



WEEKLY STUDY

Week Two

This week we heard another breaking open story from the Bible. The character of Nicodemus shows up in a couple places in the Gospel of John. He was a person of faith who was seeking a deeper understanding of who God is. During these weeks leading up to Easter, we are intentionally seeking a deeper awareness of God. To help with that, you are invited to prepare your heart for Easter by taking part in weekly prayer and journaling using the Breaking Open Journal. [Download it today!](#) If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/signup and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this prayer written by spiritual director Sally Sharpe:

Jesus, we are weary and need the renewal only you can bring. But we struggle to slow our pace and make space for simply enjoying and resting in you. Help us to follow your example and make time apart a regular rhythm in our lives, so that we may see more clearly what you are doing in and around us. Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JOHN 3.1-8

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³ *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*

⁴ *"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"*

⁵ *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

- Nicodemus began his breaking open process in the middle of the night. He carved out space even though it could have cost him his reputation--maybe even his life. What he learned was that his suspicion was correct--there WAS more to learn and experience. In fact, Jesus described it as a new birth. There is a spiritual kind of new birth that is available to those who seek it. How are you carving out space to seek God? How do you respond to Jesus' invitation to be born again?
- *Seek Jesus through prayer. Imagine yourself face to face with Jesus and respond to his invitation to be born again.*

TUESDAY: ROMANS 6.3-4

...don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

- Jesus gave the greatest example of breaking open. His life, death and resurrection are the ultimate picture of surrender, humility, and sacrifice. A sign of that humility as that we are invited to participate in his life, death and resurrection. This is how we can live a new life now. Our new life may look very similar from the outside, but it is transformed through the glory of our heavenly Father. If you have been baptized into Christ, what does that mean to you? If not, what would it mean to be invited into suffering and victory over death?
- *Prayerfully consider participation in the fullness of life, death and resurrection with Jesus.*

WEDNESDAY: ROMANS 6.5-7

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

- Breaking open to Jesus is a pathway to freedom from the guilt of sin. Although we have each messed up and fallen short of God's intent for His creation, our old self can be made new and given new life in Jesus. In what ways are you still beholden to the old self? In what ways are you being made new?
- *Through prayer, thank God for the offer of freedom from sin. Commit or recommit yourself to a life in Christ.*

THURSDAY: EZEKIEL 36.25-26

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

- Ezekiel's prophecy is all about the destruction and restoration of Israel. The promise to be made new in the midst of destruction is something we hope for today. Have you ever felt like you had

a new spirit from one day to the next? God wants to give you a heart of flesh which is available to God and able to reflect the character of God to a world in need.

- *Pray that a new spirit in you would reveal God's love to the people in our life.*

FRIDAY: GALATIANS 6.15

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.

- Circumcision was the legal way of showing that you were different--that you were in covenant with God. Paul writes to the believers in Galatia that the outward signs of religion are not anywhere near as important as the inward signs of change. Are there inward signs that you are becoming a new creation in Christ?
- *Recall the outward attempts at changing yourself. Thank God for the new creation God is creating in you.*

SATURDAY: 2 CORINTHIANS 5.17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- As a new creation, we are called to a ministry of reconciliation. We can invite others into a restorative relationship with Jesus. In doing so, the divisions that keep us separated in this world lose their power. Where is God working to bring reconciliation to those in the world around you?
- *Pray for boldness to live out the ministry of reconciliation.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Pastor Jacob said that we can be a member and a seeker at the same time. Do you consider yourself a member of the religious community? Have there been seasons when you were more of a seeker? What characterized those seasons?

What would it look like for you to create more space to seek Jesus?