



Movement One – Introduction and Scripture

John 3:16-21 *ESV* 16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

If you have been a follower of Jesus for any amount of time, you have probably heard the verse John 3:16. It’s widely memorized and quoted, and in fact, I challenge you to memorize it if you have not done so already. Do you know much about the context and time when Jesus spoke these words? Interestingly enough, Jesus shared these words as a way to help resolve the anguish of a Jewish religious leader who came to him in secret at night.

Let me ask you some things. How well do you sleep at night? Are there things that keep you up that you think about, like your worries, fears, and anxieties? When you lay down at night, so you think about what happened during the day or maybe you think about what will happen the next day?

[TEACHER NOTE: Share something about the way you sleep as an opening hook and as a way to transition to the Scripture. Here’s what I shared:

I sleep on my stomach at night, and when I go to bed, I only lay down to sleep when I know I will fall asleep very quickly. I don’t like just lying in bed waiting to go to sleep. This has been a habit of my life for as long as I can remember. In fact, when I lay down and I am still thinking about something, I have developed a way to clear my thoughts. There have been times in my life where I have had so much anxiety and worry when I laid down, that my

mind would race, and I would either relive what happened during the day in my mind or I would obsessively think about the next day. Something I have found that is helpful is to do a brain dump where I type out or record a voice memo on my phone all the things I am thinking about. When I am the most anxious or overwhelmed when I lay down, this brain dumping has helped me immensely. It satisfies my thoughts, helps me to relax, and allows me to drift off to sleep.]

There is often something significant in the sleeplessness of the night for many of us. It's in the keeping us up at night and the sleeplessness that there can be anguish, turmoil, and a restlessness that is more than just physical. There can be great anguish in our unresolved and unfinished circumstances. Maybe even you are carrying around a burden right now. Sometimes, the sources are obvious like a bad relationship, a failed test, or worry about college, and other times we find ourselves in anguish with the need for an answer from God.

In the Scripture we read earlier, in walked Nicodemus at night to speak with Jesus, maybe even in anguish.

Movement Two – Nicodemus at Night

John 3:16 contains one of the most quoted Scriptures, but did you realize that the circumstances for this salvation message from Jesus was given to a Pharisee named Nicodemus who verse 1 described as a “ruler of the Jews” coming to Jesus by night with quite the crisis of faith. Let's look closer at John, chapter 3, together.

John 3:1-15 ESV – 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know

where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

In this passage where Nicodemus is first mentioned in the Bible, we know that Nicodemus was a Pharisee—a member of a devout sect of Judaism that was concerned with holiness and following the law—and a ruler of the Pharisees, possibly a member of the Sanhedrin or something similar.

Nicodemus approached Jesus at night with the greeting, “Rabbi,” or teacher, and said that he couldn’t deny that God was with Jesus due to the signs that He had performed in Jerusalem around the time of the Passover feast. This greeting was confessional and a recognition of Jesus’ position, but there was also a question or unresolved conflict in the opening statement that questioned Jesus’ authority to heal and perform miracles. “Teacher Jesus, teach me. Rabbi Jesus, who are you really?”

Jesus, as was so often the case, did not answer Nicodemus’ question about authority, but instead proclaimed that one must be “born again” to see God’s Kingdom. Nicodemus, confused, responded that it would be impossible to be born a second time when he is old. Jesus answered this objection by stating that one must be born of the Spirit to enter God’s Kingdom. Nicodemus, still confused, asked, “How can these things be?” Jesus gave a direct and informative response to him, saying to Nicodemus that Nicodemus as a teacher—which is also what Nicodemus called Jesus—should be informed because of what Nicodemus already knew—namely the testimony of the Law, the prophecies of the prophets concerning the Son of God, the testimony of the miraculous signs in Jerusalem, and Jesus’ own testimony and presence.

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