



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of January 23, 2022 (John 3:1-21)

Prayers for Groups & Personal Devotion:

Holy God, maker of heaven and earth, you sent your Son, Jesus, into the world to reveal the true light, the true way, for us to be saved.

For centuries the church has tried to filter your light through different lenses, through different traditions, through different understandings of what it means to be saved.

Times and understandings have changed and yet still the church does not always find ways to shine your light in ways that help others to know you.

Forgive us Lord, we are fickle people, slow to learn and even slower to change, help us turn back to the light that shines in Jesus, that guides our way. Forgive us Lord, for hiding the light in doctrine and theology and failing to let the light shine brightly for all people.

Lord, help us to choose to follow the light wherever it

Devotions for Life A LifeGroup Resource

The Story: John 3:1-21

Context: This story is a biggie as it contains what is perhaps the most famous, the most recognized, and the most memorized Bible verse ever: John 3:16. We encourage you to read this whole passage keeping in mind the context this verse comes in. It's kind of amazing that the verse most broadly known comes in the context of a private one-on-one conversation.

In this story, Jesus is still in Jerusalem. Nicodemus is quoted in the text as a "Pharisee" and a "leader of the Jews". This is widely accepted to mean that he was part of the Sanhedrin which is sort of like the Jewish Supreme Court of the time. It means he is widely known, steeped in the Torah, and not only lives it out to the letter, but expects others to as well.



Reading the Story: We often encourage you to pay careful attention to the action, the plot, of the story as

may lead us, and to share the light with all people.

So be it. Amen.

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Acts of Compassion & Justice:

- In order to work for a more just world, we need to have conversations like the one between Jesus and Nicodemus, which can be interpreted as being an honest conversation where Nicodemus is trying to understand Jesus better. Who in your life (friend, family, a leader of some kind) do you need to understand better? What kind of conversation might you be able to have? These kinds of conversations can be a real act of justice in the world.
- This month we are collecting socks and underwear for Simpson Housing Services. As you have the means consider contributing to our efforts. Just drop them off at church when you come to worship or during office hours. You may also have them shipped.
- Remember to check out Simpson Housing services website for ways to get active and educated on housing matters. (www.simpsonhousing.org)

you read. This story has almost no action what's so ever. It's almost all one-on-one dialogue (with a little bit of narration). So that's what you want to pay attention to. How does the conversation flow? Why do Jesus and Nicodemus respond to each other the way they do? What kind of word play might be happening? Also, based on who Jesus and Nicodemus are as well as what they say here, try to imagine their tone in the dialogue. With what kind of spirit or attitude are they speaking each line? How do you imagine them?

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

- If you could ask a Biblical scholar one question about this story, what would it be?
- What is your take on Nicodemus? Who is he? Why is he there? What's his motive in the first place?
- Why is it significant that Nicodemus came to Jesus "by night"? What are the possible meanings of this?
- Have you ever felt like you wanted to hide in the shadows? Reflect on that? What was that about? What happened? Why did you want to hide?
- What does Jesus mean by "you must be born from above?" or "born again?" What are the differences between the two? How are they connected?
- What does it mean to be born of "water and the spirit?"
- What is "everlasting life"? What does it mean to "have life"? To "get a life"?
- What does it mean "to believe"?
- What do you think verses 3:19-20 are about? Why would someone "love darkness"?
- When you were a kid, did you ever do something wrong and try to cover it up but then get busted? What was it like trying to cover it up? What was it like when you got caught? How does this kind of scenario play out in the world of adults today?

