

Interactive lesson



*picture from
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Logo_NIKE.svg; image
in public domain*

Do you recognize what is shown in this picture?

What is the slogan that goes along with it?

What does “Just do it” mean?

When should you follow that advice?

What kind of homework have I given you each week?

Often, I have asked you to talk with unchurched people in the community about God. Should we be doing that? Why?

Have you talked with God about what exactly you should do or how best to go about it?

How many of you have actually talked with unchurched people about your faith? How has it gone?

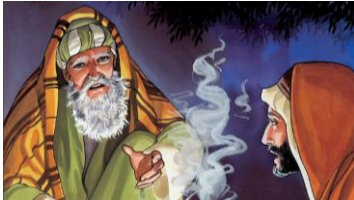
Every day, I want you to pray for God to embolden you to follow where the Spirit leads you, to speak up and to do what God would have you say and do when the time is best.

If we do not share our faith clearly with others, how are they to understand it, let alone choose to seek Christ with us?

Trust God to guide you, and just do it. You and the community will be blessed for faith in God.

Gospel lesson

We jump over to the Gospel of John today for a classic teaching from Jesus. Just prior to this story, Jesus had been teaching and performing miracles in the temple in Jerusalem during the Passover festival.



picture reversed from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-017-nicodemus/>

John 3:1-17

NRSV

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

³Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

¹¹ "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony.

¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

UMH #452

Message: Go From Your Country



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/learning-to-live-inside-out/second-sunday-in-lent-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-in-lent-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Omnipresent Majesty,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may trust Your directions without hesitation and follow wherever You lead us. Amen.

We continue our Lenten series "Learning to Live Inside Out" today with "Go From Your Country":

"This is the week that the "moving out" part of our

theme is most obvious. Whether we are talking about the call to go to a new place, like Abram in Genesis 12, or to move to a new understanding, like Nicodemus in John 3, movement is required.

Movement means change, which is always difficult and scary. So this is a week about faith and about trust and the willingness to commit to the discipleship path.”



picture from MMMS collection

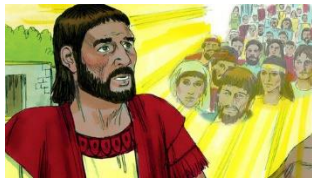
When my younger son, Jonathan, first went to college, we made sure he was settled in at the dorms and then left him to his own devices for getting to classes and general living. A few weeks later we went back to visit, picking him up for dinner. When he got into the van, we asked him how things were going.

“Good!” he replied. “You know what? You learn things at college!” We burst out laughing, teasing him about how we hoped so, we were paying for him to learn, but we knew what he really meant.

When you are first on your own, responsible for your own schedule, for getting your meals, for making sure you have the supplies you need for what you want to do, it opens your eyes to how much your parents/guardians coordinated and invested in you. Social

interactions take on a new dimension as well, because you now become the one who holds yourself accountable for how you treat others and for maintaining functional relationships outside of family life.

It is eye-opening in ways you never expected. My older son's first child is due at the beginning of April, and that will be eye-opening for him in ways parents never expect until they experience it. And yet, these new experiences enrich our lives so much!



picture from

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/abraham-canaan/>

Our faith can lead us to changes just as significant as those, if not more so. Look at Abram in the Old Testament reading today. Could he have possibly predicted how much his faith would impact the world? He went, based on the promise of blessings, and there were blessings far beyond his imagination.

It can be scary, stepping out into the unfamiliar. But we can trust in God. Faith in the Lord like the psalmist describes should be embedded in our souls; it enables us to answer when God calls and experience what we need for spiritual growth.

We learn things when we answer God's call!



picture screencaptured from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gECGNeSz6pk> and lightened

Nicodemus had it upon his heart to see Jesus, but as a temple leader it was risky for his position. He came to Jesus after dark, symbolizing that his faith in and knowledge of God was lacking. Jesus questioned him about this lack in a teacher of Israel, then proceeded to lead Nicodemus into understanding.

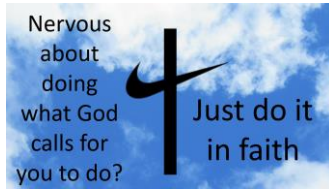
I like to think of this encounter like a seed sprouting in the dirt when stimulated by water and warmth of the Spring sun: Nicodemus reached out to Jesus and was stimulated by Jesus's words and the grace of God to grow into a new life.

Jesus came that all who believe could live eternally, reborn and growing into new life. He did not come to condemn, to put down and destroy, but to cleanse us of sin, to renew and restore us into the healthy relationships in which we were created to live. We just need to respond in faith to God's offer.

We are not the source of life; we cannot restore ourselves. Abram did not earn the blessings he received from God through any works of his own; he just trusted God and accepted the blessings God offered. Neither can we earn salvation - but Jesus offers it freely for us to live.

So how are we responding to the offer of Christ? Do we look for where we are stuck, mired in sinful habits, and pray to God for guidance and help on how

to get out of it? If God provides help from an unexpected direction, do we recognize and accept it, or just dismiss it as an odd wind blowing?



picture from personal creation

We need to respond in faith to the gifts God gives us, to step out as the Spirit call us, trusting in God to provide what we need rather than holding back in fear within our comfort zone. Your homework for this week, as I asked of you earlier, is for you: to pray for God to embolden you to follow where the Spirit leads you, to speak up and to do [what God would have you say and do] when the time is best.

Trust God to guide you, and just do it. You and the community will be blessed for your faith in God.