

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## JOHN 3.1-10



**T. M. Moore**

*A Scriptorium Study*

*And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,*

*He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

The Gospel of John: John 2.3.1-10  
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## Introduction to *John 3.1-10*

Here John brings us into an intimate conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. This is the first of several such conversations John will report. Each is fraught with theological and practical truth to guide us in following Jesus.

Nicodemus is a sincere seeker. He wants to understand Jesus, but he's stuck in a way of thinking that precludes that happening.

But Jesus will help him, by pointing him beyond his temporal and logical experience to the new realm of the Kingdom and Spirit of God. How can Nicodemus understand that?

You must be born again.

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## 1 Night Visitor

*Read and meditate on John 3.1, 2.*

Nicodemus is a sincere seeker. He wants to understand Jesus, but he will not be able to so long as he insists on fitting Jesus into his frame of thought. He needs a different perspective, and a new Spirit.

*<sup>1</sup>There was a man, a Pharisee, whose name was Nicodemus, <sup>2</sup>and one night he came to Jesus. Now he was a ruler of the Jews, and said to Him, "We know, because of all the signs You do, that You must be a teacher come from God. I cannot see how anyone, apart from God, could do such things."*

- John 3.1, 2

*Reflect*

1. The contrast of night and day, darkness and light, is a recurring theme in John's writings. Should we attach any significance – actual or spiritual – to the fact that John mentions Nicodemus came to Jesus *by night*? Does any non-believer come to Jesus in any other way? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, I remember what it was like to live in the darkness, and now You...*

2. Nicodemus is puzzled about Jesus. He has seen, or at least heard the reports of, His many signs, and he understands that such signs typically accompany men who have been sent by God. But then there was that temple-cleansing incident. Would a prophet do such a thing? Nicodemus is trying to understand Jesus from within his existing framework of thought. And this is leaving him puzzled. Why? *Lord, make me sensitive to the unbelievers in my life, since I know...*

3. Nicodemus is trying to figure Jesus out *rationally*. While *reason* certainly comes into play in understanding Jesus, *knowing* Jesus is *not* a function of reason. Explain. *Lord, I know You, and You make perfect sense to me, and this is because...*

4. Meditate on Ephesians 4.17-19. How does Paul describe the mind – and thus, the reasoning powers – of one who is still in the darkness of unbelief? Does this help us to understand Nicodemus' problem? Does it help us understand why so many people yet remain apart from Christ? Explain. *Lord, if my unbelieving friends can't make sense out of You, then how...*

5. The key to knowing Jesus is not to be found in being able to fit Him into our rational categories, or the categories of our previous experience. Nicodemus was making the mistake many unbelievers do as they consider Jesus. How should understanding this help us in communicating Jesus to the unbelievers in our Personal Mission Fields? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“This man [Nicodemus] appears also in the middle of the Gospel defending Christ when he says, ‘Our law judges no man before it hears him.’ The Jews in anger replied to him, ‘Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet.’ Again after the crucifixion he bestowed great care upon the burial of the Lord’s body: ‘And there came also Nicodemus,’ says the Evangelist, ‘who first came to the Lord by night and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight.’ And even now he was disposed toward Christ, but not as he should have been, nor did he yet have a proper regard for Jesus, being still entangled in Jewish misunderstanding. This is why he came by night, because he feared to do so by day. Yet our merciful God did not reject or rebuke him for this, or deprive him of his instruction. Rather, with much kindness Jesus talked with him and disclosed to him rather enigmatically some highly exalted doctrines indeed—nevertheless, Jesus still disclosed them.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

This is the first of several private interviews John will present in which Jesus discloses profound truths about Himself and the Gospel. It’s amazing, in each of these interviews, how *much* Jesus communicates in just a *few* words. The fewer the words, the more memorable they are. Is there advice for us here in talking with unsaved folk about Jesus?

*Closing Prayer*

Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,  
Who only does wondrous things!  
And blessed *be* His glorious name forever!  
And let the whole earth be filled *with* His glory.  
Amen and Amen.

Psalm 72.18, 19

**Psalm 72.18-20** ([\*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed\*](#))

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.  
And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forever more!

## 2 Sine qua Non

*Read and meditate on John 3.3.*

Jesus does not try to satisfy Nicodemus' intellectual curiosity. He simply cuts to the chase and puts the truth right in front of him.

*<sup>3</sup>And Jesus said, "I say to you, assuredly, no one will ever see the Kingdom of the Lord except he be born from above."*

- John 3.3

*Reflect*

1. Jesus connects being born again (literally, "born from above") with the Kingdom of God. What's the significance of this? Can you *see* the Kingdom without being saved? Can you be saved and not *see* the Kingdom? Complete this prayer: *I am a citizen and ambassador of Your Kingdom, Lord. You have saved me to...*
2. Can you see that Jesus did not feel compelled to try to fit Himself into Nicodemus thought framework or experience? What did He do instead? Would this have been immediately clear to Nicodemus? Explain. *Show me Your truth, Lord, every day, and help me to...*
3. Jesus' language was clearly foreign to Nicodemus. He had no idea what this Man from God was saying. But Jesus said it anyway. Why? *Lord, I know that many things about the Gospel are hard to understand, especially for those who don't know you. But I...*
4. The mention of being "born from above" ties Jesus' message with John's theme, which he invoked at the beginning and end of chapter 1. As Jesus came "from above" to earth, to bring light and life to people, and as He is the "ladder" which connects what is *above* with what is *on the earth*, how should we understand this idea of being "born from above"? What happens to someone who is thus born? *Thank You, Lord, that I have been born from above. Help me to live...*
5. Jesus says we can *see* the Kingdom if we are born from above. What does that mean? What does the Kingdom look like? Can we *seek* the Kingdom if we don't in some sense *see* it? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

*Summary*

"In other words: Unless you are born again and receive the right instruction, you are wandering somewhere out there far away from the kingdom of heaven... Now, some take the expression 'again' to mean 'from heaven'; others think it means 'from the beginning.' Either way, it is impossible, Christ says, for someone who is not born in this way to see the kingdom of God." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

These are hard words, and Nicodemus does not understand them. But do we? Do we understand all

the mystery involved in being born from above? But do we *believe* it? What's the difference?

*Closing Prayer*

Teach me Your way, O LORD,  
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.  
Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;  
For false witnesses have risen against me,  
And such as breathe out violence.  
*I would have lost heart*, unless I had believed  
That I would see the goodness of the LORD  
In the land of the living.  
Wait on the LORD;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD!

Psalm 27.11-14

**Psalm 27.11-14** ([\*Joanna: Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise\*](#))

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes!  
Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes.  
Had we not believed all Your goodness to see,  
Our hearts sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

Wait, wait on the Lord, persevere in His grace.  
Hold fast to His Word, seek His radiant face.  
Be strong, set your heart to abide in His Word;  
His grace He imparts; therefore, wait on the Lord.

### 3 Trapped in Time

*Read and meditate on John 3.4.*

Jesus' bold statement of the truth seems to have startled Nicodemus, and thrown him into even more confusion. I don't sense any tone of mocking here, as is often the case when Pharisees confront Jesus. Nicodemus is just still trapped in his time-and-logic-and-experience paradigm, and he can't fit Jesus' message into his mindset.

<sup>4</sup>*Said Nicodemus to Him, "How, when he is old, can a man do this thing? Can he his mother's womb begin to occupy a second time, again to be born?"*

- John 3.4

*Reflect*

1. In a very real sense, the Gospel does not make sense. At least, not to those who insist that everything must fit into their time-and-logic-and-experience frame of reference. Does this mean the Gospel isn't *true*? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, Paul says the Gospel is the power of God for salvation, and I'm beginning to see...*
2. Bless his heart, Nicodemus is doing his best to process Jesus' words. He carries out the implications of Jesus' statement to what seems to him its logical – albeit absurd – conclusion. Is there some value to his pursuing this *argumentum ad absurdum* at this point? Explain. *Lord, I'm seeing that sometimes unbelievers, before they will hear the Gospel, need to see...*
3. Is Jesus taunting Nicodemus? Is He dissing him? What *is* He doing? *Lord, help me to wait on You while I wait on my unbelieving friends to...*
4. Nicodemus makes a *suggestion* about what Jesus might have meant by being “born again” or “born from above.” But he's pretty sure his suggestion is not the answer (in the Greek, his second question begins with a negative particle which means, “no way”). Can you see that what Jesus is doing is beginning to *stretch* and *unsettle* Nicodemus' thinking? Is there value to doing this? Why or why not? *Lord, how can you use me to stretch the minds of...*
5. Jesus does not rush the Gospel on Nicodemus. He gives him time to think, to process Jesus' remarks, and to get a little unsettled in his worldview. He *knows* Jesus is sent from God, and that's threatening enough. But *not being able to figure Him out* suggests to Nicodemus that his own worldview, his time-and-logic-and-experience way of seeing the world, may *not* be adequate to fathom Jesus. Jesus has him right where He wants him. Evangelism is a *process*, not an *event*. Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“[Nicodemus] coming to Jesus, as to a man, is confused and startled and perplexed on learning greater things than any human being could speak, things no one had ever heard before. For a while,

he is impressed by the sublime character of the sayings, but his mind is darkened and unstable, borne about in every direction and on the point of falling away from the faith. Therefore he objects to what he has heard as being impossible in order to bring out a fuller explanation from Jesus.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

The fact is, people who don’t know the Lord, and whose minds are not subject to divine revelation, *do not see the world or life truly*. And sometimes we have to help them discover the limits and shortcomings of their worldview. For only when they have become unsettled in their thinking will they be ready to hear the astonishing Good News of a Man who rose from the dead. Should we have a role in their unsettling?

*Closing Prayer*

Show me Your ways, O LORD;  
Teach me Your paths.  
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,  
For You *are* the God of my salvation;  
On You I wait all the day.

Psalm 25.4, 5

**Psalm 25.4, 5** ([\*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord\*](#))

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!  
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

## 4 Twice Born

*Read and meditate on John 3.5, 6.*

Now Jesus begins to expand on His original, confusing statement. But this is not going to be any clearer to Nicodemus than what He'd already said, because it introduces a dimension of life *wholly foreign* to the teacher of Israel.

*<sup>5</sup>Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless a person be of water and of Spirit born, he can not enter God's eternal Kingdom. <sup>6</sup>Man of flesh begotten is but flesh; but he who is begotten by the Spirit will be of spirit.*

- John 3.5, 6

*Reflect*

1. In this and His previous response, Jesus begins His remarks with "Assuredly" (in the Greek, "Amen, amen," a transliteration of a Hebrew word which means something like, "Truthfully, truthfully). Jesus wants Nicodemus to understand that He's not playing word games here, nor speaking mythically nor poetically. Do you think unbelievers think we Christians believe the Gospel is true? Truthfully, truthfully true? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I believe the Gospel is absolutely true, so much so that...*
2. Jesus prefaces His comments about being born again and born by the Spirit with a statement insisting on the *truth* of what He is saying. He's not going to fit His remarks into Nicodemus' thought paradigm, but He does insist they are *true*. What does this suggest about Nicodemus' worldview? *Lord, how can I help my unbelieving friends to see that...*
3. Here again is mention of the Kingdom of God, this time not merely to *see* it but to *enter* it. What does it mean to *enter* the Kingdom of God? How do you experience this? *I know, Lord, there is always more of Your Kingdom to know and to explore, so...*
4. Jesus seems to be referring to natural birth – which comes with the breaking of a woman's water – to spiritual birth (not everyone agrees with this view, but I'm persuaded of it, because of Jesus' comparison). He's saying that something like what happens when we're born into this world must happen when we enter the Kingdom of God. What is the role of the Spirit in this (Jn. 6.63; Gal. 4.6)? How does this affect the way we *see* the world? *Lord, to be born of the Spirit is spirit, and for me this means...*
5. If people can't be persuaded of the reality of spiritual birth by *logic* or *reason* alone, how *can* they be persuaded? Put another way, can the Spirit, working with the straightforward teaching of the Gospel, overcome the limitations of a person's thinking or experience to bring him to the place of new birth? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“And then that rebirth, which brings about the forgiveness of all past sins, takes place in the Holy Spirit, according to the Lord’s own words, ‘Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ But it is one thing to be born of the Spirit, another to be fed by the Spirit; just as it is one thing to be born of the flesh, which happens when a mother gives birth, and another to be fed from the flesh, which appears when she nurses the baby. We see the child turn to drink with delight from the bosom of her who brought it forth to life. Its life continues to be nourished by the same source which brought it into being.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

We expect that Someone coming from eternity and the unseen realm would probably bring a whole new experience of life and the world with Him, and this is exactly what Jesus did. It may be difficult for our contemporaries to believe this, but it’s still true, and we need to live and proclaim it as such. What will that mean for you today?

*Closing Prayer*

You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;  
And You renew the face of the earth.  
May the glory of the LORD endure forever;  
May the LORD rejoice in His works.

Psalm 104.30, 31

**Psalm 104.24-30** (*Creation: Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*)

How many are Your works, O Lord,  
Which You have created by Your Word!  
The earth and sea with creatures teem –  
They look to You to care and feed.  
You give to them, they gather all;  
You hide Your face, they fail and fall.  
You take their breath, they gasp and die;  
You send Your Spirit, they revive.

## 5 A Work of the Spirit

*Read and meditate on John 3.7, 8.*

The Spirit of God was neither well nor widely known during the period of the Old Testament. And even during Jesus' earthly sojourn, His coming was foretold. So for Jesus to be answering Nicodemus' questions in terms of the work of the Spirit had to be even more confusing – and more wondrous.

*<sup>7</sup>Do not be confounded when  
I say to you, 'You must be born again.'  
<sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it will; you hear the sound  
of it, but know not where it may be found.  
And so is everyone begotten by  
the Spirit."*

- John 3.7, 8

*Reflect*

1. A significant part of Jesus' ministry was to prepare the world for the coming of the Spirit. Here, Jesus explains that everything new which He came to bring begins with the Spirit. How does the movement of the wind help us in thinking about the Spirit? Complete this prayer: *Lord, Your Spirit is the power we need to live and to serve You. Today, Lord, let Your Spirit...*
2. Nicodemus was confounded about the idea of being born again because he was trying to process this Good News from a temporal and rational perspective. Jesus said, to understand Him, one needs to think in terms of the *Spirit*, not of the flesh. What are some ways that being "born of the Spirit" causes us to see life and the world differently? *I want to see with the eyes of Your Spirit, Lord, so today...*
3. Previously, Jesus linked being born again with entering and seeing the Kingdom. Here He links being born again with the Spirit of God. In a single sentence, how would you tie those four concepts together: Spirit, born again, enter the Kingdom, see the Kingdom? *In Your Spirit, Lord, and in Your Kingdom...*
4. John has told us that all who receive Jesus, all who believe in Him, are born *by* God as children of God (Jn. 1.12). Jesus here says "everyone who is born of the Spirit" can "enter the Kingdom of God." Being born again involves a work of the Spirit and receiving Jesus, or believing in Him. How would you explain the work of the Spirit and the work of a human being in being born again? *I recall, Lord, when I was born again, and I knew then that...*
5. When the wind blows, it has *effects*. What *effects* should we expect when the Spirit of God causes someone to be born again and enter the Kingdom of God? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

*Summary*

"We know too that the flesh is subject to death because of sin, but the Spirit of God is both

incorruptible and life-giving and beyond death. As at our physical birth there comes into the world with us a potentiality of being again turned to dust, plainly the Spirit also imparts a life-giving potentiality to the children begotten by himself. What lesson, then, do we learn from this? We learn that we should wean ourselves from this life in the flesh, which has an inevitable follower, death; and that we should search for a way of life that does not bring death along with it.” *Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 AD)*

There is no salvation and no life in the Kingdom of God apart from the work of the Spirit. We cannot will ourselves to newness of life, and we cannot work our way into or around in the Kingdom. Jesus came to create a mindset of anticipation for the coming of the Spirit. How should we look forward to the Spirit’s work in our lives each day?

*Closing Prayer*

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.  
*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Psalm 51.10-13

**Psalm 51.10-13** (*Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Create in me a clean heart, renew me from within!  
Take not Your Spirit from me because of all my sin.  
Salvation’s joy restore, Lord, and keep me in Your hand;  
Thus shall I tell Your strong Word to sinners in the land.

## 6 Knowing, but Not Understanding

*Read and meditate on John 3.9, 10.*

Poor Nicodemus. All that training. Those coveted credentials. That prestige within the community, and camaraderie with his colleagues. All that waxing eloquent about this, that, and the other, and all that citing and quoting trusted rabbis and traditions. And yet he didn't have a clue what Jesus was talking about.

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus answered, "I cannot imagine how these things can be!"  
<sup>10</sup>And Jesus answered, "So, you claim to be the teacher of all Israel, yet you do not understand these things?"

- John 3.9, 10

*Reflect*

1. Let's not be mistaken about Nicodemus. He was not unschooled. He was *the* teacher of Israel (as the Greek makes clear). But all his learning was getting him nowhere. How should the plight of Nicodemus encourage us in the presence of today's credentialed Gospel-detractors and God-deniers? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, even though the brightest thinkers of this day deny You and reject the Gospel, still I know that...*
2. What if Jesus had tried to make Himself and His message compatible with Nicodemus' ability to reason things through to a conclusion? Would that have been a good idea? Why or why not? *Your Word and Spirit give life, Lord, not...*
3. Nicodemus is stuck on *how*. Many people who hold to a rationalistic view of life want to know *how* there can be a spiritual realm, God, and so forth, when you can't *see* such things. But Jesus did not answer Nicodemus' "*How?*" from Nicodemus' earthly perspective. He launched the conversation into a totally new dimension, that of the Spirit. Why? How does John 6.63 help us to understand Jesus' method? How should Jesus' method counsel us in talking with unbelievers? *I know, Lord, that I could never answer every objection or question about how the Gospel can be true. But what I can do is...*
4. There is in Jesus' answer in verse 10 a bit of a deliberate intention of humbling Nicodemus. If Nicodemus was *the* teacher of Israel, he *should* have been acquainted with the teachings of the prophets about Jesus and His message. Is Jesus being mean or unloving here? Should somebody say to Him, "You're going to hurt his feelings, Lord?" Explain. *Lord, when You humble me, I...*
5. John's message in this interview with Nicodemus is clear, and it serves to guide us in reading everything that follows: If you think you can figure out this Man and His work and message from your finite, rational, perspective, think again. Get ready to entertain new ideas about reality, truth, and what it means to live. How does this counsel us with respect to our calling in the Kingdom of God? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed from questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“Do we think that the Lord meant to insult this master of the Jews? The Lord knew what he was doing. He wanted the man to be born of the Spirit. No one is born of the Spirit if he is not humble, for humility itself makes us born of the Spirit since ‘the Lord is near to those who are of a broken heart.’ The man was puffed up with his mastery, and it appeared of some importance to him that he was a teacher of the Jews. Jesus pulled down his pride so that he might be born of the Spirit.”

*Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus could be brutal against self-seeking, God-dishonoring people, as we saw when He cleansed the temple. But He could be just as effective in humbling people by helping them gently, gradually, to see the inadequacy of their worldview. This is what we see with Nicodemus. This story will not end with Nicodemus praying the sinner’s prayer and receiving Jesus. What can we learn from Jesus here about our own witness to lost people?

*Closing Prayer*

O my God, make them like the whirling dust,  
Like the chaff before the wind!  
As the fire burns the woods,  
And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,  
So pursue them with Your tempest,  
And frighten them with Your storm.  
Fill their faces with shame,  
That they may seek Your name, O LORD.  
Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;  
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,  
That they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD,  
*Are* the Most High over all the earth.

Psalm 83.13-18

**Psalm 83.1-3, 16-18** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!  
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.  
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one against Your daughters and Your sons.

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.  
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your word,  
That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

## 7 The New Birth

*Read and meditate on John 3.1-10.*

John's Gospel is about Good News – that we can overcome the inertia and confusion of our finite experience, break out of the blinders of our puny rationalism, and be set free from our constant preoccupation with self. And all this is spotlighted, here in Jesus' late-night meeting with Nicodemus.

*<sup>1</sup>There was a man, a Pharisee, whose name was Nicodemus, <sup>2</sup>and one night he came to Jesus. Now he was a ruler of the Jews, and said to Him, "We know, because of all the signs You do, that You must be a teacher come from God. I cannot see how anyone, apart from God, could do such things."<sup>3</sup> And Jesus said, "I say to you, assuredly, no one will ever see the Kingdom of the Lord except he be born from above."<sup>4</sup> Said Nicodemus to Him, "How, when he is old, can a man do this thing? Can he his mother's womb begin to occupy a second time, again to be born?"<sup>5</sup> Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless a person be of water and of Spirit born, he can not enter God's eternal Kingdom. <sup>6</sup>Man of flesh begotten is but flesh; but he who is begotten by the Spirit will be of spirit. Do not be confounded when I say to you, 'You must be born again.'<sup>7</sup> The wind blows where it will; you hear the sound of it, but know not where it may be found. And so is everyone begotten by the Spirit."<sup>8</sup> Nicodemus answered, "I cannot imagine how these things can be!"<sup>9</sup> And Jesus answered, "So, you claim to be the teacher of all Israel, yet you do not understand these things?"*

- John 3.1-10

*Reflect*

1. There is nothing "pat" or "formulaic" about Jesus' interview with Nicodemus. He knew this man – well, He knows every man, as we have seen. And He knew what He must do to further fuel Nicodemus' interest in Him and His message. Jesus will get to the best and most important parts of His message soon enough, as we shall see. But for now, He's content to set the stage with Nicodemus. Who are the people in your Personal Mission Field who need to hear the Good News about Jesus? What can you learn from Jesus about how you should be praying for these people? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I want to pray daily for the unbelievers in my life. Help me know how, and remind me each day to...*

2. We make a mistake, when it comes to thinking about sharing the Good News with a lost person, if we let ourselves get on the defensive, or think this will be a waste of time, or that this person is too smart or clever to be interested in spiritual things. How does the example of Nicodemus encourage us to look for opportunities to share the Good News with our unbelieving friends? *Lord, it's probably true that many people I know are like Nicodemus. They...*

3. *Conversation* is one of the skills we need to practice well as we work our [Personal Mission Fields](#). Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus was on *his* terms, following *his* interest and concerns. How much do you know about the interests and concerns of the people in your Personal Mission Field? How could you begin to find out more? *Lord, make me truly*

*interested in the people to whom You send me each day, so that...*

4. Jesus clearly understood that Nicodemus would not understand His “spiritual talk.” But He talked it anyway, because it was *true* and *real* for Him. Do the people in your Personal Mission Field think that spiritual matters are true and real for you? Explain. *Help me, Lord, to be true and real about...*

5. Jesus walked into the temple and turned that world upside-down. Nicodemus walked into Jesus’ presence with the same result – a man’s world turned upside-down. Jesus, it seems, is about upsetting things. Why? Should we as believers fear to upset things in people’s lives? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“No one sees the Spirit. And how do we hear the voice of the Spirit? A psalm sounds forth: it is the Spirit’s voice. The gospel sounds forth: it is the Spirit’s voice. God’s word sounds forth: it is the Spirit’s voice. ‘You hear his voice, but do not know where he comes from or where he goes.’ But if you too should be born of the Spirit, you will be such that he who is not yet born of the spirit has no idea where you come from or where you go. For he continues and says, ‘So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

The world may not understand us as we talk calmly and confidently about spiritual matters. We may exasperate them no end by refusing to answer all their questions, and by continuing to point to spiritual things such as are revealed in the Bible and revolve around Jesus. We may even *upset* some people by living and talking as if these spiritual things are *true* and *real*. Well. That would be different, eh?

*Closing Prayer*

Now therefore, be wise, O kings;  
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.  
Serve the LORD with fear,  
And rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,  
And you perish *in* the way,  
When His wrath is kindled but a little.  
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2.10-12

**Psalm 2.9-12** (*[Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!](#)*)

To Christ, the Lord, be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.  
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus’ grace, and worship before His exalted face!  
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

*The Gospel of John: John 3.1-10*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What is for you the most important part of this conversation with Nicodemus to this point? Why?
2. What do we mean by saying Jesus talked about spiritual matters as if they were true and real? Why was that *upsetting* to Nicodemus?
3. What can you learn from Jesus in this story about improving your conversational skills?
4. Explain the work of the Spirit in the new birth and in the Kingdom of God.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 3.1-10? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Items for prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.