

# WATER/SPIRIT

## THE LESSON: JOHN 3 + 19

All journeys have a starting point. For Christians, the starting point is the “rebirth” that happens when we repent of our sin and turn to Jesus Christ in faith. It is this spiritual reality that we celebrate in baptism.

Before Jesus’ earthly ministry began, John the Baptist came on the scene calling people to repent of their sin and be baptized with water. He said, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16). John was preparing the way for Jesus, letting people know that something unprecedented was about to take place. But it wasn’t until Jesus died and rose again that Christian baptism came to symbolize more than simply a washing from sin, but also being buried and raised again with Jesus through faith, born again to new life in God, and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

In some traditions, including the Anglican tradition, children born to believing parents are baptized as infants in anticipation of them making the faith their own, something they still must do when they reach an age of understanding. The fledgling believer is then given instruction in the faith (“catechesis”) to equip them on the road ahead, and afterwards “confirmed” with a liturgy of prayer and the laying on of hands. Though the traditions within the broader Christian family vary, we are united in seeking to recognize and celebrate the “inward and spiritual grace” of a new life in Christ.

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Spiritual things can be hard for us to wrap our heads around. Scripture tells us that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). But we are flesh-and-blood people and we’re better at understanding what we can see and touch. Jesus knew this about us. It was one of the reasons he so often spoke in parables, using familiar things to help us understand the things that are beyond what our senses can grasp, like our need to be “born of the Spirit”.

## AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER](http://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER).)

*During this unit, we’re going to take some of the prayers that come from the liturgies of Baptism and Confirmation and pray them for one another as a reminder and a renewal of commissioning.*

Spend some time reflecting on and praying with the words of this prayer:

*We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate these persons with thy Holy Spirit, to receive them for thine own children by adoption, and to make them members of thy holy Church. Grant that, being now born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants, and attain thy promises; through the same Lord Jesus Christ thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

(FROM THE CONFIRMATION SECTION OF THE MINISTRATION OF HOLY BAPTISM TO SUCH AS ARE OF RIPER YEARS, BCP PAGE 539)

# WATER/SPIRIT

## JOHN 3 + 19: **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN**

**3**<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>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.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>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.”

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

**19**<sup>38</sup>After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup>So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.