



October 22-23, 2022

Ice Breaker Questions

- Today's text contains one of THE most well known bible verses - John 3:16.
 - Do you remember where or when you first encountered and/or memorized this verse?
 - Did this verse influence your decision for salvation?
 - In what settings have you seen John 3:16 displayed? On TV, in restaurants, at events, etc

Understand Their Story

As we talk through John 3:1-21 today, we'll break it up into 2 sections: the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (verses 1-15), and Jesus' teaching on salvation (verses 16-21).

1. While Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus is a very familiar story to people who have been in the church for a while, their dialogue contains some obscure imagery and ideas. Read John 3:1-15 slowly and highlight which phrases or ideas might be confusing for someone encountering this passage for the first time. How would you explain...
 - a. Being born again - **the process of being 're-born' spiritually. When we are physically born we are born into human condition which is marred by sin and death, when we are born-again by the Spirit we inherit a life marked by grace and life (see Romans 5:12-16 - or read all the way to 21)**
 - b. Being born of water and the spirit - **the process being cleansed from sin / forgiven of sin, and receiving the Holy Spirit (this will be unpacked more as you read Ezekiel 36 below)**
 - c. That being born of the Spirit is like the wind blowing - **we don't know how the Spirit is at work in people's hearts. We can't see the Spirit, like we can't see the wind, but we can see (hear) its effects in people's lives.**
 - d. Other ideas which might be confusing for people? **Your group may have other ideas of concepts / phrases which are confusing like: Q - 'why does Jesus make the point that no one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven (himself) in verse 12? A - likely to argue that because he has come from heaven, Nicodemus should believe what he has to say about heaven (v 11)**
2. Read John 3:16-21. Why don't people obtain eternal life according to these verses? **Because they don't "look to Jesus lifted up" eg. they don't believe in Jesus (v 16) / They don't believe that Jesus is the only son of God (v 18) / because they love the darkness (v 19) / because they hate the light and don't come into the light (v 20) / because they do wicked things that they don't want exposed (v 20)**
 - a. Do verses 19-21 "ring true" in your own experience? How / where do you see people loving or being drawn to the darkness more than the light? **Your group will have various answers!**

Connect to His Story.

3. John 3:5 is a reference to Ezekiel 36:24-28. Read these verses and answer the following questions:
 - a. Who is the one “acting” in Ezekiel 36:24-28? **God is acting. The words “I will” are everywhere**
 - b. What sorts of things happen when a person is born ‘of the water and the Spirit’ in Ezekiel 36:24-28? **Need to be cleansed from uncleannesses (sins) (v 25), receive a new heart and new spirit (v 26), heart of stone removed & replaced with heart of flesh (v 26), receive the Holy Spirit (v 27), an increasing willingness to walk as God wants us to & obey his rules (v 27)**
 - i. How do these verses influence the way you think about sharing the gospel with people? What is God’s role in salvation? What is your role in sharing the gospel?
Salvation is accomplished by God! He is the only one who can change and soften a heart, send the Spirit and cleanse us from sin. Our role is to pray for people - because God works through our prayers, and to introduce people to God and explain the good news of the Gospel - he takes it from there (Romans 10:13-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5)
4. Jesus says that the Son of Man must be lifted up just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (v 10-15). Read Numbers 21:4-9 to understand what event Jesus was referring to:
 - a. What is the parallel being drawn between Jesus and the snake? What do they both represent?
The snake was lifted up to demonstrate God’s punishment for people’s sin in Moses’ time. Jesus was lifted up to represent God’s punishment for sin for all time.

Apply to Our Story

John 3:1-21 describes how someone gains eternal life. They are born again (verse 3), they are cleansed from sin, given a new heart which is soft towards God and desires to obey, and receive the Spirit (verse 5), when they believe in the Son who was lifted up (verses 14-15). While it is unlikely that people turned their back and ignored the snake that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, many people turn their backs and ignore the salvation offered by Jesus.

- List all the reasons (as many as you can think of!) why people refuse to look to Jesus for salvation. Your group will have various reasons! **Anger against God or Jesus for situations they have encountered / lack of knowledge of Jesus / Belief in other gods, other worldviews / Bad experiences with Christians who represent Jesus / Frustration with the exclusivity of Jesus’ claim / They love their sin or want to hold onto their lifestyle & don’t want to answer to any one or have any external authority in their lives.**
- With these specific objections in mind, pray for the wind of the Spirit to blow in the hearts and lives of people and draw them out of the darkness and into the light.

Prayer

- *Pray in Adoration: Jesus was lifted up on the cross for our salvation!*
- *Pray in Confession: Are there areas in your life which need to be exposed to the light? If so, confess these privately to the LORD. Consider if you need to confess this to a trusted friend or to members of your community group.*
- *Pray in Supplication that God would send His Spirit into the hearts of the people you love.*

God’s work and our Work

How All of Life Connects to the Gospel - in John 3:1-21

The Theology of Work commentary on this text notes:

“During his discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus says that those born from above will “come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God” ([John 3:21](#))....This has important ethical implications for work. If we are conducting all our work openly, we have a powerful tool for remaining faithful to the ethics of God’s kingdom. But if we find ourselves hiding or obscuring our work, it is often a strong indication that we are following an unethical path....

It is important to understand that the metaphor of walking in the light is not a one-size-fits-all rule. Confidentiality and secrecy can have a proper place in work, as in personnel matters, online privacy or trade secrets. But even if we deal with information that should not be made public, we seldom need to act in complete darkness. If we are hiding our actions from others in our departments or from people with a legitimate interest, or if we would be ashamed to see them reported in the news, then we may have a good indication that we are acting unethically.”¹

- What strategies do you implement in your everyday “work” (at home, in your family, neighbourhood or community, at the location you work or volunteer) in order to be transparent and ‘above board’ with people? *Your group will have ideas like: Open work spaces / shared passwords on joint email or Facebook accounts (within your family or between couples) / multiple signatures for bank accounts / policies around business travel or conferences so that people aren’t in potentially compromise situations etc.*
- Are you willing to share an experience where you or someone you know hid or obscured something and it was later discovered? What did you learn from this experience?

¹ <https://www.theologyofwork.org/new-testament/john/jesus-hand-in-all-things-john-31-36>