

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

Study Guide

Encountering Jesus

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Major Points

- 1 You can be in close proximity to Jesus and still miss the life He offers — religious knowledge and moral achievement are not enough for salvation**

John 3:3

- 2 Jesus meets honest curiosity with invitation — rebirth comes not through self-reformation but through the Spirit's transforming work**

John 3:5-8

- 3 Religion gives knowledge, but Jesus gives new life — the gospel is not about achievement but about believing in the Son who was lifted up for us**

John 3:14-16

- 4 A real encounter with Jesus transforms faith from curious to courageous to committed — seen in Nicodemus's progression from night visit to public defense to burial worship**

John 19:39

Key Quotes

"You could be in close proximity with Jesus, but still miss the life he offers.

at 8:56

"Religion can get you near Jesus. Man, it could get you to have a conversation with Jesus. It could get you here to talk about Jesus. But only surrendering your life brings you into life with Jesus.

at 11:44

"You don't need improvement. You need rebirth.

at 13:12

"It's the most important question you're ever going to answer in your life, is who do you say Jesus is?

at 24:06

"From curious faith to courageous faith, to committed faith.

at 34:17

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Grabski compared missing the inside of the Palace of Versailles to missing the core of a relationship with God. Where in your own spiritual life do you think you might be 'walking around the outside' without really going deeper?

2. Nicodemus was described as the teacher of Israel — someone who knew Scripture incredibly well but still missed what Jesus was offering. How can head knowledge about God sometimes actually become a barrier to genuine heart transformation?

3. Pastor Grabski mentioned that Nicodemus likely came at night because he was cautious about his reputation. Have you ever held back from being open about your faith because of what others might think? What did that cost you?

4. We see Nicodemus progress from curious faith (John 3) to courageous faith (John 7) to committed faith (John 19). Which of those three stages best describes where you are right now, and what would it look like to take the next step?

5. Pastor Grabski said that following Jesus will cost you your pride, your reputation, and your comfort. Which of those three is the hardest for you to surrender, and why do you think that is?

Word Studies

ἄνωθεν

anōthen

Greek

From above or anew; carries a deliberate double meaning of both divine origin and radical newness, which creates Nicodemus's confusion about physical versus spiritual rebirth.

πνεῦμα

pneuma

Greek

Wind, breath, or spirit; the same word serves for both natural wind and the Holy Spirit, underscoring that spiritual rebirth is as real yet invisible as the wind.

ὑψόω

hypsoō

Greek

To lift up or exalt; used with intentional double meaning referring both to physical elevation on the cross and to glorification, linking Moses' serpent to Christ's crucifixion.

Cross References

Ezekiel 36:26-27

God's Old Testament promise to give His people a new heart and put His Spirit within them provides the prophetic background that Nicodemus, as 'the teacher of Israel,' should have recognized when Jesus spoke of being born of the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Paul's declaration that anyone in Christ is a new creation directly echoes Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus that spiritual rebirth — not moral improvement — is what transforms a person.

Romans 10:9-10

The progression from private belief to public confession mirrors Nicodemus's journey from a secret nighttime visit to publicly defending Jesus and then openly honoring Him at His burial.

Isaiah 55:1-3

God's invitation to come freely — without money or price — parallels the sermon's emphasis that entrance into God's kingdom cannot be earned through achievement, position, or moral effort.

Hebrews 11:6

The affirmation that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him connects to the sermon's theme that honest curiosity and seeking — like Nicodemus's — is met by God with invitation rather than rejection.

Further Reading

- **The Cost of Discipleship**
by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- **Mere Christianity**
by C.S. Lewis
- **Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God**
by Timothy Keller

Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
John 3:1-3	Read Aloud	6:34	<i>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodem...</i>
John 3:4-9	Read Aloud	15:31	<i>Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when...</i>
John 3:10-15	Read Aloud	19:46	<i>Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel...</i>
John 3:16-17	Read Aloud	23:11	<i>"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only...</i>
Numbers 21:8-9	Referenced	22:08	<i>Yahweh said to Moses, "Make a venomous snake, and ...</i>
1 Timothy 2:4	Referenced	25:14	<i>who desires all people to be saved and come to ful...</i>
John 7:50-52	Read Aloud	27:30	<i>Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was...</i>
John 19:39	Read Aloud	32:02	<i>Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by n...</i>
John 3:8	Referenced	17:10	<i>The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its...</i>