

2022-10-2



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

## Questions for Reflection & Discussion

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1 When did you first hear the term "born again Christian", and what was your impression of it?  
Has your opinion changed? If so, what produced that change? If not, why do you think it hasn't?
- 2 Read John 3:1-10. Nicodemus was "**the** teacher of Israel"—why do you think he didn't understand?
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3 **Imagine for a moment** that we **could** solve our sin problem through our own efforts.  
What would that say about what God is like and what the nature of our offense is?  
**Since we cannot** solve our sin problem through our own efforts, what does this say about what God is like and the nature of our offenses against him?
- 4 What do Titus 3:4-5, Ephesians 2:4-5, and 1 Peter 1:3-4 say about:  
–God's character and motivations?  
–a person's condition before he is born again?  
–a person's condition after he is born again?
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Do you think that Jesus would agree that "all paths lead to God"? Why or why not?  
Is this intolerant? Why or why not?
- 6 What should we do if others think that Christians are narrow-minded, bigoted, or intolerant?  
What would be the **loving** thing to do?
- 7 Who do you know who needs to be born again?

- 1 Take **plenty** of time to hear **everybody's** answer to these questions.  
This will tell you a lot about everyone's understanding of, and attitude toward, the fact that we need a supernatural rescue from God in order to resolve our sin problem. Take note of those who seem unclear, and make plans to grab coffee to talk more. Need help knowing how to make the gospel clear? Contact a pastor.
- 2 Spiritual birth is totally supernatural. Nicodemus was still thinking naturally: "What must I do?" Salvation is a sovereign act of God, with no contribution from us. In fact, we don't even want it until God has sovereignly worked in our hearts (see John 1:12-13; 6:44 & 65). Make sure group members grapple with the human impossibility of being accepted by God. The gospel isn't "good news" until we understand our peril. We all deserve hell.
- 3 If we **could** solve our sin problem on our own, it means that God is not good—he's only incrementally better than we are. But God is categorically good. He is in a class by himself. His is unreachable. Since we **cannot** solve our sin problem on our own, it means that we need a rescue—a rescue in which we contribute **nothing**. There is **no** hope of self-salvation; there is **every** hope since it is a free gift.
- 4 **God's character and motivations:**
  - God loves us, and he's merciful toward our piteous situation (Ephesians & 1 Peter)
  - God is kind to us, even in our rebellious state (Titus)**Our condition before being born again:**
  - dead (Ephesians)
  - foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved, malicious, envious, hateful (Titus)**Our condition after being born again:**
  - alive from the dead (Ephesians)
  - saved, washed, regenerated, renewed (Titus)
  - heirs of an imperishable inheritance (1 Peter)
- 5 Jesus said "No one comes to the Father but through me." (John 14:6)  
First of all, it is illogical to insist that there must be **multiple** solutions to a problem. There don't have to be **any** solutions to a problem. It is God's grace that he's provided a cure. It is not "intolerant" to say that "only **this** medicine cures that condition".
- 6 Beyond the truths contained in 5, we also should point out that we did not come up with this solution, God did. We're not claiming any superior knowledge or position for ourselves—only for Christ. Fact is, Christ **is** superior to all other "saviors". They all were sinners, and are in their graves. Christ is sinless, and rose from the dead. He simply is superior. And he graciously invites all to come.
- 7 You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)

Note: Don't overlook the fact that perhaps someone in your group needs to be saved. Take note of unbiblical or confused answers, and make plans to grab coffee and talk further.

## Sermon Summary (Key Text: John 3)

In the course of human history some extremely critical conversations have taken place... conversations that have shaped the history of the world. Today we will be looking at a conversation Jesus had about eternal things, things which have the potential to change our destinies.

In John 3, Jesus talked with an important Jewish religious ruler named Nicodemus. Jesus called him “the teacher of Israel.” Nicodemus began the conversation by complimenting Jesus. But Jesus replied with a jolting response: “Truly, truly, I say to you (which means, “Nicodemus, you had better hear this, this is really important”) unless one is born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus is taken back. He doesn't understand. Why is Jesus saying this? He had just complimented Jesus, and then he got this! To better understand Jesus' response. Look at something that took place just before this conversation (John 2:24-25). Jesus saw right through Nicodemus, to what is in his heart. And Jesus addressed his heart issues. Nicodemus believed that his religious devotion and good works merit his entrance into the kingdom of God. Jesus essentially said: “Your religious resume is worthless before God. Nicodemus, you don't need to improve your life. You need a new life! You need a new birth!”

It is important that we understand what Jesus is saying. If we want to be in a right relationship with God, if we want to enter into His kingdom, if we want to experience God's presence and power, if we want to spend eternity with God, we must be born again! Usually when we hear the term “born again Christian”, it is used disparagingly. People will say, “Oh you know, he is one of those ‘born again’ Christians.” It's almost like there are two kinds of Christians: The good Christians—the ones who are private about their faith and who don't try to influence public policy or morality, and those bad, “born again” Christians—the wacko's. But Jesus only knew of one kind of Christian, the born again kind!

Salvation is a work of God's sovereign mercy, not about our performance. Doing good things won't get you into the kingdom of God anymore than they would Nicodemus. Jesus didn't have much confidence in human nature; because of the sin of our first parents we have become corrupted at the core of our being (Jeremiah 17:9). In our natural condition we are opposed to God. We don't seek him. None of us are good; none of us are righteous (Romans 3). All of us are selfish and sinful. We don't want anyone to tell us what to do, not even God. The Bible says that we are spiritually dead—not just sick. Not just sleeping, not on the disabled list. We are spiritually dead...which means that we have no spiritual life in and of ourselves.

In our natural born condition we don't love God; we don't want to obey God, and we can't please God. At the core of who we are, we are corrupted and spiritually dead and unresponsive to God. Our minds are set on the things of this world. We are moved along by our lusts and our passions. Our natural desires are contrary to God's. We are enslaved to the ways of this world and we cannot change our human nature.

So what has to happen? God has to change us. God has to do it. Titus 3:4-5 says: But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” This is a description of the new birth, when the Spirit of God breathes life into you so that you can love him and respond to him and understand him and walk with him.

Ephesians 2:4-5 says: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

1 Peter chapter 1:3-4 says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to experience the mercy of God. It is not about your outward performance. Without this, we are dead men walking. Nicodemus was stupefied by all of this, and so Jesus explained it more in John 3:13-21. Jesus referred back to an incident in Israel's history in which the Israelites were being punished by God for their sins, but if they chose to respond in faith, they would be saved (Numbers 21:4-9). That incident was a foreshadowing of Christ!

The world stands judged already; everyone is guilty of sin. But Jesus took the punishment we deserve. Those who refuse to believe, Jesus said, will perish. Salvation is impossible apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ. He was slain for you. And if you will look to him, your sins will be forgiven. We must be born again, and that new birth takes place when we place our trust in Jesus Christ as our sin bearer, when we look to him in faith.



## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Billy Graham once was asked why he preached so often on John 3:16. His simple answer was, "Because you **must** be born again!"

**Monday**— Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

- By what are we saved? By what are we not saved?
- What does v. 10 say results from salvation?

**Tuesday**— Read Titus 2:11-12.

- What does it mean that Jesus brought salvation to **all** men (. 11)? Are all people saved?
- Does it surprise you that v. 12 focuses on works we are to do? How do you explain that?

**Wednesday**— Read Titus 2:11-13.

- **How often** do you "look for" the return of Christ? Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Never?
- What does that tell you about your relationship with Christ?

**Thursday**— Read Titus 2:11-15.

- For what purpose did Christ redeem us (v. 14)?
- Is that purpose happening in your life? Why or why not?

**Friday**— Read Titus 3:3-7.

- How does v. 3 describe you? Do you agree with that description? Why or why not?
- How does v. 5b describe you? Do you see yourself that way? Why or why not?

**Saturday**— Read Titus 1:1-2.

- Verse 1 says that born again people are "chosen". On what basis did God make his choice of you?
- Eternal life is our "hope" (v. 2), and God, who "cannot lie", **promised** it. So, what is Christian "hope"?
- How sure are you that you have that hope?



- "Why do so many of us struggle with addictive habits?"
- "Are freedom and change possible—for me or my friends?"
- "What is the biblical method for breaking addiction's grip?"

### Biblical Hope and Help for Addictive Habits and Eating Disorders

- **Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup> 9am — noon**
- **Triangle Community Church** [ 4216 Kildaire Farm Road, Apex ]
- **Facilitators: Dave and Krista Dunham**
- **For adults and high school students**
- **Tickets just \$15**
- **Free childcare available**



This interactive workshop will provide you with rich biblical perspectives on addictions, with additional focus on eating disorders, and will equip you with practical strategies for combatting these common struggles.