

Wouldn't it be great if we could get "do-overs" in life? I can't tell you how many times I've opened my big mouth before thinking and wish I could take the words back again, get a do over to do it right. But we don't get do overs. In recent years a number of people who have had a certain amount of financial success in their careers have focused on trying to do something significant with the 2nd part of their lives. Many people today are looking at a 2nd or 3rd career, trying to find a way to support themselves and their families. These people are all looking for a 2nd chance, not a 2nd life.

Some people live a double life. They appear to do one thing while actually doing something else. We see these people in movies, action novels, spy and espionage stories. Other people live a double life by trying to keep a secret from the people around them. This usually blows up in their face when the truth is discovered.

Nicodemus was a man who led a double life, or a second life. He was a member of the Jewish high council called the Sanhedrin. They were responsible for protecting and defending the laws and traditions of Israel. But Nic was also curious. He had to check things out for himself. When Jesus of Nazareth came on the scene and was viewed as a threat by the majority of the Sanhedrin members, Nic had to find out for himself. John 3 is the account of Nic @ Night, of Nic's visit to see Jesus under the cover of darkness. He went at night to keep his interest in Jesus a secret. It was during this night time encounter that Jesus said to Nic, **"I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."** (verse 3) Jesus told Nic that he needed a second life, but Nic didn't understand. That took some time.

Nic's encounter with Jesus must have an effect on him because some time later when the Sanhedrin was discussing what to do with Jesus, Nic was put on the spot. Would he go along with the rest of the council or would he speak up? They were ready to condemn Jesus without giving Him a chance to defend himself. That is when Nic spoke up in the nick of time and asked, **"Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?"** (John 7:51) We don't know if Nic was at the illegal meeting of the Sanhedrin that condemned Jesus. The Bible doesn't tell us. But we do know that Nic helped another member of the Sanhedrin by the name of Joseph bury Jesus' body. Nic was no longer afraid to be associated with Jesus, even after His death. Nic's life had been transformed by Christ.

Jesus wants to transform our lives, too. He wants to change us, complete us and give us a new life. He doesn't want us to just call ourselves Christians or just go to church. He wants us to be born again, to be born of the water and the Spirit. Just as we don't have a say in when we are born the 1st time, we don't have a lot to say about our 2nd life. The new life in Christ is a gift from God. Jesus told Nic that the work of the Spirit is like the power of the wind. You can't see

the wind, but you sure can feel it and see what it does. You can't see the Spirit either, but you can feel His presence in your life and see the changes He makes in people.

People who have a second life, a new life in Christ, are transformed by Him. The transformed life is the most powerful witness for the Christian faith. That is what people see when they look at people who have been born again by the power of God's Spirit. When the Holy Spirit works in our lives and gives us the new life of faith it shows. That transformation is huge.

The Apostle Paul describes the life without the Spirit this way in Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT), **“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.”** He goes on to describe the new life in the Spirit with these words, **“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”** (verses 22-23 NLT)

Don't think that this new life guided by the Spirit is easy because it is not. It is a life that goes against the flow, a life that takes a stand for moral character and integrity. It is a life that may be criticized at times, but ultimately it is a life that must be respected. It doesn't take much of a man to live a selfish, self centered life. It takes a real person of integrity to put others first, to put into practice the things he or she believes.

The new life that God gives us makes a difference for the good in the world around us. Jesus said that we are salt of the earth and the light of the world. He sends us out into the world to flavor it with His love. He gives us the light of hope to shine in a world of darkness. Jesus also said that people will know that we are Christians by our love. Love is the first product of the God's Spirit's presence in our lives. This type of love is not easy because it calls for personal sacrifice; it requires putting others ahead of ourselves. It is the type of love that makes our world a better place. The world around us is better when we forgive and when we admit our mistakes and ask to be forgiven. The world around us is better when we overlook offenses and try to live a peace with one another. These are not easy things to do. As a matter of fact they are hard to do. But they are what God wants us to do, what God's Spirit enables us to do.

What does this new life look like? The prophet Micah in the Old Testament describes it this way, **“And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”** (6:8) God has given us a new life, a second life in Christ. Don't just talk about it, live it to the glory of God! Amen.