

DENY.

The Problem with Trying Harder

Psalm 121; Genesis 12:1-4a; John 3:1-17; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

GETTING STARTED

- What is the hardest thing you ever tried to do in life? What was the result?

READ and REFLECT

Read John 3:1-17.

Who was Nicodemus? What significance did he carry in his day?

John (the writer of this Gospel) often has double-layered meaning in his writing. What are possible meanings of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at *night*?

Jesus takes on the story of Israel in his life and teaching (this was core to him being the Messiah). Where do you see Jesus embodying some of Israel's story in this passage?

How would you summarize Jesus' teaching in vs. 5-7?

How would you connect Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 to John 3:1-17?

What else would you note from John 3:1-17?

ENGAGE and DISCUSS

Henry Cloud, noted Christian psychologist and author, has often said that most evangelical Christians have been taught to believe in a three-fold formula regarding their relationship to God: God is good ...You are bad...Try harder.

Have you ever bought into that formula? Explain.

What error(s) do you see in this message?

What is the difference between training your soul and trying to be a *good Christian*?

Do you think *trying harder* works at all? Explain? Why is trying so attractive to Christians in America (our context)?

Many of us come from different backgrounds. What does it mean to be *born again*? Why is being *born again* essential to being in the Kingdom of God according to Jesus?

Are there any "faith challenges" you are facing in this season of life? Has anything in these verses or discussion *shed light* into your challenge(s)?

NEXT STEPS

- Read the Lectionary passages several times this week. What are you hearing God say to you in these?
- Reflect on Jesus' words in John 3:5-8 and your relationship with him. How are you moved to respond?
- Share at least one insight you have learned or that God has impressed upon your heart this week with at least one other person.
- Check out the stories being posted each day in the Christ Church Lenten Devotional found at www.cc-ob.org .