

## “Learning to NOT be Merely Human”

The Ministry of the Spirit

January 11, 2026

### INTRO ...a "Mode" of Doing Life

...How many of us recognize that as we "do life", we develop a "mode"??

### Meet a few Jewish guys named Nadab, Nehemiah, and Nicodemus—Who had a “Mode” of Doing Religious Life

- Nadab was a Levitical priest who lived around 1450 BC. ...Nadab had a "mode" ...a way of relating to God
- Nehemiah (lived 1000 yrs later) ...was a Jewish leader and eventual Governor in a moment of great transition for God’s people ...They too had a “Mode” of relating to God
- Nicodemus ...lived about 500 years later. Nicodemus is a god-fearing man who functions as a Pharisee ... Nicodemus has his "mode" of relating to God. ...Then, He meets Jesus

### John 3:1-12

- **Nicodemus** (a man with significant religious knowledge and a life of faithful religious engagement and a recognized leader in knowing the things of God) ...**is about to be "surprised" by a concept that he doesn't very much get!**

Notice: He's NOT waiting for whatever Jesus is talking about! ...He knows a lot of religious info—but he doesn't know this! ...**He has a "mode" of relating to God—and he's looking for whatever God does next, to "fit in his mode"!**

- **Jesus ...presents something that is "unnatural" and "mysterious"!**
  - A "Born-Again-Experience"
  - Jesus is going to ask/expect Nicodemus to be open to and to welcome and to receive something that is NOT completely understood or explained to him—v. 7-8

- There is a "wind-like" quality to the Ministry of the Spirit!
- There is an "unearthly" quality to the Ministry of the Spirit! (v. 11-12)

Jn 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jn 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

- **The "Mode" of Relating to God, to His Presence, and to the Things of His Kingdom was CHANGING! ...and Nicodemus was NOT in step!**
- **Jesus acts as though this "new Mode" has ALWAYS been the plan/purpose of God—and that Nicodemus should have better understood that!—v. 10**

### The Dawn of a “New MODE” of Doing Life

Jer. 31:33 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

...This is God stating (600 yrs before Nicodemus) that there was coming a day when there would be a "MODE-CHANGE" in relating to God!

**Ez 36:25-27** <sup>25</sup> | will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols | will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And | will give you a new heart, and a new spirit | will put within you. And | will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And | will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

...This is God's Proclamation 600 years before Nicodemus! ...This is Jesus reference point in **Jn 3:5**

**NOTE** (on the Uniqueness of Biblical Salvation):

**Religious "mode": Some kind of Moral Code + Some kind of Human Rituals, Routines, & Practices (Somehow) => Rightness w/ Deity**

- o Islam ...
- o Buddhism ...
- o Sikhism –
- o Therapeutic Moralism ...

**Bible Revealed "Mode": Supernatural Cleansing + Spirit Infusion ('breath', 'wind', ruach/pneuma of God) => Salvation (a Living Connection to God and His Presence)**

- o **Beware of Religion that doesn't Supernaturally CLEANSE!...and Doesn't Give a Supernatural Life that you Previously Did Not Have!!**

"Becoming a Christian" will change numerous things about your earthly existence. ...but there's something much deeper and much more intrinsic to your existence in "becoming a Christian" than "adjusting your morals" or "attending church somewhere else" or "including Bible reading in your religious routines"! ...The Ministry of the Spirit has imparted to you a new life, a new power, a new motivation, a new invigoration, a new compelling ...from the **INSIDE-OUT!!**

**THIS... is a New Mode!** ...It comes "at us" differently! ...it interacts with us differently! ...it is received differently! ...it feels different! ...It is more than "A Book + Self-Determination"

**"A new "WITHIN YOU" ...&... a new "WAY of READING"**

**Ez 36:27** <sup>27</sup> And | will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

"What makes the new life spiritual and what makes it supernatural is that it is the work of God the Spirit. It is something above the natural life of our physical hearts and brains. ...Flesh gives rise to one kind of life. The Spirit gives rise to another kind of life." **John Piper**, "Finally Alive", p. 36

..."something above the natural life" ... "another kind of life"

**Jer. 31:33** "For this is the covenant that | will make with the house of |srael after those days, declares the Lord: | will put my laws within them, and | will write it on their hearts.

- Laws written on hearts ...what is being described here? ...it is clearly "different" than the last time God wrote something down for man—it was "outside of him". ...How do I "read" this new writing? How do I interact with words in the heart vs words on tablets/scrolls? How does this 'feel'? How do I sense that I'm 'reading' or interacting with these words?

...Do I pull a Nicodemus at this point? ... There's some "wind" here! There's some mystery here!

- Spirit within—causing us to walk in God's statutes and to be careful to obey Him ...this inner dimension/activity of the Spirit CAUSES something to happen!

Somehow... the Holy Spirit is engaging my "values", my "reasons", my "motivations"!!!

"I need to be new. I need to be transformed. I need life. I need a new way of seeing and thinking and valuing." John Piper, "Finally Alive", p. 41

Php 2:13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Heb 13:20-21 <sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight

1 Cor 12:4-6 <sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

"So we are not dealing with something marginal or optional or cosmetic in the Christian life. The new birth is not like the make-up that morticians use to try and to make corpses look more like they are alive. The new birth is the creation of spiritual life, not the imitation of life. ...We began to answer the question 'What happens in the new birth?' With two statements: (1) What happens in the new birth is not getting new religion but getting new life, and (2) What happens in the new birth is not merely affirming the supernatural in Jesus but experiencing the supernatural in yourself." John Piper, "Finally Alive", p. 35

**BUT... much of the N.T. is written to fellow earthly Christians who are NOT always doing what the Spirit wants them to do! They are NOT always walking in God's purpose and obeying Him first and foremost!**

1 Cor 3:1-4 <sup>1</sup> But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

...**"you were not ready"** ...THIS is NOT a Rare N.T. experience!

**WHY? (not ready) ... "you are still of the flesh" ... "behaving only in a human way" ... "being merely human"**

1 Cor 2:12-14 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him

**...WE are Christians, like the Corinthians were Christians! ...Capable of having rather "limited exchanges" with the Indwelling Spirit!**