

# Jesus And Nicodemus

John 3:1-21

## MEMORY VERSE

John 3:17

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A “Pinwheel” template (included with your curriculum), and as many construction paper or tag board squares, scissors, markers or crayons, straight pins, and pencils with erasers as the number of children in your class.

A chalkboard, chalk and an eraser.

As many small prizes (pencils, stickers, etc.) as the number of children in your class.

## ATTENTION GRABBER!

### "The Wind Blows" Pinwheel

Using the enclosed template, follow the directions for making pinwheels and have each child in your class make one.

Allow the children to play with the pinwheels for a while before using an attention getting signal to start your lesson time. Explain that we will be referring to the pinwheel later in today's lesson.

## LESSON TIME!

Today we are going to meet a man who met with Jesus one quiet night in Jerusalem. His name was Nicodemus. We will see that he met with Jesus face to face, mind to mind, and heart to heart. He was a true seeker. That means he really wanted to understand the truth Jesus was teaching. He was an older man, and he did not pretend he had all the answers. He was willing to risk his reputation, his wealth, and his power to discover truth. Nicodemus discovered what God wants all people to discover **we all need a new, spiritual birth.**

### JOHN 3:1

**There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.**

God wants us to know right from the start some things about Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee, this means he was one of the religious leaders of his day. He tried to do everything just as it was written in his religious books. He wanted to keep every rule. He was also very well educated. He knew all there was to know about the religious system of the Jews. Pharisees were often proud and self-righteous. They looked down on those that did not meet their religious expectations.

Nicodemus was also one of the Sanhedrin, seventy men who were the caretakers of the Jewish religious system. Only the greatest men could be a part of this elite group. A member of the Sanhedrin was a member for life. It made them enormously powerful and revered. It usually meant they would be very wealthy too. The Sanhedrin decided everything for the Jewish people. All of this meant that Nicodemus was a very important man to the other men of Jerusalem.

### JOHN 3:2

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."

Nicodemus came to Jesus at nighttime. Remember that in the daytime Jesus had lots of crowds around Him. The other religious leader did not approve of Jesus, so Nicodemus came secretly at night to find out who Jesus was. It did not bother Jesus that Nicodemus did not want his peers to know he had talked to Him; He met him more than half way. Nicodemus chose to find Jesus at night because he was determined to have Jesus all to himself. The Bible tells us, "This man came to Jesus." Every kind of person can come to Jesus, those who are poor and crippled, and those who are rich, successful and important. All people are the same to Jesus. Riches and power do not impress him; He loves every one of us the same. He loves us all completely and fully.

Nicodemus called Jesus "Rabbi." That means he thought Jesus was a good teacher about the things of God. He told Jesus what they knew about Him, that He was a "teacher come from God." Nicodemus told Jesus what those seventy religious leaders knew about Him. They had watched Jesus and knew that only someone involved deeply with God could do what Jesus did. The other members of the Sanhedrin pretended that they didn't believe Jesus was from God, but Nicodemus let the cat out of the bag by saying "we know."

### JOHN 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Jesus ignored Nicodemus comments about the perception that He was just a rabbi, a mere teacher or prophet. Those titles might sound nice to human ears, but they are such small titles compared to who Jesus really is, God and Savior. Jesus goes right to Nicodemus' need, because Jesus knows that **we all need a new, spiritual birth**. Why do we need a new birth? Because we are all spiritually dead. We have a physical body that lives, but without Christ, our spirits are dead.

### JOHN 3:4-7

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?"

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.'

Nicodemus asks a very important question; he asks how? If we find out what we need but not how to receive it, it doesn't really help us.

## The "What and How" Game

Ask the children several "what" and "how" questions. When asking them the "what" questions, allow them to answer verbally. When asking them the "how" questions, have them act out the activity. For example:

What do you do to your teeth in the morning? (what question: answer verbally)

How? (how question; have the children pantomime brushing their teeth.)

What do you do with a glass of milk? (what question: answer verbally)

How? (how question; have the children pantomime drinking from a glass.)

What do you do when you want light in a dark room? (what question: answer verbally)

How? (how question; have the children pantomime turning on a light or light switch.)

You can think of some more questions to ask. Reinforce the importance of not only knowing what to do when it comes to understanding the “new birth,” but also how that is important.

Jesus gives us the answers to all of the how questions. Nicodemus wasn't being silly when he asked if a man could become a baby again. He was really trying to understand. It probably sounded like a marvelous thing to start all over again, but how could it be done? Nicodemus was trying to understand what Jesus was saying **we all need a new, spiritual birth.**

Jesus simply answered Nicodemus' how question. He told him that he was born of the flesh in a physical way, a physical birth, but his spirit was not born yet. His spirit needed to be born by the Spirit of God. That happens when we ask Jesus to come into our lives and forgive us our sins. At that time the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and gives us spiritual life; we are born again spiritually. The Holy Spirit comes in and gives new life! The Holy Spirit lives the

life of Christ through us; He transforms us into new creatures and we are born again.

## Fellowship in the Spirit

On the chalkboard write the following words in the following formation:

FATHER

SON

HOLY SPIRIT    spirit

soul

body

Explain to the children that God is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three in one. He created man in His image in an inferior trinity of spirit, soul, and body. Explain that God created man to fellowship with him in the realm of the spirit.

Erase the word "spirit" and draw a line under the words "HOLY SPIRIT" that causes the appearance of separation between the two lists. Explain to the children that sin in the world caused all of us to be born spiritually dead. The only way to be reconciled to God is to be born again, by receiving Jesus and His work on the cross for our sins.

Erase the line and rewrite the word "spirit." Illustrate that Jesus gives us a new birth in our spirits and reconciles us to God.

### JOHN 3:8

"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."

Jesus goes on to explain to Nicodemus that this transformation happens in us by simple faith when we accept Jesus as our Savior. We may not see this new birth or watch it as it happens but we will be able to see the effects of the Spirit in our lives. We'll know we are born again by the changes the Holy Spirit makes in us. We don't see the wind visibly, but we do see its effect.

## "The Wind Blows" Pinwheel

Have the children get out the pinwheels that were made at the beginning of class. Have the whole class blow the pinwheels to make them spin.

Encourage the children to watch one another as they blow on the pinwheels. Ask the class if they could see the air moving the pinwheels. Point out to them that they could not see the air, but they could feel it, and see its effect on the pinwheels.

### JOHN 3:9-14

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.



"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

Nicodemus asked again that important question, how? Jesus had just explained how. He points out that Nicodemus was the top teacher of that day, maybe even the most popular teacher. Jesus wasn't mocking Nicodemus' inability to understand what He was trying to teach him; He was, however, revealing the great inadequacy of Nicodemus' understanding. Nicodemus was all the best things a religious leader should have been, but Jesus was pointing out that it wasn't good enough because **we all need a new, spiritual birth**.

It doesn't matter if we know more than someone else. It doesn't help to have all the philosophies and great religious practices of man, or the best human thinking; **we all need a new, spiritual birth**. It is the only way to be restored to the intended place of communion and fellowship with God. We cannot trust in anything in ourselves. We must only trust in the work of Christ on the cross: His death, burial, and resurrection.

In simple obedience, we look to the salvation God has provided through Jesus Christ just as the children of Israel, in simple obedience, looked up to the raised serpent and lived in Numbers 21:9. We look to Jesus and live spiritually. The serpent represented God's judgment on the people's sin. When Jesus died on the cross He took our sin upon Himself. If we would only look to the one who took our judgment upon Himself, then we would live. The Holy Spirit then breathes into our spirits the breath of life because **We all need a new, spiritual birth**.

**JOHN 3:15-17**

"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

"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.

These are some of the most glorious words in the Bible. Many of you probably know verse sixteen. Let's say it together...

### "For God So Loved the World..."

On the chalk board write out the verse, John 3:16, leaving out the words "the world", and "whoever":

For God so loved the \_\_\_\_\_ that He gave His only begotten Son, that \_\_\_\_\_ believes in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

One at a time, fill in the blanks with the names of the children in your class. After reading the name of each child, erase the name and fill in another.

Try to read as many children's names in your class as possible.

It is not enough to be born only physically and have a living body. That living body, no matter how much good it does, will never be acceptable to God, because **we all need a new, spiritual birth.** We need a Savior; we need Jesus.

### JOHN 3:18-21

"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."

When we believe in Jesus, the work of salvation He did on the cross for us saves us. We are no longer condemned; the death sentence our sin requires is pardoned, because of the blood of Jesus Christ. People who reject Jesus and His work on the cross are condemned because they are already dead in sin, and they refuse to receive the life that Jesus has provided.

God sent us His light; He sent us a way to receive a new spiritual life. The light is Jesus. We receive life through Jesus' death. It is a gift from God, because He loves us so much. We simply reach out and receive the gift.

## The Gift

Before class gather as many small prizes as the number of children in your class (for added effect you can wrap them). One by one offer a gift to each student by extending it to him or her. Be sure that they take the gift from your hand only after you have extended the offer to them. Go around one by one in your class and offer the gift to them. Have them wait until everyone has theirs before they open it (if wrapped).

Illustrate for the children that our gift of salvation is extended the same way. God offers it to us in His extended hand and we must

take it. If each child in your class refused to take the gift offered to them, they would not be the recipients of the gift. If we do not take the gift of salvation that the Lord offers to us, we do not become the recipients of His gift of mercy and grace.

Have you asked Jesus to forgive your sins and come and live inside of you and make your spirit alive through His Holy Spirit? You can do that anytime, even right now. This is the most important thing you could ever do in your life. Won't you be born again today?

## **PRAYER**

If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so. If children respond, make sure that you fill out a response card for them and give them a Bible.

## Template - Pinwheel (1 of 2)

### What You'll Need

Heavy construction paper or lightweight tagboard

Scissors

A penny

A straight pin

Crayons, markers or paint for decorating

A pencil with an eraser, or a stick, or a straw

- Cut a piece of paper into a square, or trace the pattern on the next page.
- Trace around the penny right in the center.
- Now is a good time to decorate both the front and back of your pinwheel. Try some stripe designs or crazy pictures!
- Then cut in from each corner to the edge of the circle. Cut on the dotted lines.
- Mark the corners 1, 2, 3, 4 as you see in this picture.
- Bend each numbered corner into the center. (Don't fold them)
- Stick the pin through all four corners into the center.
- Then put the pin into the eraser of the pencil or the end of your straw or stick.
- Now... Blow on it or run in the wind and watch your pinwheel spin.



