

Abide in Me

*Mentored by the Master
Discipleship in Real Time*



Volume 10 - Number 7

The Week of November 17, 2024

Come and See
From Religion to Relationship
John 3:1-21

Our passage recounts the famous conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a respected Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council, who visits Jesus at night. Nicodemus comes seeking understanding, but Jesus offers him something far greater—the profound reality of the new birth. Jesus explains that entrance into God's kingdom is not achieved through human effort or religious observance, but through a radical transformation by the Holy Spirit.

This conversation was pivotal in shaping the understanding of Jesus' disciples. It revealed that following Him was not about outward conformity to the law, but about the regeneration of the heart. The reality of the new birth became foundational to their understanding of redemption, marking a dramatic shift from religious rituals to a deep, personal relationship with God through Jesus—a message they would later carry to the world.

OBSERVATION (*What does the passage say and how does it say it?*)

Before your group meets, read the passage and perform the following prompts:

Key People:

- Place a box around each occurrence of *Nicodemus* and every noun and pronoun referring to him.
- Place a † over *Jesus* and every designation and pronoun referring to Him.
- Place a Δ over each mention of *God* the Father.
- Place a ☁ over each reference to the Holy Spirit.

Key Concepts:

- Double underline every phrase that refers to the new birth.
- Place parenthesis around each occurrence of *Truly, truly*.
- Draw a sun over each occurrence of *light* and a small black triangle over each occurrence of *darkness* to illustrate the spiritual contrast.

Action Verbs:

- Highlight all the significant verbs that reveal God's actions.
- Highlight all forms of the word *believe*.

Repeated Words and Questions:

- Make a list of repeated words and concepts following the passage below.
- Write out several questions in the margins that arise naturally from the text, such as *How does the reference to Moses and the serpent help explain Jesus' mission?*

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is

old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

List of Repeated Words

INTERPRETATION *(What does the passage mean?)*

1. In John 3:2, Nicodemus acknowledges certain truths about Jesus. What does he get right about Jesus' identity, and what in his approach shows he still needs to understand more?
2. Jesus teaches Nicodemus about the new birth (John 3:3-8). How would you explain to a friend what it means to be 'born again'? How does Jesus' illustration of the wind help us understand it?
3. In John 3:14, Jesus refers to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (cf. Numbers 21:8-9). How does this story connect to Jesus' mission and His famous statement in John 3:16?

4. Why is John 3:16 considered one of the most important verses in the Bible? How does it summarize the gospel message? How does verse 17 contribute to our understanding and appreciation of verse 16?

5. In John 3:19-21, Jesus speaks about the theme of light and darkness. Why is this theme significant in this passage? How does it clarify the essence of the gospel message?

APPLICATION *(How does the passage apply to our lives?)*

1. Jesus says we must be “born again” to enter the kingdom of God. What in your experience has helped you to understand what it means to be spiritually reborn?

2. Jesus describes the new birth as something only God can accomplish. How does this truth affect the way we pray for and share the gospel with others?

3. What steps can we take to create a place for others to bring their questions about faith, just as Jesus welcomed Nicodemus?

4. Eternal life isn’t just about the future; it starts now. How does this change the way you view your daily life and priorities?

5. Jesus didn’t come to condemn but to save. How does this shape your attitude when talking to others about their sin or struggles?

