



**Grow. Pray. Serve.**

March 12, 2017

### *Float in the River of Life*

1. Winter sports. Yak Skiing. Not much control.
2. Having limits and control can be a very good thing. An absence of control leads to tragic events and heartache.
3. But sadly, we put limits on how we see God, or worse, we think we can control God. And sometimes even with the right intentions, we have such a narrow view of God that it limits our ability to see what God is up really up to in our lives and in the world.
4. Story of Nicodemus, a Pharisee. Adhered to strict religious laws and practices.
5. His faith was limited and impeded by basing faith primarily upon evidence; having a hard time believing anything is possible with God; putting religion and tradition ahead of a relationship with God; having a tough time releasing control of his life and turning it over to God.
6. Jesus challenges Nicodemus on each point including speaking of being born again. Being born again means our relationship with God fundamentally changes. We see and expect newness, wholeness, freshness, no matter what things look like. That nothing is impossible with God. When we are born again, we see things differently than we did before. We see God acting in amazing ways.
7. John 3:16. Jesus said "believe in me and you will have eternal life." Jesus did not say, "believe in ritual or follow religious regulations or put your faith in religious institutions or hierarchies." Instead he said, "life, eternal life comes from belief. It comes from a relationship with me." When we have that relationship, we are born again.
8. "The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going..." In other words, we cannot limit God or control God and God calls us to let go of worries, struggles, etc. Need to let go of our life, our worries, our struggles, and turn it all over to God.
9. Float in the River of Life.
10. Can wade in river under own control and it is hard and exhausting. Or can float in River and let go.  
God invites us to live based upon the power of God, not ultimately upon our own power and efforts. God wants us to let God be the one who moves us. To allow ourselves to float, if you will, wherever God takes us. God invites us not so much to go with our flow, but with God's flow. God's great hope for each of us is that we will relax, let go, release, and float. To let loose. When we "loose" ourselves we find ourselves.

## Today's Scripture Reading

### John 3 The Message (MSG)

3 1-2 There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we all know you're a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren't in on it."

3 Jesus said, "You're absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it's not possible to see what I'm pointing to—to God's kingdom."

4 "How can anyone," said Nicodemus, "be born who has already been born and grown up? You can't re-enter your mother's womb and be born again. What are you saying with this 'born-from-above' talk?"

5-6 Jesus said, "You're not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind-hovering-over-the-water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.

7-8 "So don't be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above'—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God."

9 Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean by this? How does this happen?"

10-12 Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?"

13-15 "No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

16-18 "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.



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