

John 3: 1-21 (New International Version)

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."^[a]

⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^[c] must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^[d] ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."^[e]

¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,^[f] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.^[g] ¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."^[h]

Footnotes:

- a. [John 3:3](#) Or born from above; also in verse 7
- b. [John 3:6](#) Or but spirit
- c. [John 3:7](#) The Greek is plural.
- d. [John 3:13](#) Some manuscripts Man, who is in heaven
- e. [John 3:15](#) Or believes may have eternal life in him
- f. [John 3:16](#) Or his only begotten Son
- g. [John 3:18](#) Or God's only begotten Son
- h. [John 3:21](#) Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 15.

OASIS: Speak Up, Speak Truth; John 3: 1-21

Possible Starter question: What does the phrase “earn the right to be heard” mean to you?
Or look like in real life? A brief example or two?

Transitional comment: Now, let’s see what we can learn from the model of Jesus.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit’s leading (if you haven’t already prayed)

Read and Overview observations:

- Let’s listen as someone reads our passage aloud.
- Now take several minutes by yourself to study the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. Look for repeated words and ideas. Note major contrasts.

- What words and ideas were repeated?
- What contrasts did you observe?

First section (vs. 1- 15):

- In vs. 1-2, what do we learn about this man who visits Jesus?

- I Why do you think he has come? What do you think motivates him?
What might be his underlying question?

- What does Jesus want him to think about *via* his (Jesus’) brief reply of v. 3?

- I What do you think Jesus is doing in giving such a cryptic comment?

- What is Nicodemus’ reaction in v. 4?

- In vs. 5-8, what two images or illustrations does Jesus use?

- I Consider each image. What insight/s does each provide?
(How are water and Spirit different?)
(How are wind and Spirit similar?)

- I What do you think the “overriding points” are that Jesus is making?

- Given Nicodemus’ befuddlement, what are the key points Jesus offers (vs. 10-15)?

- As Jesus speaks of “heavenly things,” what is he implying about himself?
(n.b. “the Son of Man” phrase is a messianic reference in Daniel 7:13)

- I Read aloud Numbers 21: 4-9. What do you think Jesus is implying?

- I In what ways does this dialogue serve Nicodemus?

- I Summarize what you think are the key insights/truths Jesus conveys.

- A What does this conversation model for us?

Second section (vs. 16-21):

- O What are the often repeated words in this paragraph?
- O What contrasts did you spot?
 - I Why so many contrasts? What is the function of so many contrasts?
- O What has God done?
 - I Why?

Summary

- A Who are some people with whom you'd love to earn the right to speak spiritual truth?
- A Brainstorm some options of how you might be able to take initiative or break the ice with them about spiritual matters?

Prayer together: for opportunities to convey love and truth about Jesus to them.

Text is on other page or www.Biblegateway.com

- a. BIG idea: Doing good means...earning the right to share God's story. After gaining people's attention and respect, we're able to engage them in conversations that lead them to the gospel.
- b. Key verse/idea: John 3: **"Very truly I tell you..."**
- c. KEY: O = Observation; I = Interpretation; A = Application (or C = Challenge).

Advice to study leaders:

- d. Complement your OIA questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? What do others of you see/think?).
- e. Determine the core questions you'll ask (know which ones to skip if pressed for time.
- f. Always reword questions in words are comfortable for you (and, if the question doesn't make sense to you, then discard it.)
- g. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. How long do you wait? Take your time; don't rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- h. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- i. Application: Pace the study to conclude with "difference making" application.
- j. Secondary texts—use other texts very sparingly, even if they are relevant. Otherwise, other texts will push you more into the "teacher role," rather than that of facilitator. It also can cause some people to feel distracted or de-powered.
- k. If you are utilizing this "on-line" study and not part of the OASIS course, I recommend that you get the 1-volume commentary entitled New Bible Commentary, Revised (21st Century Edition, IVP). It is well worth the \$40.