

Word of Life Lutheran Brethren Church  
Community Group Bible Study #9  
John 3:1-21

*Open with prayer as you begin. Pray specifically for the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind in order to understand God's Word.*

Did you ever have a teacher that was clueless? Someone who really didn't get the subject that he or she was supposed to be teaching? Were you frustrated or amused?

A "fool" is defined as \_\_\_\_\_ and foolishness is defined as \_\_\_\_\_. Nicodemus seems to recognize his own foolishness and seeks out the One who can answer his questions.

We learn from John that Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a "ruler of the Jews" which can only mean that he was a part of the Sanhedrin. He was a well known and respected spiritual and political leader of Israel.

Why might Nicodemus come to Jesus at night?

Was he paranoid or smart?

As a leader, and a Pharisee Nicodemus considered himself to be a part of God's covenant people, a member of "God's kingdom". Jesus' first words to him shatter his theology! Read verse 3 again. What did Nicodemus think made him fit for God's kingdom?

Why was he wrong?

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What does it mean to be “born again”? Is the term still misunderstood today? I think a lot of people get turned off by the term because in the past it was somewhat overused.

Nicodemus was one of the leading rabbis in Israel. And he didn't understand Jesus' message. When he asks Jesus “How can this be?” Jesus leads him right to the cross. Verse 14 refers to an event that happened to the people of Israel when they were wandering in the desert. Read Numbers 21:1-9.

The nation of Israel had been slaves in Egypt. They were badly mistreated, starved and overworked by the Egyptians. In an effort to control the growing population of Israelite slaves they had even killed all of the male children born to Israelite women. God rescued them from this slavery through a series of 10 plagues, parted the Red Sea in front of their eyes and had spoken to them while they were camped at the base of Mt Sinai. But now they were complaining.....again. They were not just rejecting the food when they complained, they were rejecting God.

Moses listened to God and made a bronze snake and held it up for the people to look at. Does this sound strange to you? Does it seem to “simple”?

How is faith in Christ like this? The Israelites simply had to look at the snake and they would be saved. If they believed God, they would look up. If they did not believe God (because it sounded stupid!) they would not look up, and they would die. Do you know of anyone who rejected the message of the cross because it was too simple or because it didn't make sense?

Because of sin we already are condemned before God. Jesus didn't come to bring more condemnation, He came to bring forgiveness and to stand in our place, receive our punishment, and die our death. The cross is central to this truth. The resurrection is the hope of new life that is given to us through faith.

Notice in v. 21 that the difference between those who “hate the light” and those who “live by the truth” is not in their actions. Those who live by the truth come into the light giving all the credit to God.

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The author doesn't record Nicodemus' response. I think this is intentional because every reader is left to respond to this teaching for himself. What impact does the cross of Christ have on your life today?

*Close in prayer. Give thanks for the rebirth that we experience in Christ. Pray that we would passionately share this "good news" with the whole world, starting in our own backyards.*