

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

1st Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 4

Jesus and Nicodemus

Jesus and Nicodemus

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The “Main passage” is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the “reward box” found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God’s Word

Objective This lesson will use the story of Jesus and Nicodemus to show what it means to be born again and why we need to be born again.

Key Verses

John 3:1-21—Main Teaching Passage

Numbers 21:4-9

John 7:45-52

John 19:39

Memory Verse - John 3:16

“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.”

Hook

Review last week’s memory verse, Hebrews 4:15.

Ask the students if any of them have lost teeth. Have any of them lost multiple teeth? Ask how many have been to the zoo. Have any been multiple times? Then ask if anyone in the class has been born more than once.

Some things in life can happen many times, but others only happen once. Today, Jesus tells us something surprising. Jesus says that we actually can be born again. Today we will find out what that means.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

One night, Jesus was approached by a Pharisee named Nicodemus (remind the students that Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders). While many of the other Pharisees did not like Jesus, Nicodemus was fascinated by Him. He went to Jesus at night and told Him that only a teacher from God's kingdom could be doing what Jesus was doing. Jesus responded by telling Nicodemus that only those who are born again can see God's kingdom. Nicodemus was confused, thinking that he needed to crawl back into his mother's womb. Jesus explained that this is a spiritual rebirth. Jesus came down from heaven to tell us about the kingdom of God and how to get there. We are supposed to respond with belief and trust in Him. Jesus used an Old Testament story as an illustration. In Numbers 21:4-9, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, snakes came and bit the people, causing many to die. God commanded the Israelites to construct a bronze serpent on a pole. Whenever the Israelites were bitten, they were told to look at this serpent and they would survive. The same way, Jesus came to earth as the cure for our disease, sin. Whoever turns to Jesus in belief does not have to face the punishment of their sin, death, but receive eternal life. He ends by saying that He entered this world like light into darkness. Some people chose light and came to Him, but others loved darkness and rejected Him. Later in John we find out how Nicodemus responded.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

Some of Jesus' teachings were very straightforward. Everyone understood (though not everyone obeyed or understood why) what Jesus meant when He said to love your enemies. However, often Jesus' teachings were difficult. Today is one such example.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, he was naturally confused, as any of us would have been. Surely birth is something that can only take place once, right? However, the birth Jesus was talking about was not physical birth, but spiritual. Being born again means turning to Jesus in faith and trusting Him and Him alone to save you. When someone is born again, they recognize Jesus as the only cure for their sin problem, which leads to death.

Jesus' Old Testament illustration helps us to understand what this new birth looks like. The poison snakes were causing death to spread all throughout the Israelite camp. The only chance the people had of a cure

LOOK (Continued)

was to look at the bronze serpent and be healed. It was just that simple, but in order to do that, the Israelites had to realize that they could not save themselves. They needed the bronze serpent. They also had to have faith in the bronze serpent (which was really faith in God). It may have been hard to believe that this method could heal them, so the Israelites needed to trust God's promise. To be born again, we need to realize that we have a problem (sin) and can do nothing to heal ourselves. We need to believe that Christ can heal and forgive us and trust Him to do that. When we exercise that kind of faith, we are born again, saved from our sins and receive everlasting life.

So what happened to Nicodemus? The passage ends without saying what he thought of this teaching, but this is not the last we hear from him. In John 7:45-52, we discover that as the Pharisees were arguing about Jesus, Nicodemus urged the others that Jesus deserved a fair trial. In John 19:39 at Jesus' burial, we find out that Nicodemus anointed Jesus' body with an incredible amount of myrrh and aloes. It appears that Nicodemus allowed these words Jesus spoke to him to penetrate his heart. While there is no way to know for sure, it seems like Nicodemus was born again.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life.

TOOK

As a class, memorize John 3:16.

Offer the students a chance to be born again. Explain the Gospel and review the lesson to show the students what it means to be born again.

Pray: Thank Jesus for coming into the world so we could be born again. Pray that every student and their family would be born again.

Parent Question: What does it mean to be born again?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on John 3:1-21 by David Guzik

The New Birth

A. Nicodemus and the new birth.

1. ([Jhn 3:1-3](#)) Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

a. **Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:** Nicodemus was one of those impressed by Jesus' signs ([John 2:23](#)), and a member of the ruling Sanhedrin. He was religious (**of the Pharisees**), educated (**Nicodemus** is a Greek name), and influential (**a ruler**). Nicodemus comes to Jesus as a representative of *all men* ([John 2:23-25](#)), and he represents what is high and best in men.

b. **This man came to Jesus by night:** Why did Nicodemus come **by night**? Perhaps he was timid, or perhaps he wanted an uninterrupted interview with Jesus.

c. **No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him:** Is this statement of Nicodemus true? Can someone *not* from God do miraculous signs? The answer is "Yes," according to [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) and [Revelation 13:13-14](#).

d. **Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:** Jesus' reply to Nicodemus shatters the Jewish assumption that their racial identity - their old birth - assured them a place in God's Kingdom. Jesus makes it plain that a man's first birth does not assure him of the kingdom - only being **born again** gives this assurance.

i. It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. In fact, some Rabbis taught that Abraham stood watch at the gate of hell, just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally wandered in there.

ii. Most Jews of that time looked for the Messiah to bring in a *new world*, in which the Jews would be preeminent. But Jesus came to bring *new life*, in which *He* would be preeminent.

e. **Born again:** The ancient Greek word translated **again** (*anōthen*) can be also translated "from above." This is the sense in which John used this word in [John 3:31](#) and in [John 19:11](#) and [19:23](#). Either way, the meaning is essentially the same. To be born *from above* is to be born again.

2. ([Jhn 3:4](#)) Nicodemus answers: How can this be?

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

a. **How can a man be born when he is old?** Nicodemus' reply may not be out of ignorance, but from thinking that Jesus means "turning over a new leaf." His question may be "How can you teach an old dog new tricks?" One way or another, Nicodemus clearly does not understand Jesus or the truth about the new birth.

b. In His description of new birth, Jesus recalls a familiar theme from Old Testament promises of the New Covenant ([Deuteronomy 30:1-6](#), [Jeremiah 23:1-8](#), [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#), [Jeremiah 32:37-41](#), [Ezekiel 11:16-20](#), [Ezekiel 36:16-28](#), [Ezekiel 37:11-14](#), [37:21-28](#)). These passages essentially make three promises in the New Covenant:

- The regathering of Israel.
- The cleansing and spiritual transformation of God's people.
- The reign of the Messiah over Israel and the whole world.

c. In Jesus' day, the common teaching among the Jewish people was that the first two aspects of the New Covenant had been fulfilled. They saw Israel regathered - at least in part - after the Babylonian exile. They saw strong spiritual movements like the Pharisees, which they believed fulfilled the promise of spiritual transformation. All they waited for was the reign of the Messiah.

i. That's why Jesus' statement about the new birth was so strange to Nicodemus. He *thought* that the Jewish people already had it; they certainly weren't looking for it. They only looked for a triumphant Messiah.

3. ([John 3:5-8](#)) Jesus explains the new birth.

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

a. **Most assuredly ... you must be born again:** Jesus is emphatic in saying that man does not need *reformation*, but a radical conversion by the Spirit of God. We must be **born of water and the Spirit**.

b. What does it mean to be **born of water**? We know from [John 3:10](#) that whatever being **born of water** is, it should have been familiar to Nicodemus from the Old Testament.

i. Some have thought **born of water** means to be baptized. Water here may represent baptism, but there is no real Old Testament foundation for this.

ii. Some have thought that **born of water** refers to our physical birth, since we come forth from a sack of water. This approach is more attractive, but doesn't it simply state the obvious? However, it does make a good parallel with the idea of *that which is born of the flesh* in [John 3:6](#).

iii. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be born again by the Word of God. In other passages of Scripture, water represents the Word, as we are *washed by the water of the word* ([Ephesians 5:26](#)).

iv. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the *living water* of [John 7:38-39](#).

v. Some have thought that **born of water** means to receive the water of cleansing prophesied in [Ezekiel 36:25-28](#) as part of the New Covenant. This is the approach that has the most weight (though it is a tough call), because of its firm connections to Old Testament prophecy - which Jesus says Nicodemus should have known to under-

stand these things.

c. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh:** Without the new birth of the Spirit, all works of righteousness are tainted by the flesh. Yet, everything that a Spirit-led man does can be pleasing to God.

d. **Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again":** Again, Nicodemus *did* marvel at this statement, because he - like most all Jews of his time - believed they *already had* the inner transformation promised in the New Covenant. Jesus wants him to take hold of the fact that *he does not have it*, and **must be born again**.

i. We should not forget *whom* Jesus said this to. Nicodemus was a religious leader and a Pharisee. By all outward appearance, he was *already* transformed unto God. If *Nicodemus must be born again*, what about you and I?

e. **The wind blows where it wishes:** Jesus' idea to Nicodemus is "You don't understand everything about the wind, but you see its effects. That is just how it is with the birth of the Spirit." Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that he didn't have to understand everything about the new birth before he experienced it.

4. ([Jhn 3:9-13](#)) Jesus responds to the question "**how can these things be?**"

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven."

a. **How can these things be?** Nicodemus is confused. He is so set in his thinking that the new birth has already happened to him and all of faithful Israel, that he has a hard time thinking out of that "box." Jesus needs to keep explaining.

b. **Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?** Jesus chides Nicodemus for not being aware of the need and the promise of the new birth, because these are plainly laid out in the Old Testament. Nicodemus knew these passages well, but believed that they had been fulfilled in regard to the new birth. But he should have known better!

c. **If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** A simple look at **earthly things** - like the illustrations Jesus used, and even a look at his own life - should have made Jesus' point plain to Nicodemus. If he can't see that he needs this spiritual transformation, what more can Jesus tell him?

d. **No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven:** Jesus "makes it clear that He can speak authoritatively about things in heaven, though no one else can." (Morris)

5. ([Jhn 3:14-15](#)) Jesus and the brazen serpent.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

a. **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness:** How can the serpent of [Numbers 21:4-9](#) be a picture of the holy Jesus?

i. Serpents are often used as pictures of evil in the Bible ([Genesis 3:1-5](#) and [Revelation 12:9](#)). However, Moses'

serpent in [Numbers 21](#) was made of bronze, and bronze is a metal associated with judgment in the Bible, because bronze must be made by passing through the "fires" of judgment.

ii. So, a *bronze* serpent does speak of sin, but of sin judged. In the same way Jesus, who knew no sin became sin for us on the cross, and our sin was judged in Him. A bronze serpent is a picture of sin judged and dealt with.

iii. We would have wanted to diminish our sense of sin, and put the image of a man up on the pole. Our image of man might represent "both good and bad" in man. But a serpent is more apparently sinful, and shows us our true nature and true need of salvation.

iv. In addition, if the serpent lay horizontally on the vertical pole, it is easy to see how this also was a *visual* representation of the cross. However, many traditions show the serpent being wrapped around the pole, and this is the source for the ancient figure of healing and medicine - a serpent, wrapped around a pole.

v. In the [Numbers 21:4-9](#) account, the people were saved not by *doing* anything, but by simply *looking* to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at such a thing would be sufficient to save them, and surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do such a thing.

vi. As it says in [Isaiah 45:22](#): *Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* We might be willing to do a hundred things to earn our salvation, but God commands us to only trust in Him - to *look to Him*.

b. Remember that even though Jesus bore our sins, He never *became* a sinner. Even His becoming sin for us was a holy, righteous, act of love. Jesus remained the *Holy One* throughout the entire ordeal of the cross.

c. **Lifted up** is a term later used to describe both Jesus' crucifixion ([John 12:32](#)) and His ascension ([Acts 2:33](#)). Both meanings are in view, His suffering *and* exaltation. Jesus was **lifted up** in both ways.

d. **Should not perish but have eternal life**: The idea behind **eternal life** means much more than a *long or never ending* life. **Eternal life** does not mean that we live the life of fallen humanity, we just live it forever. Instead, **eternal life** also has the idea of a certain *quality* of life, of God's kind of life. It is the kind of life enjoyed in eternity.

6. ([Jhn 3:16-21](#)) God's gift of salvation and sin's condemnation.

"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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

a. **For God so loved the world**: [John 3:16](#) has long been celebrated as a powerful, succinct, declaration of the gospel. Of the 31,373 verses in the Bible, it may be the most popular single verse used in evangelism.

i. We learn the *object* of God's love: **For God so loved the world**. God did not wait for the world to turn to Him before He loved the world. He loved and gave His only begotten Son to the world when it was *still* the **world!**

ii. We learn the *expression* and the *gift* of God's love: **He gave His only begotten Son**. God's love didn't just

feel for the plight of a fallen world. God *did* something about it, and He **gave** the most precious thing to give: **His only begotten Son.**

iii. We learn the *recipient* of God's love: **Whoever believes in Him.** God loves the world, but the world does not receive or benefit from that love until it **believes in** Jesus, the gift that the Father gave. **Believes in** means much more than intellectual awareness or agreement. It means to *trust in*, to *rely on*, and to *cling to*.

iv. We learn the *intention* of God's love: **Should not perish.** God's love *actually saves* man from eternal destruction. God looks at fallen humanity, does not want it to **perish**, and so in His love He extends the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

v. We learn the *duration* of God's love: **Everlasting life.** The love we receive among people may fade or turn, but God's love will never change. He will never stop loving His people, even unto the furthest distance of eternity.

c. What Jesus told Nicodemus in [John 3:7](#) (*You must be born again*) refuted the popular Jewish idea of the way to salvation. Now Jesus refutes the popular Jewish idea of the *scope* of salvation is refuted: **for God so loved the world.**

i. The Jews of that day rarely thought that God **loved the world.** They thought that God only loved. The universal offer of salvation and life in Jesus was absolutely revolutionary.

d. **This is the condemnation:** Jesus came to bring salvation, but those who reject that salvation condemn themselves. We never need to leave the *reason* for anyone's **condemnation** at God's door. The responsibility is theirs alone.

e. **Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil:** What keeps people from belief in Jesus and salvation? It is sin, or is it unbelief? Really it is both, because people will not believe *because* they love their sin.

i. This cuts right through many of the "intellectual" excuses or dishonest doubts some proclaim. Many opponents of Christianity have a vested interest in fighting against the truth of Jesus, because they love their sin and don't want to face it, or face a God who will judge their sin.

ii. When we think of the *love of sin* that sends people to hell, we often only think of notorious sin. But the simple demand to be lord of my own life is enough of a sin to deserve condemnation before God.

f. **Everyone practicing evil hates the light:** How do people hate the light of God's truth? Some express their hatred by actively fighting against it, and others express their hatred by ignoring God's truth - by saying to Jesus "You are not worth my time."