

Discussion Questions: John's Gospel (2:23-3:15)

Overview Question:

1. What are your questions, wonderings, disagreements, reflections, AND/OR connections, from the teaching this past Sunday on John 2:23-3:15, where Jesus and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, interact?

Literary/textual Questions:

2. What do you think motivates Nicodemus to come out to talk with Jesus? Why do you think he comes at night?
3. Do you think John's narrative of this exchange ultimately pushes the reader into taking a positive view of Nicodemus seeking out Jesus or a dim view? What are the details that you think push the interpretation in either direction?
4. It was asserted on Sunday that Jesus' statement, "unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (v. 5), most likely refers to a person needing to take seriously both John's baptism of repentance (symbolized with water) and Jesus' (future) baptism of the Spirit in order to gain entrance into the Kingdom. Included in this symbolic statement would be taking the authority of John and Jesus seriously. The alternative option is that being born of water refers to one's natural birth while being born of the spirit refers to the gift of the Spirit (that remained upon Jesus at his baptism) and it's work in one's life. Which of these two options seem more plausible to you? Why?
5. Why do you think Jesus says that those born of the Spirit are themselves like the wind? What might this mean, exactly?

Connection and Implication Questions:

6. In what ways might you see yourself in Nicodemus and his motivations, or in his responses?
7. How do you see our own culture being mirrored in Nicodemus' assertion about Jesus: "we know you are a God-sent teacher"?
8. Presumably, John could have chosen other "signs" or material to include in his gospel, but specifically chooses to include this discussion. Why do you think John has recorded this exchange for us from a narrative standpoint? From a theological standpoint? What do we learn about Jesus that matters so much here in this exchange?