



Sermon Discussion Guide

January 18th, 2025 | John 3:1-18 | Pastor Greg Doty

Series // The Gospel of John: Taste and See Who I Am

Summary

Nicodemus comes to Jesus expecting a simple conversation, but instead Jesus exposes a much deeper problem, one that Nicodemus did not realize he had. Like going to a mechanic for a routine oil change and discovering the car needs major repairs, encountering Jesus reveals that our condition is far worse than we assume. Nicodemus, a respected Pharisee and moral leader, believed he was right with God because of his obedience to the law, yet Jesus tells him that he must be born again. Jesus makes it clear that the problem is not external or found in others, but within us—we are already condemned apart from new life from God. When Nicodemus struggles to understand the concept of being born again, Jesus explains that this new birth comes through water and the Spirit, which points to God's promise in Ezekiel 36 to cleanse hearts and give new life by His Spirit. This transformation is not something we can achieve through effort or morality; it is initiated and accomplished by God Himself. Finally, Jesus points to Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, showing that salvation comes by looking in faith to what God provides. In the same way, Jesus would be lifted up so that all who look to Him and trust in His work would have eternal life. The problem begins within us, the Spirit gives us new life, and salvation comes by looking to Jesus, where we see God's goodness, love, and grace.

Discussion Questions (Read John 3:1-18):

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever gone somewhere expecting a simple fix, only to find out the problem was much bigger? How did you respond?

Why are you doing this?

- How does Nicodemus' status as a Pharisee shape his understanding of his relationship with God?
- Why would Jesus' statement "You must be born again" be so shocking to Nicodemus?
- In what ways do we, like Nicodemus, assume our biggest problems are outside of us rather than within us?

How does this happen?

- How does Ezekiel 36:24-27 help clarify what Jesus is saying?
- How does the wind illustration help us understand the work of the Holy Spirit?
- Where do you find yourself tempted to rely on effort, morality, or control rather than trusting God to do the work?

How can this be?

- Why does Jesus reference the bronze serpent from Numbers 21?
- What does it mean to “look to Jesus” today?
- How is faith different from simply knowing facts about Jesus?

Closing Reflection & Prayer

- What does this passage reveal about our true need?
- How does it encourage humility, dependence on the Spirit, and trust in Jesus?
- What would it look like this week to stop trying to “fix yourself” and instead look more fully to Christ?

Pray for hearts that recognize their need, trust the Spirit’s work, and look to Jesus for life and salvation.