



Jesus Teaches Nicodemus



Scripture Reference:
[John 3:1-21](#)

Suggested Emphasis: Being “born again” means having a new beginning with the Holy Spirit, God and Jesus.

Memory Verse: “A person’s body is born from his human parents. But a person’s spiritual life is born from the Spirit.”
[John 3:6, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and an important Jewish leader who visited Jesus at night to ask questions. Among other things, Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be “born again” to enter the kingdom of God.

Background Study:

In the New Testament, Pharisees are often portrayed as judgemental and hypocritical. They jealously guard their positions and are a dangerous threat to Jesus throughout his ministry. In contrast to other Pharisees mentioned Nicodemus seems to be genuinely interested in learning more about what Jesus is teaching. He recognises that the miracles Jesus is performing must be from God.

Pharisees were a religious sect of the Jews who were very concerned with purity. They believed in the Old Testament books and an ultimate resurrection of the dead. They were generally respected and had great influence. Many years after today’s event we learn that the Apostle, Paul was also a Pharisee ([Philippians 3:5](#)).

It is often assumed that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night in an attempt to keep the meeting secret. Perhaps he knew that the reaction of other Pharisees would be antagonistic. Later on, we learn that Nicodemus was willing to speak up to the other Pharisees in the Sanhedrin ([John 7:45-53](#)) but perhaps he was not yet ready to do so at this point in time. Pharisees were looking for God’s kingdom so Jesus would have caught Nicodemus’ interest when he said that a person

must be “born again” to enter the kingdom. His thoughts immediately went to a physical birth but Jesus went on to explain that a new birth in the Spirit means a fresh start allowing the Spirit of God to control every aspect of one’s life. Actions and thoughts are re-learned in the image of God.

There is more to life than the physical things we see, hear, and touch. We cannot see the Spirit but we see his effects in the world. Jesus is the only one that has lived in both the heavenly or spiritual world as well in our physical world. It is only through him that we can experience the spiritual.

Jesus’ rich teachings include a reference to the Old Testament event when the Israelites gazed up at a [bronze serpent on a raised pole](#) to be healed of their illnesses. Nicodemus was a teacher of the Law so he would have known this story well. Of course, we know now that Jesus was comparing this to his own crucifixion when he would also be lifted up, this time on a cross. The people would also be healed in looking to him.

*“I will be lifted up from the earth. And when this happens, I will draw all people toward me.”
John 12:32 ICB*

Verses 16-21 could be a continuation of Jesus’ teaching, but there seems to be a natural break as you read through the chapter. This could also be attributed to the writer, John, as a commentary or notes on what Jesus has been saying. In any case, one of the most well-known verses in the bible is found here.

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. God gave his Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life.” John 3:16 ICB

These last verses seem to bring the conversation back to light and dark. Nicodemus came to Jesus when it was night and dark. The new life in the Spirit is life lived in the light.



Way to Introduce the Story:

How many of you have ever seen a newborn baby? If so, tell us what the baby was like. Could it talk? Chew food? Crawl? No, a newborn baby has to learn to do everything.

In today’s story, we will learn about a time when Jesus said that following him means starting over and learning to do everything a new way.

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The Story:

John the Baptist had been preaching about the coming of the Messiah who would save the people of God. Crowds of people turned their hearts to God. Even Jesus was baptised in water to show he wanted to do everything right.

Not long after his baptism, Jesus chose twelve special followers, called apostles. As Jesus and his followers travelled from place to place, people began to notice that Jesus was special. Jesus performed miracles or signs that would be

impossible for people to do without God's help.

One of those people who noticed Jesus was a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Pharisees studied the Scriptures and expected everyone to follow God's laws very strictly. Many Pharisees thought they were better than others and tried to tell people what to do.

Other Pharisees did not like Jesus, but Nicodemus was very interested in the things Jesus was teaching. Nicodemus was an important religious leader, so perhaps he did not want the other Pharisees to know he wanted to ask Jesus questions. Maybe that is why he chose to visit Jesus after it was dark outside. At night, not many people would see Nicodemus and Jesus together.

When Nicodemus met with Jesus, he wanted to talk about the miracles Jesus had done. He said, "No one could perform miracles like this on his own. God must be with you."

But Jesus did not talk about the miracles he had done. He knew that Pharisees wanted to be in God's kingdom, so he said something very surprising to Nicodemus. "Nicodemus," he said, "unless you are born again, you cannot enter God's kingdom."

Born again? Nicodemus was a teacher and very intelligent, but he did not understand. Nicodemus was so confused. How can a grown man go back into his mother's womb and then be born again? What did Jesus mean by this?

But Jesus explained that he was not talking about physical birth. He was talking about being born of water and spirit. Many people knew about the water in baptism, but what was meant by being born again by the spirit?

A person's physical body is born from a mother and father. To be born again happens in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

No one can see the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the Spirit is like the wind. We cannot see the wind or know where it comes from, but we see the things the wind blows around. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but when we see the good things people do, we know that the Holy Spirit is living and working in that person.

Being born again is having a new beginning with the Holy Spirit, God and Jesus.

Jesus explained that there are some things we can see and some things we cannot. We see things on this earth, but we do not see spiritual things like heaven. God sent Jesus from heaven to save the world.

Jesus taught Nicodemus many important things that night. He even reminded Nicodemus of a time in the Old Testament when bronze statues of snakes were lifted up in the desert. When people looked at the snakes, they were healed of their sicknesses.

But Jesus was talking about something that would happen in the future. Jesus was talking about the end of his life when he would be lifted up on the cross to heal the world of its sickness of sin.

God wants everyone to be born again and live in his kingdom. He sent his Son to earth to die on the cross and give everyone a chance to live forever with him.

Jesus is the Son of God. He brings light to our dark world. This is why these important words are written in John 3:16.

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. God gave his Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life."

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain faithful to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#), or [click here to download the pictures to print](#). Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Another very good slideshow is by Good News Production Int. and is available for free download from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-017-nicodemus/>

Review Questions:

1. Who visited Jesus during the night? Nicodemus
2. What was Nicodemus' role or job? Pharisee
3. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus he must do to enter the kingdom of God? Be born again
4. What does it mean to be born again? Having a new beginning with the Holy Spirit, God and Jesus

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Song Suggestions:

- [Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day](#)
- [Jesus Hokey Pokey](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine](#)
- [Fruit of the Spirit](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Tell the story by candle or torch/flashlight to set the mood for Nicodemus visiting Jesus by night.
- Use the activity [Drawing Contrasts](#) and allow the children to talk about what it means to be born again (in the Spirit) to be born to parents as a baby. You and your children will come up with more ideas, but a few are listed below to get you started.
 - One column will contain words and thoughts related to the physical. This might include looking and acting like your parents, learning to talk, crawling, eating baby food first, seeing and smelling things, this body will get old and die someday, etc.
 - The other column will contain words and thoughts about being born again. Be sure to refer back to what Jesus said, but this may include Trying to be like the Spirit (and God and Jesus), believing in God even though we do not see him, learning to talk in a new way (kind words, no swearing), using our bodies in good ways (helping others, etc), when we are reborn our spirits live forever.
- Memorise John 3:16. [Click here for ideas](#).
- Play a simple word game. [Bible Wordz Game](#) is an adaptable game where children form words from letter tiles. The words relate to words found in the Bible lesson.

Crafts:

- Make a wind chime. Jesus used the wind to explain the Spirit.
- Design and cut simple Jesus and Nicodemus figures from coloured paper. Glue these onto black paper. Use star and moon stickers or glue and glitter to decorate the night sky.
- Print or write the words from John 3:21 on white or light-coloured paper. Glue this onto black paper to show the contrast between dark and light.



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).

Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page \(Crafting the word of God\)](#)
- [Colouring Page \(My Wonder Studio\)](#)
- [Colouring by number picture \(Sunday school zone\)](#)
- [Game: Printable matching game \(Sunday school zone\)](#)
- [Craft: Video explaining how to make an easy windchime \(Full-Time Kid\)](#)
- [Craft: John 3:16 craft pattern \(Park Baptist Church\)](#)
- [Craft: John 3:16 folded puzzle and pattern \(Kids Bible teacher\)](#)

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