

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer
2. Welcome any newcomers
3. Read John 3:1-8 and give a five-minute review of the sermon using Peppy's sermon notes.

Facilitator: Please don't feel you have to cover every question. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

CONNECT Group study questions, John 3:1-8

March 1, 2015

Title: Nic at Night

Read to the group: It's natural for us to evaluate ourselves. We all do it. We take moral inventory and come away with an opinion: I'm good, haven't robbed any banks, haven't killed anyone. Okay, I'm not perfect, but who is? I'm certainly in the top half—maybe the top third—when it comes to being good. That's how we might measure up when we look at others around us. When we compare ourselves to Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless, Son of God, we see ourselves as God sees us—in our state of absolute depravity. Nicodemus, who had more reason than anyone to place himself at the top of the moral high ground, saw himself as God saw him. That he would come to Jesus had to be a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

Question: Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:23 ). If Nicodemus was the most humanly righteous person alive at the time (and, by all indication, he was) and still needed to be born again, who are the righteous Jesus is not calling to repentance? Who are the sinners He is calling to repentance? Facilitator: If they don't figure this one out, suggest that Jesus is not calling those who think they are righteous, and He is calling those who think they are sinners.

Question: What do you think happens to a person when they come to faith in Jesus Christ? Why would Jesus describe it as being "born again?"

Question: Bible commentators seem to have a difference of opinion about "born of water and the Spirit" in verse 5. One thing we can be certain: it's not referring to water baptism. Read carefully Ezekiel 36:25-27. Then go back and read it again in context, beginning with verse 22 and read through verse 32. Would Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews and scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures, likely apply Jesus' words to that passage? Or would he naturally think of it as a woman's water (amniotic fluid) breaking just before giving birth? Try to make a case that Jesus meant "born of water and the Spirit" as a play on words—a double meaning—as both a cleansing as in the Ezekiel 36 passage and as physical birth. Would this give Nicodemus a more complete understanding of what Jesus meant?

Question: The word for wind and the word for Spirit is the same word in both Greek and Hebrew, which makes Jesus' comparison of the two another possible play on words. What is the point of Jesus' comparison between the Spirit and the wind? What is he trying to teach us about the activity of the Spirit? Facilitator: The wind blows where it wishes and cannot be controlled. You hear it, see its effects, but it comes and works when it wishes. So it is with the Spirit and the new birth He brings.

Meditation and prayer: "So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Pray that it would be so for each of us. Pray that even though we don't see from where it comes, nor where it goes, we would still be sensitive to its presence. And pray that like Nicodemus, we would not compare our moral standing to others, but heed Jesus' call to repentance instead.