

Week 2: Love that Flows Through Us John 3:1-21 Jesus teaches Nicodemus about the Spirit

Know: Review names around the group and share about when you have felt like you wanted to start life all over again. What did your dream life look like?

Grow: Have a volunteer read John 3:1-21. (There are no parallel accounts of this passage in scripture.)

The “stealth” approach:

- Nicodemus was a member of the _____, Jewish leaders who lived by the strictest possible religious rules.
- The setting for Nicodemus’ visit was during Passover, when Jesus was in Jerusalem and the city would have been very crowded with Jewish visitors. What time of day did Nicodemus visit Jesus?
_____ The Pharisees as leaders were often at odds with Jesus, and it is possible that Nicodemus may have faced persecution from his colleagues for seeking conversation with Jesus.
- Jesus often labeled the Pharisees in negative terms (see entire 23rd chapter of Matthew) for their spiritual shallowness and the religious compliance burdens they placed on the shoulders of others, yet Nicodemus seemed to be a true spiritual seeker. His comments to Jesus began with an attitude of respect. Why did he tell Jesus that he was seeking him out? (verse 2)

- Can you think of groups of persons today where someone from that group might find it difficult to approach a Christian to have conversation about faith?

Are there ways as the church that we might make that easier? _____

“Born anew, from above, again”

- Jesus told Nicodemus that unless someone is born anew, they will not see _____. Name some of the words Jesus uses to describe the concept of being “born again”? _____
_____ How did Nicodemus misunderstand Jesus’ statement? _____
- For the Jews, their most important religious consideration was their physical birth, for their heritage made them descendants of Abraham and heirs to the covenant that God made with Abraham. What do you think it means to be born anew or again?
- Read Matthew 18:1-4. Jesus said in this passage that you must become like a _____ to enter the kingdom of heaven. In the ancient world, emphasis would fall on a child’s lack of status. To become like a child requires a change of heart and life concerns, away from concerns of prestige and status. What messages do we hear in our world today about this type of humility?

- Jesus was telling Nicodemus about the need for a spiritual rebirth in the life of the believer. What category of things did Jesus say he was talking about? (verse 12)

- When we talk to people about being born again, they often begin to discuss their family's religious heritage, where they hold their church membership, or their participation in a religious ceremony like baptism. Do you think that this is what Jesus was talking about?

- Nicodemus must have been tempted to think that he understood all he needed to know about the kingdom of heaven. After all, he was born a Jew, lived a good life, and was a faithful Pharisee. What labels are we tempted to apply to ourselves, expecting that these characteristics guarantee heaven for us? _____

Holy Spirit

- Read Jeremiah Ezekiel 11:19-20 When Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, is he teaching God's Word from the Old Testament? How do these teachings relate to the story of Nicodemus? _____

- Read Ezekiel 17:1-14. The prophet Ezekiel had a God-given vision of a valley of dried bones. How did these bones come to life again, and what do you think this metaphor means?

- Read again John 3:6-8. Why did Jesus compare the Holy Spirit to the wind? _____
- When we are born of the Spirit, the heart and soul of our being is changed. We love God from inside the heart. Why does this matter in our lives? _____
- Can anything external make you do something in life? Why must it come from the heart?

- How have you seen a person's life change through a born again experience? _____

- Did Nicodemus ever get to a point of understanding? Read John 7:47-51 and 19:38-42. What do you think? _____
- Some people describe their conversion to faith as a gradual awakening of faith, while others describe it like a light coming on with immediate conviction. How would you describe your experience?

Go: faith takes action steps. "Dare you to love"...God, others, yourself.

- How is belief foundational to Christian love? _____
- Is there anyone in your group who is struggling with the "born again" concept? How can you pray for one another and support one another in a move toward deeper spiritual understanding? _____

- Is there a person that you know that is connected with a group that might make it difficult from them to have a conversation about Christianity, Jesus, faith? What steps might you take to enable them to connect with you and begin the conversation?

For further study: The Holy Spirit

- The following passages offer additional insights into the work of the Holy Spirit. Write down your learnings.

Psalm 51:10-12

Matthew 1:18

John 14:25-26

Acts 2:1-4

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

What does it mean to you to live a Spirit-filled life?