October 27, 2024 - Sermon Study Guide
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Off Brand Jesus*: Both and People* - John 1:14; John 3,4

Nicodemus Visits Jesus at Night
John 3:1–8 (NLT) — 1 There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. 2 After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." 3 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." 4 "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" 5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. 7 So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman
John 4:1–15 (NLT) — 1 Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). 3 So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. 4 He had to go through Samaria on the way. 5 Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. 7 Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." 8 He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. 9 The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" 10 Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." 11 "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? 12 And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" 13 Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. 14 But those who drink the water I give

will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." 15 "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

<u>A Life Application Study Guide</u>

James 1:22-25 tells us to put into practice what we are discovering in God's word.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. When we look at how Jesus interacted with Nicodemus and the woman at the well, the contrast in His approach is striking. He understood Nicodemus' background, values, and thought process, and He knew exactly how to deliver truth in a way that Nicodemus could grasp. Similarly, with the Samaritan woman, Jesus tailored His approach to meet her where she was, offering grace before revealing deeper truths. By recognizing who they were as individuals, Jesus showed us that sharing truth effectively requires understanding and compassion. A one-size-fits-all approach not only misses the mark but also lacks the grace needed to truly reach others.
    - How did Jesus demonstrate both grace and truth in His interactions with Nicodemus and with the woman at the well? What differences stand out to you in His approach to each one?
    - In your own life, do you find it easier to offer grace or to speak truth? Why do you think you lean more toward one or the other?

2. Truth can be powerful, but how we deliver it matters. Ephesians 4:29 reminds us of that responsibility: *"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them."* In His encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus demonstrated that context shapes how truth is best communicated. Nicodemus, a religious leader, needed direct clarity on the importance of being 'born again,' while the woman at the well, burdened by her past, needed an invitation to grace before confronting deeper truths. Both received truth, but in ways uniquely suited to them. This reminds us that the way we handle truth—whether with urgency, gentleness, or patience—can make all the difference in whether it's received or rejected.
    - Jesus approached Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman differently but delivered truth to both. How do you think their unique life circumstances shaped the way Jesus approached them? How might this inform the way we approach people with different backgrounds in contrast to our own life and experiences?

    - Think of a time when you approached a situation with too much grace or too much truth. What was the outcome? How might we collectively encourage each other to find a healthier balance in such situations?

3. Jesus' interactions with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman took place against the backdrop of significant cultural and social divides. Nicodemus was a respected religious leader, while the Samaritan woman was marginalized and outcast. Despite these stark differences, Jesus reached across those barriers to offer both grace and truth. His actions challenge us to consider how cultural and social barriers—whether societal norms, prejudices, or our own biases—affect how we share grace and truth today. In a world still divided by race, class, politics, and gender how can we follow Jesus' example and break through these barriers to reflect His love to everyone, regardless of who or what they represent?

- How do you think cultural or social barriers influence the way we offer grace and truth to others, especially those who are different from us?

- What are some cultural or societal barriers today that make it challenging for you to extend both grace and truth to others? How can we overcome these barriers together?

4. One of the most profound truths Jesus modeled was seeing every person, regardless of their status or story, as someone made in the image of God. Whether it was Nicodemus, a respected leader, or the Samaritan woman, an outcast, Jesus' interactions were rooted in this foundational truth: every person has inherent value. This perspective challenges us to look beyond societal labels and personal judgments, and instead, recognize the divine imprint in everyone we encounter. How can we cultivate this mindset of seeing the *Imago Dei* in others, and how does this understanding change the way we receive both grace and truth from one another?

- Jesus approached each person as someone made in the image of God, even when society viewed them differently. How can we practice viewing others through the lens of the *Imago Dei* (image of God)?

- How does understanding that we are made in God's image help us to receive both grace and truth from one another? How can we better reflect that understanding in how we treat one another?

5. Sometimes, knowing the truth isn't the hardest part—it's acting on it. We often find ourselves saying, 'Yeah, but…' when God calls us to do something outside our comfort zone or that challenges our priorities. These excuses reflect a struggle between what we know to be right and the hesitation to fully obey. Whether it's fear, inconvenience, or doubt, we all have our 'Yeah, but' moments. Today, let's be honest about the times we've resisted God's leading, and think together about how we can encourage one another to push past those excuses and fully embrace living out both grace and truth.
    - Think of a time when you said "Yeah, but" to something God was calling you to do. How will the verse below move you to reconsider your response next time? *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.* Philippians 2:5

    - How can we support one another in overcoming our "Yeah, but" moments, and commit to fully living out both grace and truth in our lives and in the community? How will this passage encourage you and others? *I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power* ***20*** *that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 1: 19-20*

6. Jesus didn't just preach about grace and truth—He lived it out, offering the same gift to people with completely different stories and backgrounds, like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. This shows us that grace and truth are not selective; they are meant for everyone, regardless of their circumstances. As we navigate our own interactions, we're faced with the challenge of offering both grace and truth, especially to those who may seem different from us. How can we intentionally live out this balance in our relationships and communities?

So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. John 5:19

- How can we intentionally live out this balance in our relationships and communities as we see in the passage above?

- How have we been equipped to speak both grace and truth to people who may be very different from us?

- What are some specific ways we can practice balancing grace and truth in the coming week, both individually and as a CFC community? How can we hold each other accountable in this practice?

WALKING IT OUT

1. How will you commit to living both grace and truth in your daily interactions this week?

- Who is one person you need to approach with this balance?

- Share with someone in your group (or a trusted friend) an area in your life where you struggle to balance grace and truth. Ask them to help keep you accountable to do both in balance in the way that Jesus modeled for us.