

Lesson 5

Jesus Meets a Friend at Night

Bible Lesson: John 3:1-21

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 eternal life.” *John 3:16*

TEACHER PREPARATION

Prepare to Teach

- ◆ that Nicodemus needed a Savior; Nicodemus needed to be born again
- ◆ that each child needs a Savior; each child must be born again
- ◆ that Jesus is the Savior everyone needs

Prepare Materials

- ◆ a cross to show students
- ◆ white construction paper with the outline of a cross on it, 1 per child (pattern in Teacher Manual)
- ◆ brown construction paper
- ◆ liquid glue
- ◆ 2 puppets made from brown paper lunch bags, to be used in telling today's Bible lesson. Your puppets will be Nicodemus and Jesus.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Bible Study Text: John 3:1-21

I. Introduction

In our story today we find a meeting of two very important people. One is Jesus the Son of God and the other is Nicodemus; one is the Savior and the other is a sinner. This important meeting and discourse that Jesus has at night with Nicodemus involves the eternal destiny of a sinner. The truth Christ shares bear out the truth of John's words in John 20:31, “*But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*” This is the purpose for all of the Scriptures.

II. Who Is This Nicodemus?

“*Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble*” (I Corinthians 1:26) are called; yet some are, and here was one. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, part of a proud self-righteous group. Nicodemus was a man of learning, a scholar; he was a ruler of the Jews. Jesus called him “teacher of Israel” (John 3:10). He was also a man of authority in Jerusalem, a member of the Sanhedrin. What was the Sanhedrin? It was the highest Jewish governing body in the time of Christ. So we see that Nicodemus was a very important and influential man in Jerusalem.

III. The Sinner's Approach to Jesus Christ (v.2)

A. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. It was not enough that he had heard public discourses by Jesus; he had resolved to talk with Him alone. He needed a personal encounter with Jesus.

1. This might have been an act of discretion when he "came to Him by night." Jesus had many enemies, and this meeting would have enraged the chief priests all the more. A sinner can come to Jesus by day or night. "*Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep*" (Psalm 121:4). It is good to hear Jesus' words, "...and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37b).
2. His coming at night could have been an act of zeal. Nicodemus apparently would rather lose sleep than miss seeing Jesus and having a personal encounter with Him. While others slept, he was getting knowledge of salvation. Sinners need to be zealous concerning their soul's need. "*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matthew 6:33). "*Seek, and you shall find*" (Matthew 7:7).
3. His coming at night might have been an act of fear or cowardice. Nicodemus might have been afraid or ashamed to be seen with Jesus, but weak beginnings are better than no beginnings. Nicodemus was seeking the right person, and Jesus welcomed him. Men must come to Jesus as they are with all their sins and shortcomings. "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). And though Nicodemus came by night and was possibly afraid, he later claimed and professed Christ publicly (see John 7:45-53).

B. Nicodemus got right down to business. He called Jesus "Rabbi" which means master or teacher and signifies a great man. He had deep respect for Jesus. Note what else he said: "*We know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (John 3:2).

1. Nicodemus acknowledged divine inspiration and power in Jesus. "*How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?*" (John 9:16b; Acts 2:22). We must have a high view of Jesus. We must acknowledge Him as "the Truth," the One who rules by the truth of His Word and not by the sword. We must submit to Him as Savior of men and as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:13-16).
2. Jesus assures us about who He is. "*We know that You have come from God as a teacher*" (v.2). Again refer to John 20:31, "*But these have been written that you may believe.*" Jesus wants us to know and be assured of who He is and of His power to save us, the greatest miracle of all (see II Timothy 1:12; I John 5:13,20). Note how many times the word "know" is used in I John 5.

IV. Jesus' Response to the Sinner

Jesus also got right to the point in His discourse with Nicodemus. Jesus knew the real need of Nicodemus, and He knows the greatest need in all of our lives. He came precisely to fill that need, to redeem the lost and to reconcile sinners unto God the Father. Jesus pointed out three main truths in this discourse.

A. Jesus explained the necessity and nature of regeneration (v. 3-8). It is not enough to admire Jesus' miracles or to acknowledge His mission. We "must be born again" (v.3,7). This includes all, even little children (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:10-12,23; Job 14:4).

1. We believe, according to God's Word, that God has provided for the regeneration of little children in baptism (John 3:5; Mark 16:16; Matthew 19:4). We "*are by nature children of wrath*" (Ephesians 2:3). In baptism, children are grafted into Christ by God's grace and

also become children of God under God's grace. Like a newly planted flower, this new spiritual life must be watered, fed, and exposed to the sunshine of God's Word to survive and grow.

2. Adults who have been baptized as infants and have broken their baptismal covenant, left their first love (Revelation 2:4), and left their heavenly Father as the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24), need to repent as the prodigal and return to their Father and home (Acts 3:19). This we call conversion. If people are not baptized with Christian baptism, they must repent, be born again, and be baptized (Acts 2:38), "*born of water and the Spirit*" (John 3:5).
 3. What is the nature of regeneration--being born again? It is a spiritual birth. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:6). When born into this world, we are "*brought forth in iniquity*" (Psalm 51:5). We are sinners by nature. The second birth or being "born again" is to be born of the Spirit (John 3:8). We must be born "of God" into His family (I John 5:1). We must be born from above. We must be born by the Word of God (I Peter 1:23). Being born again brings new life in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). We have a new name written down in glory (Revelation 2:17).
- B. We have absolute certainty of truth from Christ's words (John 3:11-13). We can be assured that the sayings of Christ are faithful (John 17:17). Jesus is the truth (John 14:6).
- C. Jesus' next point is the reason for His coming into the world and the blessedness of those who believe in Him (John 3:14-18). Here is the essence of the entire gospel, that Jesus came to seek and to save the children of men from eternal death and to give them eternal life.
1. Jesus came to save us by healing us from the sting of sin. The children of Israel were stung with fiery serpents but were cured by looking up to the brazen serpent (v. 14). This shows the deadly and destructive nature of sin. The Bible warns us, "*the wages of sin is death.*" But note the powerful remedy provided as a healing from this fatal malady: "*but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). We receive this remedy by believing in Jesus and His redemptive work.
 2. The brazen serpent that Moses held up in the wilderness was a "picture" of Jesus our Savior who was lifted up on the cross to die for us; and all who look up to Him in faith will live (v. 15-16; Romans 5:8; John 3:36). God has said in His Word, "*Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other*" (Isaiah 45:22). JESUS CAME AND DIED "*that the world should be saved through Him*" (v.17a). We that believe on Him are not condemne'd nor judged (Romans 8:1).

V. Conclusion

Jesus the Great Physician has diagnosed our problem perfectly and is Himself the perfect cure. He knows our naturally sinful, wretched state and clearly tells us in His Word that we are all under sin, incapable of saving ourselves, and doomed to hell. "*For the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23).

On the other hand, we have the "good news" of the gospel. God reveals to us our terrible condition, but He also provides healing in and through His Son Jesus Christ. The whole purpose for Jesus' birth, suffering, and death was to save us from our sins. That is GOOD NEWS! He forgives all our sins when we repent and are willing to receive what He has for us. He restores us to fellowship with Himself and makes us His children under grace. PRAISE GOD FOR THE NEW BIRTH. THANK GOD FOR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST!

BEGINNING YOUR CLASS HOUR

Welcome with Love

Thank each child for coming to class today. Tell them that you like to see and talk to each one of them. Say that in today's lesson they will learn about a man who came to talk to Jesus.

Use a Learning Center

FIELD TRIP - WE SEE THE CROSS

Take your class to where a cross is displayed in your church or bring one to class.

ASK: Why did Jesus die on the cross?

SAY: The cross is very beautiful and yet it reminds us that we are sinful. It is hard to understand that Jesus could love us so much that He was willing to die on the cross for our sins, but we thank Him for loving us that much.

SAY: Today we will learn more about the cross and what it means to be born again.

ART CENTER - WE MAKE A CROSS

GIVE each child a piece of white paper with the outline of a cross (pattern in Teacher Manual). Then give each child a piece of brown paper. Tell the class to tear their brown piece of paper into small pieces and glue the pieces inside the outlined cross.

As the children are working **TALK** about today's Bible verse, John 3:16, and what the cross means to us. We are born again when we believe in Jesus, confess our sins, and ask Him to be our Savior. When children are finished gluing the brown paper pieces onto their crosses, **WRITE** "JESUS SAVES" underneath the cross.

BOOK CENTER

Picture books of Jesus and Nicodemus could be shown at this time.

TEACHING TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

Sing the Message

Sing "*For God So Loved the World*" (p.69 in Salvation Songs Favorites or p.362 in the Ambassador Hymnal).

Sing "*Jesus, Tender Shepherd*" (printed in student books and Teacher Manual).

Pray the Message

Thank God for Jesus. Thank Him that Jesus loves us so much that He was willing to die on the cross. Ask God to help each one to listen and learn today.

Introduce the Message

(If children need to move around before the story, do so now. It may be easier for little ones to sit on the floor for the Bible story.)

ASK: Have you ever gone to visit someone at night? Do you like to go places at night? Why or why not?

SAY: Today we will learn about someone who went visiting at night. His name was Nicodemus.

ASK students to say "Nic - o - de - mus."

Read/Tell the Message

JESUS MEETS A FRIEND AT NIGHT

It is good for us to visit our friends and talk to them. Have you ever visited a friend at night?

One night a man named Nicodemus came to talk to Jesus. He did not understand what Jesus was teaching and doing. Nicodemus said, "Teacher, we have seen You do great things. No one can do miracles unless God is with him."

Jesus said, "You must be born again before you can go to heaven." Nicodemus didn't know what Jesus meant. He asked, "How can I be born again when I am grown up? I can't become a baby again, can I?" Jesus said, "Being born again is a miracle God does in you."

Nicodemus was born as a baby; he had an earthly father. He would become God's child

if he was born again. Jesus told Nicodemus that God's love is so wonderful that He made a way for everyone in the world to become a child of God and go to heaven. God sent Jesus from heaven to die on the cross for everyone's sins.

Jesus knew that Nicodemus needed a Savior from sin. Jesus knows we need a Savior from sin too. He is the only one who can take away our sins. If we ask Jesus to forgive our sins and we believe in Him, we are born again. Then we are God's children, and someday we will live with Him in heaven.

Reinforce the Message

Have the children role-play today's story as you re-read it. Repeat that when a person confesses his sins and believes that Jesus died to take them away, he is born again.

APPLYING THE BIBLE LESSON

Memorize the Bible Verse

SING "The Best Book of All Is the Bible."

Do the Activities Together

ACTIVITY 1 - Connect the Verse

Tell the class to draw lines connecting the picture words of today's Bible verse.

SAY: God loved so much---the world (world means all the people who live on the earth that He created)

God gave---His Son Jesus to die on the cross that whoever---believes in Him (Jesus) will not perish, but have---eternal life (live forever in heaven with Jesus)

EXPLAIN PICTURE: God's love is so big. God is sad when people sin. God wants us to ask Him to forgive us when we sin.

SAY: God provided the way to heaven. He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay for our sins by dying on the cross. When we ask Jesus to be our Savior we are born again. We won't be

separated from God forever (perish), but we will live forever with Him.

Lesson 5 - Activity 1 Jesus Meets a Friend at Night



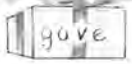








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ACTIVITY 2 - Read the Verse

Use Activity 2 to help the children learn the memory verse. Show the students that they can "read" the verse over and over.

Teach the children that they can substitute words for the pictures in this activity and then they can "read" the verse.

Lesson 5 - Activity 2 Jesus Meets a Friend at Night

"For God so  ed the  that He  ve His   gotten , that
 whoever  in ,
 should  perish, but
 have  
 life." John 3:16

Jesus loves _____

CLOSING YOUR CLASS HOUR**Teach and Sing****JESUS LOVES ME**

The third verse should be introduced today.

SAY: Jesus is always with us, whenever we are happy and whenever we are sad. If we love Jesus, He will take us to heaven to be at home with Him someday.

REVIEW the first two verses, then **SING** the third verse too.

Pray Together

ASK the children to think of one thing they learned from today's lesson that they would like to thank Jesus for. Let children pray. Teacher close in prayer.

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK**Gather and Prepare Materials**

- ◆ 2 round crackers per child
- ◆ 4 carrot sticks per child, each 1" long
- ◆ construction paper, 1 sheet per child (write memory verse at top before class)
- ◆ brass paper fasteners, 1 per child
- ◆ 9" x 6" pieces of fabric, 1 per child
- ◆ wooden ice cream spoons

Prepare Lesson 6

Read the Bible text (John 4:43-54) and the student lesson.

Memorize the Bible verse:

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. I Peter 5:7

Read the Teacher Manual

Highlight, underline, and make notes for yourself to help you teach Lesson 6.

