

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide

HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN

JOHN 3:1-16 (SB 06.25.2022)

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Today, we have the privilege of eavesdropping on a conversation that happened late one night between a powerful, wealthy, influential man named Nicodemus and Jesus. The topic of their conversation that evening happened to be heaven. Heaven has always been a popular topic and it continues to be so to this day. It has fascinated people for centuries and has served as the subject of countless songs and books and poems and films. Of course, one of the things that makes heaven a difficult subject to talk about is the fact that one of the prerequisites for getting there is you have to die. I like what actor Woody Allen said about that. He said, 'I'm not afraid of death; I just don't want to be there when it happens.' Jesus had a lot to say about heaven. He said that He came down from heaven and that He was returning to heaven. His stories often shined a spotlight on heaven and His miracles functioned like sneak previews of what heaven is like. When one of His disciples asked Him how to get to heaven Jesus responded by saying, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man gets to the Father except through Me.' {John 14:6} Because of who Jesus was and the life that He lived, His thoughts on this topic are worth considering. Let's get into our study...

1. What spoke to you from Pastor Daniel's sermon?
2. What is the biggest life change you've been through recently? What do you remember most about that experience?
3. For Christians, our conversion (when we entered into a personal relationship with Jesus through belief in Him as Savior and Lord) is the biggest change that has taken place in our lives. What are some of the ways you were changed when you met Christ?

An honest assessment of human nature shows that we have a notoriously fickle relationship with change. Sometimes we crave it; sometimes we loathe it. Regardless of our preferences towards change in general, it is an essential part of becoming and growing as a Christian. This study of John 3:1-17 shows us that real change begins and ends with faith in Jesus.

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:1-8

1. What do we learn about Nicodemus in these verses? What was missing in his life, according to Jesus (v. 3)?
2. What do you believe Jesus meant about having to be born again to see the kingdom of God?

To be "born again" means to experience a birth from above. Jesus was talking about salvation. Salvation is the term for the Holy Spirit's work in the life of an individual to bring a person into the family of God. This happens when a person expresses belief in Jesus' death and resurrection and accepts His role as Savior and Lord. Only those who believe in Jesus can be saved from sin (all the ways we disobey God) and enjoy eternal life with Him.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 3:22-23

1. The story of the fall of man and when sin first entered the world. What consequences did Adam and Eve face as a result of their sin?
2. Why do you think separation from God was the punishment for Adam and Eve's sin? How does this separation impact us today?
3. How have you seen sin distort or twist people's identities, including your own? Describe the impact of sin in our world, creation, and your personal life.

We have all rebelled against God. It started with Adam and Eve (the first humans) in the garden of Eden, when they doubted God's goodness. And we've continued thinking our ways are better than God's ever since. Thank God that our spiritual story does not stop with this dark picture of sin. From the beginning of creation, God had a plan to save us by His great grace. The term "grace" refers to the good favor God shows to us by offering us a relationship with Him, through Jesus, even though we are sinful people by nature and don't deserve it. That grace is the foundation of real life change.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:9-15

1. In what ways did Nicodemus's extensive knowledge of the law actually hinder his faith?
2. In what areas of your life have you allowed factual knowledge about God to hinder your relationship with Him?
3. What had Jesus already done that should've made it easier for Nicodemus to believe?

Jesus' miracles pointed to His divinity and gave credibility to His teaching. If Nicodemus put faith in what he saw as facts (the physical miracles), he could have believed what he heard.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:16-17

1. What does it mean to "believe" in Jesus? Why is this so important?
2. How does Nicodemus's story help us understand the type of real life change God wants to do in our lives?

God's love made salvation available to the whole world through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus, who paid the price for our sins. But salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ and His death on the cross (3:18). When we believe in Him, we are restored in our relationship with God, no longer separated from Him or under His judgment. The result of this restoration is eternal life, meaning that after our physical death, we will live forever in the presence of God. Salvation is the work of God internally through the Holy Spirit, which demonstrates itself outwardly in godly living.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

Nicodemus may have started out as a secret admirer of Jesus, but he ended up becoming a full-fledged disciple. He may have been embarrassed and afraid in the beginning, but he ended up demonstrating more boldness and courage than any of the other disciples in the end. His journey may have started under the cover of darkness, but it found its way into the light of day. His story is a wonderful reminder to all of us that it's not where you start out in life that matters most but where you end up. Some people start out great, but sputter and fade as they approach the finish line. That was Judas' story. He had a great start, but in the end, he betrayed the Lord. Meanwhile, Nicodemus started out a coward, but he finished strong!

1. When God shows His power in a person's life by saving him or her, what changes?

BREAKTHROUGH! in 2022

2. What things cause you to not trust in God's ability to bring about change in your life?

3. What would you say to people who believe God's grace won't cover the amount of sin they are guilty of?
Do you ever feel that way yourself?

PRAYER - O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" {2nd Corinthians 5:17}