CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MARCH2021

Scripture Story: John 3:1-17.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages,* chapter 17.

born again



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flashlight

"Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart. You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, making all things new, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission" (*The Desire of Ages,* p. 171).

keytext

"If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

(John 3:12-15)

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what do you think?

If you were to describe your conversion to Christ, what memorable moment would come to mind that helped you decide to give your heart to Jesus? What metaphor would you use to describe your conversion experience? Explain.

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INTO THE STORY

"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 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.'

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

"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?'

"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

"Nicodemus answered and said to Him, 'How can these things be?'

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

"'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.'"

(John 3:1-18)

did you know?

John 3:16, the most popular verse in the Bible, came from Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, a spiritual leader who took three years to fully turn His life over to Christ.

"Baptism is one of the most important subjects in the New Testament. It is mentioned over eighty times. Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus commissioned His disciples to 'go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19). The book of Acts records that the disciples followed their Lord's instructions, and tens of thousands of people were baptized." "The New Testament church baptized adult believers who committed their lives to Christ, repented of their sins, and obeyed His Word" (Mark Finley, *What the Bible Says About,* p. 311).

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OUT OF THE STORY

Read each word in this narrative carefully and patiently and see if you notice something you had not seen before.

Highlight or *underline* every question that Jesus asks. What are the questions you think are the most difficult to answer?

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What can you tell about the character qualities of Nicodemus by looking at this story?

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What are the key verses in this storied encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus?

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As Jesus seeks to communicate the essence of kingdom life to Nicodemus, what metaphors or illustrations does He use to teach this lesson? (Read also John 7:40-53 and John 19:38, 39.)

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What do you think is the central message that God has for you in this passage?

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punch lines

"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" **(John 1:10-12).**

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" **(James 1:18).**

"Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?" **(Isaiah 40:13, 14).**

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him" **(1 John 5:1).**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" **(1 Peter 1:3).**

further insight

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages,* p. 173).

"The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 176).

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Philippians 1:6.

In order to experience the gift of salvation, each of us need to be born again.

"Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, Substitute and Example" (Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, The Experience of Salvation). Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think*? section of this week's lesson. Metaphors can capture our experiences and convey them in creative ways. Young people who grow up in a community of faith often feel like they have no conversion story because their journey seems spread out over the years. But Nicodemus was in fact a teacher/leader in the Jewish faith before he discovered the kingdom as Christ taught him. Read Philippians 1:6 and reflect on the seasons of spiritual awakening in your life. What "good work" are you confident of Jesus completing in your life?

Sunday

Read John 3:3-8.

As you read the Scripture story of Nicodemus, use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. What parts of the story are new to you? Why do you think this story is included in the Gospel of John?

Nicodemus is an example of someone who was religious, and his heart was open to Jesus, but it took time for his devotion to become resolute. Who do you know that has been close to the faith but over time became genuinely passionate for Christ? In what way is their story an inspiration to you?

Monday

Read John 3:12-15.

The *Key Text* connects with the Old Testament event that was a forecast of Calvary. Read Numbers 21:6-9 and compare that story with the *Key Text* for this week. How can you keep your eyes focused on Christ throughout the course of a normal week?

Tuesday

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section of this lesson. What are some examples of "spiritual regeneration"? Whom do you know well who has experienced real spiritual regeneration? How is their life different because of their experience?

Wednesday

Read 1 Peter 1:23.

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse speaks to your life today? In what way do you resonate with Nicodemus and his experience with Christ?

Thursday

Read Ephesians 2:4-10.

Make a list of five spiritual moments in your life that were key turning points in your relationship with Christ. Briefly describe how you were impacted each time. Take time to pray and thank God for each specific event as it drew you closer and closer to God.

Friday

Read Acts 2:38, Acts 8:36, 37, and Matthew 28:19, 20.

Based on these passages, what conditions does God want us to meet before baptism?

The words of Christ to Nicodemus touched on being "born of water and spirit." Jesus knew Nicodemus would understand this because every religious teacher knew of the significance of baptism and "the new birth." Have you considered becoming born again through baptism? How can you apply the principles described in the Bible verses above as you prepare for baptism?

Tomorrow is Global Youth Day! Plan to participate with your Sabbath School class in serving your community in a practical way.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 17.

**Humble Hero* is a special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages,* created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companionbooks#.URIhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

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