



## (2) The Spirit Renews - John 3:1-8

Aim: learning about the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's ministry

### Opening up!

Catch up with each other. Talk about whether you were aware of a deeper experience with the Holy Spirit during the past week.

A Christian leader writes, 'A few years ago I watched the birth of our third child. Our son emerged into the bright light of a new world. His first gasp drew air into his lungs. His next act was to let out a piercing cry. Everyone in the delivery room smiled. The cry was a sign of life. But I have also witnessed the birth of a young adult woman! The birth did not take place in a hospital; it happened in a home. As she heard the message of Christ, the young woman believed. At that moment she was born into a whole new spiritual realm.'

The Spirit was intimately involved in that new birth. As the message of the gospel was explained, the young woman received it with faith. But the Spirit brought new life.

What thoughts and feelings do you associate with birth?

### Listening in!

#### 1 Read John 3:1-8.

Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish religious party called the Pharisees. He was meticulous in his observance of the Old Testament law. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council) and was, therefore, held in the highest regard by the religious leadership.

What kind of character do you think Nicodemus was?

#### 2 Nicodemus would have placed high value on his birth in the flesh. He was a descendant of Abraham, part of God's people of Israel. Jesus makes it clear, however, that Nicodemus's first birth was not enough to bring him into God's kingdom.

Some Christians believe that, when Jesus says we must be born "of water and the Spirit," he is referring to water baptism. It seems best, however, to view Jesus' reference to water in relation to our first birth. Water (in our mother's womb) was the necessary accompaniment to the first birth of the flesh. The Spirit is the necessary accompaniment to our second birth. Jesus talks about two births - the first is a birth of the flesh, the second a birth of the spirit.

Can you relate Jesus' teaching of being born of the Spirit to your own experience or have you witnessed it in another? If so, share your experiences with each other.

What role does the Holy Spirit play in the new birth?

#### 3 In what ways is the Spirit's work of bringing people to new birth like the blowing of the wind (John 3:8)?

- 4 There are obvious signs that a person has physical life. What are the signs that a person has the spiritual life that Jesus has described in this passage?

## Looking Out!

How will an understanding of the Spirit's work affect your life on your frontline? In the light of what you have read and discussed, reflect on, and perhaps share, whether you need to take any specific actions. How can you support each other in this?

## Now and Later!

Thinking about the passage that you have read, call upon the Holy Spirit and pray for whatever God lays on your heart. Thank God for the areas in which he has strengthened you, and ask him to help you grow in your areas of weakness.

End this time together by using the words of either the hymn or song below as a prayer.

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
and lighten with celestial fire.  
Thou the anointing Spirit art,  
who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above  
is comfort, life, and fire of love.  
Enable with perpetual light  
the dullness of our blinded sight.

Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
with the abundance of thy grace.  
Keep far from foes, give peace at home:  
where thou art guide, no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
and thee, of both, to be but One,  
that through the ages all along,  
this may be our endless song:

Praise to thy eternal merit,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

O let the Son of God enfold You  
With His Spirit and His love  
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul  
O let Him have those things that hold You  
And His Spirit like a dove  
Will descend upon your life  
And make you whole.