



Encounters with Jesus – Jesus Offers Us a New Identity

Date: Sunday 23rd January

Speaker: Jo Ramdas-Harsia (City Centre), Becky Stamps (South Site)

Key Verses: John 3:1-21

Talk Summary:

Nicodemus comes to Jesus to know more about him but is also ashamed and afraid. Jesus offers him much more than he expected - not a new plan for how to live well or be a better follower of God, but a whole new identity!

Jesus is able to offer us this new identity because he is both God and man - God's chosen messenger, the One to whom the whole Old Testament is pointing, the mediator between people and God who makes rebirth by the Spirit possible. Jesus makes this clear when Nicodemus talks to him - meaning a lot of what Nicodemus thought he knew, he really didn't get right!

Jesus also gives us an interesting take on judgement - that condemnation isn't something God does to us, but something we've already done to ourselves, if we're honest and aware that we've failed to live up to our own standards (let alone God's). He contrasts running into the 'light' with running away from it - coming close to God's presence and power for his help with staying in a dark place without God because we are ashamed of what we're done ('our deeds are evil', verse 19).

It can be tempting to live in the dark, with old habits and ways of doing things, either because we feel ashamed to confront our sin, unsafe to do so, or just comfortable with the way things are and afraid of change. Coming to God honestly can be scary, especially if we feel ashamed of things we do. In this passage, Jesus offers Nicodemus a choice: to have the new identity offered by Christ through the Holy Spirit, or to run away from God and essentially stay 'condemned'.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

This is quite a long passage of Scripture to deal with - you might find these questions work best as part of a Bible study, where you read sections of text together and facilitate people talking about what they are saying. Verses are suggested below if you would like to structure your discussion time this way.

- (Verses 1-3) Why does Nicodemus come by night to see Jesus? What reaction do you think he wanted from him?
- (Verses 4-8) What offer does Jesus make to Nicodemus? Why does he talk about water and Spirit so much and in this way?
- (Verses 9-15) Why is Jesus able to offer us a new identity as children of God?
- (Verses 16-19) What does this part of the passage say about 'condemnation' and 'judgement'? How might this change the way we think about Biblical judgement for sin?
- (Verses 20-21) What stops us (if we're committed to following Jesus) from living out of that new identity?
- What might our friends notice about us if we lived 'in the light' - out of our new identity as beloved children of God?

Witness - How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Upcoming Events (go to bvc.so/whats-on for details)
 - Encounter Night, 29th January
 - Loving Your Marriage, Starts 31st January