

Bible Studies for Life: June 12

Born Again by the Spirit • John 3:1-8; 14-17

By Clay Anthony



Anthony

Wh
at
wo
ul
d
it
ta
ke
fo
r
yo
u
to
wa
lk
aw
ay
fr
om
yo
ur
fa
ith?
At
wh
at
po
in

t
co
ul
d
yo
u
be
co
nv
in
ce
d
th
at
th
e
Ch
ri
st
ia
n
li
fe
wa
s
le
ad
in
g
yo
u
as
tr
ay
an
d
th

at
al
l
yo
u
ha
ve
ev
er
be
li
ev
ed
is
no
t
tr
ue
?
Cr
az
y
to
th
in
k
ab
ou
t
bu
t
ha
ve
yo
u
ev
er

co
ns
id
er
ed
th
at
th
is
is
ex
ac
tl
y
wh
at
yo
u
an
d
I
ha
ve
be
en
ch
ar
ge
d
to
do
wi
th
th
e
lo
st

ar
ou
nd
us
?
To
ca
ll
th
em
to
wa
lk
aw
ay
fr
om
fa
ls
e
pr
ac
ti
ce
s
an
d
tu
rn
to
th
e
tr
ut
h
fo
un

d
in
Je
su
s.
It
ha
pp
en
s
wh
en
ev
er
we
wi
tn
es
s
a
ne
w
co
nv
er
t
an
d
it
ha
pp
en
ed
in
Je
su
s'

da
y.
Fi
nd
Jo
hn
19
:4
2.
Wh
at
wo
ul
d
ma
ke
tw
o
Je
wi
sh
me
n
te
nd
to
a
de
ad
cr
im
in
al
?
Th
es
e

me
n
we
re
mo
re
th
an
ju
st
Je
ws
,
th
ey
we
re
le
ad
er
s
of
th
e
Ph
ar
is
ee
s.
Th
ey
ta
ug
ht
ot
he
rs

wh
at
th
ey
we
re
to
kn
ow
ab
ou
t
Go
d
(J
n
3:
10
).
Ye
t
he
re
th
ey
ar
e
bu
ry
in
g
a
ma
n
th
ey
we

re
su
pp
os
ed
to
ha
te
. Wh
at
ha
pp
en
ed
?
Si
mp
ly
pu
t,
Je
su
s
sh
ow
ed
th
em
so
me
th
in
g.

Note that Nicodemus comes by night to hide his inquisitive heart. We must give him credit for at least having the courage to approach Jesus and ask for clarification. Yet, is it not odd that he is not alone? Perhaps physically but he first says, "Rabbi, we know . . ." Obviously Nicodemus was not alone in his confusion. He, along with others, were eyewitnesses to the worked that Jesus was able to do. There was no explaining away this power outside of the fact that Jesus must be from God. Who could heal like this or speak to nature like this or even teach with such authority? Nicodemus had come to the same conclusion as the disciples and us today – there is something uniquely different about Jesus.

Change – 3:3-4

Ever witnessed a flag waving on a pole? What is causing that occur? Yes, the wind is blowing even though you cannot see it. Same concept happens when the Holy Spirit interjects Himself into life of a nonbeliever. Life is present where once death ruled. Action for the kingdom is now noticeable. We call this being *born again*. New life is now seen where there was none. New thoughts, deeds, purpose and destination are given to the undeserving. From the flag image above, we can "see" the wind blowing. The flag gives evidence that something has come upon it and has taken over. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. His work can be witnessed by others. He brings not just truth but also visible animation to our lives.

Cross – 3:14-17

John has twenty-one chapters. Over half of those deal with the last week of Jesus' life. Much was seen and heard that week. All of Jerusalem had been witness to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Nicodemus had a front row seat to the entire event (7:50). Nicodemus had seen the signs that Jesus performed. He had asked for clarification on salvation. Now he was watching Jesus living out the very words spoken to him by night. Jesus mentioned Moses lifting up a serpent before the people who

were charged to simply look at the symbol of God's salvation for healing (Num. 21:8). Do you think that Nicodemus's mind raced back to that conversation at night when Jesus seemed to randomly bring up the bronze serpent as he watched Jesus being lifted high upon a cross? It is not hard to imagine that a lightbulb lit up above his head as he realized exactly what Jesus meant by that statement.

Seeing Jesus live out the words He spoke on the cross led Nicodemus to open his heart to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He became a follower of Jesus to the point of aiding in His burial – a highly respectful moment for the Jews. Jesus is no longer physically present to take questions from those who are curious. Yet, the Holy Spirit is still active in our lives. May others see Jesus' power in our lives. May they witness the change only the Holy Spirit can bring. May we always be faithful to point to God's salvation on a cross and the empty tomb He left behind. May we never be silent around those with questions: the story of Jesus is far from over.

Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network, Oxford/Holly Springs.