

A.C.T.S.

Our 'Core Values' at Gilcomston Church

We believe it's important that everyone is clear as to what we are about as a local fellowship: we've set this out as four basic 'parameters' defining our aspirations and priorities, and it's these which we will be working through in this series of studies drawn from John's gospel.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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2. John 3.1-21 [w/b Sunday 13th January 2019]

“.., ‘You must be born again’ ..”

Although a reputable Pharisee with solid credentials as a teacher himself, Nicodemus is nonetheless a ‘seeker’: he’s clearly drawn to Jesus, but, like most ‘seekers’, has a load of questions.

As it is in the natural world with a newly germinated seed, so the first ‘green shoots’ of faith are always fragile: they require careful nurture, and it’s to that end that the teaching ministry of Jesus is directed here.

Consolidating the faith of believers is a core component always of the ministry we seek to exercise here - strengthening the faith of those who have trusted in Jesus and feeding the ‘embryonic’ faith of those who are seeking.

*[It would be great if you can cover all the questions, but there may not be time in your Community Group! Try and ensure that in this study you at least cover questions **1**, **3**, and **6**. And as always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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1. Read John 3.1-21. The passage contains the ‘*you must be born again*’ verses (vv.3, 5, 7), and the best loved verse in the Bible (John 3.16): but there’s lots more going on than just that!

Were you ever a ‘seeker’ (drawn to Jesus, but with a load of questions)? What were the questions you had?

What do you find striking about the way Jesus engages this man and teaches him?

2. Read John 3.1-2. Just as we saw last time in chapter 1, here too an individual is drawn to Jesus, this time from the ranks of those who had been suspicious of Jesus' ministry from the start.

Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus 'at night'?

What clues are we given as to how he was drawn to Jesus?

3. Read John 3.3. Jesus doesn't 'beat about the bush'! Instead He responds to Nicodemus' courteous opening gambit by setting out a basic, and very challenging, gospel principle.

'The kingdom of God' was a central theme in Jesus' preaching: what is meant by the term?

Is it 'understanding', or 'experience', or both, to which Jesus is pointing when He speaks of 'seeing' the kingdom of God?

This reply of Jesus must have knocked Nicodemus right off balance: why do you think Jesus pitched in like this?

4. **Read John 3.4-8.** Nicodemus was plainly somewhat 'thrown' by Jesus insistence on being 'born again': his question gave Jesus the opportunity to explain what's meant by the startling phrase.

In the light of John the Baptist's ministry to what will Jesus have meant His allusion to 'water' here refer?

Using vv.5-8 as your starting point, what's involved in being 'born again'?

Why should we not be surprised at Jesus saying '*You must be born again*'?

5. **Read John 3.9-15.** Jesus' teaching (vv.5-8) in response to the question Nicodemus had asked (v.4) prompts a further question from the man: in answer to that Jesus takes him back to the Bible

What is the point Jesus is making in vv.10-13?

Read **Numbers 21.4-9**: why do you think Jesus used this Bible text to answer Nicodemus' question?

6. **Read John 3.16-17.** It's not clear whether these are Jesus' words to Nicodemus, or John's 'commentary' on the previous

conversation: one way or the other they summarise the thrust of what Jesus has been teaching.

How does the passage in Numbers 21 (with which Nicodemus would have been familiar) help us understand the challenge as well as the comfort of these well known words?

Why is v.17 as important for our understanding of the gospel as v.16?

The cross is always at the heart of our teaching ministry: how is the centrality of the cross seen here in Jesus' words?

7. Read John 3.18-21. These verses form the conclusion to the teaching Jesus has been giving.

What is the point being made?

How would you illustrate from contemporary life the reality alluded to in vv.19-20?

Read **John 19.38-42**: how did Jesus' teaching help the faith of Nicodemus grow?