



Nicodemus

Lesson Overview

1. Critical Thinking

What barriers prevent us from thinking spiritually?

2. Watch a Video

Watch John 3:1-21 at bit.ly/GCEDGospelOfJohn from **20min 20sec to 23min 21sec** (3min 1sec).

3. What Did Jesus Mean

Read interpretations of Jesus' statements and decide which are correct. p. 2.

New Church Concept Spiritual Rebirth

Jesus said, Except one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God.... Truly, truly, I say unto you, except one be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is begotten of the spirit is spirit. (John 3:3-6). As Nicodemus did not understand the spiritual sense of the Lord's words...the Lord explained that "to be born" means "to be born of water and of the spirit," thus to be regenerated, that is, by means of truths from the Word and a life according to them, for "water" signifies truths, and "spirit" a life according to them. See *Apocalypse Explained* 721.2

What Barriers Prevent Us from Thinking Spiritually?

While we live in a world of time and space thinking spiritually can be difficult for us. Why is this?

List five things that might be barriers to thinking spiritually, for example personal doubts, cultural practices, etc. Write them below. Discuss your answers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Are these barriers unique to our time or have people always had barriers to thinking spiritually?

Watch a Video

When Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover many people witnessed the signs He did and believed in Him. One man who was struck by Jesus' teaching came to Him at night, when it was dark. Nicodemus asked questions so he could understand Jesus and His mission better. Watch John 3:1-21 from *The Life of Jesus . Official Full HD Movie . English*, at bit.ly/GCEDGospelOfJohn. (Enter link in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.) **Start video at 20min 20sec and watch until 23min 21sec; 3min 1sec.**

Discuss

What impression does this story give of Nicodemus as a person? Put a check next to statements that you think are true.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Humble	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very smart
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wanted to be taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thoughtful
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrogant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Understands Jesus
<input type="checkbox"/>	Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wanted to teach
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amazed by what Jesus is saying

What Did Jesus Mean?

Read the following statements from the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. What does the New Church teach about what the Lord meant? Circle your answers and discuss them with the group. (More than one answer may be right!)

1. "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 - a. People need to be saved to get to heaven.
 - b. No one sees the kingdom of God unless the Lord shows it to them.
 - c. In order to get to heaven people must fundamentally change their lives.
2. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
 - a. Wind is hard to trace: so is the Lord.
 - b. The work of the Lord is often invisible.
 - c. We cannot tell who has been born of the Spirit and who has not.
3. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."
 - a. Only people who are baptized and have the Lord in their lives enter heaven.
 - b. Only people who know a lot about the Word and pray enter heaven.
 - c. Only people who try to live according to the truth and have the Lord in their lives enter heaven.
- d. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."
 - a. People who believe Jesus died on the cross for them are saved.
 - b. God has a Son.
 - c. The Lord Himself came into the world to lead people to heaven.
 - d. God sent His Son into the world to die for our salvation.
5. "The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."
 - a. There are parts of all of us that love darkness.
 - b. When the Lord came on earth all people were evil.
 - c. When the Lord came on earth some people liked doing evil things more than good things.
6. "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."
 - a. People who do good things have nothing to hide.
 - b. People who do good things like others to see their deeds.
 - c. People who do good things like to get credit for them.
 - d. People who do good deeds love to have the Lord in their lives.
7. "Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."
 - a. People like to do bad things at night.
 - b. People who do bad things hate the Lord.
 - c. People who do evil don't care what others see or think of them.

Explore

Read what the Writings teach about being born again, or *regeneration* (see right).

There are two states that we go through if we are to become a spiritual person. The first is called reformation; the second, regeneration. In the first state we look from our earthly self toward having a spiritual self; we long to be spiritual. In the second state we become someone who is both spiritual and earthly. The first state is brought about by truths related to faith. Through these truths we aim to develop goodwill. The second state is brought about by good actions that come from goodwill; through these actions we come truths related to faith. The first state is a state of thought in our intellect; the second state is a state of love in our will. As the second state begins and progresses, a change takes place in our minds. The love in our will flows into our intellect and leads it to think in agreement and harmony with what we love. As good actions that come from love take on a primary role, and the truths related to faith take a secondary role, we become spiritual and are a new creation. Then our actions come from goodwill and our words come from faith; we develop a sense of the goodness that comes from goodwill and a perception of the truth that is related to faith; and we are in the Lord and in a state of peace. In brief, we are reborn. These states can be compared to the increase of light and heat that occurs as the day progresses in springtime. The first state is like the early light before dawn. The second state is like the dawn and the morning. See *True Christianity* 571