



## WEEKLY STUDY

### Week Three

Dear friends,

This weekend, we continued our Believe in Miracle series within our year-long look at the Gospel of John. John chapter 3 contains probably the most recognizable verse in the Bible... John 3:16. That famous verse comes as part of the story of a member of the Jewish ruling council who seeks out Jesus under the cover of darkness so he can ask him about his mission. He then asks how a person can be born again. His story demonstrates that we can notice the ache in our own hearts, change our pace, and create space for God to work a miracle in our lives.

Peace of Christ,

Pastor Mark

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional question at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit [prov.church/smallgroups](http://prov.church/smallgroups).

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture, follow the daily prayer prompt, and then pray this or your own prayer.

*Jesus,*

*I come to you—in broad daylight, or under the cover of darkness.*

*I seek your direction in my life. I am curious about who you are.*

*Reveal the truth of salvation to me and work a miracle in my tired and broken heart.*

*May I be born again in you!*

*Amen.*

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### DAILY STUDY

#### MONDAY: JOHN 3.1-3

*Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”*

- It was the signs and miracles that drew Nicodemus to Jesus. He knew that the signs pointed to Jesus being a godly teacher and, as someone who loved to learn, Nicodemus was willing to risk going to Jesus at night. What he found was that Jesus was more than a godly teacher. Jesus revealed that the signs Nicodemus had seen were actually pointing to the Kingdom of God and that a person could see it if they were born again. Have you ever had your expectations of God exceeded?
- *God, thank you for continually causing us to look to the higher things. Give me eyes to see your Kingdom today.*

## **TUESDAY: JOHN 3.4-8**

*“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!”*

<sup>5</sup> *Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> 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.”*

- The phrase *born again* has been part of the vernacular of the church ever since Jesus uttered these words. If you have heard these words many times, you could be likely to miss the radical nature of what Jesus is saying. Nicodemus didn’t miss it. The words sparked an obvious question. How can a person (who is already born) be born again?  
Jesus replies by showing that there are two kinds of birth. He echoes the words of John the Baptist’s testimony in John 1.33. There is a birth in the Spirit that allows one to see and to enter the Kingdom of God.
- *God, pour out on me your Spirit. I make myself available to the direction your Spirit leads.*

## **WEDNESDAY: JOHN 3.9-12**

*“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.*

<sup>10</sup> *“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?” <sup>11</sup> Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.*

<sup>12</sup> *I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?”*

- Nicodemus is trying to understand this whole *born in the Spirit* thing. Jesus seems to prod him a bit with his words. This is not an educational pursuit, it is a spiritual one. Have you ever heard someone testify to the amazing works of God? How did it make you feel? When we are receptive, there can be a softening in our heart of understanding and we move closer to believing heavenly things.
- *Jesus, today I sit in the testimony of you and your disciples. Soften my heart and allow me to see heavenly things.*

## **THURSDAY: JOHN 3.13-15**

*“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”*

- Jesus had more to do with his life than to teach good things. He would eventually become a sign that points the way to heaven by being lifted up. The image sounds a lot like Jesus on the cross. The way to eternal life is through humility and even suffering. But Jesus has suffered for us, and belief in that truth is what plants eternal life in us.
- *Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. Your sacrifice on the cross points the way to my salvation. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.*

## **FRIDAY: JOHN 3.16-21**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.<sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.<sup>19</sup> This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.<sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.<sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.*

- Jesus did not come into the world to bring more darkness (we have plenty of that). He came to drive out darkness. If darkness-turned-into-light is a miracle, then a miracle happens every morning. GK Chesterton wrote, "*But God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon.*" The miracle of each new day reveals a Jesus who came to save the world. Reminders are everywhere!
- *God if I forget about your great love for me that saves my life, remind me. Do it again God!*

## **SATURDAY: MATTHEW 7.7-12**

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.<sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*<sup>9</sup> "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?<sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?*

*<sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!<sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

- In John 3, Nicodemus made space for this world-changing conversation with Jesus. He was bold enough to seek out Jesus and vulnerable enough to admit his lack of understanding. Here in Matthew, Jesus encourages us to seek and knock. God wants to give good things to us!
- *God, today I search for you. I scan the horizon and look deep into your heart for me. Thank you for the good thing of salvation that you offer to me.*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The message this week drew out these three parts of Nicodemus' story. In order to put himself in a place where the miracle of salvation could happen he had to:

- **Notice the ache:** He was compelled to come to Jesus by something that was not quite right or complete.
- **Change your pace:** Nicodemus went well outside of his normal rhythms to seek out Jesus at night.
- **Create space:** Nicomedus carved out time and space to be with Jesus.

How are you paying attention to the ache in your heart?

How will you change your pace?

Where and when will you create space for face-to-face time with Jesus?