

A new series beginning Easter weekend

COMING UP EMPTY

FINDING ALL THE

WRONG ANSWERS

IN ALL THE

WRONG PLACES

COMING UP EMPTY - WEEK 4

Community Group Study: How Can This Be?
Coming Up Empty - Part 4 | John 3:1-13 | week of April 17

GETTING STARTED

Imagine you are having a conversation with someone who has never read the Bible or heard anything about Christianity. What would you say is the "essence" of being a Christian?

CONTEXT What happens in John 2:13-25? How does this set the stage for Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus?

Read John 3:1-13

OBSERVATION What can we observe about Nicodemus' attitude? His starting point? His implied questions?

Nicodemus expects the Messiah to "come from God" – establishing God's Kingdom and rescuing the Jews from oppression. What is Jesus saying about those expectations? Why does Nicodemus not understand what Jesus says?

A phrase repeats in verses 3, 5, and 11. What does this emphasize about Jesus' response to Nicodemus?

MEANING Many have discussed the possible meanings of Jesus' words in 3:5, especially this "water." It is helpful to connect these words with a number of Old Testament promises, especially since Nicodemus would have surely known them. Read Ezekiel 36:22-27. How do both water and Spirit work together here to describe the fulfillment of God's work in his people? What does Ezekiel say the water and the Spirit accomplish?

A Pharisee like Nicodemus would have put a great deal of trust in external things – like law-keeping and ancestry. However Jesus is talking about a whole different category of things. How does he open Nicodemus' eyes to this realm (3:6-8)?

Why is "birth" a great image to communicate what is needed in people like Nicodemus – and in all of us?

APPLICATION

What kinds of things do people tend to trust in to gain approval from God? How do you see yourself, or the church in general, wrestling with this idea of righteousness by pedigree?

Jesus operates with a “bigger” definition of sin than most of us do. What must sin “be” if even Nicodemus’ righteous resume is not enough to enter the Kingdom of God? What are the implications of this in your life?

The main way Jesus answers Nicodemus’ confusion is to talk about himself (3:11-13). How do you respond to what Jesus says?

NEXT STEPS ...

Meditate upon and pray through Ezekiel 36:22-27. Reflect upon the new covenant/new creation work that God has promised to do in his people.

Reflect on this statement: Legalism says, “What I do makes me who I am.” Lawlessness says, “What I do doesn’t matter.” Grace says, “Who I am determines what I do.” In what areas of your life do you need to more fully live like who you are in Christ? Share your thoughts with a spouse, friend, or group member.

