

LEARNER GUIDE

John 3:1-8

Time and time again in the Gospel of John we read about people looking through the lens of human experience and human understanding to discover the question John seeks to answer: *Who is Jesus?* But Jesus and salvation through Him are not _____; they are _____.

Jesus hadn't come to bring new _____. Jesus came to bring new _____.

All of his credentials and intellect combined couldn't obtain what Nicodemus had been looking for because when it comes to life in Christ, _____ doesn't matter.

John 3:22-36

When it comes to life in Christ, _____ doesn't matter. Believers in Jesus are not people who _____. Believers in Jesus Christ _____.

John 4:1-26

Jesus broke through barriers of _____ and _____ when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. But perhaps the last obstacle He overcame was the most significant - He struck down her _____.

Jesus doesn't _____ shame; He _____ it into testimony.

When it comes to life in Christ neither merit, nor membership, nor _____ matter.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Webster's Dictionary a synonym for the word *discover* is *determine*. A person who discovers something plays a big part in determining how it is understood or interpreted. How is this a problem when we apply it to *discovering* who Jesus is? How can we see evidence of this in our world today?
2. What is the difference between *going* to church and *being* the church? In what specific ways does that play out in the life of a believer?
3. The Samaritan woman was the first person in Scripture to whom Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah. Why do you think He chose that person and that place to first verbally declare the powerful revelation?
4. Has God powerfully converted any difficulties in your life into a Gospel testimony or ministry?

PERSONAL STUDY

Part One

Read John 3:1-21

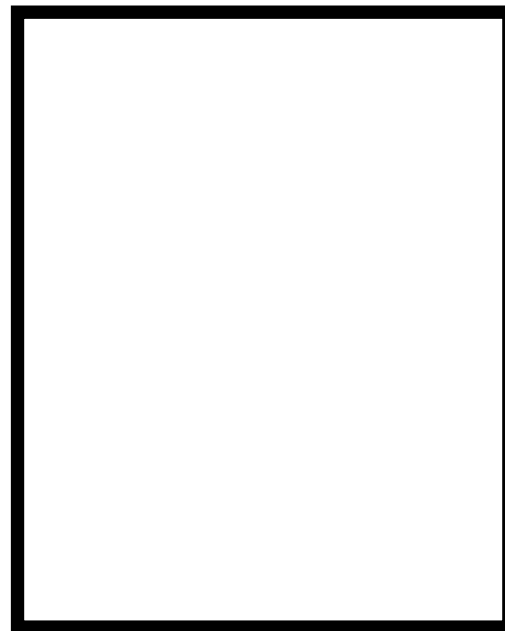
Nicodemus, like many Jews of his time, likely thought that because he was born a Jew and a descendant of Abraham, he was automatically going to heaven. But Jesus explained that being born a Jew doesn't assure eternal life. In fact if Nicodemus wanted to enter the kingdom of God, he must be born again. During their conversation, Jesus used a story about Moses (which Nicodemus would have been familiar with) to illustrate this truth.

Read Numbers 21:4-9

Bronze in the Bible represents *judgment*. The serpent is often used to represent *sin*. Therefore, what would a bronze serpent represent?

The bronze serpent in Numbers 21 is a sign of sin judged and dealt with the same way that Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us on the cross, and our sin was judged in Him. Our salvation comes not from being someone or doing something, but by looking to and receiving what Jesus did for us...*Look to me and be saved all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* Isaiah 45:22.

Use the box to draw a picture of how you imagine the bronze set on a pole described in Numbers 21.



If you imagined the serpent lay horizontally on the vertical pole, what shape would it take?

Close in prayer, thanking God for Jesus, who died on the cross so that we may be saved.

Part Two

Read John 3:22-36

In all three of the Synoptic Gospels, details of Jesus' earthly ministry began in Galilee. But John's Gospel uniquely records a time when both John the Baptist and Jesus were actively ministering in the area of Judea. While John the Baptist never lost focus of his purpose (to point others to Jesus), John's disciples saw Jesus as competition. And they were especially bothered when Jesus began drawing more crowds than John. John, however, quickly set them straight.

Take another look at John 3:28-30. To whom does John compare himself in verse 29?

The New Manners and Customs of the Bible (Chadwick & Freeman) explains the friend of the bridegroom was selected by the groom. One of his most important roles was to bring the bride to the groom. He was also responsible for carrying messages between the groom and his bride during the time of the betrothal.

How is friend of the bridegroom a fitting comparison for John the Baptist? Who is the groom and who is the bride in John's analogy?

Perhaps one of the most important parts of John's analogous role as *friend of the bridegroom* was not something he was, but something he was NOT. Much like the groomsmen and bridesmaids of modern weddings, John was not the *center of attention*.

In March 2017, after returning from her first mission trip, a friend text me: "I just want people to see Christ in me. I don't even care if they know my name as long as they get to know my God." I've kept that text as a reminder because I want to want that too! But if I were honest, sometimes I work for attention or credit. What about you? Are there areas of ministry or service where you are working for the attention of men? What could you do differently?

Read Matthew 5:16 and *close in prayer*, asking the Lord to direct your desires to glorify Him.

Part Three

Read John 4:1-42

The woman who came to the well lived in shame. In shame, she came alone at the hottest part of the day. In shame, she wondered why Jesus would be willing to accept water from her cup, let alone speak to her. In shame, when Jesus acknowledged He knew her past, she quickly changed the subject to something less personal (the disagreement between where Jews and Samaritans worshipped).

When we think of shame, our Western minds likely think of those hidden parts of our heart where our deepest regrets and greatest guilt try to hide. But according to *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, in Bible times shame equaled *public reputation*. There was nothing private about shame. There was no escape from the condescending looks, the harsh words, the constant rejection for the woman at the well...that is until she met Jesus. Jesus took away her shame, and in return he gave her a testimony.

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." John 4:39

When you think of the woman at the well, I doubt you've ever considered John the Baptist to have anything in common with her. But take a look at a verse we studied just a few weeks ago about John the Baptist.

He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.
John 1:7

Write the underlined portions from each of the two verses.

In the original language, those phrases are the same! In the same way that God used John the Baptist to lead others to Jesus, He also used the woman at the well. To be qualified to serve in God's kingdom, you only need one thing - a testimony! A testimony is a story about what God has done in your life. What is your story? (Use an extra sheet of paper to record your thoughts.)

Close in prayer, asking for courage to tell others the story of what God has done in your life.

Heart-to-Heart

Spend some time with Jesus using one of the suggestions below. Remember to reference the RESOURCES pages to help you.

- Revisit a verse or passage that stuck out to you this week. Compare the text in a few different Bible translations or do a word study on a few key words.
- Read a commentary on John 3:1-4:42.
- Journal about what you learned through His Word this week.
- Spend time in prayer, focusing on what the Holy Spirit revealed to you through your study of John 3 and 4.
- Record any questions you still have about the text.

Looking Ahead

Read John 4:39 - John 5:47.

Use the space below to record anything that jumps out to you or any questions that come to mind about the text.
