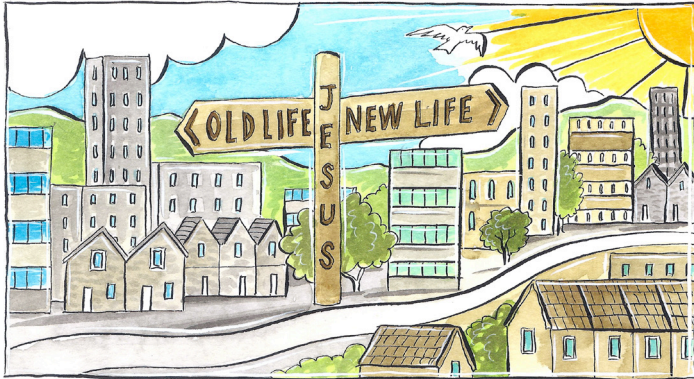


Bible reading John 3:1-17

A step into the unknown

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE WHAT IT TAKES TO TRY SOMETHING NEW

Jesus' late-night conversation with Nicodemus challenges him, and others like him in the synagogue, to be courageous enough to bring their curiosity about Jesus into the open. They will find this challenging – as will we – but the disturbance it causes will be like being born over again.



Make a basic 'life map' for yourself.

You will need: paper and coloured pens.

Draw a simple line across the paper (landscape), with peaks for the high points in your life and troughs for the low points. Don't go right across the paper, you will need that for the next step. Add words or little pictures to describe what was happening in the various peaks and troughs. Next, using a different coloured pen, continue the line as you might hope or expect your life to work out in the coming months and years. Again add notes.



Pray



Nicodemus had to take steps to find out more about Jesus. He had to go to him and to ask questions – both took courage. What might you do – in terms of action or asking questions – as a step to follow Jesus? On a piece of paper, draw round your shoe and cut the shape out. Lay it down somewhere (e.g. in a hallway) as both a prayer of commitment and reminder to do that action or explore the question. You can make more than one step!

GO OUTDOORS

Try and connect with God outdoors through creation, perhaps by doing something unusual or that you've not done before, e.g. hug a tree (if you are with other people, find the biggest tree you can and see if you can hold hands round it); lie/roll on the grass; splash in a stream; watch an insect closely. How do you feel connected to God as you do this?

Bible notes

Many believed in Jesus 'because they saw the signs that he was doing'. But he 'would not entrust himself to them', 'because he knew what was in everyone' (2:23-25). Jesus requires more than a superficial response to 'these signs that you do', and with Nicodemus' recognition that they reveal 'the presence of God' there begins a conversation suggesting that Jesus dares to entrust himself to this 'leader of the Jews'. This trust is respected since Nicodemus will have the courage to speak up for Jesus to other leaders, appealing to the law for a fair hearing (7:50-51). And he will bring costly myrrh and aloes for Jesus' burial (19:39-42). But we are not told whether the man who first came 'by night' ever openly acknowledged that 'the law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth through Jesus Christ' (1:17). Jesus acknowledges Nicodemus' high regard for Moses, the greatest ruler of his people, who descended from Mount Sinai shining with divine glory (Exodus 34:29-35).

The importance of right rule is reflected here in the references to the kingdom of God, which Jesus explains is 'from above', 'of the Spirit', 'heavenly', 'eternal', and indeed 'not from this world' (18:36). And Jesus shows his respect for Moses (who put a bronze serpent on a pole so that whoever looked at it would live; Numbers 21:9) to help Nicodemus understand that Jesus' being lifted up on the cross will bring eternal life to all who believe. Nicodemus is slow to grasp these deep distinctions between what is eternal and what perishes, and the ambiguity of language has him confusing what is 'from above' with what is merely 'again'. But he is poised to step into the unknown, leaving us with his open question, 'How can these things be?'

First impressions

- What is it like for you to try something new, challenging and a bit risky?
- Are there some new 'holy habits' you would be prepared to try?
- If so, will you need a bit of a push?



A prayer of thanksgiving

We thank you, Lord Jesus, for the faithfulness of the disciples – so ready to help, even though they didn't understand what was going on. We thank you for the joy we can have, the hope in the unknown, high expectations of your power in our lives, courage to follow your Spirit in all we do. We thank you for the unexpected experiences, for the unexpected people we will meet, walking your way. Go with us, Lord. Amen.

LISTEN



Listen to 'Up and Up' by Coldplay on *A Head Full of Dreams* ([youtube.com/watch?v=BPNTC7uZYrl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPNTC7uZYrl)). Imagine you could visit Jesus by night, like Nicodemus did. What would you ask? What do you think Jesus might challenge you to do that's new and maybe a bit scary?