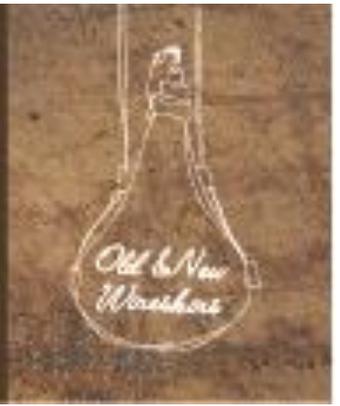


THE NEW BIRTH

by andy hopz



Throughout the New Testament the writers use many metaphors to describe the process of "regeneration" - perhaps the most confusing and misunderstood is the idea of being "born again". So what does it mean to be born again, and what difference should it make in our lives?

John 3:1-10 (NIV)

¹Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

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

⁴"How can someone be born when they are 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^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^[c] 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."^[d]

⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"

1 Peter 1:23 (NIV)

²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you're talking to non-Christian friends, colleagues or strangers about your faith - how comfortable are you talking about being "a born again" Christian? Do you find that it something easy to explain or for them to understand?
2. Nicodemus' biography was a long list of items that marked out his superior spiritual status - what do you think would have motivated him to approach Jesus and what do you imagine his reaction was to the conversation with Jesus?
3. "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." - What does this verse indicate about how to pursue a spiritual life following Jesus, and the implications of trying to be close to God in our own human strength?
4. What are some of the areas of your life that you've sourced your identity and confidence from - be it family upbringing, qualifications, career, title or other areas?
5. Andy mentioned that "Christians should be the most purposefully living people on the planet..." - how do you see your new spiritual birth shaping your calling and what does that look like expressed in your life?