

Bible Study: Nicodemus and the New Birth (John 3:1–21)

Overview of Study

Nicodemus was a respected Pharisee and a leader on the Sanhedrin—educated, moral, influential, and religious. Yet he came to Jesus at night because something was missing. In this conversation, Jesus makes the message clear: **religion and knowledge aren't enough—people must be “born again,” meaning spiritually changed by the Holy Spirit.** This passage also includes the heart of the Gospel: God’s love, Christ’s mission to save, and the choice between light and darkness.

Key Points

1. **Nicodemus Came Seeking—But Quietly**
 - He came at night because he had a lot to lose (status, power, reputation).
 - Lesson: Some people search for truth privately—**don’t give up on them.**
2. **Nicodemus Had Religion, But Was Still Lost**
 - He had training, morals, influence, and knowledge of Scripture.
 - Lesson: **Position, church involvement, and knowledge do not equal salvation.**
3. **Jesus’ Message: You Must Be Born Again**
 - Not “try harder,” not “check more boxes.”
 - Born again = **born from above**—a spiritual rebirth by the Holy Spirit.
4. **Spiritual Things Can’t Be Understood Only With Natural Thinking**
 - Nicodemus thought physically; Jesus taught spiritually.
 - The Spirit’s work is real—like the wind: you see the effects.
5. **The Gospel in One Sentence (John 3:16)**
 - God loved → God gave → we believe → we live.
 - Jesus came to save, not condemn.
6. **Light vs. Darkness**
 - People avoid the light because it exposes deeds.
 - Real faith steps into truth, repentance, and transformation.
7. **Saving Faith Is More Than Interest**
 - Not just “Jesus existed.”
 - Not just “miracles are impressive.”
 - It includes **repentance, belief, and commitment to Jesus as Lord.**

Reflective Questions

1. In what ways might I be like Nicodemus—curious, but cautious?
2. Have I ever confused **religion** (doing) with **relationship** (surrender)?
3. If Jesus asked me today, “Are you born again?” how would I answer—and why?
4. Is there an area of my life I keep in the “dark” because I don’t want it exposed?
5. What does “stepping into the light” look like for me this week—practically?
6. Am I asking, “What can I get away with?” or “Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Action Steps

- **Ask God honestly:** “Lord, have I truly surrendered to Jesus as Lord?”
- **Read John 3:1–21 again** and underline phrases about *Spirit, belief, life, light*.
- **Write a simple prayer of surrender** (1–3 sentences) and pray it daily this week.
- **Take one step into the light:** confess a sin, make a change, ask for help, or seek prayer.
- **Encourage a “Nicodemus” in your life:** be patient, stay kind, and keep showing Jesus.

Conclusion

Nicodemus shows us a hopeful truth: you can be respected, religious, and “good,” and still be missing the one thing that matters—**Jesus as Lord**. But you can also seek the truth and find Him. Jesus doesn’t call us to polish ourselves up—He calls us to be made new by the Spirit. The question isn’t “How religious am I?” The question is: **What have I done with Jesus—and am I living in the light?**