

In a society where need seems to get mixed up with want, have you ever really thought about what you need. I mean what you really need?

Kids can be incredibly demanding when something catches their eye in a shop and they begin the process of wearing you down with the phrase, 'Mummy, Daddy, I want this'. 'Mummy Daddy, I want this'. After you reply that they are not getting it, they then begin to go harder with the line 'But Daddy I need this'. This cuddly rabbit is required so much by this child that their very life seems to depend upon it.

Our commercialised Western society has built itself on this very issue. We want it, and we can get it. And what it has unfortunately blurred is the understanding what actually need is. We think we need things when in fact we don't really.

So what is it that you need most? Is it the better job, is it the better family, is it a better house, what is it? There are many things that we don't need; but there is something we need even more than food and water- We need Jesus. In fact, is that not what every person in our society needs to understand? We might know it, but do they? A lot of the time the thing that people want more than anything else will be happiness and love, and many are still looking for it.

## 1. Check your definition of success.

Nicodemus was successful and yet he was searching. He was a Pharisee. He was a member of this special group who never had more than 6,000 members. Each had taken a vow that they would devote their entire life, every moment, to obeying the Ten Commandments. Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin. This was a group of 70 men who ran the religious affairs of the nation and who had religious authority over every Jew in the world. As verse 10 tells us, Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel. Nicodemus was at the top- Religiously, morally, politically, and socially. By all of the world's standards he was a success. Society would have considered him as needing nothing, and yet he was searching for answers.

## 2. Check your source of success.

It is interesting that Nicodemus showed up at night. Why did Nicodemus come at night? There are 2 possibilities- So that he wouldn't be noticed or so that he could find time alone with Jesus. I have always assumed that Nicodemus simply did not want his reputation to be ruined by being seen with Jesus; but I do believe he wanted to talk to Jesus alone.

## 3. Check your method of success.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again; and it completely throws him off. This doesn't sound like anything he had heard before. How could a person who had been born once go back into the womb to be born again? To be born of water speaks of a physical birth; and to be born of the Spirit is a spiritual birth.

And this folks is where many in our society get so lost. They spend their lives searching for things that are going to make their life more fulfilling, more secure, and more stress free.

But Jesus is saying that in order to have a full life, we have got to start all over again, born anew where our dependency is entirely on God. People including many with the church are putting so much effort into what they need to do to gain more in return. In a spiritual context they have misunderstood the difference between religion and regeneration. And that is where Nicodemus is getting stuck. He has spent his life focused on a series of laws and rules, and now Jesus is telling him it's actually all about relationship.

Religion says... I can achieve God's favor on my own.

Regeneration says... God's love is an undeserved gift.

Religion says...The good in my life can outweigh the sin.

Regeneration says...Jesus' death on the cross forgives my sin.

Religion says...I must give up a part of my life.

Regeneration says...I commit my entire life to Jesus.

Religion says...I must try hard.

Regeneration says...I must trust Him.

Nicodemus asks Jesus "How can this be?" And Jesus replies in verse 10 "You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things'?"

Jesus is pointing out 3 things to Nicodemus :

- 1.He didn't understand
- 2.He didn't receive
- 3.He doesn't believe

And yet this encounter is not over. We don't hear anything more about Nicodemus in Chapter 3 and yet something of his encounter with Jesus has

made an impact on him. How do we know this? Well first he's asking the questions which is a good start. And even though he doesn't understand, he doesn't yet receive and he hasn't yet believed, a seed has been sown. He realises that his need actually is not the religious practice. His need is Jesus.

The next time we encounter Nicodemus is near the end of John's Gospel. Because after Jesus' death, Nicodemus would later come and take His dead body and prepare it for burial, using "*a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.*" John 19:39-40.

Who in your life, in your family or in your work, needs to hear the story of Nicodemus. Who do you know that is searching. What each person needs more than anything else is salvation through Jesus Christ. As Christians, the most important thing to us should be to lift up Jesus, so that others will be drawn to Him and saved. We cannot save them, that is only Jesus, but we sure can point them to Jesus. Make this your objective in the week ahead.