



Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. (John 3:1)

We don't often hear a Pharisee say something kind about Jesus in the Gospels or bring an honest and good heart to him. But listen to what John tells us about this ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly,

truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (3:2-15)

This is the context for that most famous statement in all of the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (3:16). We'll read a little more from John 3 as a class, but for now, what did Jesus mean in this talk with Nicodemus? Why does it still matter? Let's dig in together...





For Class & Family Discussion:

1. Sometimes, the Pharisees had very nasty things to say about Jesus, but what do we see about Nicodemus' heart by the way he begins this talk with Jesus?
 - "Rabbi" -
 - "We know that you are a teacher come from God" -
 - "For no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" -
2. Of all the ways Jesus could have replied to Nicodemus, why do you think he said what he said in John 3:3 and 3:5?
3. This sounds like a really, really important statement from Jesus, so let's make sure we understand it. What does it mean to be "born again" and how can that happen in our lives? Passages like John 1:9-13, 2 Corinthians 5:16-17, Titus 3:3-7, 1 Peter 1:3-5 and 1:22-25 might be helpful here...
4. Why, of all the things Jesus could bring up in this conversation, did he lead Nicodemus to think about Numbers 21:4-9, the account of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness? What did that ancient event have to do with Jesus and this conversation?
5. Let's read what John tells us next in John 3:16-21. How is John helping us understand what is going on as Nicodemus crosses paths with Jesus? And notice where else in John's Gospel we find Nicodemus (7:40-52; 19:38-42)...
6. So what about us? We want not only to "cross paths" with Jesus, but to walk with him as his disciples. So what should we carry away with us from this episode with Nicodemus?