

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

EPISODE 7: ENTERING THE KINGDOM

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Main Points

Here are the big ideas you want people to understand:

- Unless we are born again, we cannot see or enter God's kingdom
- Spiritual life requires spiritual birth
- As with our physical birth, spiritual birth is something we are given – not something we achieve. Life comes from a source outside ourselves. None of us would exist if we did not have a physical father; in the same way, we must have a Spiritual Father (God) if we are to have spiritual life.
- The key to being born again is recognizing the Son who was sent; "loving the light" and "coming to the light" – this light is Jesus, the only one who was sent from heaven into the world

EXPLORING THE STORY

◀ Look Back

Before diving into this week's session, give the group a chance to share and catch up to see where each person is at. Start with the following:

1. One-up (or One-down)

Invite each person to share one thing that has happened over the past week that they are grateful for (or, they can share one thing that has been weighing on them)

2. Prayer

Have a time of prayer and thanksgiving based on what was shared

3. Review

Quickly summarize where we've been before moving into this week's story:

“ **Last time...** Jesus the Messiah began his public work for God. He traveled around performing amazing miracles, healing the sick and teaching people about God. Most importantly, he announced that the Kingdom of God had arrived and that people should repent so that they could become a part of it.

▲ Look Up

Now that you've reviewed where we've been, shift to this week's episode.

4. Setting the Stage

“ As Jesus continued his public work of teaching and healing, his popularity increased. But he also became very controversial, especially with the religious rulers who viewed him as an outsider and a threat to their power. But not all of these rulers opposed Jesus. One, a man named Nicodemus, visited him one night to learn more about his message. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that he must be born again if he was to enter the Kingdom of God.

As we read the story, be thinking about these things:

- Why did Jesus talk to Nicodemus about being born again?
- What does Jesus have in common with the story of Moses and the bronze snake? (see Numbers 21.7-9)

5. Read **John 3.1-22** and then discuss:

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- Nicodemus was a very religious man, a very “good” man. What do you think Jesus wanted him to understand? What do you think he wanted Nicodemus to do?
 - Nicodemus was familiar with the story of Moses and the serpent. Do you understand what Jesus was saying about himself in these verses? (vs. 14-15; see Numbers 21.7-9)
 - Why will men be judged (vs. 19)? Does this surprise you?

(Note: Jesus explains that we are not judged for the wrong we have done but because we “loved the darkness rather than the light” – that is, we preferred life without Jesus to life with Jesus.)

► Look Ahead

Help people process the implications of this week's reading and how they should apply its truths to the way they think and live.

6. Implications and Applications

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- No matter how good you are, you cannot give yourself life; only birth leads to life.
 - No matter how bad you are, Jesus was lifted up to save you from “the bite of sin” that leads to death. We must come to him, believing that he is the only one sent from heaven to save us.
 - Have you been born again, born spiritually?

7. Closing Prayer