Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus and Nicodemus

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Nicodemus came to Jesus with questions, and Jesus told him, "Ye must be born again." God loves the world so much that He gave Jesus, so that whosoever believes in Him can have everlasting life.
Bible passage: John 3:1–21. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." *John 3:16 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a paper bag with one small object inside, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Put one small object in the paper bag (a spoon, a key or a pencil).

1. Opening game: Ask a Good Question (5–10 minutes)

Hold up the closed bag. Say: "Something is in this bag. You can find out what it is only by asking me questions I can answer with yes or no." Count the questions. When someone guesses it, open the bag. Play again with a child holding the bag if there is time. Ask: *Which questions helped the most?* Say: "Good questions help us learn. Today we will meet a leader who came to Jesus at night with questions, and Jesus gave him the most important answers of all."

2. Bible story: Born Again (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

A leader comes at night. Look up John 3:1–2. (A **Pharisee** was one of a group of Jewish men who worked hard to keep God's law; a **ruler of the Jews** was a leader of his people; **Rabbi** means teacher, or Master, John 1:38; **miracles** are wonderful things only God can do.) The Bible does not say why Nicodemus came by night. It just says he came.

"Ye must be born again." Look up John 3:3–4. (**Verily** means truly; the **kingdom of God** is where God is King.) Nicodemus thought Jesus meant being born as a baby a second time, and he knew that couldn't happen.

Water and Spirit. Look up John 3:5–7. (**Flesh** means our human body; **marvel not** means don't be surprised.) Our first birth gives us a human body. Jesus was talking about a new birth from God.

Like the wind. Look up John 3:8. (**Bloweth where it listeth** means blows where it wants to; **whence** means from where; **whither** means to where.) Nicodemus asked, "How can these things be?" (3:9), and Jesus said, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (3:10). A **master of Israel** is a teacher of God's people.

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Lifted up. Look up John 3:14–15. Jesus reminded Nicodemus of a story from Numbers 21. God's people spoke against God, and fiery serpents (poisonous snakes) bit the people (Numbers 21:5–6). God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole, and everyone who was bitten and looked at it lived (21:8–9). Jesus said He must be "lifted up" the same way (John 3:14). He meant the cross (John 12:32–33). Whoever believes in Him has eternal life (3:15).

God so loved the world. Look up John 3:16–17. (**Begotten** means born; **whosoever** means anyone at all; **perish** means be lost forever; **everlasting** means forever; **condemn** means judge guilty and punish.) Jesus is called the Son of God because He was born of Mary by the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35). He is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16).

Darkness and light. Look up John 3:19–21. (**Condemnation** means the judgment; **reproved** means shown to be wrong; **made manifest** means shown clearly; **wrought in God** means done with God's help.) People who do wrong hide from the light, but people who do what is true come to the light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Nicodemus came in the night, and Jesus told him about the Light that had come into the world.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Nicodemus was a teacher, but he still came to Jesus with questions (John 3:2, 3:10). Why is it good to bring our questions to Jesus?
2. Jesus said the wind blows where it wants, and you can hear it but can't see it (3:8). What are some things you know are real even though you can't see them?
3. Jesus said "whosoever" in John 3:16. Who is left out of "whosoever"? *(No one!)*
4. John 3:17 says God did not send Jesus to condemn the world but to save it. How does that show God's love?
5. People who do what is true come to the light (3:21). What does it look like to "come to the light" at home or at school?

Recall questions

1. What group did Nicodemus belong to? *(The Pharisees, John 3:1)*
2. When did Nicodemus come to Jesus? *(By night, 3:2)*
3. What did Moses lift up in the wilderness? *(The serpent of brass, on a pole, 3:14; Numbers 21:9)*

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4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **so loved** means loved so very much, **begotten** means born, **whosoever** means anyone, **believeth** means believes, **perish** means be lost forever, and **everlasting** means forever. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God loves you so much that He gave Jesus. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Jesus told Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (John 3:5). On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached how we obey the gospel: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **born of water** when we are buried with Jesus in baptism, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). We are **born of the Spirit** when God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). On that day the Holy Ghost came with a sound 'as of a rushing mighty wind' (Acts 2:2), and Jesus had told Nicodemus that being born of the Spirit is like the wind (John 3:8)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: bring one question about God to your parents or pastor, like Nicodemus brought his to Jesus. And tell one person John 3:16.

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6. Activity: Hide or Come to the Light? (10–15 minutes)

Draw a dark cloud on one side of the board and a bright sun on the other. Read each one. Kids cover their eyes for "hide in the dark" or hold their hands up open for "come to the light," then say what the right choice is (John 3:20–21).

1. You break a dish and push the pieces under the couch. *(Hide: tell the truth, 3:21)*
2. You broke a rule, and you tell your mom before she finds out. *(Come to the light, 3:21)*
3. You have a question about God, and you ask your teacher. *(Come to the light, like Nicodemus coming to Jesus, 3:2)*
4. You take a cookie when no one is looking. *(Hide: don't do what you'd need to hide, 3:20)*
5. You tell God you're sorry for a wrong thing and stop doing it. *(Come to the light: repent, Acts 2:38)*
6. A friend is sad, and you tell them, "God loves you." *(Come to the light, John 3:16)*

Or choose the **Jesus and Nicodemus word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/nicodemus-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/nicodemus-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/nicodemus-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/nicodemus-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for loving the whole world so much that You came to us in Jesus. Thank You that whosoever believes in Him can have everlasting life. Help us bring our questions to You and walk in the light. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks why Nicodemus came at night: the Bible doesn't say, so we don't guess (John 3:2). It does tell us what happened later: he stood up for Jesus in front of the other Pharisees (John 7:50–51), and he brought myrrh and aloes when Jesus was buried (John 19:39).
If a child asks if the snakes in Numbers 21 are scary: keep it short: God told Moses to make the serpent of brass so the people who looked at it would live (Numbers 21:8–9). Jesus was lifted up so whoever believes in Him would live forever (John 3:14–15).
If a child asks what "only begotten Son" means: Jesus was born of Mary by the Holy Ghost, so He is called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

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