

Message Discussion Guide

LIFEBLOOD, THE GOSPEL: WHAT WE NEED

The Church at Brook Hills . Dr. David Platt . April 20, 2008 John 3:1-21

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect...

Option 1

Think back to the beginning of the service on Sunday. David said he thought today could be the most important day of your life. What did he mean by that? What aspects were brought to light that are different than the gospel you have heard perhaps all your life? What is the focus of the gospel message we heard today?

Option 2

Think about the end of today's service. We were asked to think on one question—*have you been born again?* What was your response? Were you able to communicate your response outwardly? What questions or truths were on your mind during that time?

Review the Message...

What Happens When We Are Born Again?

- **God reveals our need .**
 - Context- John 3:1-3 recounts the beginning of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council, a spiritual leader among his fellow Jews. He spent his whole life devoted to the Word (studying and teaching it), yet he still missed the main point of the Word completely. He had no spiritual life in him. How could that happen?
 - The first thing Jesus did was to expose to Nicodemus his flawed foundation of religion and spirituality by telling him he must be born again. How do you think Nicodemus probably felt after Jesus told him he was not going to experience the Kingdom of God?
 - Is it possible for our lives to be similar to Nicodemus' life? Can we develop a flawed spiritual foundation based on religious practices that looks spiritual, yet have no life? What might that look like in the church of the Twenty First Century?
 - How do you think Nicodemus went wrong? How can we likewise go wrong if we're not careful?
 - How does God reveal today to us our need to be born again? How did you become aware of your need?

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- **The new birth is necessary to know God.**
 - Can someone who has not been born again know God—not merely *about* God, but truly know God?
 - What is the difference in knowing about God versus knowing God?

- **The new birth is impossible without God.**
 - “Born again” literally means, “born from above,” which is why Jesus begins talking about the Spirit.
 - Who must act first in order for you to be born again and enter into the kingdom of God? How does that happen?

- **We are morally evil.**
(Gen. 8:21, Luke 11:13, John 3:19)
 - How does Scripture line up with the claim, “Well, I’ve always loved God”?

- **We are spiritually sick.**
 - Jesus said in Matthew 9:12, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.”
 - Based on Scripture, who are the sick? What kind of attitude does this truth cause you to have?

- **We are slaves to sin.**
(John 8:34, 2 Timothy 2:26)
 - Read Romans 6:16-20. Based on those verses, what does being a slave to sin lead one to do?
 - How is this spiritual sickness, this slavery to sin a progressive problem?
 - How does being a slave to sin affect our heart?

- **We are blinded to truth.**
(1 Cor. 2:16, Eph. 4:18, 2 Cor. 4:4, Matt. 5:8)
 - How are we blind? Why are we blind? Who causes us to be blind?

- **We are lovers of darkness.**
(Eph. 5:8)
 - What is one reason—according to John 3:20 that men who do evil hate the light?

- **We are children of wrath.**
 - Romans 5:10 and James 4:4 say that we are enemies of God. What does Eph. 2:3 say about us?

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- **We are spiritually dead.**
 - What does it mean to say we are dead when we are alive on this earth?
 - Read Romans 5:12 and 8:10...what do we see here?
 - Eph. 2:1 literally says, "You are dead in your sins." What does that mean? Can dead people make themselves alive? What do they need?

- **The new birth is dependent on God.**

In light of all the characteristics we just discussed, what can we do about our condition before God?

 - How can those who are morally evil choose good?
 - How can those who are sick make themselves well?
 - How can slaves set themselves free?
 - How can the blind give themselves sight?
 - How can lovers of darkness come into the light when they hate the light and run from it?
 - How can an object of wrath appease that wrath?
 - And how can the dead come to life?

What do you think you have to offer in terms of the basis of your salvation? This kind of desperation is at the heart of what it means to be born again.

Read John 3:1-10 again, Is the focus on a person's humility, or brokenness, or even faith? What, or whom, is the focus of this passage? (The focus is on the need for a miraculous, supernatural intervention by the Spirit of God.)

- **God changes our heart.**

How does God change our hearts?

 - **He cleanses us.**

There are pictures in the Bible of how God changes us by His Spirit when we're born again. Jesus is referring to this transformation that the Spirit does in us when He refers to water and spirit in verse 5. What does it mean to be changed and cleansed with each of these—

 - His Word (1 Peter 1:23)
 - Water (Ezekiel 36:24)
 - His Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Is this a one-time cleansing or an ongoing process?

 - **He indwells us.**

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When we're born again, not only are we clean, but we have a new Spirit living within us!

- Does God wipe away your sins and give you His Spirit in order to free you up to make excuses to continue to live contrary to His Plans for your life? (READ Galatians 5:1)
- Whose Spirit dwells in the hearts of the forgiven?
- When we're born again, we are a new person, a new creation, and we have new longings and new desires and new loves and new affections – because God has put His Spirit in us.
- What are some new desires that the Holy Spirit gave you when you were born again?
- How does this truth line up with the statement “Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven”?

- **God enables our belief.**
 - Is there a difference between believing hearts and believing minds?
 - What is required for salvation to take place—an intellectual acknowledgment of Jesus or a change of heart?
 - Who can change our hearts? So, who gives us faith to believe?

 - **By His grace, we turn from sin.**
 - How does repentance show itself in a change of mind, heart, and life?
 - How should our lives look different because of this work of Christ?

 - **By His grace, we trust in Christ.**
 - What are we trusting Christ to *do*? (We trust in Christ not just to forgive us, but to reconcile us to God forever, to change our hearts, to cleanse us and change us.)
 - Why can we not trust in ourselves or anything else on planet Earth for our salvation?

- **God transforms our lives.**
READ John 3:21.
 - **He transforms us for our eternal good.**
 - What does it look like for God to go from our topic of discussion to our delight?
 - How can we know that He'll only transform us for our good?

 - **He transforms us for His eternal glory.**
 - READ John 3:21 again and Ezekiel 36: 23
 - For whose sake are we transformed? How does our transformation bring great glory to God?

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The Ultimate Question...

Have you been born again?

- Has the Holy Spirit of God revealed to you the depth of your need for him?
- Has the Holy Spirit of God changed your heart?
- Cleansed you and filled you?
- Has the Holy Spirit of God enabled you to turn from sin and trust in Christ?
- And has the Holy Spirit of God transformed your life?