

Encountering Jesus: The Curious

Derrick Hamre

October 28, 2018

Text: John 3:1-9

NOTES:

A. Introduction:

1. Jesus is the central figure in human history. He revolutionized our thinking about God, heaven, and introduced salvation. He presented Himself as the path forward, the truth and the life.
2. In this series we've talked about Jesus responding to the leper with compassion, the adulterous woman with grace and truth. Today we see him interacting with spiritually curious Nicodemus. As we observe Him, we find answers to how to interact with the Muslim on our soccer team, our Sikh neighbour, the Jehovah's Witness who comes to our door.

B. Reading John 3:1-9

1. The book of John is not like the other (Synoptic) gospels. Its goal is to show us the surpassing greatness of Jesus above everything and Lord of all. It contains the seven "I am" statements of Jesus.
2. Nicodemus was a prominent Jew, a Pharisee and a member of the ruling Council (Sanhedrin). He was also wealthy (brought a large quantity of spices for Jesus' burial – John 19:39). He comes to Jesus secretly, out of belief? Out of curiosity? He calls Jesus Rabbi, putting Him on the same level as himself.
3. Jesus: "Unless one is born again he cannot **see** the kingdom of God." – Nicodemus appears to take Jesus' statement, about being born again and seeing the Kingdom of God, literally—perhaps recalling the new heart of Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26. But Jesus use of "see" here means to "perceive, understand."
4. Jesus explains the new birth contrasting the old way versus the new. Old: born of flesh included keeping the law, following the rituals. New: born of the Spirit "[pneuma](#)." **Pastor Derrick:** "The New Testament is a time of Spirit breathing, anointing, bringing life and transformation. When you put your trust in religion, it's the wrong path. That's the point of the text. Jesus is stirring us toward personal relationship."
5. Nicodemus's curiosity drove him to Jesus. **Pastor Derrick:** "Curiosity fuels thinking toward asking important questions."

C. Four things we can learn from Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus:

1. **Affirmation:**
 - a. Jesus affirmed Nicodemus's curiosity. He didn't point out where Nicodemus was mistaken.
 - b. He let Nicodemus question and asked questions of him. **Pastor Derrick:** "Don't dominate the conversation. Take only a moment. Say a few words."
2. **Gospel Fluency:**
 - a. Gospel Fluency is the ability to address our culture about God and the Gospel in a way they understand, without using theological jargon and hard words.
 - b. **Pastor Derrick:** "Take a moment and communicate the truth that God wants those around you to understand."
3. **Just a Nugget:**
 - a. **Pastor Derrick:** "Drop a just a pebble in the shoe to irritate the person for the rest of their life." **Jesus:** "You must be born again." **Nicodemus:** "How can these things be?"
 - b. Modern examples: Pastor's memories of what the late **Eugene Peterson** said to him while a student at Regent College: "You don't study the Bible for facts, you study the Bible for relationship." "Why on earth would you want to grow a church. That's not your job."
4. **Challenge:**
 - a. Jesus to Nicodemus: "You must be born again" and "Are you a teacher in Israel, and do not know these things?"
 - b. Modern examples: "The grave isn't the end." "You don't have to live this way." "There's more than this, my friend."

D. Deal with Sin:

1. Jesus' talk with Nicodemus concluded with His declaration of God's love for the world and how we can avoid the death sentence our sin deserves – John 3:16-21.
2. **Pastor Derrick:** "God gave Jesus for us to be transformed from sin. If there's sin in your life, come to Him, confess, receive His forgiveness, make a new start."

DISCUSSION:

1. How is John different from the other gospels? Who was Nicodemus? What strikes you about him and his encounter with Jesus?
2. How did Jesus affirm Nicodemus?
3. What is "gospel fluency"? How might you respond with gospel fluency to these situations (you might do a role play): * A neighbour asks you where you go every Sunday morning. * An unsaved family member is diagnosed with terminal cancer. * Your child's sports team wants to schedule regular practices during church time on Sunday. * The topic of SOGI comes up in your discussion with a fellow parent at school. * Name your own situation(s) and tell how you responded with gospel fluency.
4. What "pebbles" did Jesus drop in Nicodemus's sandal? How did He challenge him? Was Nicodemus ever "born again"? How does the thought of dropping just a pebble take the pressure off us when we talk about the gospel? Who does the real work of drawing people to Jesus?

PRAYER:

Dear Father, please forgive us for the sin that separates us from You. We turn from it. By Your Spirit, breath life into us. Then help us to tell the good news of how it's possible to have a relationship with You to family members, neighbours, and friends in a way they understand. Amen.