

Sermon Discussion Guide

Encounters with Jesus: Nicodemus

John 3:1-15

February 1 & 2, 2020

Part 1: Pray

Every time we study God's word, we should ask God to give us the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts, teach us and mold us into who he created us to be. Ask God to reveal his truth to transform you through your discussion time.

Part 2: Read the Text

Read the passage(s) from the sermon. Keep a focus on key words, repeated phrases or major themes.

Part 3: Reflect on the Sermon

Introduction

1. Ray began by talking about all the major transitions and change that happen in our lives. What makes a spiritual birth so much more important than any other transition or change in our life?
2. Have you witnessed the spiritual rebirth of someone before? What was special and significant about that experience?

New Birth: Its Need

1. Ray talked about some of the history and public perception of the idea of a "born again Christian." What has been your understanding and experience with this phrase/idea?

2. Nicodemus was publicly respected, wealthy and successful, yet Jesus communicates his need to be reborn. What does this say about how Jesus understands our achievements? What are the implications of this for you?
3. Ray shared a story of the Harvard Club, located just blocks from the dereliction of Times Square in Manhattan. From this story, Ray said that there are more prostitutes in the kingdom of God than Harvard Club Members. Reflect on this. What did Ray mean? Do you agree?

New Birth: Its Definition

1. New birth can be defined as a work of God that reverses what we've done to ourselves. Break down that definition as a group. In particular, why is it so important to understand that our new birth is a "work of God?"
2. Being born again means that we are cleansed from our unrighteousness, made alive again and given a whole new operating system. Consider what each of those things means. How does each of those things change our everyday life?
3. Being born again means we are given the life that we forfeited and that we've been trying to fill, unsuccessfully, ever since. As Spurgeon said, "You will never know the fullness of Christ until you know the emptiness of everything else but Christ." What sorts of things you find yourself regularly using to fill your emptiness and why is it so important to understand our emptiness without Jesus?

New Birth: It Reception (Grace, Love)

1. Rebirth is granted by grace. As Ray said, "You have no more power over your second birth as you did your first birth." Why is this important to understand/remember?
2. The righteousness that God requires is a gift from him, not a product of a life we live. This means that you can be a monk, a long time church goer, a member of Seven Rivers, a decent dad, a pretty good friend, or an outstanding citizen and not be born again. Reflect on this and how it might apply to you.
3. Who do you know that claims their good life as being enough for God? What do/should you say to them about that? Why is "doing the best we can" not enough?
4. Just as physical birth requires pain, blood, sweat and tears, so did our spiritual rebirth. Who took on that birth and what makes it such a clear expression of love?

Part 4: Summarize the Message

How would you summarize the sermon to someone who has never heard it? What are your two or three key takeaways from the message and your discussion?

How does this sermon change your perspective on God? Your own heart? And/or, how to follow him?