

### **John 3: 1-21 (New International Version)**

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup>He 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."

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

<sup>4</sup>"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!"

<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit<sup>[b]</sup> gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup>You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You<sup>[c]</sup> must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The 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."

<sup>9</sup>"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

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

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,<sup>[f]</sup> that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup>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.<sup>[g]</sup> <sup>19</sup>This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But 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."<sup>[h]</sup>

#### **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, John 3: 1-21**

Possible Starter question: What does the phrase “no strings attached” mean?

What are some examples of “string attached” experiences—and what don’t we like about them?

*(n.b. I suspect that this phrase is derived from puppets and marionettes.)*

Transitional comment: Now, let’s take a look at some of the good Jesus did.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit’s leading (if you haven’t already prayed)
- Now let’s listen as someone reads our passage aloud.
- Take a couple of minutes on your own to study the flow of interaction between Jesus and an overwhelmed father.

First segment (vs. 46-47):

O What do you observe about the context?

*(n.b. map of Israel during Jesus’ life in back of Bible? Locate places, and calculate the distance that the man traveled.)*

O Who comes to find Jesus and what do you learn about him? His concern?

I What kinds of thoughts and feelings do you imagine filled him?

Second segment (vs. 48-50):

O In vs. 34, to whom is the King speaking. What are they being offered?

I What do you find attractive about the King’s offer?

O Why or on what basis does the King bless these people?

O Who were the people being caring for? In what ways?

A Consider these 6 “kinds of people.” Where in our society or world might some of the kinds of people live?

O In vs. 37, what is it that surprises “the righteous”?

I Why do you think that is?

Third segment (vs. 50-54):

O In what ways do the King’s words indicate his disapproval?

O On what basis is He upset?

*(n.b. Throughout the OT, God repeatedly and strongly expressed His commitment to justice and His expectation that Israel care for vulnerable people. This is not a new concern! Deut. 24; Is. 58:64; Micah 3, etc.)*

O In vs. 44, what is it that surprises “those on the left”?

I Why do you think that happened? What did they fail to realize or do?

A In what ways can we be similarly blinded to this reality?

A What are the “rationalizations” by which we excuse our response or lack thereof?

A Given our circumstantial realities (busy lives, where we live, families we serve, multiple commitments, etc.), any sense of how the Holy Spirit is urging/leading you to apply this passage? Short-terms ways? Longer term considerations?

Summary/conclusion:

Prayer together: Without God’s love and grace, we can easily fall prey to “analysis-paralysis” or guilt. Let’s pray for one another that :

- a. we develop a heart for all people, a heart like God’s,
- b. our eyes are opened to the presence and needs of people near and far,
- c. each of us grows in love and action in helping others, for Jesus’ sake.

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- 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 (21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition, IVP). It is well worth the \$40.