

For the ONE - The Religious ONE

Introduction:

Arguably the most quoted bible verse in the world, John 3:16, was taught to a man named Nicodemus. He was an influential Rabbi and a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the supreme court and religious ruling body of the Jews made up of 71 rabbis. He was a Pharisee, an order of Jewish Rabbi's that practiced strict adherence to the written law and the oral traditions of their ancestors. Nicodemus was a man of great influence.

We first meet him in John 3 where he meets Jesus secretly at night to ask him questions. Then in John 7 we see that he defends Jesus before the Pharisees, arguing that he should receive a fair trial. After Jesus dies, Nicodemus in John 19 provides 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes to prepare Jesus body for burial, an extravagant amount fit for the burial of a king.

We do not know if Nicodemus was a follower of Christ, or simply sympathetic to the cause. What we do see is that Jesus broke through this Rabbi's religious rigidity with grace and truth. Jesus did not just come for the outcast, but for the religious elite as well. After all, from the cross, he looks down at the Pharisees who helped put him there and says, "Father, forgive them for what they do."

Read Your Bible

- 2 Corinthians 3:1-18
- John 3:1-21

Apply God's Word to Your Life:

1. What catches your attention from Jesus' interactions with John 3?
2. What do you believe Jesus was teaching Nicodemus? About faith? About salvation?
3. Put into your own words what 2 Corinthians means?
4. What's the difference between the Letter and the Spirit of the law? How does the letter of the law bring death? How does Spirit bring life?
5. How is your life a letter from Christ? What are people reading in you?
6. Is it possible to be religious but have no faith? Why or why not?
7. What do you think these texts teach us about faith today?

Reflecting on the text:

1. What have you learned about God?
2. What have you learned about the world?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

Pray

Lord, we praise you that you love all people. From the religious elite to the homeless on the street, your Grace covers all our lives. Where our religious traditions have blessed us and glorified you, we thank and praise you. Where our traditions have become legalistic and cause harm, we ask for our forgiveness. May we live by your Holy Spirit always. In Jesus name, Amen.