

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The third chapter of John provides two proof-texts for generations of evangelical Christians: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), and “You must be born again” (John 3:7). The first of these throws the door wide open in love; but the second has been used to divide Christians and set up criteria which they must meet if they are to believe that they have been “saved.” American Protestantism developed the tradition of identifying the exact moment at which this occurs: a moment of psychological crisis with certain required characteristics. Until it comes in your life, you are not “saved.” In communities where this tradition prevails, the worshiping fellowship as well as the daily world is divided between the “saved” and the “unsaved.” The Good News and the mystery of God’s working become bent almost entirely on fostering the appearance of such moments in the lives of the “unsaved,” so as to add them to the ranks of the “saved.”

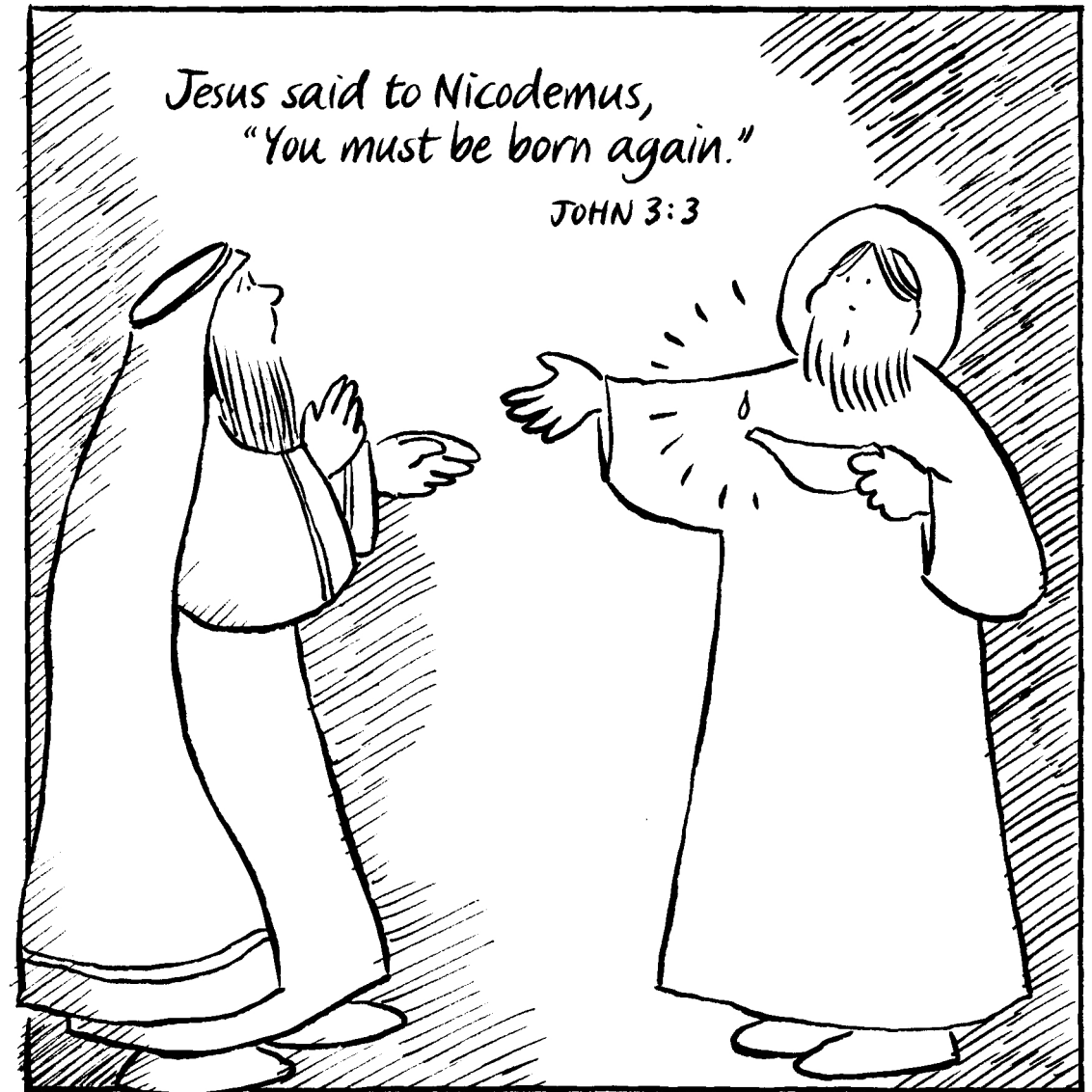
Newness of life is a hallmark of the New Testament and of the Christian community. But such an exact prescription for how it should happen in the life of every believer is very hard to justify from Scripture. It is particularly hard on children reared in faithful Christian families. For such children there is rarely a moment that can truthfully be identified as “being saved”—turning away from a former life and embracing a new one. They have trusted and loved Jesus ever since they can remember. As they grow, their own conscious choice enters more and more fully into that trust, but there is no single moment in which they turn from unbelief to belief, from separation from God’s faithful people to union with them. Their new birth precedes their choice: their baptism as infants shows the faith of the community, which buries their “old life” through water and the Spirit, before it ever has a chance to take hold. In our eagerness to identify all Christians with the Prodigal Son, we have forgotten the older brother, to whom the Father said, “Son, *you are always with me*, and all that I have is yours.” The Father’s acceptance and love of the older son may be less dramatic and exciting, but it is no less real.

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NICODEMUS WAS A POWERFUL RELIGIOUS LEADER.

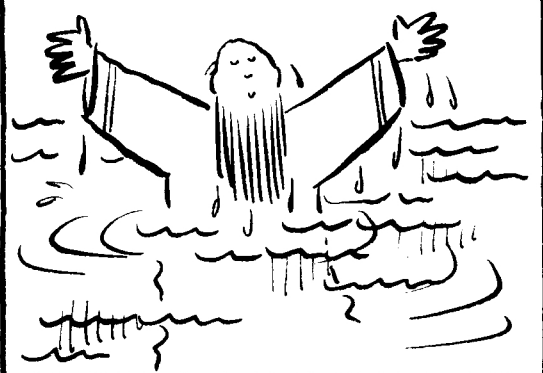
Most of the religious leaders were scared of Jesus. But Nicodemus wanted to talk to Jesus. He came to Jesus secretly, at night.



Jesus said to him, "You need to become a new person. Then you will be part of God's Kingdom."



Nicodemus said, "How can someone become a new person?" Jesus said, "By water..."




"...and God's SPIRIT blowing new life into you. That's what can make you new."



Jesus said that we can't understand God by ourselves. We can't love God or follow Jesus by ourselves. We need God's SPIRIT to live in us and give us new life. We need to be BORN AGAIN.

We show that we want to be born again when we are baptized. We tell God we want to be part of his Kingdom. God makes us new, by water and the Holy Spirit.

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON 

so that whoever believes in him may have everlasting life  **JOHN 3:16**

Learn the Bible verse by heart. Fill the space between Jesus and the people with designs for water and the Holy Spirit.