

## A New Do

**Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5).**

**Scripture:** John 3:1-8

**Song:** “Blessed Assurance”

*Snip.* I closed the scissors over my tautly pulled hair. *Boing!* The shortest curl I’d ever seen bounced up, hugging the top of my forehead. My stomach sank into my shoes. All I wanted was to have stylish bangs so I would fit in with the rest of my seventh-grade class. I thought it would be easy to do myself. But now looking wide-eyed into the mirror, I could relate to the quip: “I don’t understand. I cut my hair twice, and it’s still too short!” There are no redos when it comes to cutting hair.

Nicodemus was confronted with the logical impossibility of another kind of redo. How could he be born again? He didn’t understand that Jesus spoke not of a redo but a “new do.” Nicodemus did not need another physical birth; he needed a new kind of birth—a spiritual one.

Our salvation is a new beginning, a work of God’s Spirit. Thankfully, as ones who have been born again, we are not stuck trying to redo our lives, trying to rectify our sins and mistakes. Instead we each have been forgiven and given a new spiritual life in Christ.

**Father,** renew our wonder and joy today at being born again by Your Spirit into eternal life with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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July 11–17. **Rachel Schmoyer** is an author, pastor’s wife, and mom living in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania.

## A Cure for Snakebites

**“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him”** (John 3:14-15).

**Scripture:** John 3:9-17

**Song:** “Look and Live”

Settlers on the Kansas prairie in the 1870s were in desperate need of a cure for rattlesnake bites. Many had lost family members because of the deadly poison injected by sharp fangs. Simple cures like whiskey, milk, or sucking out the poison produced inconsistent results. The more involved cures were not reliable either. One newspaper of the time confidently prescribed a plaster of one tablespoon of gunpowder, some salt, and the yellow of an egg mixed together, placed on a cloth, and applied to the wound until the cloth dried and fell off.

The Israelites suffered from venomous snakebites as a consequence of their faithless, impatient complaints (Numbers 21). The people cried out for a cure. God in His mercy provided a simple remedy. Moses fashioned a bronze snake onto a pole and lifted it up in the camp. When someone who was bitten looked at the bronze snake, the person would live.

We tend to overcomplicate the life of faith. We want thorough directions to follow, a checklist to mark off all the steps. But God keeps the life of faith simple. Salvation begins with “look and live.” Growing in faith continues not in our own strength but with the steady, faithful gaze on Christ our Savior.

**Father,** thank You for salvation and for the strength to live by faith. Help me remember to look at You and live. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## My God, the Unchanging Rock

**“My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge”** (2 Samuel 22:3).

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 22:2-7

**Song:** “He Hideth My Soul in the Cleft of the Rock”

As a teenager I spent my summers as a camp counselor. I slept in a platform tent in the woods, sang around the campfire, and taught the campers God’s Word in the midst of God’s creation. One of the highlights of the campsite was the climbing hill. Counselors took turns sitting on a large rock jutting out of the top of the hill to supervise the kids on the hill. Twenty years later, I visited the campsite. So much had changed! The dining tent had been upgraded to a concrete pavilion. The archery range was overgrown. The trees were taller. It felt strangely unfamiliar until I looked up and saw the rock on the hill, which stood as solid as ever.

King David’s life was marked with upheaval. King Saul turned against him. Absalom turned against him. Even the land turned against him with three years of famine. When the Lord delivered him, King David sang a song of praise to God, his rock.

Rocks are unchanging compared to trees, grass, and manmade structures. God, our rock, is unchanging in character. His love, His protection, and His listening ears are a comfort during unsettling changes in our lives. When the world feels unfamiliar and our loved ones are unreliable, we can trust in the Lord our God, our rock and deliverer.

**Father,** thank You for being a refuge, a protection, the rock of unchanging love and deliverance. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## So Poor, We Trusted the Lord

**“Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”** (Psalm 62:11-12).

**Scripture:** Psalm 62

**Song:** “Trusting Jesus, That Is All”

When my husband and I returned from our honeymoon, we unpacked our suitcases in our tiny apartment and wrote out our first budget for the month. Only \$5 was left over after the bills were covered. We weren't drowning in debt; we were just young and freshly starting out. We trusted the Lord for every need. When a car repair bill came, we prayed for God to provide and He gave me overtime. When babies came along, we prayed for God to provide car seats; a friend at church gave us their gently used ones. Those lean days are long gone. Now when we need or want something, we can buy it. God is still our provider, but praying for our every need doesn't feel as urgent now.

The psalmist reminds us not to set our hearts on riches, even if they increase. The riches are not the source of our provision. God is the powerful one, the one who gives with unfailing love. He is the one who provides, whether I acknowledge it or not. But just like the psalmist glorifies the Lord in whom his soul rests, I can glorify the Lord by still lifting my needs to Him in prayer and thanking Him for being my powerful, loving provider.

**Father,** I pause now to give You thanks for all You have provided for me, time and again. I declare my trust in You alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Sharing the Prize

**“You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor”** (Hebrews 2:7).

**Scripture:** Hebrews 2:1-9

**Song:** “Crown of Life and Crown of Glory”

In London’s Guildhall, anxious authors, dressed in their black-tie best, gathered to hear the announcement of the 2019 Booker Prize. The Booker Prize is a coveted literature award given to the best novel of the year written in English and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland. The master of ceremonies approached the microphone: “And the winners are . . .” The *winners*? To everyone’s surprise there were two winners. The jury explained that after many hours of deliberation, they could not decide on just one. One author was a previous winner and happy to share the honor. The other was a lesser-known writer who was grateful for the distinction.

Jesus Christ suffered on the cross and rose again. He is now with the Father in Heaven, crowned with glory and honor. Jesus Christ has tasted death for everyone. Through Him, God also crowns the redeemed with honor and glory, which we will fully realize when we reign with Christ in His kingdom (Revelation 22:5).

We are not defeated, and we do not need to live in discouragement. As God’s children and co-heirs with Christ, we have special glory and honor bestowed on us by God. Let’s live today knowing that we are victorious in Christ and will joyfully reign with Him in the new creation.

**Father**, fill me with humble confidence today as I walk in the victory You have secured for me and in the honor You bestow on me through Your Son. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## The Time Is Now

**Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you” (John 12:35).**

**Scripture:** John 12:27-36

**Song:** “Today the Savior Calls”

On October 8, 1871, D. L. Moody, an evangelist in Chicago, wrapped up his sermon with a cliffhanger: “What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called the Christ?” He asked the congregation to think it over during the week. He would explain more about salvation the following Sunday. Ira Sankey started the closing hymn; but before the hymn was over, fire engines roared and alarms whistled outside. By the next morning, Chicago was in ruins from what would become known as the Great Chicago Fire. D. L. Moody felt the loss deeply. Never again did he give the people a week to think over what they would do with Jesus! From then on, he preached Christ with urgency—knowing there might never be another opportunity.

The crowd listening to Jesus understood from the Law that Messiah would remain forever. They were confused when Jesus spoke about being lifted up to die. But Jesus knew His earthly ministry was winding down, and there was no time like the present for the crowd to believe in Him.

It feels like this present age will last forever. But Christ has promised to return to make all things new. This is the time to believe in Christ. Those who already trust Him must share the gospel with urgency. Time is limited.

**Father,** thank You for Your salvation. Help me believe and obey while time remains. In Jesus' name, amen.

## A Natural Reflection

**“I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken”** (John 12:49).

**Scripture:** John 12:44-50

**Song:** “O to Be Like Thee!”

“Remember, be natural! Aaaand . . . Action!” Alice Guy-Blache, one of the first female film directors in history, hand-cranked her moving-picture camera to create movies with innovative film techniques, such as close-ups and hand-tinted colors. She was also credited in 1912 as the first director to film the classic “mirror routine” made popular on the stage. Her instruction to “be natural” was posted in her studio on a large sign. The direction helped the actors in the mirror routine stay in sync. In the mirror routine, the sweeping motions of their hands and their facial expressions looked identical as the two actors faced each other through a frame.

By nature, the Father and the Son are in complete unity. Along with the Holy Spirit, they are one in essence. To see one is to see the other. They have the same words, the same message. All the words Jesus spoke in His earthly ministry are from God the Father.

Believers, the body of Christ, reflect His love, mercy, compassion, grace, and truth. Together we are united with Christ and to one another, hidden with Christ in God and filled with His Spirit. Often in our weaknesses, we need to be reminded to keep in step with the Spirit and to reflect God’s truth and goodness together with our fellow believers.

**Father,** may I stay unified with my brothers and sisters in Christ as we reflect Your love, truth, and grace. In Jesus’ name, amen.