

I Introductions and announcements, joys and concerns.

II Prayer.

III Intro: John the Evangelist wants us to recognize that when we speak of God and the Spirit, we are compelled to use symbolic language. It is only with the help of symbolic language, metaphor and simile, that we begin to grasp and use spiritual concepts. John is going to use dialogue; he is going to provide dialogue with irony and humor to help us with two important concepts about symbolic language: 1. The terms and pictures must not be so vague, so complex or so incredible as to create confusion rather than comprehension. 2. We must avoid the tendency to make symbolic language literal thereby making it absurd.

IV In the section for today, the dialogue is between Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a Jewish leader, a member of the Sanhedrin. He is a man of intelligence, education, experience and curiosity.

In the reconstructed dialogue which follows, we assume that the record as we have it is condensed. We will expand it as needed for clarity.

V Read and outline John 3:1-21, Willhauck C 3, Blackwell C 6.
For the dialogue we need: 1. Nicodemus; 2. Jesus; 3. John the Evangelist as narrator and commentator. In the coming week, each class member should learn all three roles so that we may have volunteers for each.

VI Reconstructed dialogue of John 3:1-21.

Narrator: Jesus came from Galilee with a group of disciples for the Spring Passover festival. When they entered the Temple courtyard Jesus was appalled at the pandemonium--crowds of people and numerous booths set up for money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals. Both services were essential to enable pilgrims to make the required gifts and sacrifices but Jesus perceived that this violated the spirit of worship and had become a device to extract money from poor people. Jesus took harsh action to register his objection.

The Sanhedrin had sent out people to ask Jesus to explain his rude behaviour but they did not learn much. Their second move was to send Nicodemus, a man of learning and experience, to try to get knowledge of Jesus' mission and purpose.

Nicodemus: Rabbi Jesus, I have come to see you not only as a representative of the Sanhedrin but also for my own curiosity. You appear to be a man on a mission from God because of your acts, your signs and your teaching. We think God must be with you but--

Jesus: Very truly, I tell you, a person cannot enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

Nic: This is absurd. One cannot possibly reenter his mother's womb and be born a second time.

J: Quite right; I am talking about two kinds of birth, the natural birth to which you refer and also a second birth by the Spirit. Your natural birth provides your fleshly life and your life in the spirit is caused by God's Spirit.

Nic: Where is this Spirit? How do we recognize it?

J: Let me illustrate. You cannot see the wind but you hear it and see its effect. It is like that when someone is touched and renewed by the Spirit

Nic: You are still not making sense. I don't know what you are trying to say.

J: You are an inheritor of the great spiritual truths from Moses and the prophets. You really should know how to speak of heaven and spiritual truths.

(over)