

Bible Study Guide: Out of the Darkness – Encountering Jesus Like Nicodemus

 Source Transcript:

Big Idea

A true encounter with Jesus requires more than knowledge—it requires spiritual rebirth, surrender, and stepping out of darkness into the light.

Theme

Like Nicodemus, many people approach Jesus with curiosity and knowledge, but transformation only happens when we move from control and law into faith and the Spirit.

Core Scriptures

John 3:1–21

The encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus

John 3:16–17

“For God so loved the world...”

Romans 8:5–6

“Those who live according to the flesh... but those who live in accordance with the Spirit...”

Introduction: A Nighttime Encounter

Nicodemus:

- A Pharisee
- A religious leader
- A man full of knowledge

Yet he comes:

- At night
- In darkness
- With questions

Key Insight:

“Nicodemus comes in darkness because he cannot yet see.”

Spiritual Meaning of Night

In the Gospel of John:

- Darkness = lack of understanding
- Light = truth revealed in Jesus

The Tension

Nicodemus knows:

- Jesus is from God

But he does not yet understand:

- Who Jesus truly is
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Main Point 1: Knowledge Is Not the Same as Transformation

Explanation

Nicodemus:

- Knows the law
- Recognizes Jesus' miracles

But still:

- Does not understand the kingdom

“He has knowledge—but he cannot see.”

Spiritual Truth

You can:

- Know Scripture
- Know theology

And still:

- Miss Jesus

Application

- Am I relying on knowledge or transformation?
- Do I truly know Jesus personally?

Sticky Quote:

“You can know about God and still not know Him.”

Main Point 2: Jesus Calls for Spiritual Rebirth

Explanation

Jesus says:

“You must be born again.”

Nicodemus:

- Thinks physically
- Misses the spiritual meaning

Spiritual Truth

Being born again means:

- A new identity
- A new nature

- A new way of living

“This is not a physical thing—it’s a spiritual transformation.”

Application

- Have I experienced spiritual rebirth?
- What does new life look like in me?

Sticky Quote:

“Transformation begins when your spirit is reborn.”

Main Point 3: Control Keeps Us from True Faith

Explanation

Nicodemus’ worldview:

- Based on law
- Based on control
- Based on behavior

Spiritual Truth

The Pharisee mindset says:

- “I earn my way”

Jesus says:

- “You must surrender”

“The law gave control—but Jesus calls for faith.”

Application

- Where am I trying to control my relationship with God?
- What would surrender look like?

Sticky Quote:

“Faith begins where control ends.”

Main Point 4: The Spirit Cannot Be Controlled—Only Followed

Explanation

Jesus compares the Spirit to:

- The wind

You cannot:

- See it
- Control it

But you:

- Experience it

“The wind blows wherever it pleases.”

Spiritual Truth

Life in the Spirit means:

- Trusting what you cannot see
- Following where God leads

Application

- Am I open to the movement of the Spirit?
- Or do I resist what I cannot control?

Sticky Quote:

“You don’t control the Spirit—you follow it.”

Main Point 5: Jesus Wants to Be Known for Who He Is—Not Just What He Does

Explanation

Nicodemus focuses on:

- Miracles
- Signs

Jesus redirects:

- Toward identity

“He doesn’t want to be known just for signs.”

Spiritual Truth

Faith is not about:

- What Jesus can do for you

It is about:

- Who Jesus is

Application

- Do I follow Jesus for what He does—or who He is?
- What defines my faith?

Sticky Quote:

“Don’t chase miracles—know the Messiah.”

Main Point 6: We All Have an Orientation Problem

Explanation

The transcript highlights:

- When we sin, we become self-centered
- We lose our God-centered orientation

“When God is not before you—you take control.”

Spiritual Truth

Sin shifts:

- Our focus
- Our priorities
- Our identity

Application

- Where is my life out of alignment?
- What needs to be re-centered on God?

Sticky Quote:

“When your focus shifts off God, your life follows.”

Main Point 7: Light Requires a Step of Faith

Explanation

Jesus is the light:

- Nicodemus is in the shadows

The invitation:

- Step into the light

“You have to step out of darkness into the light.”

Spiritual Truth

Jesus:

- Does not force you
- Invites you

Application

- What is keeping me in the shadows?
- What step do I need to take toward Jesus?

Sticky Quote:

“Jesus invites—you must step forward.”

Main Point 8: Faith Requires Letting Go of Old Systems

Explanation

Nicodemus:

- Tries to fit Jesus into the law

But Jesus:

- Is something entirely new

“You can’t fit new wine into old wineskins.”

Spiritual Truth

Following Jesus means:

- Letting go of old thinking

- Embracing new life

Application

- What old beliefs do I need to release?
- Am I trying to reshape Jesus to fit me?

Sticky Quote:

“You can’t reshape Jesus—He reshapes you.”

Main Point 9: We Are All Nicodemus

Explanation

At different times:

- Curious
- Confused
- Resistant

“We are all Nicodemus in some way.”

Spiritual Truth

Every believer:

- Wrestles
- Questions
- Grows

Application

- Where do I relate to Nicodemus?
- What is Jesus teaching me?

Sticky Quote:

“Your questions don’t disqualify you—they lead you.”

Main Point 10: Lent Is a Season of Transformation

Explanation

Lent is:

- Not just giving things up
- A journey of change

“This is a spiritual transformation process.”

Spiritual Truth

True transformation requires:

- Reflection
- Repentance
- Renewal

Application

- How am I using this season?
- What is God transforming in me?

Sticky Quote:

“Lent is not about sacrifice—it’s about transformation.”

Discussion Questions

1. What areas of your life reflect Nicodemus?
 2. Are you relying more on knowledge or relationship?
 3. What is keeping you from stepping fully into the light?
 4. Where are you trying to control instead of trust?
 5. What is God transforming in you right now?
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Practical Application Steps

1. Step Into the Light

- Confess and surrender areas of darkness

2. Embrace Spiritual Rebirth

- Seek transformation through the Spirit

3. Release Control

- Trust God in uncertain areas

4. Deepen Your Relationship

- Spend intentional time with Jesus

5. Walk in Faith Daily

- Follow the Spirit, even when unseen
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Closing Prayer

Father,
Thank You for meeting us in our questions
and calling us into the light.

Help us to move beyond knowledge
into true transformation.

Give us the courage to surrender control,
to trust Your Spirit,
and to walk in faith.

Make us new,
born from above,
and fully alive in You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Takeaway

You can stay in the shadows with questions—or step into the light and be transformed. Jesus is inviting you to be born again and truly see

