



UNIT 20 | SESSION 1

JESUS TOLD NICODEMUS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE

JOHN 3

KEY PASSAGE:

Romans 5:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How do we know God loves us? We can know that God loves us because He gave us Jesus to forgive the sins of the world.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. God showed His love in this way: He sent His one and only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



LEADER Bible Study

Light and darkness are contrasted throughout the Scriptures. In John 3, Jesus explained to Nicodemus the hope and grace of God and the means by which He saves. Consider what Jesus was saying as He emphasized this contrast in this conversation.

In John 3:19-21, Jesus said, “This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

Jesus said that judgment is coming—and has arrived—because people loved the darkness more than the light. Ultimately, Jesus was referring to Himself, having entered the world to overcome the darkness. But as John 1 says, He was not recognized as the light, even by His own people.

Some two thousand years later, the question is, do we too love the darkness, or have we truly received the light? And how can we know? Jesus helps us answer this question.

One might summarize Jesus’ response this way: if you love the darkness, your deeds will

be evil. If you love the light, your works will be obvious evidence of the power of God. The evidence of whether we love the darkness or the light is found in the way we live.

Do you live in a way that expresses your love for light or for darkness? Is there a clear picture of the power of God in your decisions, actions, and words? Do people see the work of God and hear of His power when they interact with you?

It’s easy to answer these important questions with aspirations, but we cannot convince God of what is not true. And even further, our aspirations mean nothing without a deep dependence on God’s transformation for our lives. Though we find evidence of what we love in how we live, ultimately God looks at the heart. Our lives will be evidence for loving God above all else. In our faithful pursuit of the light, the evidence will show itself.

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Nicodemus: a Pharisee who visited Jesus at night, seeking to flee from the darkness of his own sin and ignorance to the light of Jesus. He later participated in Jesus’ burial. (John 19:39-41)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Can you think of a time when you asked someone a question and their answer made no sense to you? What did you do?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Picture This” on the activity page.

SAY “In our Bible story today, Jesus met a man who came to find answers. Jesus answered the man by telling him about the greatest gift God gave to the world.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: GOD GIVES



Form kids into five groups and assign one of the following Bible verses to each group: Romans 8:32; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:23-24; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

Ask each group to look up and read their Bible verses. Then prompt each group to answer the question: “What is the good gift that God gives?” Invite each group to share their answer.

SAY “God loves to give. And He gives because He loves. He has given us life. He gave us a beautiful world to enjoy. He gives us what we need such as food and clothes. But the most important gift God gave is His Son, Jesus. Only Jesus can save us from our sins. Today, we will learn how a man named Nicodemus learned that Jesus is God’s greatest gift to the world.”

OPTION 2: UNWRAP IT

Before the session, wrap five to eight boxes inside of one another. Place a note labeled Jesus in the smallest box.

Lead the kids to form a circle. Give the wrapped box to a kid and invite her to tear a small piece of wrapping paper off. Lead her to pass the box to the kid beside her who will do the same. Continue passing the box around the circle, allowing kids to tear off pieces of wrapping paper as they uncover the various boxes. Inform kids that inside the last box is a special gift.

SAY “It is exciting to receive a gift and then unwrap it to find out what is inside. Gifts are not earned but are given out of love. Today, we will learn that Jesus is the greatest gift God gave to the world and how we can receive Him by faith.”





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hi, kids! I’m [your name], and I’m so excited you are here this morning. Did you bring your Bible with you? Hold up your Bibles! [Distribute Bibles to those who need one.] Today, we will be reading from the Gospel of John. [Guide kids to turn to John in their Bibles.]

In today’s Bible story, we will learn about a man who wanted to know more about Jesus. Many people had lots of questions about Jesus during His time on earth and were confused about who Jesus is. We can read about Jesus in our Bibles and grow to know Him more. Knowing who Jesus is and believing in Him is the greatest gift we can receive. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

SAY “ For the next few weeks, we are going to be discovering people who met Jesus and how He taught them more about who He is. Jesus’ early encounters with people revealed that He had come to be the Savior of the world.

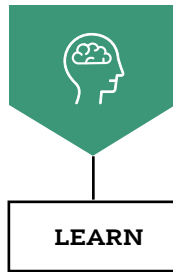
Our big picture question is, **How do we know God loves us?** How would you answer that question? [Allow kids to respond.] Great answers! We will answer it this way: **We can know that God loves us because He gave us Jesus to forgive the sins of the world.** ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ All of the Old Testament points to the Messiah that would come to save people from their sins. Finally, Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem just as the prophets said He would be. The angels praised God and the shepherds told others the good news.

Then we learned that Jesus was dedicated and baptized. We also learned that Jesus never sinned, even when He was tempted by the devil. Now, let’s learn more about who Jesus is through His encounters with people. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to John 3. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Told Nicodemus about Eternal Life.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS TOLD NICODEMUS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE

“ Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. **One night, a religious man came to see Jesus. The man’s name was Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee.** He studied and taught God’s law, and he tried very hard to obey the law. **Nicodemus wanted to know more about Jesus.**

“**Rabbi,**” he said, “**we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. No one could do the miracles You do unless God were with him.**”

Jesus said, “**I tell you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

Now **Nicodemus was confused.** He thought that keeping all God’s laws was how a person got into heaven. Besides, what Jesus said didn’t make any sense to him! “**How can anyone be born when he is old?**” Nicodemus asked.

Jesus said, “**A person cannot enter God’s kingdom unless he is born of water and the Spirit.** Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.” When a baby is born, he gets physical life from his parents. **Physical life doesn’t last forever. But the Spirit gives people a better kind of life—spiritual life—so they can live with God forever.**

Jesus said, “Don’t be surprised I told you that you must be born again.”

Nicodemus still didn’t understand. “How is this possible?” he asked.

Jesus said, “When you don’t believe what I say about things I’ve seen on earth, how will you believe what I say about the things I’ve seen in heaven? **Do you remember how Moses raised up the bronze snake in the wilderness? Everyone who looked at it was healed. Like that, the Son of Man will be raised up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.**”

Then Jesus told Nicodemus about God’s great plan. **Jesus said, “God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.** God did not send His Son to declare the world guilty, but to save the world. Anyone who believes in Him is found not guilty, but anyone who does not believe in Him is guilty already.”

Christ Connection: Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. God showed His love in this way: He sent His one and only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Act it out: Invite two kids to act out the parts of Nicodemus and Jesus as you tell the story.

Define it: Write the definition of **born again** on a dry erase board: *The gift of new spiritual life through faith in Jesus.* Point to the definition when you mention it in the story.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Nicodemus was a Pharisee who wanted to know more about Jesus. He knew that Jesus was from God because He performed miracles. Jesus directed Nicodemus’ curiosity about where He is from to the kingdom of God. What did Jesus say is the only way into the kingdom of God? Look at John 3:3. [Choose a volunteer to read John 3:3.] Jesus said that the only way into God’s kingdom is to be born again. Nicodemus was still very confused. So Jesus helped him further understand.

What were the two births Jesus described? Look at John 3:5-6. [Choose a volunteer to read John 3:5-6.] Jesus explained that all people have a physical birth and are made of flesh. But the Spirit gives people a new birth and a spiritual life that lasts forever. We are all born physically but we must receive the Spirit of God to live forever.

But Nicodemus was still confused. What Old Testament story did Jesus tell Nicodemus? Look at John 3:14-15. [Choose a volunteer to read John 3:14-15.] Jesus reminded him of the bronze serpent that was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness and how the people’s faith in God healed them. Jesus was hinting at the truth that He was going to be lifted up on the cross to save people from their sins.

Jesus told Nicodemus that God loved the world so much that He sent His Son to die so people might have eternal life. **We can know that God loves us because He gave us Jesus to forgive the sins of the world.** ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. God showed His love in this way: He sent His one and only Son to save the world. Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 20, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can we better understand the Bible when we feel confused by its teachings?
2. How would you tell someone how they can have eternal life?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Display the photos as you tell the story.

SAY “ Victor Reyes is the pastor of Iglesia Bautista Neptune in Jacksonville, Florida. While Victor was in Europe with a group of Hispanic pastors and missionaries, he had an opportunity to speak with a Muslim man. He realized this was the first time he had spoken with someone who was Muslim. Pastor Reyes said being a Hispanic man and an immigrant himself in the United States



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

helped him have a connection with the Muslim man, who was an immigrant in Spain.

Sometimes having something in common with someone builds connection and trust. Missionaries in Europe feel like Hispanic people can be highly effective in telling people about Jesus because they know how to adapt their own cultures with the culture where they now live. Also, many Hispanics can speak two or three languages, which can help them tell many people they meet about Jesus. ”

Tell kids that another pastor, Eloy Rodriguez, who leads a Hispanic congregation at Idlewild Baptist Church Español, says that his Puerto Rican background helped him begin a conversation with a store owner during a prayer walk for the city. Explain that the two men found a connection through talking about Puerto Rican music, and then moved to talking about a local church. Tell kids that the store owner gave Pastor Rodriguez his contact information to give to the church.

Pray for more Hispanic churches and people to serve in mission assignments. Thank God for all missionaries currently serving God around the world.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Before the session, write each word of the key passage on individual index cards. Create two sets of cards. For large groups, consider making multiple sets of cards. Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Romans 5:8 together.

SAY “ Our key passage reminds us that we do not have to make ourselves right with God before He will save us. In fact, we could never make ourselves good enough to be saved. God’s love for us was shown while we were still sinners. God’s gift of salvation is undeserved! ”

Form kids into two teams and provide each team with a set of index cards that are not in the correct order. On your start, direct each team to work together to put the cards in the correct order of the key passage. The team that completes it correctly first wins. Play again as time allows.

Lead kids to sing “His Own Love for Us (Romans 5:8).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. Thank You for the love You show us through Jesus, and for the gift of eternal life in Him. In Jesus’ name, amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**

