

Jesus and Nicodemus Series

Scripture Focus: John 3:1-21

Lesson Title:

“Born Again? Understanding What We Believe”

Lesson Objective:

To help us understand how embedded theology (unquestioned beliefs we inherit from family, culture, and church) shapes our faith and how Jesus challenges Nicodemus to move beyond traditional beliefs to true faith and transformation.

Introduction: Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

Activity: "What Do You Believe?"

- Write down 3 beliefs about God, salvation, or faith.
- Share (if comfortable) and discuss where those beliefs came from (parents, church, social media, etc.).

Hypothetical Question: *Not to be discussed*

- What if one of your strongest beliefs about God was challenged? Would you be open to re-examining it or would you be closed minded?

Biblical Context: Who is Nicodemus?

- A Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council (Sanhedrin).
- A highly educated religious leader who followed the Jewish Law closely.
- He comes to Jesus **at night**—Why? Fear? Curiosity? Seeking truth?
- Despite his religious background, Nicodemus struggles with Jesus’ teaching about being "born again."

Reading the Text: John 3:1-21

1. Nicodemus’ initial question: **“How can a man be born when he is old?” (v. 4)**
2. Jesus’ response challenges Nicodemus to think beyond his **embedded theology** (his lifelong assumptions about God and salvation).

Embedded Theology vs. Deliberative Theology

Definition of Embedded Theology:

- The set of beliefs we absorb from our family, church, culture, and experiences without critically thinking about them.
- **Example:** "God doesn't hear a sinner's prayer" (Is this biblical or cultural?).

Definition of Deliberative Theology:

- The process of actively questioning and refining our beliefs to align with God's truth in the bible.
- **Example:** Jesus teaches that salvation comes by faith, not just by being "good."

Discussion Questions: How Embedded Theology Impacts Faith

Nicodemus and Embedded Theology

1. Why do you think Nicodemus struggled to understand being "born again"?
2. What assumptions do you think Nicodemus had about salvation?
3. Why did Jesus challenge Nicodemus' religious understanding?

Personal Reflection on Embedded Theology

4. What are some beliefs about God, faith, or the Bible that you've been taught but never questioned?
5. Have you ever encountered a moment where something you believed about God was challenged? How did you respond?
6. How can we move from an **inherited** faith (what we've been told) to a **personal** faith (what we know and believe for ourselves)?

Application

- Jesus calls Nicodemus to move beyond **religion** to **relationship**.
- Faith isn't about how much we **know** but about who we **trust**.
- Encourage one another to examine our beliefs and ask, "Is this really what Jesus taught?"

Challenge:

- This week, write down one belief about God/faith that you've never questioned and research what the Bible actually says about it.

What are your takeaways?