



Prayers Anchored in the Gospel of John

John 2:23–3:15

Monday, February 17, 2014

* Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

* The Collect

Collecting your thoughts so you can focus
on God.

John 2:23–3:15 (NIV)

- * ²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. ²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.
- * ^{3:1} Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”
- * ³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
- * ⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”
- * ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”
- * ⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.
- * ¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

- * This is a time when you will want to understand the passage and the original intent of the author.
- * Feel free to read it several times and write down your thoughts and questions.



* Meditation

1. Who is Nicodemus? Why does he come to Jesus at night? What does he mean when he says that they know he comes from God?



2. Two words in this passage are helpful to explore further:

- “*anōthen* (Greek) can mean ‘from above’ and ‘again, anew.’ ...In this context ‘from above’ in the sense of ‘from God’ appears to be primarily in mind (this is its meaning elsewhere in the Gospel, incl. 3:31), the other meaning [‘again’] is naturally subsumed under its primary emphasis.” (George Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 45)
- *pneuma* (Greek) means both ‘wind’ and ‘spirit.’ How does Jesus use the word-play with wind to illumine the nature of the Spirit?

3. What is Jesus referring to about Moses, a snake and the desert? *Look up Num. 21:4-9*. How is that related to ‘the Son of Man being lifted up’?

* **Meditation**

“Nicodemus arrives, Barth explains, with the intention of leading a cautious, judicious, tolerant, religious conversation as from one bank of a stream to the other.

'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.' But he had scarcely opened his mouth when he is stopped. ‘

Truly I say to you, unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

All Nicodemus' cards are struck from his hand and he finds himself face to face with something incomprehensible, something he cannot fathom. 'How can a man be born again when he is old?' This is no talk shore to shore; **Nicodemus is suddenly in the middle of the stream with the ground taken from under his feet.** He cannot take a position of his own nor engage in a genuine exchange of opinions. The time for tolerance is past; a choice has to be made: 'Either-or'. 'Unless a man is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus stammers, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answers, 'Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?' Nicodemus is checkmated in three moves.”

 **Meditation**

(John Bowden, *Karl Barth Theologian*, 1971)

Living God,
help us so to hear your Word
that we may truly understand;
that, understanding, we may believe;
and believing,
we may follow your way in all faithfulness,
seeking your honor and glory in all that we do.
Amen.

http://www.browndowntown.org/files/Liturgist_Resources.pdf

 **Response**



* Jesus came so that we could receive Him and open ourselves, like Nicodemus, to have many conversations with Him. Take a few minutes to receive the presence of Jesus into your whole day. Ask Jesus to walk with you through each coming event.

* **Prayer**



* Pray for one or two of your friends who have a hard time opening the door of their heart to hear Jesus talk with them. Ask that their eyes may be opened to the love of Christ.

* Prayer

The **love** of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself;
The **power** of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in
his service;
The **joy** of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Copyright © 2014 Better Gatherings. Used with permission.

 **Blessing**