

Week 3

7-Day Expository Bible Study through John 3

Born Again: New Life, True Faith, and the Love of God

Memory Verse:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

— John 3:30

Day 1 – Coming to Jesus in the Darkness

John 3:1–2

Theme: Religious knowledge cannot replace the need to come honestly to Jesus.

Exegetical Reflection

Who was Nicodemus?

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He was respected, religious, educated, and morally serious. Yet John shows us that even a man like Nicodemus needed to come to Jesus.

Why is it significant that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night?

John may be showing both the literal time of the meeting and the spiritual condition of Nicodemus. He is interested in Jesus, but he is still in the dark about who Jesus truly is and what he truly needs.

What does Nicodemus recognize about Jesus?

Nicodemus recognizes that Jesus is a teacher come from God because of the signs He performs. He sees something real, but he does not yet understand the full identity and mission of Christ.

Personal Reflection

What does this passage reveal about religion apart from new birth?

Religion can recognize truth about Jesus without truly understanding Him.

Nicodemus knows Jesus is from God, but he still needs spiritual life that only God can give.

Why is it dangerous to confuse spiritual interest with saving faith?

A person can be curious about Jesus, impressed by Jesus, and respectful toward Jesus without being born again. John is pressing us to move beyond admiration to true life in Christ.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that religious knowledge, morality, and respectability cannot replace the need for new life in Christ.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the patience of Jesus, who receives those who come to Him in weakness and confusion. Repent of trusting in religious background, knowledge, or reputation.

Hands – What should we do?

Come honestly to Jesus today. Tell Him where you are confused, where you are hiding, and where you need His light.

Prayer:

“Jesus, bring me out of darkness and help me see my need for the life only You can give.”

Day 2 – You Must Be Born Again

John 3:3–8

Theme: Entrance into the kingdom of God requires new birth from above by the Spirit of God.

Exegetical Reflection

What does Jesus say is necessary to see the kingdom of God?

Jesus says, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” New birth is not optional. It is necessary.

What does Nicodemus misunderstand?

Nicodemus thinks in earthly categories. He wonders how a person can be physically born a second time. Jesus is speaking of spiritual birth, not another natural birth.

What does Jesus mean by being born of water and the Spirit?

Jesus is speaking of the cleansing and renewing work of God. The language echoes the promise that God would cleanse His people and give them new hearts by His Spirit.

Why does Jesus compare the Spirit’s work to the wind?

The Spirit’s work is sovereign and mysterious. We cannot control Him, but we can see the effects of His work in a transformed life.

Personal Reflection

What does this passage teach about human inability?

People do not enter God’s kingdom by natural birth, human effort, religious status, or moral improvement. They must be made spiritually alive by God.

How does this protect us from pride and despair?

It humbles us because we cannot cause our own new birth. It gives hope because salvation depends on God’s power, not our ability.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that new birth is a work of the Spirit, not the achievement of the flesh.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the mercy of God, who gives life to the spiritually dead. Repent of thinking Christianity is mainly about self-improvement.

Hands – What should we do?

Pray for the Spirit to bring true spiritual life and renewal in you and in others you love.

Prayer:

“Holy Spirit, do what only You can do. Give life, cleanse hearts, and make us new.”

Day 3 – Earthly Confusion and Heavenly Truth

John 3:9–13

Theme: We need Jesus to reveal heavenly truth because human understanding cannot reach God on its own.

Exegetical Reflection

How does Nicodemus respond to Jesus’ teaching?

He asks, “How can these things be?” Even as a teacher of Israel, he struggles to understand the new birth.

Why does Jesus challenge Nicodemus as “the teacher of Israel”?

Nicodemus should have understood from the Scriptures that God promised to cleanse His people, give them new hearts, and pour out His Spirit.

What does Jesus claim about Himself in verse 13?

Jesus claims unique heavenly authority. No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. Jesus alone reveals heavenly truth because He came from heaven.

Personal Reflection

What does this passage teach about revelation?

We cannot climb up to God by our own wisdom. God must make Himself known. Jesus is the final and perfect revealer of heavenly truth.

Why must Scripture correct even religious assumptions?

Nicodemus knew much, but he still misunderstood. Religious knowledge must be submitted to the revelation of God in Christ and Scripture.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that Jesus alone reveals the truth of God with perfect authority.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the humility of receiving truth from Christ. Repent of leaning on your own understanding while resisting His Word.

Hands – What should we do?

Read Scripture today with a posture of humility. Ask not only, “What do I think?” but “What has God revealed?”

Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, teach me heavenly truth and humble me under Your Word.”

Day 4 – The Son of Man Lifted Up

John 3:14–15

Theme: Eternal life comes through looking in faith to the crucified Christ.

Exegetical Reflection

What Old Testament event does Jesus refer to?

Jesus refers to the bronze serpent in the wilderness. In Numbers 21, the people were judged for their sin, but God provided a way of mercy: those who looked at the lifted-up serpent lived.

How does Jesus connect that event to Himself?

Jesus says the Son of Man must be lifted up. This points forward to His crucifixion, where He would be lifted up on the cross.

What is the promised result of believing in Him?

Whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. Life comes not by self-rescue, but by looking in faith to the One God has provided.

Personal Reflection

What does this reveal about sin and salvation?

Sin brings death and judgment, but God provides salvation through His Son. The sinner does not create the remedy; the sinner receives the remedy by faith.

Why is faith compared to looking?

Looking emphasizes dependence. The dying Israelites did not heal themselves. They looked to what God provided. In the same way, sinners look away from themselves and trust Christ.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that eternal life is found only through faith in the crucified Christ.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the mercy of God displayed at the cross. Repent of trying to save yourself through effort, guilt, promises, or religious performance.

Hands – What should we do?

When guilt or shame rises, look again to Christ crucified. Preach this truth to yourself: “Christ was lifted up for sinners like me.”

Prayer:

“Jesus, help me look away from myself and trust fully in Your finished work.”

Day 5 – The Love of God in the Gift of the Son

John 3:16–18

Theme: God's love is revealed in the giving of His Son so that believers may not perish but have eternal life.

Exegetical Reflection

How does John describe the love of God?

God's love is not vague sentiment. It is revealed in action: He gave His only Son. The gift of Christ is the supreme display of divine love.

What is the purpose of the Son being given?

The purpose is that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus came to save sinners from death and judgment.

What does John say about condemnation?

Whoever believes in Christ is not condemned. Whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Personal Reflection

What does this passage teach about the seriousness of unbelief?

Unbelief is not neutral. To reject the Son is to remain under condemnation. The greatest issue is not merely immoral behavior, but refusal to believe in Christ.

How does this passage reveal both love and judgment?

God's love is seen in sending the Son. God's judgment is seen in the reality that perishing and condemnation are real. The gospel is good news because the danger is real and the Savior is sufficient.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that God's love is displayed most clearly in the giving of His Son for sinners.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the costly grace of God. Repent of unbelief, indifference, or treating John 3:16 as familiar but not wonderful.

Hands – What should we do?

Thank God specifically for sending His Son. Then share John 3:16 with someone who needs to hear the gospel.

Prayer:

“Father, thank You for loving sinners by giving Your Son. Help me believe deeply and speak clearly.”

Day 6 – Light, Darkness, and the Exposed Heart

John 3:19–21

Theme: People reject the light because they love darkness, but those transformed by grace come into the light.

Exegetical Reflection

What is the judgment described in this passage?

The light has come into the world, but people loved darkness rather than light because their works were evil.

Why do people avoid the light?

They do not want their works exposed. The light of Christ reveals sin, motives, rebellion, and the true condition of the heart.

What marks the one who comes to the light?

The one who does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

Personal Reflection

What does this passage reveal about the human heart?

The problem is not lack of information alone. The heart loves darkness. Sin is not only something we do; it is something we desire apart from grace.

How does grace change our relationship to exposure?

Apart from grace, exposure feels like threat. In Christ, exposure becomes mercy because the light that reveals sin also leads us to cleansing and life.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that Christ's light exposes sin, but it also leads us to truth, grace, and freedom.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the light of Christ. Repent of hiding, excusing, defending, or protecting sin.

Hands – What should we do?

Bring one hidden area into the light through confession to God and, where wise, to a trusted believer.

Prayer:

“Jesus, I do not want to hide in darkness. Bring me into Your light with honesty, repentance, and hope.”

Day 7 – He Must Increase

John 3:22–36

Theme: True joy is found when Christ increases and self decreases.

Exegetical Reflection

What concern do John’s disciples bring to him?

They notice that people are going to Jesus. They seem concerned that John’s influence is decreasing.

How does John respond?

John understands his role. He is not the Christ. He is the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices when the bridegroom receives attention and honor.

What does John mean when he says, “He must increase, but I must decrease”?

John knows that Jesus is supreme. His mission was always to point to Christ. The growing glory of Jesus is not a threat to John’s joy; it is the fulfillment of it.

How does the chapter end?

The chapter ends by emphasizing the authority of the Son. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, and the wrath of God remains on him.

Personal Reflection

What does this passage teach about humility?

Humility is not self-hatred. Humility is gladly taking our proper place before the greatness of Christ.

Why is Christ’s increase the believer’s joy?

Because Jesus is the bridegroom, the Son from above, the One who speaks God’s words, the One given the Spirit without measure, and the One in whom eternal life is found.

Application

Head – What should we know?

Know that Jesus is supreme over all, and eternal life belongs to those who believe in Him.

Heart – What should we love or repent of?

Love the glory of Christ more than personal recognition. Repent of envy, comparison, pride, and needing to be noticed.

Hands – What should we do?

Practice decreasing today. Give attention, credit, praise, or honor away from yourself and toward Christ.

Prayer:

“Jesus, increase in my life. Make my joy found in Your glory, not my recognition.”

Closing Encouragement

John 3 confronts us with one of the most important truths in all of Scripture:

You must be born again.

Religious knowledge is not enough.

Moral seriousness is not enough.

Spiritual curiosity is not enough.

Human effort is not enough.

The kingdom of God is entered only through new birth by the Spirit and faith in the Son.

But John 3 does not only expose our need. It announces God's provision.

The Son of Man was lifted up.

The Father gave His only Son.

The light has come into the world.

The Spirit gives life.

The Son offers eternal life.

And true joy is found when Christ increases and we decrease.

John 3 reminds you that:

- New birth is necessary.
- The Spirit gives life.
- Jesus reveals heavenly truth.
- The cross is God's appointed remedy for sinners.
- God's love is displayed in the giving of His Son.
- Light exposes darkness so grace can bring freedom.
- Christ must increase, and we must decrease.

Do not hide in darkness.

Do not trust in religious appearance.

Do not settle for knowing about Jesus.

Come to the light.

Look to the Son.

Believe in Christ.

Receive eternal life.

And find your joy in His glory.