ADULT SMALL GROUP GUIDE

You Must Be Born Again

The Gospel of John: Why Should I Believe? · Week 09 · November 8, 2026

LEADER OVERVIEW

Big idea: Nicodemus had every religious credential Israel could offer, and Jesus told him he couldn't even see the kingdom of God unless he was born again. We can't improve our way to God; we need the new heart only the Spirit gives. And God has provided the remedy: look to the Son of Man, lifted up like the bronze serpent, and live.

Sermon outline: Jesus knows our true self (2:23–25) · Jesus goes to our main issue (3:1–3) · Jesus speaks directly to our greatest need (3:4–8) · Jesus closes with the choice before every person (3:9–15).

Scriptures used: John 2:23–3:15 · Psalm 139:1, 23 · Ezekiel 36:25–27 · Daniel 7:13–14 · Numbers 21:4–9 · John 20:31

Time: 60–75 minutes. Eleven questions are more than you need — choose what fits your group and skip freely. Questions in bold are the ones not to skip.

OPENING (10 MIN)

The goal of the opener is to get every voice in the room once before the harder questions arrive. Keep it light.

1. When you were growing up, what did people around you think made someone a "good Christian"?
2. **Pastor Jeff asked, "How different is the person sitting in church right now from the person you are when nobody else is around?" Why is it both uncomfortable and comforting that Jesus "knew what was in man" (2:25)?**

NICODEMUS (15 MIN)

Read John 3:1–3.

3. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and "the teacher of Israel." What do you imagine was stirring in him that brought him to Jesus at night?
   Leader: he had done everything his religion asked and still felt unsettled. Coming at night protected his reputation.
4. **The Pharisees built "fences" around God's law: washing to the elbows, rules against even talking about drinking. What fences do Christians build today, and how do they shift the focus from loving God to protecting ourselves?**
5. Nicodemus opened with a compliment, and Jesus went straight to "You must be born again." Why do you think He skipped past the flattery?
6. Pastor Jeff asked, "If Jesus sat down with you this morning, would you start telling Him all the religious things you've done?" Which item on your own "résumé" are you most tempted to lean on?
   Leader: church attendance, baptism, serving, giving, Bible knowledge. These have their place in the Christian life, but none of them can give a new heart.

BORN AGAIN (20 MIN)

Read John 3:4–8, then Ezekiel 36:25–27.

7. **Nicodemus heard "born again" as biology. How does Ezekiel 36 explain "born of water and the Spirit"?**
   Leader: Pastor Jeff's point is that this is not baptism. It is God's promised cleansing, a new heart, and His Spirit within. The word "again" (anōthen) can also mean "from above."
8. Pastor Jeff used the picture of a failing heart: exercise and vitamins are good, but they can't replace a transplant. Where do people try to "manage the symptoms of sin" instead of admitting they need a Savior?
9. Jesus compares the Spirit to the wind (v. 8). What does that say about who is in control of new birth? How should it shape the way we share Christ with others?
   Leader: Nicodemus doesn't get it here, but he shows up again (7:45–52; 19:38–42). Sometimes we leave people with the truth and let the Spirit work.

LOOK AND LIVE (10 MIN)

Read John 3:9–15, then Numbers 21:4–9.

10. The bitten Israelites only had to look at the bronze serpent. Why is "just look" so hard for people to accept?
11. **Pastor Jeff asked, "If God has provided the only cure for your sin, why would you keep trying to save yourself?" What are you trusting to make you right with God?**
    Leader: give people room to answer honestly. Some may realize they have never trusted Christ at all.

CLOSING (5 MIN)

Read John 3:3 together. Nicodemus knew the Law and the traditions, and none of it could give him a new heart. Only God can. And God has provided the remedy: the Son of Man lifted up for sinners.

If someone in your group realizes they have been trusting their own goodness, don't rush past it. That is exactly where Jesus was leading Nicodemus. Pray together that each person would look to Christ, not to themselves.

Then give the week's assignment: Memorize John 3:3, and write down one thing you've been trusting to make you right with God instead of Jesus. Then cross it out and pray, "Jesus, I look to You."

Memory verse: John 3:3. Next week: Week 10 · The Love That Saves · John 3:16–21 · November 15, 2026