere, but they are definitely having a good conversation. They just like to debate. And I am sure that Nicodemus was really enjoying this conversation because it was testing his knowledge of

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the Old Testament. *'What do you mean being born again? I am not familiar with that in the Old Testament.'*

Here is the thing - we know that the Old Testament talked about this concept of new life a lot. When Nicodemus says he is not getting it may be that he meant to say, *'I don't know if I have ever heard this before.'* I am going to share with you a couple of passages of Scripture. This is not a predominant theme in Scripture, but it is mentioned.

The first passage is in Ezekiel Chapter 11. ***"And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God."*** See, He says right there in Ezekiel, *'Listen, I am going to give you a new heart. I am going to create something new inside of you. Something you haven't had before.'*

So it is a concept of new life, of a beginning again. There is another verse in Jeremiah Chapter 31 and verse 33 where it says: ***"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*** He is saying He is going to give them a new heart, which is the same thing we saw in Ezekiel. A new heart, a new creation; there was something new He was doing. We also see this in Psalm 51 where David is writing after his sin with Bathsheba of adultery and his murder of her husband. He says this very powerful thing: ***"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*** There is this idea of creating a new heart.

What we have to understand is that this was a theme throughout the Old Testament. So what was Nicodemus saying when he says, *'Hey, I am not getting this. How can these things be? I am not sure that I get it?'* Jesus understood what Nicodemus was talking about because Jesus knew that Nicodemus understood the concept but he didn't know how to get there.

So you might understand the knowledge of it, but if you don't understand how to do it, it is meaningless. For example, I think I have shared this illustration with you before, but I don't swim. In fact I can't swim, okay? I mean I can dog paddle, I can tread water for a short period of time, but thank God that I am 6 foot three inches tall because most pools only go to six feet of depth. And as long as my toes can touch the bottom of the pool I am good.

Now my mom grew up in South Florida and she loves swimming. She wanted all of her kids to swim well, and by God's grace three of her four children do know how to

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swim. I am the fourth child, I am the black sheep, and I cannot swim. I don't know how to swim even though I took swimming lessons every summer for eight years. Finally my mom just gave up.

I went to a Bible college and we had this summer ministry team where we had a basketball team that would travel around, and we would do basketball camps all around the country. We went to the Dominican Republic and we did basketball camps for the kids there and we would share the gospel with them. Now before you think I am that great of a basketball player you need to understand that they needed a preacher guy on the team, okay? So I passed the basketball around, and I rebounded, but the rest of the guys did the real heavy lifting of the basketball team.

I remember one week when we were doing this basketball camp on the campus of our college and we had a bunch of kids there from the Bronx come to be a part of this camp. A lot of these middle schoolers were in my group, and I taught them basketball for the week. And we had a pool at our campus. I noticed that none of the kids during free time would ever go to the pool. So I asked them why they didn't want to swim in the pool and they said they didn't know how to swim. So I told them I would teach them how to swim. (*Laughter.*)

I am not kidding. I taught three kids that week how to swim. I knew exactly what to do. I knew how to start them off. I knew the first step, the second step and so forth. I taught three kids how to swim, but I still could not swim. Do you know why? It was because the moment my feet, my tippy toes touch the bottom of the pool I have no faith in my ability to stay afloat. I know how to do it, but I have no faith I can do it.

So I can know something about swimming, but my faith is not there; therefore I am not going to be a swimmer. And I think many times that is the trap we fall into. We know so much about God. We can even know the facts about the cross. We can know the facts that Jesus came to die for sinners. But if we do not take that step of faith and see Jesus for who He really is and place our faith and trust in Him alone, we will miss Jesus. We will never be able to enter into that relationship with the Holy Spirit and grow in that relationship. We will miss all the wonderful benefits of knowing and living with the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Nicodemus was saying that he still didn't get it. And so Jesus is explaining it by telling him he didn't understand it in earthly terms because he didn't understand who Jesus was. Jesus was having this theological conversation with Nicodemus. Verse 13 is the turning point when Jesus says, "***No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.***" Jesus is going back to the beginning where

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Nicodemus said, *“**Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with Him.**”*

Jesus is asking Nicodemus if he believes He is just a prophet speaking for God, or if he believe He is the Son of God. Jesus is saying, *‘If you really want to know me, if you really want to respect me, if you really want to honor me, it is more than just believing that I am speaking for God. No, you must believe that I am God.’*

Look again at verse 14 where it says: *“**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.**”* Let’s stop right there and ask the question, *‘Why does Jesus use this illustration?’* This is referring to the story in the book of Numbers Chapter 21 about the fiery serpents. The children of Israel have been wandering through the wilderness after being released from captivity. They wandered for forty years, and they were always complaining about the things they missed in Egypt. And God was done with it. He had saved them from slavery, from bondage, from certain death, and He wanted to give them the Promised Land. He wanted to give them a new life and all the wonderful things He has planned for them, and they just continued to complain and complain.

So finally God sends fiery serpents that start biting the Israelites and many die. Moses talks to God and asks Him to save the people. So God tells Moses to make a bronze serpent on a pole, and whoever looks at the bronze serpent will live. Now this is kind of weird, because why would Jesus mention this story to Nicodemus? What did this story have to do with being born again?

You have to understand something. Jesus is trying to point out something to Nicodemus that will make the difference in his understanding of himself. He says, *“**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.**”* Jesus was saying, *‘Nicodemus, you have to see yourself as one of those grumbling, complaining Israelites in the desert. You are a sinner. You are helpless.’*

The reason why God sent serpents is because the Israelites wanted the things of Egypt. And if you are familiar with Egypt, what is on the headdress of Pharaoh’s hood? It was a serpent. God was saying if they wanted Egypt He would give them Egypt. See some people are like, *‘Oh, God is so mean.’* No, God was saying, *‘If you really want Egypt, this is what Egypt is like. It is certain death.’* These serpents that would bite them would kill them, and if they went back to Egypt they would be going back to a place of death, because it was a place of sin and slavery. But God gave them what they wanted.

The serpent was to be made out of bronze. Why a bronze serpent? It was because the serpent was a symbol of death, but looking at the bronze represented life. And that is

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what the cross represents. From the very beginning in Genesis Chapter 3 after Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil they had to die. And it was from the curse of that tree that death and condemnation and sin entered into the world. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that just as a tree was used to bring in death and sin, He would be lifted up on a tree that would bring about the salvation of humanity.

The picture of what Jesus is and what He has done is throughout the entire Bible and what He is telling Nicodemus is this: *'You have to see yourself as hopelessly sinful and you have to see me as your only hope. That is what it takes. You have to humble yourself and start over. You have to put your trust in me alone and not in anything else for your salvation. And if you do that you can have eternal life.'*

Many of us are familiar with the next verse that says: ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*** It is the love of God that gave Jesus to us. It is the love of God that is inviting you this morning to have a relationship with Him. The love of God may be calling to you this morning saying: *'I want you. I want you to come to Jesus. I want you to come to me because I love you so much.'* And when we have the humility to start over and the faith to come over, what it leads to is the hope and the makeover.

Jesus says, *'If you believe in me, you will have eternal life.'* That is a very profound and powerful statement. Remember Nicodemus has been climbing the wrong ladder his entire life. He has been climbing the ladder of achievement as a Pharisee and a ruler. And here is what is amazing - when you start over with Jesus, you don't just start over at level one, because He gives it all to us. He gives us everything that He has. He gives us His Spirit, He gives us salvation, and He gives us His righteousness. He gives us every blessing, and He gives it all to us from the moment we trust in him. He may ask us to start over, but when we start over with Him we have it all. That is what it means to put our faith and trust in Him. We don't have to work our way up. When we start over with Jesus He has already given us the hope. Whatever is broken in our life will be made new.

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in II Corinthians Chapter 5 and verse 17. Listen to this verse: ***"Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old is passed away; behold the new has come."*** Here is what happens when you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior: the Holy Spirit enters into our life and we are given new life. It is a promise that we are a new creation which means that everything that is bad, wicked, wrong, broken and dysfunctional in our life will be made new.

The same works the Spirit of God did in Genesis Chapter 1 where He was hovering across the waters in the darkness of the universe and He brought order and beauty and light, the same work that God the Spirit did in creation He will do in our lives

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as well. Whatever is broken, whatever is in chaos, He will make into a new creation. He gives us new life and everything that is wrong in our lives He can make right. That is the hope we have every single day we wake up as followers of Jesus.

Do you have hope today? Do you see the narrative of your life as one where you are writing it? Or do you see the narrative of your life as what God is doing? The Spirit of God is always working in our lives once we have Him. He is always working to make us more like Jesus. We can have hope today that He loves us and that He is not going to let us go.

I remember thirteen years ago when we bought our house in Denver, and it was only half way finished. It was a 1200 square foot finished home with a 1500 square foot unfinished building. We bought the house with the hope that we could renovate that unfinished 1500 square feet, and make it into a 2700 square foot house. But here was the problem - I am not a handyman. We bought this with a big trusting God thing, but I didn't have a clue. This was before all the fix-it videos were on You Tube, and I just didn't even know where to begin.

Do you know what it took? It took two men from my old church stepping in, who knew I didn't know anything about building, but they did. And they came and helped me every Saturday for two years to refinish this house. My hope was so different after those two guys said they got it. I just showed up every Saturday morning and they told me what to do.

You see when you let the Holy Spirit into your life He knows you don't know how to do this, but He does. And He works, and He moves, and He doesn't let us go. Some renovation projects take five years, some take ten years and some take twenty years, but He doesn't let us go. We can have hope today that the Spirit of God will transform our life and make everything that is broken beautiful.

I have a couple of questions that I want to leave you with this morning. Number one is this - have you been born again? That experience of truly discovering the new life, that you have the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit has you. If you are not sure about that, do not leave here this morning without knowing the answer to that question.

The second question is this - maybe you are born again, but how is the Spirit growing you in humility and hope? How is the Spirit of God growing you in humility and hope? We need to realize that the humility of understanding our starting point, that everything we have is because of Him, and the promise of what He is going to do in us and through us will not wane with time? It does not wane with our failures; it keeps growing. Is the Spirit of God growing in you as you walk with Him?

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I want everyone to grab a Connect card in the back of the seat in front of you. We did this a couple of weeks ago and I want us to do it again. Maybe you will have to grab the Contact card on the back of your own seat. Please grab a card this morning and I want you to do something for me. Everyone in this room can write down something on the card. Maybe you are sitting here this morning thinking, *'You know, Ben, I have a lot of questions. I am like Nicodemus and I don't understand what this being born again is all about. I have questions.'*

Or maybe you want to come up and talk with a pastor this morning. There will be one right over here. Or maybe you are like Nicodemus and you would rather meet with someone later. You would rather meet with someone at night because you have a lot of questions and you don't know where to begin. If you are someone here this morning that has a lot of questions, I don't care how long you have gone to church, I don't care what your status is. Nicodemus had a lot more position than any of us in this room has and he was willing to humble himself and come to Jesus.

Maybe you have questions and you would write down on your card: *'Ben, I want to meet with someone.'* If you have questions and you want to talk with someone about being born again then just write that down on the card and someone this week will contact you and set up a time to meet with you.

The second thing is this - maybe you are thinking, *'Ben I am born again, but there is someone in my life that is not and I need you to pray for this person.'* I would like for you to write down the name of someone that you know who needs to be born again, someone that you know in your life that is far from God but close to you, that we can pray for them this week. We will pray that God will begin to work in their lives to be born again.

Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. The entry point for all the benefits of the Spirit of God is to be born again. I don't know where you are at this morning, but I am going to ask you, as we get ready to respond with a song, this question - how are you growing in humility and hope? We will have a pastor up front that would love to pray with you. Maybe you just need some hope this morning, and you would like to pray with someone because the struggles of life are hard. Maybe it is addictions, maybe it is financial issues, maybe it is health issues - I don't know what it is, but I want to invite you to come forward and pray. There is something about praying with someone that grows hope in our heart, and knowing that we have the Holy Spirit can give us hope and let us know that we are not alone.

We want to invite you to come forward if you have questions about being born again, or for any other questions you might have. You don't have to wait for us to

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contact you by what you write on that card; you can meet us up here this morning and we will be glad to talk with you right now. But all of these benefits begin with being born again. Don't miss what the Spirit is calling you to believe and to do this morning.

Let's pray. *Father, I don't know what you are saying to every person in this room, but God, I believe that you are calling us to deeper humility and to greater hope. Father, I pray that you would lead us, teach us, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, and to understand all that He is, and what He has done for us. If there is anyone who has not yet come to Him, please draw them to yourself right now. God, give us the hope we need to carry on knowing that we have new life in you. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.