

# Is Being Religious Enough?

John 3:1-17

**Objective:** To discuss a passage that clearly communicates the gospel message.

## Opening Questions:

Choose one or both questions based on your group.

1. What did your family do when the power went out? What did you do to combat the dark, or your fear?
2. Share about a time in your life when you needed a fresh start. Were you able wipe the slate clean and start over?

## Overview:

This passage focuses on Nicodemus, a man who was a religious leader and a teacher of the law, known as a Pharisee. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus would have been well-versed in the Jewish Scriptures. These spiritual leaders strictly observed religious ceremonies and practices and cared deeply to uphold Jewish law. In this story we learn that our actions alone aren't what make us holy.

We see how Jesus gets to the heart of the matter with Nicodemus. Nicodemus has followed Jesus and has seen him perform miracles. He can see that God is with Jesus. Jesus points out that faith and relationship with God is a matter of the heart, not simply doing what is right. Our greatest need is not a physical rebirth but rather to start over spiritually. No one is good enough, no one can save themselves. Life for all is only found in Jesus Christ. The only sinless one, the only one who could rightfully say He earned His salvation, came not to condemn us, but instead to be our savior. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

## Questions from the Text:

Read John 3:1-7

1. What do we learn about Nicodemus from verses 1-2?
  - *Pharisee of Ruling council = Member of Jewish governing body with both spiritual and political power*
  - *Afraid for his reputation – came at night*
  - *Teachable and curious*
2. What does Nicodemus already know about Jesus?
3. Why do you feel Jesus responded in the way He did in verse 3 (almost feels like Jesus just changed the conversation)?
  - *He saw through to the real needs and questions of Nicodemus and began to talk about them.*
4. What is the difference between Nicodemus' and Jesus' understandings of rebirth?
5. What could this metaphor mean?
  - *Newness, innocence, new family, different understanding of the world, become a child of God*

Read John 3:16-17

6. Who does John say about who Jesus is and why he came? (v16-17)
  - *Son of God - made a way so we don't have to spend eternity without God. He came to save the world. Without believing in the Son, we perish and are disconnected from God for all eternity.*
7. What does John mean when he writes that God "gave" his one and only Son (16)?
8. Why is God "giving" His Son considered an act of love?
9. How does God "giving" His son relate to the next verse where it says God "sent" his Son (17)? What does this tell you about the Son?

10. In verse 17, we learn that salvation would come through Jesus. How would that then come about?
11. What does it mean to “believe” in Him?
12. How does someone not “perish”, but receive eternal life? (vs.16-17)
  - *By having faith in Jesus Christ*
  - *Believe in Him = not perish, but having eternal life*
  - *Not Believe in Him = stand condemned*

**Application Questions:**

1. Take a moment to reflect and write down what John 3:16 says to you about God’s love and the character of God. What does this mean for you as a person? Consider sharing as a group.
2. This passage presents Nicodemus and us with a crossroads decision. Where would you place yourself in that decision of not believing and believing that Jesus died for you?
  - If not, what would you need to help you move forward in belief?
  - If so, how have you seen spiritual rebirth impact your life so far?

**Creative Implementation for the week/Spiritual Exercise:**

Find a friend who will look through, discuss and share their thoughts with you about this passage.

**Verses To Memorize:**

John 3:16-17

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*