

Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit – 2. The Potter and the Clay

Isaiah 64:8; Galatians 5:22-25

July 9, 2023

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We're on our second week of a series focusing on the Holy Spirit. And though this might be the least understood member of the Trinity, the Spirit has been present in our world and lives since the beginning of time.

In the book of Genesis, the very first book of scripture, there are two accounts of creation. The first is told in Chapter One, and you'll hear right away how the Spirit accompanies God in all God does:

“God’s spirit moved over the waters, and God said, “Let there be light.” And light appeared... there was evening and there was morning: the first day.” -- Genesis 1

And so it continues, day by day, revealing to us the creation of our world, by God’s voice and Spirit. This story of creation is huge in its magnitude – it tells us the story of the whole cosmos, reminding us that God is big and powerful and reigns over all of creation: from the furthest galaxies, to the tiniest particles.

But in chapter two, we hear another story. This one is a story about the creation of relationships, it is intimate in its telling and reminds us that God is not only powerful and all-creating, but that God – from the very beginning – creates us in community and relationship with God and with one another. Here we read:

On the day the LORD God made earth and sky— before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the LORD God hadn’t yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land— the LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life’s breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. — Genesis 2

This story of creation goes on to tell of the creation of the second human, a partner to the first, who are directed to care for God’s creation. To name each living creature, to tend to the gardens, to take care of it all. Scientific research and discovery, tells us yet another story of creation. Probably since creation itself, humans have been trying to piece together the story of how the world was created. Now, we understand that it all began with the Big Bang, which tells us, in overly simplified terms, because I am a theologian and not a scientist. But NASA tells us:

The universe began as hot, tiny particles, mixed together with light and energy. Those tiny particles grouped together and over time these groupings grew to form stars and galaxies, and from there they formed to create planets and life. Science tells us that light and energy pierced the vast darkness of the universe, and from it – life began. Sounds a little familiar, doesn’t it? In every account of creation, we see God and the Spirit at work, in tandem.

Now all three of these creation stories are complimentary, but they don’t give us exactly the same information. And at times, they seem to contradict each other in the precise manner in which God created the universe. But they do so, because each of these have a slightly different goal and audience in mind.

When I’ve taught confirmation, I’ve explained it in this way: these variations in creation stories are similar to variations we see in the four Gospels. Each of them, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – tell us the story of Jesus’ life, his teachings, his death and resurrection. But they have differing perspectives, differing memories, and differing audiences. So while they tell the *same* story, they each have their own unique elements.

And, it’s a little bit like this: every year, on my boys birthdays, we look at photos and videos from their birth. I tell them the story of that day and how they came to be. When I tell the story of Josiah, for example: I remind him that his sense of adventure and joy was present since the beginning of time. Even when I was in labor, I was laughing easily at his Dad’s corny jokes. I was listening to music, texted a few friends. Even in his birth, he was creating and surrounded by laughter and joy. And though he was a week overdue, once he decided it was

time to arrive: he made it quickly! So too, has it been with his life. Filled with lots of laughter and music, seeking adventure, and fast on his feet. The story I tell Josiah tells him something about who he is and to whom he belongs. The story his Dad tells, highlights the strength he saw in his mother that day, it tells the exploding of his heart, making room for our second born. And the notes from the midwives that day, would tell a different story, too. Theirs are filled with times and specific notes about contractions, and apgar scores; of the baby's weight and length. All three of these are true stories of Josiah's birth. But they each sound a little different. Woven throughout them all, is the story of love and life. It's just like this with God's creation.

In Genesis 1, we have an account from one source that tells the big picture story of God creating the universe while the Spirit moved over the waters. In Genesis 2, we have another source telling the story of God's intimate relationship with humankind, as the Spirit gives life. And in scientific studies, we see the specific measurements and notes of how this all came to be, noting still how the Spirit of God brings forth energy, light, and life. Woven throughout, is an unmistakable thread. It is a story of light piercing the vast darkness, the movement of the Spirit bringing forth life. From the very beginning of time, we see two things: God is the creator, and the Spirit is present – breathing life into all things.

Hand-in-hand, God the Creator and the Holy Spirit work together. This was true in creation, and it is true today. Not a moment, day, or experience of your life is separated from the presence of God or the Spirit. And this is the way they work together: God creates. The Spirit sustains.

Scripture tells the story of God creating us over and over again, using many different images of God as creator. In some passages, God is referenced as our loving parent – tending, nurturing, birthing us. In other passages, God is referenced as a master artist, who delights in us as part of God's handiwork.

As we heard from Isaiah, God is referenced as a potter. One who forms us as clay – molding, shaping and creating us. Yet without breath, we have no life. Without movement on a potter's wheel, the clay does not come to be. It is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, that nurtures and sustains our living. By allowing ourselves to be shaped by God on that potter's wheel, we will experience the goodness and life of God. And it is by the presence of the Spirit in our lives, the movement and shape of the potter's hands upon that clay – that we find ourselves led to be the people God wants us to be.

Now this imagery of Potter and Clay is woven throughout scripture. We heard it in Genesis 2, that creation story we just spent time with: as God took dirt from the earth to form humankind. We hear it in Psalm 139: "for it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb." We read it in Jeremiah, saying, "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand ." And it's echoed again in Isaiah as we heard today: "We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand." - Isaiah 64:8 Even in the New Testament, there is a story of Jesus healing a man by using mud – or clay – and smearing it upon the man, he is healed. All together, we see images of God as a potter, molding and shaping us, forming us into the people that God has called and created us to be.

Now, we might not yet know or understand how God is shaping us, or to whom God is forming us to be. And at times, it may be uncomfortable, it might be uneasy, we might make missteps... but I think any artist would tell us, this is all part of the process, yeah?

This is the way the whole Trinity is at work in our lives:

God creates. Christ redeems. Spirit sustains.

All the ways that we follow God, is made possible because we, like clay to the potter, are nurtured by the presence and fruit of the Holy Spirit. As Pastor Tami mentioned last week – there are a lot of ways we talk about the Holy Spirit to try to get a better understanding of how the Spirit is present to us. In scripture, we see images of the Spirit as breath and wind. As a dove or as fire. We hear the Holy Spirit called *Sophia*, in the Greek, which means wisdom.

And in both Hebrew and Greek, the root word for the Holy Spirit is feminine, which reminds us of the fullness of God to both encompass and surpass all genders... but also, I think, is a really nice way of reminding us that our

feminine sides, our tender sides that nurture and birth and create, are fully of God. Just as much as every masculine imagery of God and the ways that our masculine sides embody God's image, too.

When God created and breathed the Spirit into us: we were all fully made in the image of God. Across the full spectrum and diversity of life – God has created us, the Spirit has breathed into us life and the image of God. This means, that the beautiful pieces that are special about you: maybe the way you can mold clay, or bring from simple pieces of wood something beautiful. Maybe the way your voice, or your written words take on shape. Or the ways that your skills lend themselves to teaching, to nursing and healing, to accounting and discovering. All of these things are of God. Pieces of the Holy, made alive in you. But it also means, that throughout our lives – God continues to nudge and mold, to shape and create something more within us. As we grow and age, God continues to form us in God's image, and set us free into the world to live as people of God.

It seems to me, that throughout scripture, there are a few prominent themes. One, that God desires to be in relationship with us, that we live in God, and are secure in our knowledge that God is with us always. And two, that God desires for us to live fully in the image of God, to be marked by love. That our daily living is one that loves God, loves ourselves, and loves our neighbor. And when we do this, we help others see themselves as made in God's image, set free themselves to love God and neighbor, too.

The role of the Holy Spirit then, is to help us live into this. To nudge and guide us, that we can best discern how to love God and love our neighbor. Of course, the Spirit is not the only thing in life that nudges and guides us. Though we are made in the image of God, we are also given freedom of choice, freedom of will, freedom to live. And so, we will make our own way, our own mistakes, our own decisions.

And sometimes – other outside factors shape and form us, too. We will experience deep loss and profound grief. We will experience traumatic events, and some of us have known many significant and even generationally deep traumas. We all have voices in our minds that speak to us words of fear or shame, words from the evil one that try to tempt us away from believing we are made and formed fully in the image of God. Words that tempt us to believe that we are not good, or beloved.

But through it all, God desires to be the primary force in our lives. God won't give up on us, but will continue to create, redeem, and sustain us. As Jesus said in the final words of Matthew's Gospel: *"Look, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* One of our tasks through life is to trust in these promises, to learn to hear God's voice, and sense God's spirit at work in us, so that we can love God and love our neighbor.

In the book of Galatians, Paul has something to say about this. Here, Paul is writing to a group of people who are trying to figure out how to parse out the voice of God from all the other voices and distractions in their world. Like many of the Epistles, this is another example of the early church trying to figure out how to put their faith into practice. Throughout this letter, Paul reminds them that because of Christ, they have been released from the law, and are freed to live as children of God. Paul wants, I think, for them to worry less about what is the "right" or "wrong" way to follow Jesus, and pay more attention to the freedom God gives us. Following Jesus is not about a list of laws and rules. Instead, it means living as ones molded and shaped into God's image, given life by the Spirit, and sent out by Jesus to love God and our neighbor. Making this message from Galatians especially relevant for us today, Paul tells them that the holy Spirit will guide them through all of this. In chapter five, Paul writes:

You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don't let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: *Love your neighbor as yourself.*" - Galatians 5:13-14

Paul is reminding them that the most important thing is that we love God and love one another. Christ has given us the freedom not to worry about our own worthiness, not to be slaves to the voices in our minds, to not worry if we are 'good enough' ... but simply, to love.

It sounds so simple, doesn't it? But we know, that in practice the command to "love" is one that will take a lifetime to understand and experience. Still, Paul isn't finished, because he reminds us that when the Spirit of

God, *our guide, our advocate, our wisdom*, is active in our lives... when we allow ourselves like clay to be formed and shaped, that certain Fruits of the Spirit will be revealed within us. Paul continues:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this... If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit. - Galatians 5

When we are as a clay to the potter, allowing God to work in and thru us, we will see the Holy Spirit transforming our hearts and minds. This wild fire, unleashable wind, and flowering fruit are made alive within us, so that we can love our neighbor and change the world.

Our lives bear the fruit of the Spirit. Since the beginning: God has created us in God's image, has redeemed us by the love of Christ, and given us the the Spirit *so that* we can be freed to love God and neighbor. And already inside of us, is the ability to act in this way, filled with fruit of: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

One thing I notice, is that each of these are connected to the heart. They are fruit that help us love ourselves, love God, and love one another more fully. God didn't say, that when we live in the Spirit we will bare fruit of great amounts of wealth, a perfectly healthy immune system, unsurpassed intelligence, or incredible strength or lasting youth and beauty. I mean, maybe some of these are present in your lives. And hopefully you use them, too, to follow God's command to love.

But instead of checking off the boxes of things we might think would be really 'handy' elements for a good life – God says, this is what you need to love. This is what I will give you, so that you can live as one made in my image, and change the world. This is what you need: joy, patience, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. Our whole lives are shaped by this truth:

God creates. Christ redeems. Spirit sustains.

And so, I wonder then, how do our lives look when we, as clay to a potter, are formed and shaped by God's image and filled with the fruit of the Spirit? How is our life transformed when we live as people of love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness and so forth? Might this help us love our neighbor? Might this help us make amends with others? Or cross the divide between those who think, act, look, or believe differently than we? What might our world look like, if our every day life is marked by love, joy, peace? Patience, kindness, gentleness? I don't know about you, but I know that I daily need help to be someone that bears such fruit. Who ignores my own selfish thoughts or impulses, but instead seeks to live first in the Spirit, shaped and molded by God. I invite you to pray with me this week, that God will strengthen these fruits within us, and reveal opportunities to share them with others. Pray with me that God will shape and form us in God's image, freed to be the people God has made and called us to be.

As you reflect on your own life, I want to tell you a story about one way I have seen these fruits shared. A story of how followers of Jesus, churches, and community organizations have all allowed the holy spirit to shape and form them in God's image, loving their neighbor and transforming our world. It's a story of people who seemed to ask the question, "What is the most loving thing I can do here? What is the most joyful, patient, kind and gentle?" And acted in response.... About ten years ago, there was a United Methodist church plant in Brooklyn Park. This congregation was brand new, finding their footing and connecting with their community. They called themselves Mosaic and centered themselves around worship and service. From the beginning, they looked for opportunities to love God and their neighbor by meeting the immediate needs of their community. In doing so, Pastor Rachel Morey, who was the founding pastor of Mosaic said she "was particularly struck when a junior high principal asked her if she could help some pregnant teens find a place to stay after they'd been kicked out of their families' homes. After praying for the girls and spending some sleepless nights thinking about them, she picked up the phone and began trying to find partners and address the problem. She said, "The guiding principle is: What is God calling me to do? That was God calling me to action. Once I said 'yes' to it, I had never felt so secure in my calling." According to 2018 numbers, 47% of the homeless population in Minnesota are children and youth under the age of 24. This includes 15% who are unaccompanied-meaning they do not have family or adults with them. Thru the work of the Spirit, one small and mighty group of people in the north metro were moved to change these numbers. Over time, and with

many community partnerships, Mosaic helped bring the first suburban youth shelter to the Twin Cities in 2014. This shelter was run by *Avenues for Youth*, which is our Second Mile recipient for July. The people of Mosaic, which now lives on through many of the food and shelter ministries that it supported, saw a need within their community. And because they were able to trust in the gifts of the Spirit present to them: gifts of gentleness, faithfulness, kindness and goodness – they were able to work with others to help make possible a place for youth experiencing homelessness to find safety and housing. These same gifts are present across everything that Avenues for Youth does. They have been around for nearly 30 years, serving youth ages 16-24 in Hennepin County. I see the Spirit working within them to give them wisdom and kindness to help these young people navigate early adulthood. They help with housing and nutrition, but also medical needs, education, and careers. They embrace the gifts of the Spirit to serve those who are so easily looked over and left behind. The Spirit empowers them to love those who have been seriously hurt and harmed by others.

There are many ways the Spirit can guide us towards something that brings healing, wholeness and love. I think it's a 'holy spirit' moment itself that we are supporting Avenues during the same month as the sermon series, because I see the Holy Spirit evident their work and mission. They are a people who act in kindness, live in generosity, and love those who most need attention and care.

The Spirit is guiding and shaping those who lead the organization, those who volunteer and support it, and those who receive support. Every youth that has been part of the Avenues family, experiences the gifts of the Spirit in action, too. And – as their impact stories tell, it doesn't stop with them.

I invite you to hear now, Shantasia's story:

Shantasia: "I ended up homeless because unfortunate things happened with my Mom. I lived in an abandoned house for a bit... Everyday was dedicated to surviving. Poverty doesn't give you time to actually live, it feels like you are fighting for your life everyday... I feel like I was relieved when I found Avenues... because I felt secure. I felt safe for the first time in a year. The first person I met was Gary, and he treated me with kindness. That's something that a lot of people don't do.... Avenues helped me dream... I always knew I wanted to help people because I know what it's like to not be given a chance or forgotten about.... A lot of my hopes and dreams now don't feel impossible now. I feel more alive... I feel like I can accomplish everything now."

Now what I see in these stories is this:

**God creating. Christ redeeming. Spirit sustaining.
The body of Christ flourishing like fruit on a vine.**

God created the first humans, and everyone of us since, to tend and care for God's creation. God gave us Jesus, to show us how to do this, *and* to redeem us when we fail to do so. And, God gave us an advocate in the Spirit to sustain and help us do this work of loving our neighbor. When we allow God to form and shape our lives, these fruits flourish and grow, changing the world. It means that the work God began at creation, continues today... and we get to be part of it! In big ways and small, we can transform the world, even if one person at a time. This is living in the power of the holy spirit. It is recognizing that we have been created in the image of God, redeemed by the love of Christ, and have been sustained by the Spirit to live, to share, to love. And when we do, we invite others to know, experience, and share these same gifts. This is the real fruit of the Spirit: that *by* love, we *can* love. Our whole world can be as clay to a potter, and be formed and shaped in God's image.

Let us pray: Holy Spirit, Everlasting God, Redeeming Christ – make us instruments of your grace. Mold us like clay upon your potters wheel, that we can fully embody your image, being infused with your gifts – that you might work in us and through us to love and transform your world. Amen.

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 9, 2023

Weekly Prayer

Creator God, all creation is your handiwork; your breath and love gives life to all that is. You have shaped me and formed me by your Spirit, giving me gifts, and calling me to use them in ways that honor and glorify you. May your Spirit be at work in and through me today, dear God, Amen.

Monday, July 10

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Observation

As you read this, my family is heading out on vacation. My boys will experience their first airplane ride, and we will spend a few days with friends in Cincinnati. As I *write* this, I am preparing for that trip – making lists of things to pack, things to buy, hoping I'm not missing anything. But now, I am adding these gifts of the Spirit to my "packing list!" Oh, how I hope we all bring a big piece of peace, a lot of patience, and an abundance of joy with us in the days to come.

Application

Noticing my own "need" to pack up these various fruits of the Spirit, I invite you to do the same. What will you carry with you intentionally today? If you packed a bag (or a basket, to keep with the metaphor) of this fruit – which would you carry?

Prayer

God, thank you for these gifts of the Spirit. Bless me, that as I focus on the fruit I 'need most' today, that I may also notice your presence and guidance at work. Give me your love, your peace and patience, your kindness, goodness, faithfulness, along with your gentleness and self-control. Amen.

Tuesday, July 11

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-26

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the self with its passions and its desires. If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit. Let's not become arrogant, make each other angry, or be jealous of each other.

Observation

Can you picture the Spirit as a flowering, fruit-filled plant in your garden? I imagine that it is overflowing with perfectly ripe and delicious fruit for our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But just like any plant in our homes or gardens, the fruit of the Spirit requires the right amount of tender care. Without the right balance of sunshine and water, without being harvested at just the right time – this fruit, too, will fail to thrive and grow properly.

Application

We are sitting with this passage again today, because it is "ripe" with wisdom! (See what I did there?) Now, I am *not* a good gardener, but I hope I am better at cultivating the gifts of the spirit in my life! As you read this list, are there certain gifts that come easier to you? Others that need more attention in order to flourish? Maybe some that seem prone to 'over watering'? Notice your feelings, your words, and your actions today – paying attention to the ways that you are tending to the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Prayer

God, in creation you made a garden. At Jesus' resurrection, you were revealed in the garden again. And now, in the gifts of the Spirit, you are making a garden within me. Help me to nurture my garden well: tending and caring for your gifts, that my whole life may fruit and flourish. Amen.

Wednesday, July 12

Scripture: Isaiah 64:8

But now, LORD, you are our father.

We are the clay, and you are our potter.

All of us are the work of your hand.

Observation

Here, Isaiah reminds us that we are all a part of God's creation. Just as an artist takes time to work the clay – molding and shaping it with loving care – so too, does God shape and mold us. But also, like any artist knows, the end result can be a bit unpredictable! That is part of the joy of art, I think. God created and guides you, but God also delights in the ways that you grow and find your own way.

Application

Are there areas in your life where you might need to return to the “potter's wheel” for some additional molding or shaping? Places that require God's attention and grace today? And maybe, there is something in your life that makes you think, “I bet God is really delighted with how this turned out!” You can bring your thanks to God for the ways you, God's most beloved art, have found your own way in the world and flourished.

Prayer

Mold me and shape me, dear God. Set within me your goodness, your grace, and love. And then, may my days find their “final form” in ways that bring you delight in how I love you and your created world so well. Amen.

Thursday, July 13

Scripture: Romans 8:22-27

We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience. In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God's will.

Observation

The apostle wrote that even when we find ourselves at a loss, “the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans.” The ministry of the Spirit is to help believers pray, and even to pray for them.... Jesus also prays for believers (Romans 8:34). If there are questions or pains that leave you speechless, ask the Spirit to help you lay them at God's feet today.

Application

The apostle Paul faced many griefs and hardships, yet we never find him asking, “Why did God send that mob to attack me?” We never find him resignedly sighing, “Everything happens for a reason. Nero's madness and injustice are just God's will.” Instead, Paul expressed a deep trust that even when bad things occur, things God never wished for, the Holy Spirit gives us hope, even pleads our case in prayer when words fail us, and guides us to lives “consistent with God's will.”

Prayer

Holy Spirit, thank you for being a source of encouragement and guidance. Thank you for interceding, and for interpreting my prayers – even when they are merely “sighs too great for words.” Amen.

Friday, July 14

Scripture: Romans 8:1-5

So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending his own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us. Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness. People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit.

Observation

The apostle Paul echoed the core of Jesus' words: "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). We can choose to live oriented toward self (i.e. away from God), or to live by the Spirit oriented toward God. That's the choice that joins us to Christ's new community, living in peace. As *The Message* put Romans 8:1, "Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud."

Application

Verse 5 said our whole life, not just one day a week or even a few minutes a day, is based on "the Spirit." How have you sensed a shift, over time, from basing your life on self-interest to basing it on the principles God's Spirit teaches you and guides you in living? Where is your life's "growing edge" right now—in what areas is that shift (not without struggles) taking place?

Prayer

Jesus, I want to follow you faithfully, yet I still lose my way. Thank you for your patience, and for continuing to pull me back towards you. Help me to deepen my faith, to grow closer to you each day, Amen.

Saturday, July 15

Scripture: John 3:1-5

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born anew,^[a] it's not possible to see God's kingdom." Nicodemus asked, "How is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to enter the mother's womb for a second time and be born, isn't it?" Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it's not possible to enter God's kingdom."

Observation

Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, "came to Jesus at night." He praised Jesus' "miraculous signs." When Jesus said the vital thing was to be born "anew" or "from above" (the Greek word John used could mean both), Nicodemus seemed stuck on understanding Jesus' words literally. But Jesus wasn't saying people should crawl back into their mother's womb. He was comparing the more abstract idea of spiritual renewal to being born again, as a new person, filled with God's Spirit.

Application

Part of human development is moving from concrete thought patterns to abstract/conceptual thinking. Nicodemus had surely developed that, yet he chose a literal meaning for Jesus' words. Maybe that was because inherent in being born again would be the sense that following Jesus isn't a 9-5 job. It's a new way of living that transforms every part of a person's life. How does following Jesus transform your life? Have you/do you ever resist parts of that transformation?

Prayer

Dear Jesus, cleanse me in your healing and life-giving waters. Pour out your Spirit, and their gifts, into my heart and life. Let me be born, every day, in you. Amen.