

HIGH Calling

Winter 2026

The *High Calling* is a publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

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You Must Be Born Again

By Bill Kierce, FAS President



Billy Graham once told the story about a time when he was a young preacher with Youth for Christ and arrived in a town to preach.

Having an urgent letter to mail, he began looking for the local Post Office but had gotten lost. He pulled his car beside a young boy walking along the road. Rolling down his passenger side window, Mr. Graham asked the youth, “Son, can you give me directions to the Post Office?” Once directed and before driving away, Billy bade farewell to the lad with the following invitation, “Son, if you will come to the Baptist Church in the center of town tonight, I will give you directions to Heaven.” The little boy replied, “Mister, you can’t even find the Post Office. How are you going to give me directions to Heaven?”

In John 3:1–6 (New International Version), we find a similar occasion when an important person, a religious leader, came asking for directions. His name was Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jewish synagogue (v. 1). Without realizing the intent of his own question, he approached Jesus seeking directions to Heaven: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him” (v. 2). From the text, we do not know what Nicodemus planned to discuss with Jesus under the cover of darkness that evening. But Jesus knew what he needed: “Very truly I tell you,

no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again” (v. 3). It would be completely predictable that an unregenerated human mind, even a brilliant one by the world’s standards, might ask the obvious: “How can someone be born when they are old?” (v. 4).

I remember when the Holy Spirit first began to penetrate my heart with prevenient grace as an early teen. In the 1970s, the biblical experience of new birth was often described as Jesus coming to live within one’s heart. I remember asking my Sunday School teacher, Johnny Cason, the local florist, how Jesus could fit in my heart. Maybe I asked Mr. Cason because he had a large barrel chest and maybe I could imagine Jesus squeezing in there. But if so, how could he live in mine—or anyone else’s for that matter? Thankfully, I was to discover in just a few months forward that Jesus could indeed get into my heart through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and I would soon come to recognize him in others—now for fifty years, across the street and around the world. Both Scripture and history tell us that Nicodemus made the same discovery, but we will get back to that in a few paragraphs.

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH

Before we explore the *nature* of the new birth, let’s emphasize the *necessity* of it. Couple John chapter 3 with John 14:1–6, where Jesus reminds his disciples during the last week of his earthly life that he is going to prepare

a place for them to live eternally. “You know the way to the place where I am going,” he said (John 14:4). What a great setup Jesus made. He knew that they didn’t know the way quite yet, and he knew that at least one of his disciples would call him out on that. It was Thomas, the skeptical one: “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5).

About a decade ago, Kim and I had the privilege of “adopting” an international student at our local university into our home for holidays and special occasions. It has developed into a deep mutual friendship. A Fulbright Scholar, this young man moved to our town to pursue his PhD in civil engineering. It necessitated his leaving home and his young bride in the Middle East to embrace this opportunity. Of course, the first question Kim wanted to know was about how they met. It was an arranged marriage, like most in his country and many in Jesus’ day. She was a very young bride, who was required to bid her husband farewell after only six months of marriage. She was not allowed by their government to accompany him. We then asked, “Where is she living?” His response stunned me, “Oh, she is living at my father’s house.” You see, in the Middle East, now and then (Jesus’ time), when a couple get married, the husband will make space in his father’s house for them to live, often by building a new room.

Jesus reminded his disciples that he was “going to prepare a place” for them in his Father’s house (John 14:2). So how do we get there, Thomas asks. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” Jesus said (John 14:6). Those are straightforward directions.

The new birth is not an option or suggestion for persons who want to spend eternity in God’s presence. It is an imperative. There is only one road that leads to Heaven and no shortcuts. The idea that all religions lead to the same place is a hellish lie designed to deceive multitudes of people. Our culture does not appreciate imperatives. It never has. Today’s Millennials or Gen Z, even Gen Alphas, are not the first generations to insist upon finding their own way in this world. Exploration and a demand for independence are bound into the human heart (Proverbs 22:15). When grace overwhelms our hearts with prevenient love, we realize that the Holy Spirit leads every generation back to the same eternal address—and the same Person (Matthew 7:7–12). Imagine the audacity of Jesus to say that there is no other way to God but through Himself.

We don’t like exclusivity in our culture, either. Perhaps the greatest and simplest apologetic for the authority of Jesus’ imperative in John 14: 6 was the argument of British scholar C. S. Lewis. Once an agnostic who came to faith in

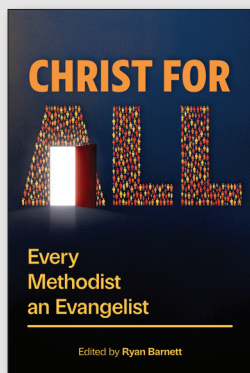
Christ in his late twenties, Lewis said (paraphrasing), “Jesus Christ is either who He said He was, the Lord God of Heaven, or one can take their pick between liar and lunatic.” There are no other options. Nicodemus, you must be born again. That goes for every other person who ever has or ever will leave shoeprints in the dust of planet Earth.

THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH

Physical birth is an awesome analogy of spiritual birth. The parallels are more synonymous than similar. Isn’t it interesting how God designed it that way before ever breathing life (*ruach*, breath or wind in Hebrew) into Adam’s lungs? Adam was the only human being never to be born the old-fashioned way. Well, except for the Second Adam (1 Corinthians 15). Attempting an explanation to Nicodemus about the mystery of the new birth, Jesus said, “No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5).

There are many reasons, biblically and historically, to support the practice of infant baptism. There is also honest interpretive disagreement in the Body of Christ, and among Wesleyans, about the practice. It is not our purpose to

NEW Title: Coming Soon!



CHRIST FOR ALL: Every Methodist an Evangelist

Edited by Ryan Barnett

Format: Paperback

Page count: 139 pages

Retail price: \$12.95

Evangelism cannot be the domain of professional clergy alone

This resource was originally developed for participants of the NextLevel Evangelism Conference hosted by The Wesley House of Studies at Truett Theological Seminary (Baylor University). The Spirit of God is moving in powerful ways among Methodists; notably, though not exclusively in the Global Methodist Church, which is experiencing exponential growth. Many believe that a global awakening has begun as we find ourselves in the greatest ingathering of Christians in human history. It is our hope that every Methodist church across the globe might decide to be an active participant in what God is doing. For that to happen, evangelism cannot be the domain of professional clergy alone. It must be the work of the entire priesthood of believers. Thus, our title: *Christ for All: Every Methodist an Evangelist*.

debate that here and now. However, it is a misinterpretation of John 3:5, in my opinion, to suggest that the water to which Jesus refers is the water of baptism. In the next verse, Jesus continues the analogy and makes clear what kind of water he is referencing: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit” (John 3:6). There is a bag of water, called the *amniotic sac*, that surrounds a baby in utero until the time of physical delivery. Kim and I were in the grocery store when hers burst before delivering our second child. That is the water of physical birth. Just as one is born of water, one must also be born of the Spirit. The flesh produces the first kind of water; the Spirit of God produces spiritual life. One cannot produce the other. And the Church, as vital as it is to our nurturing as newborn babies in Christ (1 Peter 2:2), as well as mature adults (Ephesians 4:11–16), cannot confer salvation upon an individual, no matter how beautiful the ceremony or meaningful the ritual. Flesh and blood cannot reveal this reality to us, only our Father in heaven (Matthew 16:17).

Now, let’s qualify here: God can and often does use the sacramental practices of a vibrant church as a spiritual midwife in the process of new birth. But no church should presume to believe that it can do the Holy Spirit’s work. That takes a lot more audacity than Jesus proclaiming to be the only way to the Father. There is no human or ecclesiastical assembly line to life in Christ. Conception and birth take place in God’s timing.

One reason, among many laudable ones, we like rituals in church life is because they give us a sense of control over things. But God’s birthing schedule cannot be controlled. Therefore, we must learn to trust people with the Holy Spirit and trust the Holy Spirit with people when it comes to the timing of grace. Just as a baby is conceived in its mother’s womb in an intimate moment of loving expression, the Holy Spirit conceives Jesus in us through what John Wesley called “prevenient grace,” the grace of God that precedes our spiritual conversion. It is an intimate and holy moment when a soul is conceived, when an individual,

overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, as Luke chapter 1 said of Mary the virgin mother of Jesus, is longing to do something in us that has eternal ramifications. Like Mary, we have a choice to make. If, like Mary, we respond (paraphrasing again), “Yes, Lord, have your way in me. I will do whatever you want; all I want is to be yours” (Luke 1:38), then we are on our way to spiritual birth. We are then propelled through the Holy Spirit’s birth canal into new life in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:17). With all due respect, when a church tries to make a baby through ritual observances and sacraments alone, the offspring is always stillborn. And stillborn babies grow up to be loyal church members who sit in pews and secretly wonder why worship is so boring to them. They have a form of godliness but no spiritual power (2 Timothy 3:5).

Please hear my heart in writing these words. I love the local church. When it works the way God designed it, there is spiritual life abounding. There is no joy like that experienced by a Sunday School teacher, youth leader, or children’s ministry volunteer participating in leading a person to spiritual birth and subsequent growth. Sometimes God anoints a confirmation class in such a way that leads an entire group of youth into life-altering encounters with Jesus that spark revival in a congregation or community. At other times, there is the one quiet teenager who seldom gets noticed in the crowd but is genuinely born again while others go through the motions and give assent to the Catechism.

We are right to value the processes that help us ritualize the reality of life in Christ and practice them. But, if you are a church leader or pastor, don’t confuse the process with the product. The consequences of that mistake are just too eternally tragic for the people in our care. And (respectfully), for God’s sake, let us proclaim to our people the plain truth: Only God can do for us and in us what nothing or no one else can do. Preach the necessity of new birth in Christ for everyone—yes, even to those who assume themselves to be children of God by virtue of being active in church, and much more so to those in our communities who are far from God.

Have you, the reader, been born again? How can we know? It is not because we have a church certificate, but because the Holy Spirit convinces our own spirit that we are a child of God (Romans 8:15–16). The flesh/Spirit analogy works well here. How do we know that we are physically alive? There are many signs, but here are three: we breath, our heart beats, and we get hungry every day. We can know for certain that we are spiritually alive in Christ because he becomes our breath,

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our reason for being. We can know we are spiritually alive because our heart is changed; it beats with the rhythm of God's heart. What God loves, we love. What offends God breaks our tender new heart. We can know we are spiritually alive because we hunger for his presence and his Word every day and can't get enough to eat.

So now let's circle back to Nicodemus, the man who came to Jesus at night. Like a future Oxford scholar and son of a prominent Anglican clergymen in England, who would also have his heart strangely warmed by an evening encounter with Christ seventeen centuries later (May 24, 1738), if anyone could gain salvation through religion, it would be Nicodemus and John Wesley. No, Nicodemus could not find his way back into his mother's womb. But that night, prevenient grace conceived something in his heart. We know from Scripture that he helped provide a

place for Jesus' burial (John 19:38–42). More than sympathetic to the cause of Jesus the Christ, Nicodemus had likely been born again. Oral tradition and some credible church history recounts that he was removed from the Jewish Sanhedrin after the death of Jesus and may have later been martyred. Surely, Nicodemus was aware of what Jesus had spoken to a grieving family at the tomb of a good friend, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And he who believes in me will never die" (John 11:24–25). In fact, it was the resurrection of Lazarus that caused the Jewish rulers to plot the death of this Rabbi Jesus who had gone too far (John 12). The world says, "We live, then we die." But God's Word says, once we're born into spiritual life, we never die. For the Christian, death is not the end of life or the beginning of another life. It is a change of address—the address of the Father's house. ✠

The Carnal Mind vs. the Mind of Christ

By Dennis F. Kinlaw



This article has been edited and abridged, taken from Chapter 5 of *The Mind of Christ* by Dennis F. Kinlaw (Francis Asbury Press, 1998).

Do you feel there is a tug-of-war going on within you? Do you find yourself hesitating to do what God is calling you to do, because you feel there might be a more pleasant or more socially acceptable alternative? Do you feel guilty because you hold back from giving yourself fully to the Lord?

The divided heart is an agonizing state to live in. It's impossible for a person to stay there long; you will choose either God's way or the world's way. I've observed that the divided heart is a common experience among Christians. However, it is not the way that the New Testament calls us to live.

Romans 8:1–4 says:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (ESV)

Paul says the requirements of God's law can be fulfilled in the likes of you and me. He says the power of God can bring us to the point that we can please God himself. He acknowledges that there are two ways people can attempt to please God. One way is to work out of our own resources. The other is to let God put his Spirit in us and fill us so that we can live out of the resources of the Spirit. If we attempt to live out of our own resources, Paul says, we're living

"according to the flesh." But if we live out of the resources of God, we live "according to the Spirit." Paul sees no third alternative. Ultimately, you and I must live one way or the other. We must live "in the flesh" without God or we must live in the Spirit and be totally God's.

I am intrigued by the sharp contrast that Paul draws between the "flesh" and the Spirit. He makes very clear the disastrous consequences of living "in the flesh" and the glorious privileges of living in the Spirit. Notice what he says about living in "the flesh." First, he says that if you live "in the flesh," you will die. Romans 8:6 bluntly declares that "to set the mind [Gk., *phronēo*] on the flesh is death."

**"We must live
'in the flesh'
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Verse 13 reiterates, "If you live according to the flesh, you will die." Why? Because life is in God; it is not in us. So, if we attempt to live in our own power and wisdom, we will perish.

Second, he says that if you try to live without God, you will be hostile to God. No one can remain neutral regarding God's will. Notice verse 7: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." Apart from the Holy Spirit's working in a person's life, that person will be hostile to God. The flesh sees God as the enemy. The perfect picture of demonstration of that fact is the Cross, where the likes of you and me murdered God when he came to live among us. Paul is setting up the sharply etched reality that there can be no middle ground between life "in the flesh" and life in the Spirit.

Third, Paul says is that if you live “in the flesh,” you cannot please God. Notice verse 8: “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” So, if human desire dominates my life, I will find a hostility rising in me against God. I will not please him. I will be separated from him. I have no option but death.

The fourth thing Paul says is that living “in the flesh” is to live in bondage. Look at verse 15: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a Spirit of adoption....” He’s contrasting the Spirit of God and the spirit of human flesh, saying that the flesh is bondage. The natural man knows what it means to live in bondage. It may be a habit; it may be lust; it may be any manifestation of sin. Whatever form the bondage may take, a human being living in the flesh is powerless to rid himself of sin. That bondage brings an ominous sense of fear. We know intuitively that we are not right, so we have a fear of God.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

In verse 2, Paul shows us the opposite: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” Sin does not have to dominate us. Death does not have to determine our destiny. In fact, if you look at verse 4, you will even find that it is possible for a person like you and me to please God. The end result in verse 6 is that we have life and peace. We have the privilege of being led by the Holy Spirit. We can walk in the Spirit. We don’t have to fear God, because he puts a witness in our heart that we are his children and we belong to him. What an incredible experience it is when God tells you that you belong to him!

Then, as we walk with him, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. Look at verse 26: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” We don’t even know what to pray for. So, the Holy Spirit prays for us, with groans too deep for words. The Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of the Father; it is the Father’s will that the Spirit states our case. What a marvelous privilege it is, to have the Holy Spirit pleading on our behalf before the throne of heaven!

So, Paul sees only two ways to live—in the flesh or in the Holy Spirit. One is a life without God and the other is a life with all the resources of God. The problem is that most of us Christians have known very well how it feels to have a mixture of the two within us. Most of us have tried to live part of our lives—perhaps most of our lives—in a kind of spiritually comatose state. There has not been a clear separation between “flesh” and Spirit. We have been neither fully alive nor dead.

If we are to stand before God, our hearts must be cleansed of this double-mindedness. God must make us holy so that we will be wholly his. There can be no divided loyalties in the Kingdom of God.

Introducing Aaron Mansfield: In His Own Words



I am the senior pastor of Trinity Hill Methodist Church in Lexington, KY, and I am honored to serve as the Secretary of the Board of the Francis Asbury Society. I would have been happy enjoying FAS conferences and buying resources as a grateful constituent. I would have

been content telling my pastoral colleagues and church members about the work of FAS. So, when I was asked to serve on the Board, I was a little hesitant. But I have been welcomed into a warm fellowship. What a blessing to reconnect with some people I have known for a long time and to meet new friends in the work of spreading scriptural holiness across the street and around the world.

I first heard of FAS when I was a student at Asbury Theological Seminary. I remember Dr. Allan Coppedge talking about Barnabas groups and FAS. Fast forward about twenty years and my friend Mike Powers was a guest teacher for a group of pastors who gathered to study John Wesley’s teachings on Christian Perfection. Mike re-introduced me to the Francis Asbury Society.

I started dreaming about a preaching conference in the Wesleyan tradition, and knowing that Francis Asbury Society had the preachers and the books to help pastors recover our doctrinal heritage, I pitched the idea to Bill Kierce. Trinity Hill’s first preaching conference was such a blessing! Bill Kierce, Chris Bounds, and John Oswalt shared, and it whetted our appetites for more. Just a few months ago, we hosted a “Preaching in the Spirit” conference with Bill, Jessica LaGrone, and GMC Bishop Kenneth Levingston.

My goal in hosting these conferences has been two-fold: (1) to inspire and increase the capacity for holiness preaching; and (2) to get as many FAS books and knowledge about FAS resources to as many pastors as possible.

For twenty years, my ministry has been dedicated to planting churches and making disciples who make disciples. I am firmly convinced that the love of God shed abroad in hearts is what makes people effective evangelists. I have been so blessed to work with the Francis Asbury Society not only through the publications that give us a solid foundation but also the preaching and disciple-making work FAS does.

I am very grateful and honored to serve the Francis Asbury Society, where we are working hard to join hearts and hands in promoting vital piety and ministry to the local church and to leaders who will ignite a revival of Christian holiness! 🙏

There is power when we live in the Spirit. There are only sterility and death in the works of the flesh.

The Body of Christ has never learned that. We still squabble for position. We fight for power. We want what we want, when we want it. We try to sanctify our desires by saying,

“There is power when we live in the Spirit. There are only sterility and death in the works of the flesh.”

“This is for God.” But our motives are mixed. We have a double mind. As a result, our works are sterile. Oh, how we need to have the mind of Christ! Only when we have his mind and live his way can the fullness

of the Spirit of God flow through us and be manifest in our living and in our service.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Take another look at what Paul says in Romans 8:5: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds [Gk., *phroneo*] on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.” There again is that flag word, *phroneo*. Remember that it speaks of a person’s entire perspective on life—what one thinks, feels, and aspires to do. Paul is saying that a carnally-minded person is driven by physical desires. The appetites rule. Such a person seeks whatever brings pleasure, whatever “feels good.”

In contrast to that is the person who thinks with the mind of Christ. This person has the perspective of Christ’s own Spirit. This person seeks whatever pleases the Spirit of the Lord. This person yearns to know where Christ’s Spirit is at work and join in that work. The person who sets his mind on the Spirit of Christ sees the world through Christ’s eyes and seeks to be a part of what he is doing in the world.

John Wesley referred to this way of thinking as “Christian perfection.” Notice what he says in his journal entry for January 27, 1767:

By perfection, I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers, words, and actions. I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore, I retract several expressions in our Hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility.... I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant.

But I believe [there is] a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.... As to the time[,] I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before. I believe it is usually many years after justification, but it might be within five years or five months after it; I know of no conclusive argument to the contrary.¹

It is unfortunate that so many people have a distorted view of what Wesley meant by “perfection.” He makes it clear that he is talking about the same thing that Paul describes in Romans 8. This is not an experience for a spiritual elite corps; it is God’s gift for all his children. None of us needs to serve our human passions. “We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh” (Rom. 8:12), but rather to serve God in the Spirit of his Son, Jesus Christ.

God is looking for people who will keep traveling down “the Roman road” from salvation to live as Christ lives. That kind of life takes more than courage. It takes more than insight. It takes the very Spirit of Christ living within us and animating our lives every day. ✨

1 Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of Wesley*, Vol. XI (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 446.