



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Midweek / Sermon Starter

Unit 3: Final Destinations
Sermon Series Title: Living with Eternity in Mind
Sermon 1 Title: Eternity Prerequisites
Bible Passage: John 3:1-16

Background/Context

Did you know that you can be in church, and not be changed? Are you aware of the fact that you can have “good religion,” and not have a relationship with God? There just may be several people who attend local churches and are a part of religious organizations who have membership without discipleship.

In the Gospel of John, we see a religious figure that had no relationship with the Father. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, but he had no relationship with Jesus Christ. Nicodemus had a great standing in the community—because he was a Pharisee, but he was in a bad state before God—because he was not born again. And, being born again while on earth is the prerequisite of enjoying everlasting life in eternity with the Father (John 3:1-3).

The Apostle John opens his gospel with a lengthy prologue about the person, power, purpose, and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-18). He tells the reader that Jesus is Co-existent, Co-equal, and Co-eternal with God the Father (John 1:1-3). John says that Jesus made all people, made all things, and that Jesus came in the likeness of man to reveal God to the world (John 1:4-18). In Chapter 2, John demonstrates Jesus’ divine power, passion, and perception. Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana, drove the moneychangers out of the temple, and chose to not “entrust himself” to them because He “knew what was in man” (John 2:23-25). Then we come to Chapter 3 where there’s an illustration of a man who has religion and reputation without relationship. It is here that the Bible reveals eternity prerequisites.

**A. The Must of Being Born Again
(John 3:1-3)**

Nicodemus was leader among the religious and political party in Palestine in New Testament times. The Pharisees were known for insisting that the law of God be observed as the scribes interpreted it. They were also known for their rigorous commitment to keeping the laws of tithing and ritual purity. Though Nicodemus was a religious leader, he still had a religious longing. He came to Jesus at night (in secret) and told Him he knew that He was a teacher that came from God—not knowing that Jesus was God and that He came to teach.

Jesus went straight to the heart of the matter—the matter of the heart. He told Nicodemus, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). When it comes to eternity, the Bible teaches that you will go to heaven or hell after death. Whether or not you have been born again determines where you go.

Application Point: If you died tonight, where would you spend eternity? Knowing that every person who does not place his or her faith in Christ will perish in eternity should drive every Christian to share the gospel with people everywhere—all the time.

B. The Meaning of Being Born Again (John 3:4-9)

Nicodemus couldn't understand this talk of being born again. He asked how does this happen for an adult? Does that person enter a second time into his or her mother's womb? (v. 4) Jesus went on to explain to Nicodemus that a person must be "born of water and the Spirit" (v. 5). When a person places his or her faith and trust in the finished work of Christ, that person receives new life from the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14; 2:1-8; Titus 3:5). By the time we get to verse 9, Nicodemus is still not clear on what the new birth is, nor how it works, because he asks, "How can these things be?" At this point, Nicodemus has not been born again.

Application Point: Once conversion takes place in the heart and spirit, we become convicted when we commit sin. This is evidence of being born again. How will you demonstrate and communicate to others that you have been born again?

C. The Message of Being Born Again (John 3:10-18)

Jesus draws on Nicodemus' familiarity with Old Testament Scripture (v. 10). He tells him that just as the children of Israel who were bitten by serpents for murmuring against God had to look up at the brass serpent lifted up by Moses (Num. 21:4-9); even so, Christ would be lifted-up (crucified on a cross). Whoever believes on Him would not perish, but would have eternal life (vv.14-15). The message was and still is today, when you place your faith in Jesus Christ your heart is changed along with your final destination changed—from hell to heaven.

The message is spelled out more clearly in verse 16. It's a verse about the great God, who demonstrated His great love for humanity by making the great sacrifice of His only Son, so that we could obtain His great promise of everlasting life. John 3:16 is the gospel in a nutshell. The verse is about the greatest power "God," the greatest passion "loved," the greatest population "the world," the greatest practice "He gave," the greatest price "His one and only," the greatest Person "His one and only Son," the greatest persuasion "so that everyone who believes in him," the greatest promise "will not perish," and the greatest possession "but have eternal life."

Every believer must consistently *connect* to God's love through Bible study and prayer. Every believer must consistently *carry* God's love through acts of kindness towards others. And, every believer must consistently *communicate* God's love by faithfully sharing the gospel with the unsaved.

Application Point: Committed Christians show and share the gospel through the lives they live and the words they speak. How do you embody and explain the message of God's love to unsaved and hurting people?