

### **John 3:1-15 "You Must be Born Again"**

1. What is wrong with the world? What is needed to bring change to the problems to our world?

*This is obviously a personal reflection question to get your group thinking through the main point of the conversation.*

*Pay attention to the themes that come out and perhaps name them as they arise.*

*More than likely they will include externalizing those problems – not me them..*

*Speaking of structures, lack of education, social security – rather than bearing any personal responsibility that relates to something fundamentally flawed within our nature.*

#### **Read John 3:1-15**

2. Who was Nicodemus from the details of the passage? What has Nicodemus seen in Jesus?

*(vs.1) A Pharisee – one of the most highly respected group of people in the culture – known for their goodness, their adherence to the law of God.*

*(vs. 1) A ruler – a member of the 70 person Sanhedrin or Jewish supreme court.*

*(vs. 9) Not only a teacher in Israel but THE teacher in Israel – the primary religious authority of the Jewish faith at the time.*

*From the sermon (some may remember these details – if not – feel free to add them as they might help in the discussion)*

*Tim added something what will come up in chapter 19 – he was wealthy providing 100 lbs of spices worth hundreds of thousands in today's dollars.*

*Some commentators note that his name gives us an indication that he was from a family of national heroes.*

*It is the signs that he is doing that are bringing him to Jesus. The only sign that Nicodemus could have known about was the cleansing of the temple – for the other sign – water into wine – was only a private sign known to the disciples and the servants.*

3. In the sermon Tim brought to the surface the detail that the “sign” that brings Nicodemus to Jesus that night was the cleansing of the temple. The cleansing of the temple was a central act of every revolutionary moment in Israel’s history against foreign rule. Nicodemus is coming to Jesus in hopes of sparking a revolution. What does this tell us about Nicodemus’ perspective of what is wrong with the world and how to address it?

*The problems are out there with the Romans, the lack of a Jewish King on the throne, the land occupied, the temple defiled by pagan images.*

*What we need to address it is a revolution – armed rebellion – the seizing of the throne – the pushing the enemies from our borders – the cleansing of the temple.*

4. (vs. 3) How do you think Nicodemus would have heard Jesus’ response? How does it impact you personally, to hear Jesus saying you are part of the problem with the world?

*This would cut hard at any pride in Nicodemus heart. An invitation to consider that he was part of the problem with the world – the problem with Israel. Everything about him in his culture would tell him that he was the solution to the problems of the world.*

*No Nicodemus – you need an entirely new nature.*

*In the personal portion of this question – going back to your exploration of question 1 might help as to hear Jesus say this we may need to speak of the inter-relationship between our fundamentally flawed nature and education, structures, relationships etc...*

5. Read Ezekiel 36:22-27. Jesus expects that Nicodemus as *the* teacher of Israel should understand what he is talking about from his knowledge of scripture. How does this passage help us understand what it is to be born again, to be born of water and the Spirit?

*God would cleanse us from not only our sins but also our false worship.*

*God would give us his Spirit to remove the heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh – and entirely new nature that is enable to live in the way God has called us to live*

*This is something God does – an act of his grace – not our doing.*

6. Read Numbers 21:4-9. The way we come to be born again is to see Jesus lifted up on the cross, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert. What do you make of the comparison between Jesus and the snake being lifted up? What is Jesus trying to tell us by this comparison?

*Both the problem and their solution is a snake – the means of their judgment is also the means of their salvation.*

*The link – what is our problem? We look to the cross and we see it there – it is our very humanity. In Jesus we see our humanity judged in him, dying in him. But looking to him we can also receive new birth by the work of the Spirit.*

7. (vs. 8 and Read John 7:50-51, John 19:38-40) The new birth is likened to the wind. We don't know where it is coming from or where it is going, but you can feel, see, hear the results. What are the results of the new birth in Nicodemus and in us?

*He seems to have walked away from thinking that armed revolution will address the problems of the world.*

*Courage – in the face of great risk – the potential of losing everything – he approaches Pilate and asks to be able to remove Jesus' body – to align himself with Jesus in this way took great courage.*

*He and Joseph take the body from the cross, wash it and prepare it for burial. No man in this culture would ever do that – this was a job for slaves and women. He has been enabled to lay down male pride, class pride, and cultural pride to do something no man would every do.*

*He has been enabled to let go of any attachment to money, money holds no hold over his heart – as he spends a huge amount of money on spices to prepare Jesus for burial – how we use our money says much about who we are.*

*The results of new birth in us can be explored here. It will be hard I would think for people to reflect on their own rebirth – as we think by doing so – we are "tooting our own horn" – but no this is a gift from God from start to finish – to talk about it is to give Jesus the glory. Perhaps saying that up front will allow for some personal reflection on the question rather than speaking of "Celebrity Christian" stories of change, of transformation.*