

Nicodemus worked his way into the ruling council of the Jewish people. He sat with 70 other high priests, elders, and scribes to address the issues of the people. He also verified messianic claims.

*1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night.*

The nighttime visit sets the message of the meeting against the backdrop of darkness and light (*John 3:19-21*).

### 1. Talk Through Your Questions

*John 3:1-13*

Nicodemus raises discerning questions.

Question #1: Does God have more to offer than I have found?

*2 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. (Note the connection with John 2:23-25.)*

The authority in Jesus' teachings engaged heart and soul (*Matthew 7:29*). The religious leaders were curious. Perhaps, as Nicodemus searched his heart, he was wondering... is there more to being God's person than being good, saying prayers, and learning about God?

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

The crucial question here makes the hearer and the reader ask, "Am I qualified to enter this kingdom?"

Question #2: How can one be born again?

*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!"*

Anyone can make promises but starting over is hard.

*5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh; but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"*

There is more to the Christian life than changing our behavior.

Jesus used the picture of being *born again*. The term can be found in ancient literature in reference to a new standing or a new start.

Question #3: What do you mean?

*9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.*

*10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 I 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. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"*

How do you take lost, self-centered people and connect them with God? How can these people possibly change? Yet, God offers to take people, clean them from the inside out, and transform them into his children (*John 1:12*). He changes hearts and lives.

### 2. Think About the Symbols

*John 3:14-15*

*14 "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."*

The ancient Hebrews murmured, complained, and regretted leaving Egypt, so God sent a plague of serpents. When they cried for mercy, Moses erected a bronze serpent. The people turned to it and repented (*Numbers 21:4-9*). They had followed the sin pattern set in *Genesis 3*. People choose to live their way only to complain when things fail to turn out right in their eyes. Jesus foresaw his death on the cross for the sins of humanity. (*John 12:32*).

### 3. Trust God's Promise

*John 3:16-18*

*16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever 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.*

God initiated the plan for the salvation of rebellious humanity. He opened the door of hope wide so everyone who believes with the belief that entrusts all of life to Jesus Christ shall be saved. The saved will be transformed as they live in relationship with Jesus.

The New International Version is the Bible translation used in this study.

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