



JESUS, PART 8: RELIGION VS RELATIONSHIP

Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again to enter God's kingdom. What does it mean to be “born again”? Let's listen to Jesus explain the answer to this 1st Century Religious person who thought he had all the answers. No one, even the most religious person, enters heaven by doing good things, but only by having a relationship with Jesus.

THE BIG IDEA: Religion is spelled do. Relationship with God is spelled done.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Frankly, one of the most difficult individuals to lead to a knowledge of God through faith in Jesus is a religious person. Why do you think that is?
2. [With your Bible or Bible App, read John 3:1–10.](#)

¹ There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ² After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi,” he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.” ³ Jesus replied, “**I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.**” ⁴ “What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?” ⁵ Jesus replied, “**I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.** ⁶ Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. ⁷ So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.” ⁹ “How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰ Jesus replied, “**You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things?**” [John 3:1-10 \(NLT\)](#)

3. The idea of a second, spiritual birth challenged Nicodemus’s assumptions about religion because it meant God’s love and gift of salvation extended beyond Abraham’s offspring. Can you think of any examples of people today acting as though they have exclusive rights to a relationship with God? Why is it so easy for people to fall into that pattern?
4. With your Bible or Bible App, [read Luke 9:44–45.](#)

⁴⁴ “**Listen to me and remember what I say. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies.**” ⁴⁵ But they didn’t know what he meant. Its significance was hidden from them, so they couldn’t understand it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. [Luke 9:44-45 \(NLT\)](#)

5. In what ways has not understanding what Jesus is doing in your life or the world around you been an obstacle in your faith?
6. With your Bible or Bible App, [read John 3:11–18.](#)

¹¹ I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony. ¹² But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son.

7. What are some reasons it can be difficult for us to believe that God loves us so much he sent Jesus to die for us? Why is it sometimes easier to believe that God condemns us?
8. What is one thing you can do this week to embrace the truth that God loves you, that he gave his only Son on your behalf, and that all you must do is believe in Jesus and receive that gift? How can this group support you?

MOVING FORWARD

God loved. God gave. We believe. We receive. Does that sound too simple? If so, it's because Jesus defies our expectations. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

WEEKLY READING

Spend some time reading and reflecting on Luke 20.