

Rescue Story - Sept 20th - Rescued From Religion - Troy Knight

TALK IT OVER

Key Scriptures:

Ephesians 5:5 NIV
John 3:1-6 NIV
John 19:10-11a
Ezekiel 36:22-27
Titus 3:5

Start reading

Ephesians 5:5 NIV

“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

John 3:1-6 NIV

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi”, he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?” Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.”

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Can you relate to any of the people who shared their rescue story in the video on Sunday?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- Do most religions teach salvation through being a good person or faith in a person? Do most Christian churches teach salvation through being a good person or faith in Jesus? What did you grow up believing?
- If you stood before the gates of heaven and God were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” What would be your response today?
- Read John 3:1-6. What was Nicodemus purpose in coming to Jesus? What does the phrase, “you must be born again”, mean to you? Has that happened to you? Why was Nicodemus so troubled by it?

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- Answer whatever question applies to your life and upbringing:
 - If you are born again but grow up in a church that did not teach salvation, then what were some of the rituals or traditions you believed got you to Heaven if followed (attending Sunday School and church, saying specific prayers, etc.)?
 - If you are born again but grew up in a church that did teach salvation, then what are some of the things that impacted you the most?
 - If you didn’t grow up in church what were your views of church and people who went to church?
- Troy listed 3 reasons for rejecting God’s gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. How might understanding those 3 reasons influence your witnessing relationships with those who are not saved?
- Share some of the most interesting responses you have received when telling others you are born again.
- Do you hesitate to tell others about your salvation? Why?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Think of one person you know needs a relationship with Jesus. Commit to sharing your faith with this person.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, thank you that we have You in our lives and that we aren’t held down with the doing of religious things to gain your approval. Help us to live in the freedom of our salvation in you. Also help us to share what you have done in our lives with others who need to know you. In Jesus name - Amen.

Start digging. For further study.

- Read the article on the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: "How should Christians stand up for their faith in such an anti-Christian world?"

Answer: As Christians, the two things we can do to stand up for Christ are to live according to His Word and grow our own knowledge of Him. Christ said, "Let your light shine before men..." (Matthew 5:16). This means that we should live and act in a way that supports the gospel. We should also arm ourselves with knowledge, both of the gospel (Ephesians 6:10-17) and of the world around us. First Peter 3:15 says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." All we can do is live and teach as Christ would and let Him take care of the rest.

Critics of Christianity have become more vocal recently. This is partly because there are many people who do not believe in God or understand the truth about Him at all. Yet the apparent increase of anti-Christians is also due to perception. As with many topics, those who truly despise Christianity are the loudest and most vocal of the non-believers. The vast majority of those who do not believe don't care enough to bother believers. The few angry, vocal, bitter unbelievers make enough noise to seem more numerous than they are.

The typical insult from the non-religious crowd is to refer to believers as "ignorant," "stupid," "brainwashed," or to otherwise suggest that those who have faith are less intelligent than those who do not. When a Christian stands up intelligently for his faith, the terms change to "bigot," "extremist," or "zealot." When people who know that the believer is kind and loving hear this, the atheist starts to look like the fool that he or she is (Psalm 53:1). Most non-believers have no personal reason to see Christians negatively, but they sometimes hear so much from the loud anti-Christians that they just assume it is so. They need examples of Christ-like living to see the truth.

Of course, when someone claiming to be a Christian says or does something that is not Christ-like, the angry, loud crowd is there to identify him as a typical religious hypocrite. This is something we have been warned to expect (Romans 1:28-30; Matthew 5:11). The best thing to do is to cite a passage of the Bible that speaks against what the person did, and remind the atheists that just because a person says he is a Christian, and even if he thinks he is a Christian, that does not mean that he is. Matthew 7:16,20 tell us that true Christians will be known by their actions, not merely by their profession. And remind critics that absolutely no one lives without sinning at all (Romans 3:23).

An important thing to remember is that no one, no matter how persuasive, can force anyone to believe anything he doesn't want to believe. No matter what the evidence, no matter what the argument, people will believe what they want to believe (Luke 12:54-56). Conviction is not a Christian's job. The Holy Spirit convicts people (John 14:16-17), and they choose whether or not to believe. What we can do is present ourselves in a way that is as Christ-like as possible. It is sad that there are many atheists who have read the entire Bible looking for ammunition against Christians, and that there are many Christians who have hardly read the Bible at all.

It's hard for the angry crowd to accuse a Christian of being a hateful, cruel bigot when that person demonstrates a life of kindness, humility, and compassion. When a Christian can discuss, debate, or debunk secular arguments accurately, the label of "ignorant" no longer fits. A Christian who has read the secular arguments and can politely expose their flaws helps to deflate the stereotypes advanced by atheists. Knowledge is the weapon, and it is invincible when we let Christ direct us in how to use it.