

Nicodemus Talks to Jesus

(John 3:1-20)

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, ask each student to tell you their birth date. Record names and dates for each student. Tell students that these dates are very important because they signify when they entered into this world. It is their “earthly birthday.”]

Today in class you will learn about a second birthday, one even more important than the first. It is God’s desire that everyone have a “spiritual birthday.”

Opening Prayer

Father, this morning if there are any children here that do not know You on a personal basis, who have not trusted You for your gift of forgiveness of sins and for their personal salvation, then I pray that this morning might be the day that they put their trust in You and become “born again.” In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)

Lesson

Alternative Lesson Presentation

Invite a “mystery guest” dressed as Nicodemus into your classroom and talk to the students as though sharing secret information. Have “Nicodemus” tell the students about his night encounter with Jesus. Include an explanation of who Nicodemus is (a Pharisee) and why he had to meet with Jesus secretly, the questions that Nicodemus asked Jesus and Jesus’ reply to him, an explanation of the term “born again” and a clear explanation of the plan of salvation.

Traditional Lesson Presentation

Shhh.... It was a dark and quiet night. A man walked quickly down the shadowy streets of Jerusalem. Who was the man? Where was he going? It all happened like this...

John 3:1-2

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. (2) 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.”

Nicodemus was an important man. He was a Pharisee, a well-respected religious leader of the Jews. Nicodemus had heard much about Jesus. He wanted to find out more about His teachings. But, Nicodemus was not very brave about going to see Him. The Jewish leaders were watching Jesus; Nicodemus was afraid to be seen talking to Him. So he came to visit Jesus at night.

Nicodemus told Jesus, “Your miracles show that You are a teacher sent from God.” (vr. 2) He knew that no one could do such miracles unless he was a man of God. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know about His kingdom of love.

John 3:3

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus had never heard about being “born again.” Do any of you know what that means? [Teacher, let the children respond.]

Nicodemus had a hard time understanding that it isn’t enough just to know about God – that he had to begin a new life by being “born again.”

John 3:4

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”

Did you know that you must be born again to have your sins forgiven?

Nicodemus still didn’t get it.

John 3:5-7

Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. (6) Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. (7) So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'

When we are born as babies into our human family, we are born with a sinful nature. Sin is anything you and I think, say, or do that does not please God. The Bible says, "No one is righteous—not even one." (Romans 3:10 NLT). God says we must be punished for our sin. That punishment is to be separated from Him forever in Hell after we die.

To be "born again" means to be born spiritually. This is a work that only the Holy Spirit can do in our lives. God alone is able to make you and me new on the inside when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus. When that happens, we come alive spiritually and we know we will be in heaven with Him someday.

John 3:9

"How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.

Jesus scolded Nicodemus for not understanding...

John 3:10

Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things?"

Nicodemus was a leader of the Jewish religion; he should have known that God can change someone's heart.

Jesus told Nicodemus why God had sent Him to earth.

John 3:16

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

God is a holy God – 100 % pure. He cannot allow anything that is unholy into His presence; He hates sin. But God loves His creation. God loves each person in the whole world. He loved Nicodemus and He loves you, too. God's love is so great, He sent the Lord Jesus to be punished for sin. He wants you to believe in, that is, trust in what Jesus did so that you will not die in your sins and be separated forever from God.

Anybody, anywhere may enter the Kingdom of God. How? By believing in Jesus.

John 3:17

God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

God hates evil, but He loves people. That is why we need Jesus. God doesn't want anyone to go to Hell. He wants everyone to come to the saving knowledge of what Jesus did for them on the cross. People send themselves to Hell by refusing to believe in Jesus.

John 3:18

"There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son.

Those people who have not trusted in what Jesus did for them on the cross will be punished for their sin. You must be born again and have your sins forgiven so that you can see the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is perfect. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve. When we trust Jesus (that is, believe that He is God and ask Him to come into our lives) we are "born again" into God's family.

What about you? Are you born again? Do you want to be? Bow your heads and repeat after me,

“Lord Jesus, I have disobeyed Your commands. I know I deserve to be punished. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. Today I want to believe in You as my Savior and be born into Your forever family and called a child of God.”

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for making me a new person. Thank You for saving me from the punishment of sin and for allowing me to be part of Your family. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

Learning Activities

Activity Ideas

Testimonies

Invite one or more people to come into your class and share their salvation experiences with the students. Be sure to have them share the steps involved in becoming a Christian.

Birthday Party

Decorate the room with balloons and streamers. Give each student a cupcake with a candle on it. Sing “Happy Birthday”. Explain that it is God’s desire that each of us have a “spiritual” birthday.

Craft Corner

Salvation Bracelets

This is a good conversation starter to tell their friends about salvation. Encourage the students to practice sharing the bead story with a friend.

For each student you will need:

- 1 piece of leather string
 - 5 beads, one each of yellow, black, red, white, and green
1. String the beads on the leather string in order given. Tie a knot at each end of the beads to keep them together and centered. Tie the bracelets onto the student’s wrists.
 2. Guide them to discuss the meaning of each color.
 - Yellow (or gold)—Heaven is a wonderful place.
 - Black—Sin, my heart is sinful. I can't get to heaven with sin in my heart.
 - Red—Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood for me. He took the punishment for my sin.
 - White—Now my heart is clean, I am forgiven!
 - Green—I am growing in my walk with the Lord.

As they work on the craft, invite them to share the story of their own spiritual birthdays, explaining when and where they came to know Jesus as their Savior. Let them practice sharing the bead story.

Game Center***Bean Bag Toss***

Cut a triangle, square, and a circle in the bottom of a cardboard box. Make the openings big enough for a beanbag. Decorate the box and label the shapes "Who," "What," and "Where."

When a child throws a beanbag through a shape he may select a card of the corresponding shape with a question to answer for points for his team.

Who Questions

1. Who was the man who came to Jesus by night? (John 3:1 – Nicodemus)
2. Who did Nicodemus come to see by night? (John 3:2 – Jesus)
3. Who will be able to see the kingdom of God? (John 3:3 – Those who are born again.)
4. Who loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son? (John 3:16 – God)
5. Who gets eternal life? (John 3:16 – Whoever believes in Jesus)
6. Who stands judged before God? (John 3:18 – Whoever does not believe in Jesus)

What Questions

1. What was Nicodemus' job? (John 3:1 – He was a Jewish religious leader)
2. What did Nicodemus say to Jesus when he first came to Him by night? And why? (John 3:2 – He said, "Rabbi, we all know that God has sent you to teach us" because of the miracles you do.)

3. What did Nicodemus come to Jesus by night for? And why? (He wanted to examine Jesus for himself. He came at night because he was afraid of persecution from the Jews.)
4. What did Jesus say you have to do before you can see the kingdom of God? (John 3:3 – Be born again.)
5. What does it mean to be "born again"? (When you trust that Jesus took the penalty for your sins and made it possible for you to go to heaven, you become a new person – born of the Spirit!)
6. What two things do you have to be "born of" before you can enter the kingdom of God? (John 3:5 – Water and the Spirit.)
7. What does it mean to be born of water? (Physical birth)
8. What do humans produce? (John 3:6 – Human life)
9. What does the Spirit produce? (John 3:6 – Spiritual life)
10. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? (To receive the new life given by the Holy Spirit.)
11. What did God send His Son into the world to do? (John 3:17 – To save the world)

Where Questions

1. Where did Nicodemus think Jesus came from? And why? (John 3:2 – He thought Jesus came from God because of the miracles he had done.)
2. Where do you get to go if you become born again? (John 3:3 – the Kingdom of God)
3. Where was Nicodemus a teacher? (John 3:10 – Of the Jews in Israel)

4. Where did God send His son? And why? (John 3:17 – Into this world to save the world)
5. Where does someone who does not believe in Jesus go after they die? (John 3:18 – Hell. They are condemned.)

Or, use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. What did Jesus talk about one night with a man named Nicodemus? (They talked about how to go to heaven – being born again).
2. Why did Jesus tell Nicodemus that he could not go to heaven and see the kingdom of God? (John 3:3 – because he had not been “born again.”)
3. What does it mean to be “born again”? (Being “born again” means to begin a new life with God as my “boss.” We are born again when we believe that Jesus died to forgive our sins.)
4. How did Jesus know so much about heavenly things? (John 3:12-13 – He came from heaven)
5. To whom does God give eternal life? (God gives eternal life to everyone who is “born again” – to all who believe that Jesus died to forgive their sins.)
6. Recite the memory verse. (John 3:16 or Romans 10:9)
7. Why is it important for us to tell other people about the way to eternal life? (Possible answer: Because if no one tells them, they might never find out.)
8. Was Nicodemus a sinner? (Nicodemus was a good, honest man, but he was a sinner like everyone else.)
9. What is the difference between your physical birthday and your spiritual birthday? (Possible answers: your physical birthday

comes before your spiritual birthday; your physical birth comes from your mother; your spiritual comes from your Heavenly Father; etc.)

10. How does God save us? (We are saved when we believe that Jesus died to forgive our sins.)
11. How does it feel to know that God loves you enough to die for you?

Two Birthdays

Read John 3:1-21

How is your spiritual birthday different from your physical birthday?

Physical Birthday

first birth

born of water
(3:5)

born to a family

takes place in your
mother's body

my physical
brothers and sisters

my physical birthday

Spiritual Birthday

_____ birth

born of the _____
(3:5)

born to _____

takes place in your

_____ my spiritual
brothers and sisters

_____ my spiritual birthday

