

Changing Your Change

This sermon explores themes of shame and transformation through biblical stories. By looking at the Israelites in the wilderness and Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus, we learn that true change comes from a rebirth through Christ. It challenges us to see the deeper meaning of the Cross and embrace our identity as God's children.

Changing Your Change (Jonathan Stornment – June 30, 2024)

1. How does understanding the historical context of crucifixion change your perception of the cross? Follow up: In what ways do you think modern society has "romanticized" the cross, and how can we regain its true significance?
2. **Reflect on a time you felt shame.** How can viewing this experience through the lens of Jesus' suffering and redemption change your perspective?
3. **Leading Grumblers and Raising Snakes.** Why do you think the Israelites struggled to appreciate their newfound freedom despite God's continuous provision? How does this reflect our own tendencies in life today? Follow up: **Read Numbers 21:4-9.** Why do you think God used this pagan imagery to bring healing?
4. **Nic At Night. Read John 3:1-9.** Why do you think Jesus used the analogy of being "born again"? What was He communicating that was so radically different? Follow up: In addition to redefining what it means to be part of God's family, how does Jesus challenge our typical ideas about religion being based on our family, human effort and moral achievement?
5. **Read John 3:9-17.** Why do you think Jesus chooses to refer back to this strange story about the bronze serpent? What stands out to you? Follow up: In what ways was the cross just as bizarre and offensive as the bronze serpent for the Jewish people? Why would the instrument of death and Roman shame be the last place they'd look for salvation?
6. **A New Family, A New Birth.** *Jonathan pointed out that **John 3:16** would have been the most offensive part of the story to Nicodemus.* Why would the idea that "God so loved the world" be offensive to Nicodemus? Follow up: How does this idea challenge our own views about who is deserving of God's love?
7. In what ways might you need to let go of trying to "balance the scales" through your own efforts and simply receive God's grace and forgiveness? Where do you tend to try to earn your worth or identity apart from Christ? What "fig leaves" do you look to? Follow up: What practical steps can you take this week to more fully embrace the new identity and life offered to you through Christ's death on the cross?

