

**Trinity Sunday, May 30, 2021 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**

**Bible Study – John 3:1-17**  
**“Born of the Spirit”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes) In pairs or groups of three, have participants share their top one or two questions they would like to ask God.

**Context John 3:1-17.** John records that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover on three different occasions during his ministry. During his first pilgrimage he purged the Temple of sellers and moneychangers (an event the other evangelists record during Holy Week) and performed other "signs" (mighty works that "pointed" to their source in God) that had attracted the attention of the crowd. One of the crowd was Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling religious body in Jerusalem. Nicodemus comes at night = "in ignorance," a point that Jesus doesn't hesitate to bring to Nicodemus' attention. More important, the conversation between the two of them provides Jesus with the opportunity to describe spiritual rebirth: being "born from above" which Nicodemus misunderstands as physically being "born again" from a mother's womb. The following discourse describes the essence of the Good News: for God so loved the world... Jesus refers in this passage to Moses and the serpent in the wilderness. This is a story found in the book of Numbers where God had sent serpents to kill those who kept murmuring against God and wanted to return to Egypt. God tells Moses to fashion a serpent of bronze and lift it up, so that those who would look upon it would be healed from their snake bites and survive. These survivors were the generation born in the wilderness, not in Egypt, that would eventually enter the Promised Land. Jesus uses the figure as a simile of how God's love and salvation will be revealed through the "lifting up" (crucifixion, resurrection, ascension) of Jesus – the source of our spiritual rebirth.

**Read John 3:1-17**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read John 3:1-17 again.**

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- Have all participants close their Bibles (and Bible apps). See if the group can recite from memory John 3:16. Once the group is close to consensus, check to see how they did with this familiar verse.

- When can something become so familiar that it loses its freshness or uniqueness? Has John 3:16 become so familiar that it has lost its audacious claim?
- Another familiar phrase from this passage is “being born again” or “born from above.” [Both are appropriate translations.] What does it mean to be “born again” or “born from above” in light of this passage?
- How does verse 17 support and expand verse 16?
- How is the word “believes” used in this passage? [Belief is more than just head knowledge; it is trusting our lives to God’s promises.]
- Which phrase in verse 16 is most astonishing?
  - “For God so loved the world”
  - “He gave his only Son”
  - “So that everyone who believes in him may not perish”
  - “But may have eternal life”
- What might it look like to live in light of John 3:16?

### **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Loving God, we confess that our gaze is often too low – focused on the earthly instead of what is being born of you from above and from within. By the power of your Holy Spirit, broaden our understanding of love and grace to see more fully how you see. Help us to love others in such a way that your love is on full display. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.