

LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

John 3:14-21

LEADER'S STUDY

Condemned From Birth, Rescued by Love

John 3:14-21

What is happening?

A Pharisee named Nicodemus slipped away one night to secretly ask Jesus who He really was. Rather than answer directly, Jesus addressed the underlying question. That is, what does a person have to do to be accepted into God's eternal kingdom? Though *born again*, the phrase Jesus used in His answer, is familiar to us today, Nicodemus didn't know what to do with it. He asked, perhaps sarcastically, "What are you talking about? Can a person go back into his mother's womb and be born a second time?"

Jesus told Nicodemus what he, as a Pharisee, would have already known: our first parents, Adam and Eve, passed down the legacy of sin to all their descendants (Genesis 3). And that includes us. We're as incapable of escaping that inheritance as we are of rewiring the DNA we were born with. We can change our physical appearance and our outward behavior, but not the sickening fact that we're innately sinners, condemned to hell from birth. But keep reading! We're also deeply and majestically loved by our Heavenly Father. And because of that love, He made the way—the *only* way—to reroute our horrible destiny. Though Jesus explained it in plain language, Nicodemus didn't immediately understand. Most people probably don't at first. That's why it's worth repeating!

Where is the gospel?

We grow up thinking that if we're good enough, life will work out for us in this world, and we'll be a shoo-in for Heaven when we die. Sadly, the scriptures teach otherwise. Despite what we'd like to believe, hard times are guaranteed in this life no matter what we do (John 16:33). Worse yet, no one will ever be good enough for Heaven, because even the slightest flaw is enough to disqualify us. God's perfect justice requires that He punish sin, but His astonishing love moved Him to send His own Son to pay the penalty for it. Believing He's done that on our behalf and trusting His leadership thereafter is all that's required to receive complete forgiveness. That kind of faith leads to a supernatural exchange in which Christ takes the shame of our sin upon Himself, and we're reborn to new life in His righteousness.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: How old do children have to be before they insist on getting their own way? Would a truly just God excuse sin? Do I ever feel I'm entitled to more than I've received in life? What does God say I'm entitled to? What does God offer me, regardless of what I deserve? How is God calling me to think and to live differently? How does this change my perspective today? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on these truths as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to "follow Him" and make clear "I" statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: Genesis 3; Psalm 14:2-3; 51:3-5; Luke 13:1-9; Romans 3:10, 20-26; Ephesians 2:1-7; 1 John 1:8-10. What other places in scripture speak this same truth?

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ John 3:14-21
and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word
translation.

Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-
for-thought perspective. (The New Living
Translation is particularly helpful with this
passage)

Try to summarize the passage in your
own words.

**Every verse of scripture points to the
gospel. Look for how this passage
points to Jesus and what He has done.**

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your
group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer
all of these as a group

**What is significant, surprising or
confusing from these verses?**

**What seems to be the main point of
this letter?**

**How does this portion of scripture
point to Jesus and the gospel?**

**What parts of this passage are
challenging to your current way of
thinking?**

**What did you discover or learn about
God and His character from this
passage?**

**What parts of this passage can you
relate to?**

**Look at one or two key words and
define them really clearly, then look at
them in context with that definition.
Does this change your understanding?**

**Why did God bring me to this scripture
today?**

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

**How is God calling you to obey, based
on this passage?**

or

What is your "I will" statement?

(Encourage everyone to steer clear of
"we" or "us" or "Christians" statements)

**With whom are you going to share
what you have learned?**

(This is a critical part of growth that is
often overlooked. If we can share it with
someone else it means we really
understand it, it cements it in our own
minds, it makes us accountable to the
truth and it blesses the one who hears it.
Rom 10:17)

**Based on this passage, what can we
pray about and how should we pray?**