

The Pastor's Bible Study

An interactive study of the Gospel of John¹

Week 6 ~ Exploring John 3:1-21

Personal Study Time:

(Use the following suggestions in your personal Bible study time this week to prepare for our class discussion next Saturday.)

Day 1: Read John 3:1-21 through twice, then answer the following questions in your Gospel of John notebook.

- What can you learn about the character and status of Nicodemus from this passage? List all that you learn on a piece of paper. Compare what you find with John 7:45-52 and 19:38-42, and add to your list as needed. Was Nicodemus really a timid man? Would he be a good neighbor today?
- What can you discern about the motives of Nicodemus from this passage? Why does John tell us that he came “at night”? Does this have anything to do with his motives?

Day 2: Reread John 3:1-21 and then answer the following questions in your Gospel of John notebook.

- Is there anything in this passage that supports the idea that the "water" of 3:5 is a reference to baptism? List the evidence you find, if any. Now explore John's uses of the term “water” in chapter 1 and 2 is there anything in these chapters that help you answer the previous question? If “water” is not a reference to baptism what else might it be a reference to? Could there possibly be a double meaning for “water”? If so, other than baptism what might Jesus be referring to?

Day 3: Reread John 3:1-21 and then answer the following questions in your Gospel of John notebook.

- Does Jesus continue speaking to Nicodemus right up to verse 21 or does the author of the Gospel take over? At what point would you think Jesus interview with Nicodemus ends and the commentary on it takes over? At what point in the passage does Jesus move from the second person ("you") to third person ("he" "whoever")? Does that knowledge help to answer the previous question?
- Now reread John 3:16-21. What difference does it make to your understanding of John 3:16-21 if Jesus was not speaking but rather John was commentating?

¹ Quoted and/or adapted from Jon Paulien and George R. Knight, *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1995).

Day 4: Reread John 3:1-21 and then answer the following questions in your Gospel of John notebook.

- According to this passage, how does a person become "born again" (or born from above)? Write out your answer.
- In verses 14 and 15 Jesus compares His future death on the cross to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (see Num. 21:-4-9). Is this an apt comparison? Why?
- Nicodemus' interest in Jesus was aroused by the cleansing of the temple episode. What was it that first aroused your interest in Jesus? Why did it arouse your interest? Have your interests changed? How has that affected your relationship with Jesus?

Day 5: Reread John 3:1-21 and then answer the following questions in your Gospel of John notebook.

- Why are people so afraid to expose their lives to Jesus when there is so much to be gained? Are there areas of your life that you don't want anyone to know about? What are they? Have you ever tried to hide these defects from God?

Day 6: Reread John 1:1-3:21 and then answer the following questions in your Gospel of John notebook.

- In what kind of setting are you willing to confess your sins to others and to God? How can the church help to create such settings?

