

A man watched a child struggle to fill a hole at beach. The surf ran in and out and the hole disappeared. Over and over, the same thing happened. As the man looked at the power of the vast ocean, he realized how impossible the task was. Doesn't our struggle to comprehend God often feel just as overwhelming? Our attempts to make God easy are like a little child trying to hold off the ocean on a beach. For that reason, God has brought us a better way.

The world has always struggled to find closeness with God. Ancient people went to mountaintops or built pyramids to get closer to heaven. Abraham and his descendants used the smoke and aroma of sacrifices to get God's attention. Moses built a tabernacle, and Solomon a temple to get closer to God. European Christians built cathedrals to come into the presence of the holy. We continue to seek new ways to explain, understand, and get closer to God.

Who can truly understand infinity, eternity, or what is at the core of the Sun? How then can we explain the God who created what we cannot even see? Or how that same powerful being appeared in human form to wash feet and conquer death. Or how that same Savior now lives invisibly in all time and place. Where do we even begin? Over the years the Church developed a theology or language seeking to explain and celebrate the awesome complexity of a God who is unexplainable and infinite. Father, Son, Holy Spirit; one God who reveals himself in three distinct ways. The word Trinity is shorthand for what we believe about how God has revealed himself to us.

From the beginning, people invented gods, goddesses, who fit their needs. Today is no different with arguments over male and female attributes and the need to make God look like we do. Others arbitrarily pick and choose between out of context Bible verses, or philosophical and reasoned arguments using earthly wisdom to bring God down to our level of comprehension. But such efforts often leave more questions than answers.

To end our confusion God came into our world to deliver us into His universe forever! Today the Church focuses on our language about God, as Father, Son, and Spirit – all in one. We celebrate a God we don't have to work to get close to. We celebrate a God who has created all things. A God who has revealed himself in the manger, cross, and empty tomb. A God who fills us with the same life that crated stars and seashells. How incredible that the God who creates all that is, stoops to embrace us and promises to bring us home with Him forever.

John's Gospel introduces us to one of the chief teachers of Israel, Nicodemus, who was engaged in the same search. The Gospel states that Nicodemus came looking for Jesus under the cover of darkness. He was searching but confused, wanted answers but was in the dark. Nicodemus struggled to fit God into his system thinking all he had to do was to keep the law and do good works. Jesus said he had to change his

operating system. He need a rebirth, meaning to start all over with a different perspective and breath to fill his life.

We are familiar with 12 step programs to assist one to escape the trap of alcohol or drugs. Step one is simply to begin that the road to sobriety begins with conversion. In other words, submit to God! And that is where our search begins as well. Just as an alcoholic is ether in denial or recovery, so it is with people on earth. All are in denial or recovery when it comes to a relationship with God. Faith means I surrender to God. Faith means that I realize that I cannot, by my own effort or understanding, get close to God, but hat God, in his love, is close to me! Think about how much time is wasted searching, complaining, being confused, trying to find the secret and easy way to explain and control God.

A boy and his dad were walking along a road and came across a large stone. The son asked, If I use all my strength, can I move rock? Father answered, If use ALL your strength, you can! Exerting himself, he pushed and pushed. But rock did not move. Discouraged, he said, "You were wrong, I can't do it. The father said, No, son, you didn't use all your strength — you didn't ask ME to help. ¹

That is where the struggle of Nicodemus stalled. He used every law and good deed he could think of and it all came short. He was confused. He came to Jesus, literally in the dark. And Jesus said you must become alive in a new way! And obviously he was, for a few months later Nicodemus did show up in darkness again, but it was to bury Jesus. Because he hung on to that loving life, he was there to see the LIGHT finally dawn!

Today we celebrate the infinite love of the God of creation who simply has chosen to reveal himself to his world, to embrace us with his love, and promise that we can live with him forever. That is the power of the manger, cross, and empty tomb!

A man came home to see a sign in kitchen saying Prayer changes things! Next morning wife noticed sign was gone. She asked her husband if he moved it and he said he had. She asked, "Are you just uncomfortable with prayer?" He answered, "Of course not. I'm very comfortable with prayer, but I don't like change."

Being born again is all about change! It is the change faith brings as God becomes our breath of life. The good news is we simply need to stop trying so hard and cease stumbling around in our darkness. Allow God to do for you, what you can figure out to do on your own.

That was Nicodemus' object lesson about being born from above! Just as a baby does not decide to be born, but simply lives, so we, having been brought into life, respond by living it. Faith is all about surrender that is not giving up, but filled with the power and peace of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

TWSeeber

¹ Teaching your Children About God Brussat, ed. Simon Schuster.1996 p.447