

UNIT 21 | SESSION 3

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

JOHN 3



KEY PASSAGE: 1 John 3:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Did Jesus ever sin? No, Jesus never sinned.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Nicodemus was a religious leader, but he needed to be born again to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus shared how the Spirit causes people to be born again to new life. Anyone who believes in Jesus will be born again and receive eternal life.

STORY POINT: Jesus taught that people must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus reveals the Lord's patience and kindness toward us as we earnestly seek Him. Though Nicodemus had heard Christ's teachings, he had not yet placed faith in the true Ruler and King of the Jews. But here in this chapter, he would learn what it means to be born again.

Nicodemus was curious about Jesus and ventured to see Him under the cover of night. He called Him "Teacher" and declared that only someone who knew God could perform such miracles. Jesus knew the internal struggles of Nicodemus and spoke to his curiosity: "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus' words debunked some Jews' belief that God's salvation was their birthright as His people. Jesus likewise declared salvation for all who would place their trust in Him—Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) alike.

When Jesus answered Nicodemus' questions, He compared Himself to the bronze snake lifted up in Numbers 21. Just as the Israelites had to look to the snake while trusting in God's salvation, so, too, are we called to look to Christ's work on the cross by faith. Nicodemus no doubt recognized this Old Testament reference; however, he had no way of knowing that Jesus would soon be lifted up on the cross as a sacrifice for his own sin.

In John 3:16, the gospel is proclaimed in a single verse: "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Jesus declared God's love for all of humanity, an invitation for anyone to trust in Him by faith. God didn't send His Son to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:17)!

Pray that the words of John 3:16 will take on fresh meaning in the lives and hearts of the boys and girls who learn from you. May they realize that salvation is possible by faith alone and that they, too, may be born again into the kingdom of God!



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "How Do You Grow?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- flashlight
- Objects that represent where people may go to find truth (magazine, picture of a TV, a smartphone, Bible, etc.)

Session Starter (Option 2)

- straws
- craft pom poms



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Jesus and Nicodemus" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- simple costumes and props (optional)

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 21, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- "Sharing Jesus" video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "No Sin in Him (1 John 3:5)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- "For God So Loved the World" printable, 1 per kid

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- bean bags

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Who do you usually go to when you need to ask a question? Why do you choose this person?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “How Do You Grow?” on the activity page.

SAY “In today’s story, we will see how **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD**. I am looking forward to sharing this story with you.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: FLASHLIGHT SEEK AND FIND

Before this activity, place objects around the room. Invite kids to sit in the center of the room and then dim the lights. (Be sure to keep within your church’s risk management policy.) Use a flashlight to direct kids’ attention to the different objects spread out around the room. When you shine the light on an object, challenge kids to shout out what object they see. Then, discuss how people might use that thing to try to find truth. For example, when you shine the light on a phone, you could discuss how some people try to find truth on the internet or by asking friends or family members. Continue until you have discussed all the objects around the room.

SAY “Today we will learn about a man who came to seek the truth and found it in Jesus because He is the light of the world. **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD**.”

OPTION 2: WIND OF THE SPIRIT RELAY



Gather kids around a long rectangular table. Ask for two kids to volunteer to go first. Direct the volunteers to line up on one end of the table and give them each a craft pom pom and a straw. Challenge them to use their straws to blow their pom pom across the table. The kid who gets their pom pom across the table first wins that round. Continue playing until each kid has had a turn. Then, allow the winners of each round to compete against each other until there is one ultimate winner.

SAY “You used your breath to get the pom pom across the table. Today we will see how Jesus compares the work of the Holy Spirit to the wind that blows. You can’t see the wind, but you can see what it does and the effect it has on what’s around it.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Welcome, kids! I am so glad you are here! My name is [your name], and I am excited to study the Bible with you today. If you have your Bible with you, will you take it out? [Distribute Bibles to kids who do not have one.] Today, we will learn about a man named Nicodemus who went to Jesus because he knew Jesus had been sent by God. During Nicodemus’ conversation with Jesus, **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** We will talk more about this important truth as we study today’s story. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ Each time we study God’s Word together, we like to think through a big picture question and answer that helps us focus on an important truth. Does anyone remember our big picture question? [Allow responses.] Our big picture question is: **Did Jesus ever sin?** What is the answer to this question? [Allow responses.] **No, Jesus never sinned.**

Because Jesus never sinned, He is the only one able to pay for the sins of the world. Today we will see that **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** Anyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior will be born again and receive eternal life. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ As Jesus’ earthly ministry continued, He revealed His glory by changing the water into wine. This miracle showed the disciples and the people that He is God. Last week, we learned that Jesus knew the people’s sin and cleaned out the temple. Today, we will see how **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to John 3. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus and Nicodemus.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

“One night, a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus came to Jesus. Nicodemus said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, because no one could perform the miracles you do unless God were with him.”

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth: unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus was confused. He asked, “How can anyone be born when he is old? He cannot go back in time and be a baby again.”

Jesus answered: “I tell you the truth: unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t be amazed that I told you that you must be born again.” Like the wind blows where it chooses to blow but you don’t know where it came from or where it’s going, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus still didn’t understand. “How can this be possible?” he asked.

Jesus replied, “I can’t believe that you are a teacher of Israel and don’t know these things! I’m telling you the truth. You can trust me because I am the Son of Man who has descended from heaven.

Then Jesus reminded Nicodemus of a story from the Old Testament. Jesus said, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” Jesus was talking about the future when He would be lifted up on a cross, and everyone who trusts in Him would be saved from their sins.

Jesus continued, “God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him would not die but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to punish the world, but to save the world. Anyone who believes in him will not be condemned. But everyone who does not believe in the Son of God will be punished for their sin.”

Christ Connection: Nicodemus was a religious leader, but he needed to be born again to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus shared how the Spirit causes people to be born again to new life. Anyone who believes in Jesus will be born again and receive eternal life. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Act it out: Invite kid volunteers to act out the story as you tell it. Assign one volunteer to play the part of Jesus and another the part of Nicodemus. You can even provide simple costumes and props for the kids to use.

Listen Close: Challenge kids to listen carefully for the word *born* as you tell the story. Each time they hear that word, encourage them to raise their hands.



2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Nicodemus was a religious leader, but after hearing about Jesus and the things He had done, Nicodemus had some questions, so he went to see Jesus at night. How did Nicodemus know Jesus had come from God? [Allow responses.] He said that no one could perform the signs and miracles Jesus did unless God was with him. Then, Jesus explained how to enter the kingdom of God. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus about entering the kingdom of God? [Allow responses.] **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** This puzzled Nicodemus because he did not understand what being born again meant. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit causes people to be born again and have a new life with God.

Jesus told Nicodemus that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus, so that anyone who trusts in Him will have new life forever with Him. Nicodemus had to decide if he believed that what Jesus said was true. Was Jesus really the Son of God, the promised Messiah? Is being born again really the way to enter the kingdom of God? We must make this same decision. Will we trust Jesus as our Savior or not?

Nicodemus was a religious leader, but he needed to be born again to new life. Anyone who believes in Jesus will be born again and receive eternal life. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? If you haven’t or you have more questions about what it looks like to follow Jesus, I would like to share more with you! ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 21, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How did Pastor Kevin become a Christian?
2. What would you tell someone about how to become a Christian?

**5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)**

SAY “In a video we’re about to watch, Gary Warrior will ask to sit in a booth with his friends in a restaurant in Central Asia. Watch and listen to the video to see what the men will do.”

Show the “Sharing Jesus” missions video.

Ask the kids what they saw the men doing at the restaurant. Mention that the meetings in the restaurant are important to the men who are learning more about Jesus, but they are also important to Gary. He has lived in Central Asia for more than 20 years. He spends most of his time supervising missionary teams and teaching other missionaries what he has learned about mission work in Central Asia. Gary says that he wants to stay active telling people about Jesus, even as he leads his mission teams to do missions work.

Sometimes the men sit in the private booth for a couple of hours. The men ask Gary to tell them more Bible stories. Gary and his wife, Ann, have seen God do great things in Central Asia.

Pray, thanking God for the work of the missions teams in Central Asia. Pray for Gary and Ann as they lead the missions teams. Pray that God will continue to work in the hearts of people living in Central Asia.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 John 3:5 together.

Form kids into small groups. Challenge them to work together to create hand motions for words or phrases in the key passage. For example, for the phrase *You know*, kids could point out for the word *you* and point to their heads for the word *know*. Once kids have created their motions, invite each group to come to the front and demonstrate them in front of the group while saying the key passage.

SAY “Great job! It is so important to memorize God’s Word and have it in our hearts and minds as we live for Him!”

Lead kids to sing “No Sin in Him (1 John 3:5).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “Thank You, God, for making the way for us to enter Your kingdom through Your Son, Jesus, and for the new life You offer. Help us share this good news with others. Amen.”





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to John 3. Explain that the story of Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus is only recorded in the book of John. John records many stories of Jesus interacting with and teaching individual people.

Consider pointing out the location of Jerusalem (H5) on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 3:5 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY “ Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, a Pharisee, and an important religious man. But when he saw all that Jesus had done, he had to go to Him. **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Move this sentence up to the previous paragraph. Nicodemus was a religious man who was well-respected among the Jews, but this was not enough for him to enter the kingdom of God and have eternal life with Him. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation or our place in the kingdom of God. We are only saved by trusting Jesus as our Savior, being born again into a new life through the work of the Holy Spirit. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ How does Jesus' death on the cross show us God's love? ”

God loved us so much that He created a plan to rescue us from our sins by sending Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He took the punishment our sin deserves so that we can be forgiven and have eternal life with God.

| **SAY** “ Why is the gospel good news to sinners? ”

The Bible tells us that everyone has sinned, so we all have a sin problem. The good news of the gospel is that when we trust in Jesus, He saves us by taking the punishment for our sins and fixing our broken relationship with God.

| **SAY** “ Who can enter the kingdom of God? ”

Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. When we trust Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit works in our lives, changing us to be more like Jesus and giving us a new life in Him. There is nothing we can do to earn our way into the kingdom. Only God can give us new life through Jesus.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD ...

Invite kids to sit around tables and distribute one “For God So Loved the World” printable to each kid. Read John 3:16 aloud then encourage kids to write the passage in the open space of the heart. Lead them to use colored pencils, crayons, or markers to color the printable. Next, challenge kids to use their scissors to carefully cut out the world, hands, and heart. Assist kids who need help with scissors. Then, direct them to glue or tape the hands to either side of the world and the heart in the center of the world. Remind kids how **JESUS TAUGHT THAT PEOPLE MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

SAY “ God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus to save us from our sins. Through Him, we can be born again and have new and eternal life. ”

OPTION 2: BIBLE BEAN BAG TOSS

Prior to the session, write the books of the Old Testament on individual papers and spread them out on the floor. Direct kids to line up one behind the other. Hand a bean bag to the first kid in line and challenge her to toss the bean bag to the paper with the name of the first book of the Bible written on it (Genesis) and then go to the back of the line. Assist kids who need extra help reading the names of the books of the Bible. Then, challenge the next kid to toss a bean bag to the second book of the Bible. Continue until you have worked your way through all the Old Testament books. Repeat with the New Testament books. Tip: For easier prep and a simpler challenge, consider making papers for just the first 10 books of the Old and New Testaments.

SAY “ Great job! It is important to learn the names of the books of the Bible so that you can understand how the Bible is organized and study it for yourself. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.