

# Membership Covenant



## A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: John 3:1-21

Message for the Week: Starting Point

Sunday, November 19

### Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Have you ever met with someone in secret? Why was it in secret? What was it about?

### Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

### Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [John 3:1-21](#) out loud.

[Clicking the link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

## Respond / Reflect:

When you imagine God, what does the picture look like?

What does it mean to be born again?

Why do you think Nicodemus waited until it was dark to go talk with Jesus (the light of the world...see [John 8:12](#))?

Why did it become dark when Jesus was on the cross? What was happening during this time? What was Jesus doing?

When you give...of your time, your talent, your treasure, your self....what is your motivation or reason behind it?

Why in our membership covenant do we commit to giving generously?

## Try It:

For the next seven days, as you start your day, commit to God each day to living your day as a "born again" representative of God's great gift of love. Be ready to share your experiences and give testimony of what you encountered while doing so.

## Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

Father in heaven, thank you for your great love for us. Thank you for loving us so much that you gave us your one and only Son, Jesus. Thank you for not sending Jesus to condemn us, but rather to save us through his life, death, and resurrection. What an amazing gift! Spirit of God, enable all of who we are, our thoughts, words, and actions, to be shaped and formed by this great gift. AMEN.

## Missional/Spiritual Practice: Giving

I commit to giving generously of my time for the building of Christ's Church and Kingdom.

I commit to giving generously of my talents for the building of Christ's Church and Kingdom.

I commit to giving generously of my treasures (financial resources) for the building of Christ's Church and Kingdom.

I commit to giving generously of my testimony for the building of Christ's Church and Kingdom.

How are you giving generously in these areas? If not, why not? What needs to change?

# John 3:1-21

## New International Version

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.<sup>[a]</sup>"

<sup>4</sup> "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!"

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit<sup>[b]</sup> gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You<sup>[c]</sup> must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> 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."<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

<sup>10</sup> "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

## Footnotes

a. [John 3:3](#) The Greek for *again* also means *from above*; also in verse 7.

b. [John 3:6](#) Or *but spirit*

c. [John 3:7](#) The Greek is plural.

d. [John 3:8](#) The Greek for *Spirit* is the same as that for *wind*.

e. [John 3:13](#) Some manuscripts *Man, who is in heaven*

f. [John 3:14](#) The Greek for *lifted up* also means *exalted*.

g. [John 3:15](#) Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 21.

## The Message

<sup>3</sup> <sup>1-2</sup> There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we all know you're a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren't in on it."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus said, "You're absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it's not possible to see what I'm pointing to—to God's kingdom."

<sup>4</sup> "How can anyone," said Nicodemus, "be born who has already been born and grown up? You can't re-enter your mother's womb and be born again. What are you saying with this 'born-from-above' talk?"

<sup>5-6</sup> Jesus said, "You're not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind-hovering-over-the-water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.

<sup>7-8</sup> "So don't be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above'—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God."

<sup>9</sup> Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean by this? How does this happen?"

<sup>10-12</sup> Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?"

<sup>13-15</sup> "No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

<sup>16-18</sup> "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

<sup>19-21</sup> "This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is."