

Introduction:

1. What are your own favorable and unfavorable past experiences with Lent?
2. When have you shown (or been shown) love in an unexpected way?

Understanding:

3. How would you summarize the difference between religion and relationship?
4. Tim Keller mentioned that the operating principle of the gospel is “I am accepted by God through what Christ has done – therefore I obey.” The opposite is to be obligated to obey in order to get God’s approval. When are you most likely to start falling into the trap of living your Christian life thinking “I have to do this. I am obligated...”? How can you begin to remedy that? ‘
5. In today’s passage, when Nicodemus met Jesus, despite all the religious things he did, Nicodemus had no spiritual life in him, and secretly visited Jesus at night. But now read John 7:45-52. What kind of changes do you see in Nicodemus? Was he still afraid of his peer group? How do you account for the changes?
6. One of the great promise passages for what the Holy Spirit does in us is Ezekiel 36:25-28. What is more important in these verses: what God does or what we do? What are we required to do?
7. Another great picture of the Spirit in action is Ezekiel 37:4-6. Read these verses. Can you give an example in your life where Jesus turns dryness to life?
8. Pastor Ted mentioned how, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man had to be lifted up. This meant his death on the cross. God had to intervene for them to have any hope. And God provided something to save them. Now read Acts 5:31. Keep in mind that exalted and lifted up are the same original word, and that we enjoy the benefits of Israel mentioned here. How does this verse summarize what we are experiencing during the Lenten season?
9. Read John 3:18. Does this say that believing in Jesus is merely a nice option? Is the answer to try harder to be good? If not, what is the solution?
10. Read John 3:21. How does this contrast with being good so that people will notice? What is the difference between deeds done in the sight of man and done in the sight of God?

Application:

11. Are you tired of trying to “be good”? Maybe you realize, like Nicodemus, that you’re not saved by going to church, or keeping the commandments. Instead we have to come to God as a sinner, recognizing that Jesus Christ died for us and rose again and that we must put our trust in Christ alone to save us. If you have not done this, you can pass from death to life by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have believed, reflect on what Christ achieved during this Lenten season, and be able to explain to someone who does not believe yet how they can pass from death and condemnation to life.

12. Do you believe that Christ died for your sins, but you still feel like you have to do MORE to make God love you? Remember that God already loves you more than you can ever imagine – Enough to give His Son for you – and this week check your motivation for how you serve Him. Ask yourself if I’m doing this because I HAVE to – I feel obligated – Or because I WANT to. Know that the Lord who seeks hearts can change our motivation! Pray and ask Him to do so!