

DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

The main text for the sermon, "The Spirit Gives Life," is John 3:1-8, but the sermon cites several other passages, all of which contribute to our understanding of this topic.

Taken together, they provide a broad picture of the life-giving ministry of the Spirit:

- Ephesians 2:1-10
- Titus 3:4-5
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-18
- Ezekiel 36:25-27

INTRODUCTION (observation):

- 1. What had Nicodemus seen that prompted him to come to Jesus? (see the end of chapter 2)
- 2. What pieces of key information does John give us about Nicodemus?
- 3. What else do we know about Nicodemus from the rest of John's gospel? (John 7:50-51; 19:39)

DISCUSSION (interpretation):

- 1. What is the difference between being a "Christian" and being a "born-again Christian"?
- 2. Drill down on Jesus's word-picture: the work of the Spirit is like the wind. There is a play on words here that wouldn't be reflected in our English translations. In the ancient Near Eastern mind, "wind" and "spirit" were such similar concepts that the same word was sometimes used for both concepts.
 - How is the work of God's Spirit like the effects of the wind?

SO WHAT? (application): Here we move toward firstperson pronouns as we begin to consider how we must respond to what God has said in His Word. 1. You can hardly fault Nicodemus for being confused at Jesus's assertion that he must be "born again" to enter the Kingdom of God. He apparently takes Jesus literally and wonders how it is possible for an adult to be given birth by his mother a second time. • How is being "born again" spiritually similar to being born physically? How are the two experiences different? 2. Jesus indicates that this work of the Spirit is ultimately mysterious, not something that can be replicated under laboratory conditions. • What happens to a person when he/she is "born again"? How can a person know if he/she has been "born again"? • On a practical level, does a person's being "born again" mean that he or she will never again be tempted to sin? • If not, what is the point of being "born again"? 3. How has the grace of God made a difference in your life? If you, like many others, came to faith at a very young age, you probably cannot point to specific changes in your behavior ("stopped going out for milk with the boys"). But, knowing your own predilection for sin and thinking about what kind of person you would now be apart from the work, you can speculate on how the work of the Spirit changed the trajectory of your life

when you were young.