

September 10, 2023
La Jolla Christian Fellowship
The Gospel of John // S3 E5: Nick at Night
Pastor Jim Smith

John 3:1-8

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. **2** He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Welcome to “Nick at Nite!” While Nicodemus’ night-time visit with Jesus is widely familiar... it also illustrates (like a Nicolodean 1985 program decision) the engaging potential of “re-runs.” Three life-giving Kingdom principles/lessons rise from this classic encounter:

1. In each life moment, lead with the measure of FAITH/understanding you have

Nicodemus (3:1-2) comes secretly, offers pious compliments not worship, but centers on Jesus
Jesus, values him & all facing doubt (Mark 9:24) & limitations (Luke 17:5-6). He listens, speaks
Paul cited a “measure of faith” as vital in transformed life (Romans 12:1-3), matching needs.

*“I must ask for your help and mercy, ask you to **fill with wind the sails I’ve hoisted** for you and to carry me forward on my course – to **breathe your Spirit into my faith and confession...** And I will knock at every door locked against my understanding... but it is for you to give what I pray for, to see what I’m looking for is there, to open doors...” (Hilary of Poitiers, ca. 350AD)*

2. Root your HOPE in the Lord’s glorious “grace and truth” (John 1:10-14) hospitality

Nicodemus (3:3-5) is stunned by word envisioning not only changed mind but new birth. How?
Jesus graciously welcomed the Pharisee-Councilman – inviting him beyond kudos to Kingdom.
Peter restated “born again” as “partakers of the divine nature.” Family DNA (2Peter 1:1-7)

*“Optimism is the expectation that things (weather, relationships, economy, politics) will get better. **Hope** is the trust that God will fulfill promises to us – and the deepest desires of our hearts – bringing true freedom... Joy is the fruit of hope...” Henri Nouwen (1932-1996)*

3. God’s character & purposes are revealed in LOVE languages (time, service, gifts...)

Nicodemus’ humble faith steps (3:6-8) release God’s grace in gospel & his new life (John 7:40-52, 19:38-42).
Jesus: the same Spirit empowering his conception (Luke 1:35) & baptism (1:29-34) works in us!
John in 3:16 will cite God’s love - revealed in & through the Holy Trinity (I John 4; Eph. 5)

“Verses 7-8 admit something mysterious about this begetting from above by the Spirit (pneuma) Not surprising... We see the effects of wind all around us, but no one actually sees IT. Both the Spirit and Jesus are from above...” Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to John (2v)

Small Group Questions:

1. No one’s faith is perfect. What are areas of confidence and question in your reflections?

2. Is the “hoist your sails” analogy helpful? What are key matters to uplift in prayer/plan?

3. How has your growth in faith, hope and love evidenced our Lord’s active Word and Spirit?

4. Dallas Jenkins’ goal in ***The Chosen***: invite all to “encountering Jesus through the eyes of those who actually met him, so they can be changed in the same way... Nicodemus [2019 S1Ep7 and others] presents a nuanced arc of character in Scripture. He must decide whether to become a Jesus follower or stay in his lifestyle of wealth and prestige.” What are your key decisions?