

When love comes to town

HomeGroups@West

Session 6

John 3:1-17

Nicodemus Encounters Jesus

What times and situations help you to relax and allow you to engage in times of free conversation? Are you an armchair in front of an open fire person, or maybe a long walk with friends on the beach, or is it a coffee shop with a tall steaming latte that opens your capacity to chat life?

Discuss

In today's encounter we find Jesus sitting into the wee hours with a person who is looking for answers to the big questions.



John 3:1-17

1. How do you think this conversation would have gone if the disciples or the crowds had been there too?

Nicodemus may well have been operating in a manner that put him under the radar, but it resulted in time and space being given to him to really unpick the big issues of life - when everyone else was sleeping.

2. How have you found these opportunities and whom have you been able to sit and explore 'the big issues' with?

It is a surely a vital component of our discipleship that we make ourselves available to give others opportunity to ask the big questions - as well as seeking other Christians to learn from and journey in faith along side of.

The conversation between these men displays a collision between two different systems; the faithful religious observance and inheritance of Nicodemus versus the grace, relationship, love, life and mercy of God that Jesus is presenting.

Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God: Jesus' reply to Nicodemus shatters the Jewish assumption that their racial identity - their old birth - assured them a place in God's Kingdom. Jesus makes it plain that a man's first birth does not assure him of the kingdom - only being **born again**

(The ancient Greek word translated **again** (*another*) can be also translated "**from above**") gives this assurance.

It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. In fact, some Rabbis taught that Abraham stood watch at the gate of hell, just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally wandered in there.

Most Jews of that time looked for the Messiah to bring in a *new world*, in which the Jews would be pre-eminent. But Jesus came to bring *new life*, in which *He* would be pre-eminent.

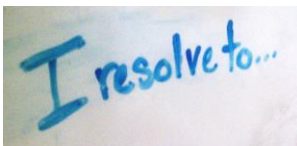
3. How born again are you? Tell your story.

New life that Jesus speaks of and makes possible (3:16) is something that is profoundly different to the rule keeping and 'superficial tweaks' of Nicodemus. As John presents a glimpse into this midnight discussion, it is clear that Nicodemus was genuinely searching for answers to the big questions. And that he got his answers. This is borne out by him being counted as a disciple of Jesus at the point of most challenge and risk after his crucifixion. (John 19:39)

4. How do you imagine that Nicodemus looked back on his conversation with Jesus as he carried his body to the tomb?

5. Now think how John 3:16-17 would have impacted Nicodemus as he met the risen Jesus. How do you think Nicodemus would have freshly understood these two verses and v5-8 as he witnessed the resurrection and the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost?

I love the picture that Charles presented, of Jesus with his arm around the shoulder of this man; "Look Nick all you have longed for in your spiritual journey, all you have studied for, all you have worked hard to be, leave the old country behind and step into the new, the country of my Grace".



Be creative and practical- how can you make possible the 'late night conversations' of faith that Nicodemus had with Jesus?

PRAY for each other as you seek to live in that 'new country'.

Pray for those brothers and sisters for whom being born again means that they live in fear of danger and death.

