

Greetings in Christ!

There are a few different opportunities coming up for you! Thursday July 9 we're taking a trip to LiFest! It's a big Christian music festival with bunches of bands, different speakers/seminars, and loads of fun and fellowship! Tickets are \$38 (or \$19 for anyone who participated in a fund-raiser this year) for the day, we'll be carpooling and leaving Immanuel at about 11 am. You can check out their site (www.lifest.com) for more information, and let me know if you're interested!

Saturday July 11 we'll be meeting at noon at Lake Wazeecha (white sands beach) for a cookout! I'll have the meat, but if you're able to bring a dish to pass please do! We'll have some food, and enjoy the summer weather! Look for the facebook invite this week and please RSVP so that I know how much food to bring! There will be extras, so don't be afraid to show if your plans change last minute.

One more opportunity is much less immediate. Many of you have attended the National Youth Gathering in high school, if you have no idea what I'm talking about message me and I'll describe it to you! Many people are needed to make this gathering happen, and one group of people is the Young Adult Volunteers. Anyone 19-25 can apply to help out for the week and participate in many of the gathering events. There is a cost of \$275, but that covers your lodging and most meals for the week. This would be next summer in New Orleans. Applications will not be available until August, but it is something to think about. I will get more information out to you again once applications are available.

John 3:1-21 – Happy Birthlife!

There are a few phrases that we all know. We know who said them and why. Some examples:

Luke, I am your father. – Darth Vader, Star Wars

The Eagle has landed – Neil Armstrong

Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you – Alexander Graham Bell, first words spoken over the telephone

These are things that we remember, and are famous, because they were at a time when something new was changing the world. What would you say the most famous bible verse is? Most would say John 3:16. Do you know what who said this and what was going on at the time though?

Read through John 3:1-11 <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%203:1-11&version=31>

What does this tell us about Nicodemus? He was a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish ruling council, he was struggling to understand who Jesus was, but came at night, afraid to show that he believed in this man. Quick background about Pharisees: they were all about the law; they even made up rules, to help people follow other rules. They concentrated so much on these rules and regulations, that a true relationship with God was not possible. Jesus rebuked them for this, and they didn't understand, this led to them pushing Jesus' crucifixion.

What does this passage tell us about spiritual birth? It is necessary to see and enter God's kingdom, and it is different from the birth that we celebrate with cake and candles each year (usually ☺).

Interesting tid-bit: the word used here that is translated 'again' in 'born again' can also be translated 'from above.' Nicodemus obviously understood it as 'again' (hence the mother's womb statement), but we can understand it as a birth from above, being born differently as God's beloved children.

Now read through John 3: 10-21 <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%203:10-21;&version=31>;

What happens for those who are born again? (I'm not giving the answer this time ;)) What does this really mean? Here are a few other passages that describe the process of spiritual birth: John 1:10-13, 1 Peter 22-25, and Titus 3:4-7. These verses show some of the differences between physical birth and spiritual birth. Spiritual birth is imperishable, and it offers eternal life. Physical birth is temporal and corruptible.

Now is the time for some personal reflection. Are there times in your life when you are just obeying all of the rules without a heart for God? Can you think of other examples of this in our culture (they're all over the place!!)? Can you remember a specific time in your life when you were born again? When you were given the opportunity to really experience a relationship with Christ in a new way?

Heavenly Father, help us to always feel your presence Lord, and continue to draw us closer to you and strengthen our relationship with you! Send your Spirit to fill us and guide us Lord, so that we are never simply obeying the rules. Thank you for the countless opportunities that you give us to live in Your Love, rather than going through the motions, without meaning. Amen