

Small Group Discussion Guide — March 1, 2020

- Series: “Life in His Name”
 - Sermon: Born Again?
 - Scripture: John 3: 1-17 (NIV)
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FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST WEEK:

How did the idea that Jesus is THE LOGOS (the final and redemptive Word) on all of life direct your thinking this week? What counterfeit *logos* did you detect, trying to win over your heart?

CONNECT:

When was a time someone saw something good or strong in you that you didn't recognize in yourself? How did the idea of new identity change your behavior or actions?

ENGAGE:

1. Read John 3: 1-3.
 - What clues in this text paint a fuller picture of Nicodemus? What are all the possible reasons you can think of as to why Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?
 - Since he doesn't ask him a direct question, what do you think Nicodemus really wants to know about Jesus?
 - Does anything surprise you about Jesus' response to Nicodemus? What's his point?
2. Read John 3: 4-9.
 - Why do you think Jesus uses the birth analogy? Why not explain it as self-improvement or behavior management?
 - How would you explain verse 6 in your own words?
3. Read John 3: 16-17.
 - How do these verses help you understand God's love for man? In what way do they help you understand God's love for you individually?
 - What do people outside the kingdom of God say about why Jesus came into the world? What do these verses say is the reason?

APPLY:

1. When you hear “born-again Christian,” what are usually the connotations? What do you think of when you hear those words? Given this scripture, how would you explain the new birth to someone now, and what are its implications?
2. This passage gets at the idea of a new identity as a child of God. Is there someone you know who lives like they are loved deeply? Identify three attitudes or behaviors they demonstrate. What would it mean for you if you believed this enough to live like someone who is loved by God?
3. Nicodemus approached Jesus with regard to Jesus' competencies and attributes. But Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter by addressing Nicodemus' core identity and misunderstanding of who Jesus actually is. What's the difference in regarding Jesus as a great teacher, versus Lord over all creation and eternity? How does that difference influence your day-to-day life?

PRAY:

Father, You know that we could never fix the brokenness within our souls, so you came as our perfect sacrifice, our perfect salvation. You rescue us from our sin nature and give us new identities as Your sons and daughters. Thank you for this new birth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

GOING DEEPER:

1. Discuss the idea that *identity drives behavior*, not vice versa. Said another way, "Being precedes doing." Do you agree? How does this compare to how we try to manage our sin (shortcomings, failings, weaknesses)? Why do you think identity is such a powerful idea for us?
2. Augustine once taught that the problem with humanity is not that we sin, but that we are in a *state of sin* that needs a comprehensive solution. What's the difference and why is it important?

SUPPORTING VERSES:

Friendly reminder: Download one of the Bible apps on your phone or tablet to have quick access to the many different versions of scripture available.

Psalm 51: 5

Ezekiel 36: 27-27

Romans 5: 12

2 Corinthians 5: 16-21

QUOTES:

"Our culture is so dazzled by its own brilliance that it's blinded to anything bigger than itself."
Lois Tverberg

"...One night, a juror came to Jesus and he wanted to know what he could do to be saved. Jesus didn't get bogged down on the kind of isolated approach of what you shouldn't do. Jesus didn't say, 'Now Nicodemus, you must stop lying.' He didn't say, 'Nicodemus, now you must not commit adultery.' He didn't say, 'Now Nicodemus, you must stop cheating if you are doing that.' He didn't say, 'Nicodemus, you must stop drinking liquor if you are doing that excessively.' He said something altogether different, because Jesus realized something basic: that if a man will lie, he will steal. And if a man will steal, he will kill. So instead of just getting bogged down on one thing, Jesus looked at him and said, 'Nicodemus, you must be born again.' In other words, 'Your whole structure must be changed.'"

Martin Luther King Jr.