



Links Players

5 WHO AM I?: BORN AGAIN

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, ESV)

YOU KNOW THERE ARE WORDS that any respectable golfer does not say. Foremost among those is a word naming the act of striking the ball off the hosel of the club and sending it on a severe angle left or right of the target, depending on which side of the ball you play from. See how I carefully used 35 words rather than that one? You're welcome.

When it comes to the way we speak of our faith, we also tend to keep certain words and phrases under wraps. "Carrying your cross," "the wrath of God," "circumcision"—these I understand. They are uncomfortable both literally and literarily. But there is another phrase we may be avoiding because it can be, well, embarrassing: "born again."

The kind of preachers who emphasize being "born again" in our time are frequently those with too much volume, too much air time, and too much hair product. If they were golfers, they'd be the guys wearing the loudest plaids. Not my type. Yours?

But here's where we have to be careful, because the first man of God to talk of being born again was Jesus. Actually, he's the only one in Scripture who uses the phrase, so we might say its origin and copyright rest with the Son of God. That should be plenty to cause us to notice.

Now it may come as good news to you that even the first hearer of these words was uncomfortable with them. The Jewish teacher Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus under the cover of night, asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" The whole idea confused the man, smart as he was.

Jesus' teachings were often simultaneously simple and searching. Of course we can understand the meanings of plain words like *born* and *again*. But put them together in the mind of a person contemplating how to stand rightly with God and they suggest something very demanding: a complete do-over. "How about if we just whittle off a few unnecessarys, Lord? Should be good, right?" But Jesus comes back with a picture of wholesale newness: "No," he says. "What you need is to be born again." Talk about a change in identity! And yet, when we are made new in Christ, we can sing with conviction, "I am my Beloved's and he is mine."

Opening questions Are you superstitious about the words you say or the things you do on the golf course? Are there words in golf or in life that just make you uncomfortable?

READING John 3:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17

New birth (John 3)

Some translations render "born again" as "born from above." Jesus also spoke with Nicodemus about being "born of the Spirit." How do all of these expressions aid your understanding of how spiritual birth is different than physical birth? How do you know you've been born again?

Would you hesitate to use the words "born again" in talking to others about your life in Christ? Why or why not? What alternative words might you employ that can communicate the same vital concept?

A new creation (2 Corinthians 5)

When you look at the life of someone who has been made new in Christ (maybe you!), what old things have passed away and what new things have replaced them?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/NCt8LFNs-Uw>.