

John 3:14-16 Sermon-Based Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To find our contentment in God through Christ.

Icebreaker Suggestion: What is the closest to death you have come?

Transition: Death is something we all face. Sickness and disease are rightly feared and fought against. But, as Shay said in his sermon, “there is a sickness worse than cancer, and a poison that can kill our souls for all eternity.” What is this greater sickness, this greater poison in our souls and what is the remedy? As Jesus continues his conversation with the religious leader Nicodemus, he corrects Nicodemus’ religious confusion as to what really makes someone right with God.

Discussion

Read [Numbers 21:4-9](#) out loud.

1. Why were the Israelites upset? Why are their grumblings ultimately directed against God?
2. Shay said “There is an infinite discontent in our hearts which makes us unhappy with our spouses, unhappy with our jobs.” How might we struggle with ingratitude towards God, or fail to trust in his guidance in our lives, or are discontent with his provisions for us?
3. What good purpose would God have for sending the “fiery” serpents in their midst?

Deeper discussion (optional): In sending serpents, God is connecting them to the serpent in the garden letting them know whose domain they are choosing. Read [Ephesians 2:2](#) and talk about how sin connects us to Satan’s kingdom.

Read [2 Kings 18:4](#).

4. God’s merciful provision of the bronze serpent was a means of healing in Numbers. People kept the serpent and continued to try to use it for healing. Later, King Hezekiah destroyed it. What does that communicate about the bronze serpent itself?

Read [John 3:14-16](#).

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5. Jesus compares himself to the bronze serpent. Why does he compare himself to a picture of the people's sin in the book of Numbers? Read these verse to discuss why:
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
 - Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.'"
 - Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
 - Acts 26:18 "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

6. Jesus tells us that the only hope we have is to look up to the true bronze serpent in order to be healed or to believe in the Son. God's merciful provision is only made possible by believing in Christ. Remember this conversation is with a religious leader, Nicodemus. He tells Nicodemus essentially that your religious works cannot save you, only believing in me. What ways might be tempted to trust in our religious acts?

Summary Questions

7. This great poison is our discontent with God. God's great remedy is the mercy and forgiveness Jesus made possible by his death on the cross. How might this move us to find our contentment in God in whatever our area we are feeling discontent this week?

Sharing and Prayer Time

Consider having an extended time of thanksgiving by having people give thanks to God for his guidance and provisions even in the areas we are discontent. Then offer a prayer of repentance for our discontent and a prayer to renew our trust in the one who was lifted up for us.