

LESSON 9

Nicodemus

JOHN 3:1-21



BIBLE TRUTH

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read John 3:1–21 from the Scriptures or read story 87, “Nicodemus,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Nicodemus

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ flat bed sheet for a Nicodemus costume
- ✓ a rope for a belt
- ✓ three-by-five cards with John 3:1–21 written out to use as cue cards in retelling the story

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Jesus Is Not a Flashlight

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ flashlight

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 9—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Memorize John 3:16–17

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ prizes for the winners
- ✓ something for those who attempt but do not succeed

TOTAL 85 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God—Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to Jesus at night under cover of darkness to learn more about him. Nicodemus began by saying that he believed Jesus had been sent by God. Jesus replied to Nicodemus with a riddle-like statement: “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The Jews believed one had to obey the Law to enter the kingdom of heaven. But by teaching that one had to be “born again” or “born from above,” Jesus was saying that one cannot get to heaven by doing good works. Nicodemus replied with incredulity touching on sarcasm, “How can a man be born when he is old?” Jesus repeated his statement and assured Nicodemus that it was by God’s work—by the Holy Spirit’s work—and not one’s own work that a person enters the kingdom of heaven. Nicodemus likely left that night a bit confused, but in the end there is evidence that he believed. While here in this passage Nicodemus came at night so that the other Pharisees would not see him, after Jesus’ death on the cross he came boldly with Joseph of Arimathea to claim Jesus’ body (John 19:39). It seems that the Spirit fell upon Nicodemus and he was “born again.”

Apart from Christ, man stands condemned—John 3:18 tells us that we all stand before God as condemned sinners. Sometimes people will say, “I can’t believe a loving God would send men to hell.” They wrongly think that people are inherently good. In reality, we are all sinners, rebels against God. Our status as sinners condemns us and our breaking of the Law confirms that we live as God’s enemies and are condemned already.

Wickedness hates the light—John tells us that “light has come into the world” (John 3:19), and that people hate the light because their evil deeds are exposed by the light. Not only are we sinners who stand condemned, we are incapable of seeing the light of God unless we are born again. In our sin we hate the light. Like someone who has been trapped in a dark cave can’t stand the brightness of his rescuer’s flashlight, neither can sin stand the light of God’s truth. We reject God, until by his Spirit he transforms us. Later in John 8:12 we read that Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

The third chapter of John introduces the idea of the new birth: being born again. Like our first birth, this new birth is not something we can do for ourselves; it is something that God does. When the Holy Spirit makes us alive or born again, we are given a new heart, and our eyes are opened to believe the truth of the gospel, that Jesus Christ was "lifted up" (John 3:14) on the cross so that all who look upon him for their salvation will be saved.

Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:8-9) was a picture of how God planned to save his people from their sin. Bitten by the snakes, the Israelites could do nothing to save themselves. But, because of the grace and mercy of God, if they looked to the serpent on the pole, God healed them. Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel yet he failed to see that our salvation is by the mercy and grace of God, not by our own works. Perhaps it was when he saw Jesus "lifted up" on the cross that he finally understood and believed.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read John 3:1-21 from the Scriptures or read story 87, "Nicodemus," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Nicodemus

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ flat sheet for a Nicodemus costume

- ✓ a rope for a belt
- ✓ three-by-five cards with John 3:1–21 written out to use as cue cards in retelling the story

Have a helper receive the children and get them started while you dress up as Nicodemus. Once class begins, enter the classroom pretending to be Nicodemus. The first thing you should do is urge the teacher to turn off the light so that the other Pharisees don't see you. Then begin retelling the class about your encounter with Jesus. End the time by telling the class the riddle Jesus gave you: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Tell the class that you have to go but perhaps they could help you figure out the riddle first. Tell the class to discuss the riddle with their rabbi. Then leave and say goodbye.

While you change out of your costume, your helper can explain that the word "rabbi" means teacher in Hebrew and that when the teacher comes back into the room you can discuss the riddle. Use the "Where Is the Gospel?" section to help explain the riddle once you return to class.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESON 2 10 MIN

Jesus Is Not a Flashlight

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ flashlight

This is a silly skit that you can ad-lib with another teacher. One teacher comes into the room with a flashlight on, aimed at his head. (Turn the room lights off to help it show more brightly.)

The second teacher asks the first what he is doing. He answers, "Walking in the light." He goes on to explain that he was reading about coming into the light in today's Bible passage and decided he had better make sure they were walking in the light.

Ask the class to help the teacher by discussing the following questions:

- Can anyone help explain what God means by walking in the light?
(See 1 John 1:5–9.)

- What do we need to do to walk in the light?
(Trust Jesus and confess our sins so they do not remain hidden in the darkness.)
- When we hide our sins and don't confess them, can God still see them?
(Yes, God can still see them. God is all-knowing.)

Have the teacher thank them but then look confused again and ask, "So what is the light anyway?" Answer by saying, "Not *what* but *who*. You should be asking 'who is the light?'" Then go on to explain that Jesus is the light.

The first teacher should start laughing and end the skit by saying, "How foolish. I thought Jesus was a flashlight."

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 9—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- Who is Jesus standing with in the picture?
(Nicodemus)
- What did Jesus tell Nicodemus?
(Read John 3:16–18 again to the children. Keep helping them until they are able to share the main parts of the verses.)
- Why did Jesus need to come into the world to save us?
(Jesus came into the world because of our sin. All men would have had to be punished by death and separated from God forever. God sent his Son to rescue rebellious sinners.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Memorize John 3:16–17

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ prizes for the winners
- ✓ something for those who attempt but do not succeed

Most people have John 3:16 memorized but fewer people have verse 17 memorized. Divide the class in half and give them ten minutes to work on memorizing it. If you make it a competition between one half of the class and the other, you are likely to get them working on it more seriously, especially when you tell them the winning team gets a prize.

Bring the class back together and ask several representatives from each team to recite both verses.

LESSON 9 - NICODEMUS

