

## NICODEMUS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JOHN 3:1-21

*You must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**Unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.** Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. In view of John's use of light and darkness (John 3:19), we may deduce that Nicodemus, though seeking, was an unbeliever fearful of being seen with Jesus in the daylight. Jesus' words, "born again," can be literally translated "born from above". Nicodemus took them literally but upon further explanation Jesus revealed that a person needed to be born of the Spirit of God to enter into heaven. Nicodemus did not understand. We are not told how Nicodemus responded, but he is mentioned later in John 19:39 with Joseph of Arimathea caring for Jesus' dead body. One would like to believe that Nicodemus eventually understood what Jesus meant and one day in heaven we may see Nicodemus.

**Apart from Christ, man stands condemned.** When Adam and Eve sinned, all mankind was condemned to die. Jesus came into the world to save the world, not to condemn it. Those who don't believe stand condemned already.

**Wickedness hates the light.** John tells us that light has come into the world and that men hate the light because their evil deeds are exposed by the light. John 8:12 records these words of Jesus: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus came to expose the teachers of the law. They appeared to be righteous, but inside they were sinful. Time and time again Jesus exposed the hidden, sinful motive of men's hearts.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

The third chapter of John introduces the idea that becoming a Christian is a new birth. This new birth comes to everyone who believes in Jesus. What we believe about Jesus is of primary importance. 1 John 5:5 tells us we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God..

Many people celebrate John 3:16 all by itself. But we need the whole of the Scriptures, which tell us everything we need to believe about Jesus. It is not sufficient to believe that Jesus was a good teacher or that He was a prophet. We must believe that Jesus was both man and God, that Jesus died for our sins taking the penalty we deserved, and that He rose from the dead as He said He would.

Jesus bore the wrath of God for our sin. That is why a man who trusts in Christ is "not condemned" (John 3:18). If Jesus was only a good teacher, or a remarkable prophet, or a man like any other, He would not have been able to take away our sin. When we believe in Jesus, God places His commands in our hearts and places the Holy Spirit to live within us. It is by the power of the Spirit of God that we obey God's commands and live for Him. In fact, though all believers struggle with remaining sin, they are able to overcome sin and grow in the grace of obedience.

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

**Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.**

**Bible Passage: Isaiah 52:13**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

This passage falls in a section of Isaiah that very specifically points to Jesus. Here in this verse, the servant will be raised and lifted up, and then highly exalted. John 3:14 says that Jesus will be lifted up - a reference to His crucifixion.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- Read Isaiah 52:13 and Philippians 2:7-10. How does Paul's description of Jesus match Isaiah's description? (Paul tells us in Philippians 2:7-10 that because Jesus took on the nature of a servant, God exalted him.)
- What are the three key ideas that match? (Jesus was a servant, was lifted up on the cross, and is highly exalted.)

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# SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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.

## ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

### 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, shining on his head. (It might help if you turn the room lights off to help it show brighter.)

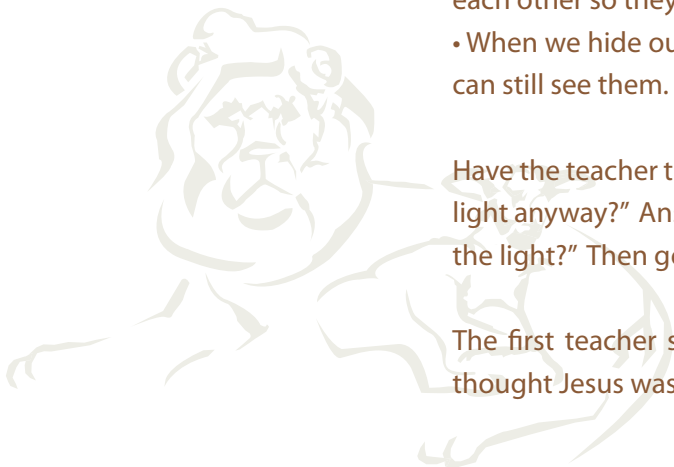
The second teacher asks the first what he is doing. He answers, "Walking in the light." He goes on to explain that he was reading about coming into the light in the passage for today and decided he had better make sure they were walking in the light.

Ask the class if they can help the teacher with the following questions.

- I think \_\_\_\_\_ is confused. 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 to each other 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 saying, "How foolish. I thought Jesus was a flashlight."



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### LIFTED UP IN THE WILDERNESS

**Supplies:**

two drawings, one of the bronze serpent on a staff, the second of a cross with Jesus on it

Help the children make the connection between the two drawings. Read the account of Moses and the bronze serpent from Numbers 21:4-9 and read John 3:14. Hold up the two drawings and ask the children to tell you what they have in common.

They are both lifted up for people to look on and be healed.

Ask the class what the people were healed from in both cases, (People who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed of a poisonous snake bite. People who look to Jesus crucified and believe by faith in the Gospel are healed of their sin.)

### MEMORIZE JOHN 3:16-17

**Supplies:**

prizes for the winners  
– and something for the losers

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 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.

## PRAYER

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

## IN CLASS PROJECT

### AN ACTIVITY

**Supplies:**

pencil and paper

Have the children draw a picture to represent one of the following verses -- John 3:19, 3:20 or 3:21. Ask a few of the children to explain their drawings to the class.



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**FOR THE OLDER GRADES****HAVE THE STUDENTS MAKE UP A MODERN DAY NICODEMUS SKIT**

Divide the class into groups of 4-6. Tell them that their job is to create a modern day Nicodemus skit. The setting is that a Christian meets up with a group of friends and witnesses to them. His friends ask him, because they know he goes to church, how a person can go to heaven. The Christian responds, "You have to be born again." The rest of the skit can either be serious or humorous, but not disrespectful. In the end, discuss what it means to be "born again." Talk about how you might answer someone who asks you, "Are you one of those born-again Christians?"

**A LITTLE BIT MORE**

Rather than focus on the words "born again," think of the meaning, "born of God." Once God causes our spirits to come alive, or be born again, our hearts respond in faith to the Gospel. Before that happens we are dead and unable to respond in faith acceptably. When we are born of God, God places His Spirit in our hearts and comes to live with us. That is something we can sense by faith. God tells us that He places His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee we are going to go to heaven to be with Him forever (see 2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

