WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL · PRINT EDITION

You Must Be Born Again

The Gospel of John: Why Should I Believe? · Week 09 · November 8, 2026

JOHN 3:3 (ESV)

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

HOW THIS WORKS

- Five days, Monday through Friday — about ten minutes each. Every day has a prayer to open, a short reading, something to think about, one action step, and a prayer to close.
- This week’s homework runs underneath all five days: Memorize John 3:3, and write down one thing you’ve been trusting to make you right with God instead of Jesus. Then cross it out and pray, “Jesus, I look to You.”
- Keep a pen with it. The lines are part of the devotional.
- Prefer your phone? The same devotional is online each week at thesummit.life → The Gospel of John → Reading Plan.

THIS WEEK

Sunday Pastor Jeff introduced us to Nicodemus: a Pharisee, a ruler, the teacher of Israel, and a man who still came to Jesus at night with something missing. Jesus told him, “You must be born again.” This week you will take it one scene at a time: the Jesus who knows what is in us, the religious man who needed more than religion, the new heart only God can give, the Son of Man from heaven, and the bronze serpent lifted up so that whoever looks can live.

DAY 1 · MONDAY

He Knew What Was in Man

JOHN 2:23–25 · PSALM 139:1–4, 23–24

Opening prayer

Lord, You know me completely. Help me stop hiding from You. Amen.

Read John 2:23–25, then Psalm 139:1–4. Chapter and verse numbers were added to the Bible centuries after John wrote, and sometimes they split what belongs together. These three verses aren't so much the end of chapter 2 as the doorway into chapter 3.

Many people in Jerusalem "believed in his name when they saw the signs." But Jesus "did not entrust himself to them," because "he himself knew what was in man." He was not fooled by a crowd's excitement.

Be honest: how different is the person you are on Sunday morning from the person you are when nobody is around? We all know how to present the version of ourselves we want people to see. But the private struggles, the hidden resentments, the thoughts you would never say out loud: Jesus already knows.

That could be terrifying. But David found it to be an invitation: "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" (Psalm 139:23). The Savior who knows you completely is the very Savior who came to rescue sinners.

You can fool the people around you, even yourself, but you cannot fool Jesus. And He came for you anyway.

Reflect

Where is the gap widest between the version of you people see and the person Jesus knows? Write it down honestly.

Today's action step

Start this week's homework today. Write John 3:3 on a card and put it where you will see it every day: "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Closing prayer

Jesus, You know what is in me. Search my heart, and don't leave me where I am. Amen.

DAY 2 · TUESDAY

A Man Who Had Everything

JOHN 3:1–3 · PHILIPPIANS 3:4–9

Opening prayer

Lord, show me what I'm trusting besides You. Amen.

Read John 3:1–3. Nicodemus had it all. He was a Pharisee, one of a few thousand men devoted to strict obedience to God's law. He was "a ruler of the Jews," a member of the council that governed Israel. Jesus calls him "the teacher of Israel."

The Pharisees took God's law so seriously that they built fences around it: extra rules to keep them from ever coming close to breaking a command. Over time, crossing their fences became the same as breaking God's law. It became less about loving God and more about protecting themselves.

And still Nicodemus comes at night. Something is missing. He opens with a compliment: "We know that you are a teacher come from God." Jesus skips it and goes straight to the heart: "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Paul had the same kind of résumé, and he counted it all as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). Church attendance, baptism, serving, giving, knowing the Bible: these things have their place. None of them can give you a new heart.

You can be deeply religious and still desperately need to be saved.

Reflect

If Jesus sat down with you today, what would you be tempted to tell Him you've done? Write the list. Then ask: Am I trusting what Jesus has done for me, or what I've done for Jesus?

Today's action step

Say John 3:3 out loud three times today: morning, noon, and night.

Closing prayer

Jesus, I don't want to lean on my résumé. I want to lean on You. Amen.

DAY 3 · WEDNESDAY

A New Heart

JOHN 3:4–8 · EZEKIEL 36:25–27

Opening prayer

Lord, I can't make myself new. Do in me what only You can do. Amen.

Read John 3:4–8. Nicodemus is baffled. "How can a man be born when he is old?" He's thinking about biology. Jesus is thinking about a promise.

Now read Ezekiel 36:25–27. Centuries earlier God told His scattered people, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean… I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you." That is "water and the Spirit": God washing away sin and giving a new heart by His Spirit. The teacher of Israel should have recognized it.

Think of it this way. If your heart were failing and the doctor said you needed a transplant, you wouldn't answer, "What if I eat better and take vitamins?" Those are good things, but they can't do what only a new heart can. Nicodemus thought in terms of religious improvement. Jesus spoke in terms of new birth.

And like the wind, the Spirit is not under our control (v. 8). You can't produce new birth. You can only receive it from God.

You don't need a slightly improved version of your old self. You need the new life only the Holy Spirit can give.

Reflect

Where have you been trying to manage the symptoms of sin rather than bringing your heart to God? Write down one area.

Today's action step

Write one honest sentence: What have I been trusting to make me right with God instead of Jesus? Keep it. You will use it Friday.

Closing prayer

Spirit of God, take my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh. Make me new. Amen.

DAY 4 · THURSDAY

The Son of Man From Heaven

JOHN 3:9–13 · DANIEL 7:13–14

Opening prayer

Lord Jesus, You came down from heaven to show me the way. Help me receive what You say. Amen.

Read John 3:9–13. Nicodemus asks one more question: “How can these things be?” Jesus answers with a gentle rebuke: “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”

Then Jesus explains why He can speak about heaven with authority: “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.” He is the only one who has been there.

Now read Daniel 7:13–14. “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite name for Himself, and it comes from Daniel’s vision of one “like a son of man” coming with the clouds of heaven, given dominion and glory and a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Nicodemus knew that passage. Jesus is telling him: That is Me.

Nicodemus doesn’t get it all in one night. But he shows up twice more in John’s gospel: speaking up for Jesus before the council (7:50–51) and helping bury His body (19:39). The truth Jesus left with him did its work over time.

The One who came down from heaven is the only One who can tell us how to get there.

Reflect

What part of Jesus’ words to Nicodemus is hardest for you to understand or accept? Write it down and bring it to Him honestly, the way Nicodemus did.

Today’s action step

Say John 3:3 from memory today. Then think of one person you have been praying for, and ask God to keep working on their heart the way He worked on Nicodemus.

Closing prayer

Jesus, You are the Son of Man, and Your kingdom will never end. Open my eyes to who You are. Amen.

DAY 5 · FRIDAY

Look and Live

JOHN 3:14–15 · NUMBERS 21:4–9

Opening prayer

Lord, I'm done trying to save myself. Help me look to Jesus. Amen.

Read Numbers 21:4–9. Israel was in the wilderness, complaining against God and Moses, even about the manna God provided every day. God sent fiery serpents among them, and many died. The people confessed, "We have sinned," and begged Moses to pray.

God's answer was strange: "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." No medicine. No effort. Just look.

That's it? Just look? The power was never in the strength of the person looking. It was in the God who provided the remedy. Anyone who refused to look and fought the poison on their own was lost.

Now read John 3:14–15. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." Jesus would be lifted up on a cross. You cannot save yourself. But God has provided a Savior.

If God has provided the only cure for your sin, why would you keep trying to save yourself?

Reflect

What are you trusting to make you right with God: your goodness, your church attendance, your baptism, your background? Or Jesus Christ? Write your honest answer.

Today's action step

This is the heart of this week's homework. Take the sentence you wrote Wednesday, cross it out, and pray, "Jesus, I look to You." Then say John 3:3 from memory.

Closing prayer

Jesus, You were lifted up for me. I can't make myself new, but You can. I look to You. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next Sunday: Week 10 · The Love That Saves · John 3:16–21 · November 15, 2026. Memory verse this week: John 3:3.