

Bible Story

Jesus and Nicodemus • John 3:1-21

Story Point

Jesus taught that we must be born again.

Memory Verse

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” **John 3:16**

Big Picture

What makes people special?

People are special because we are made in God’s image,
as male and female, to know Him.

FOR PARENTS ONLY: Bible Study

Jesus’ ministry had begun. His early miracles included turning water into wine, casting out demons, and healing people. John 2:23 says that “many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing.” Jesus likely spent a large part of His day teaching. When the day was done, He spent time alone or with His disciples. One night, a man named Nicodemus approached Jesus.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews; that is, he was a religious leader who taught God’s law, and he was a member of the Sanhedrin—a Jewish governing body. Nicodemus held to the belief that if a person was a law-abiding Jew, he would be accepted by God. Jesus gave Nicodemus a lesson that would turn his belief system on its head.

Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), so the religious teachers likely assumed He didn’t know theology. But they had seen Jesus’ miraculous signs in Jerusalem. Nicodemus had to conclude, “You are a teacher who has come from God” (John 3:2).

Nicodemus initiated the conversation, but Jesus chose the subject. His words perplexed Nicodemus: “Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Jesus explained that spiritual birth is not unlike physical birth in that a person cannot do it himself; it is something that happens to him.

Jesus reminded Nicodemus of an Old Testament account, the disobedient Israelites and the bronze snake. The Israelites could not help themselves, but when they trusted in God and looked to the bronze snake lifted up on the pole, they were healed. (Num. 21:4-9)

Emphasize to kids that every person is born a sinner—spiritually dead and alienated from God. It is by God’s Spirit—not our own effort—that we are born again. We look to Jesus and His finished work on the cross for our salvation.

Activity Sheet

Pass out the activity page. Prompt kids to share who they go to when they have a question. Does that person always have the answers? Why?

What You Say:

Your birthday is a celebration of the day you were born. Did you know if you trust in Jesus, you actually have *two* birthdays?! Today in our Bible lesson we are going to hear about Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus, and we will also learn what it means to be born again.

How in the world?

What You Do:

Read these four questions regarding how things work. (Feel free to add your own additional questions.)

Provide a pencil and two index cards to each kid. Read one question and invite kids to write a brief answer. Kids can write on the back and front of each index card. If kids do not know the correct answer, encourage them to write their best guess. Then call for kids to read their answers. Let kids vote which answer they think is correct. Then give the correct explanation. Play again for each question.

Questions:

How can flies land on the ceiling?

How do glasses help people see?

Why is the ocean salty?

Why does ice cream cause a “brain freeze”?

Answer Key:

1. Hairs on a fly’s footpads produce sticky “glue” made of sugar and oil.

2. Eyeglasses bend light coming toward the eye to correct vision.

3. Rain breaks down rocks on land and washes salty elements (sodium and chloride) into the ocean.

4. The cold quickly constricts the blood vessels in the roof of your mouth.

What You Say:

Those were some hard questions to answer! Sometimes answers are difficult to understand! In the Bible story we will hear today, a man asked Jesus, “How can anyone be born when he is old?” We’ll find out what Jesus said. **(Open your Bibles to John 3)**

Bible Lesson: Jesus and Nicodemus • John 3:1-21

Bible Storytelling Tips:

Call for active listening: Challenge kids to count how many times they hear the word *born* in the story.

Vary your voice: Vary your voice for the dialogue of different people. For example, use one voice for Jesus and another voice for Nicodemus.

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”^[d]

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^[e] ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[f] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”^[g]

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has

come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

What You Say:

Jesus taught that we must be born again. Without Jesus, we are spiritually dead. Our hearts are hard, and we love sin more than we love God. But God can soften people's hearts. Jesus offers new life to those who trust in Him for salvation. Let's answer our big picture question: ***What makes people special? People are special because we are made in God's image, as male and female, to know Him.***

Discuss

- Jesus said that He had been sent by God not to punish the world, but to do what? (*save the world, John 3:17*)
- What does it mean to be born again? *Prompt the kids to think about the ending of their old, sinful lives and the start of their new lives in Jesus. Remind them that God declares sinners righteous when they believe in Jesus. God no longer sees believers as sinners, but as saints. Our new and eternal life with God starts as soon as we believe the gospel.*
- What does it mean to have eternal life? *Discuss the idea that eternal life with God is not just regular life that never ends, but joyful, loving, obedient life that goes on forever. A believer's new life begins right away. Even after physical death, our souls live with God forever. When Jesus returns, we will continue living with God in glorified bodies.*
- Why did God send Jesus to save us? *Remind the kids that God loves people and always does what is for His glory and our good. We are special to God, and He wanted to save us from sin to show His goodness and love.*

Christ Connection

Nicodemus needed new life—eternal life—but he could not do anything to earn it. Every person is born a sinner—spiritually dead and separated from God. Eternal life is a gift that comes only from God. It is by God's Spirit—not our own effort—that we are born again. We look to Jesus and His finished work on the cross for our salvation. 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.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS:

Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 3:14-16. Ask the following questions and discuss:

- How was the bronze serpent being lifted up like Jesus being lift up? *Lead kids to connect that like the serpent, Jesus was lifted up on the cross. He died for our sins and was raised from the dead. Like the Israelites with snakebites, we can't do anything to save ourselves. But we can look to Jesus for salvation.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Num. 21:8-9.)
- Can a person get into heaven by doing enough good things? Why or why not? *Emphasize that God wants us to obey Him, but the Bible says everyone sins. (Rom. 3:23) If we had to obey God perfectly to go to heaven, no one would ever get to heaven! We are accepted by God when we trust in Jesus, who lived a perfect life and died the death we deserve for our sins.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 2:8-9.)
- How is being apart from God like being in the dark? How can we bring friends and family members into the light of the gospel? *Explain to kids that the Bible says that Jesus is the light of the world. Before we trust in Jesus, we live in darkness. Discuss the difficulty of seeing in the dark. God lights up the path of our lives and shows us what is true. We can tell others about what Jesus has done and pray for them.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 5:8-10.)

Big Picture Question

Jesus met all kinds of people while He was on earth, and He loved them. As you remember our Bible lesson today, think about our big picture question: ***What makes people special? People are special because we are made in God's image, as male and female, to know Him.*** God is not distant; He is personal and wants us to know Him. One way we can know better God is by reading His Word—the Bible.

Questions from Kids, Bible Story Video

Show the Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to think about what happens when a person trusts in Jesus. Guide them to discuss how they think a person might feel after trusting in Jesus. Would a person feel different? Why or why not?

Missions Moment

In Nevada, a young woman named Anna asked, “What can I do to have a relationship with Christ?” Missionaries Heiden and Neena Ratner and Christian athletes of Walk Church introduced Anna to Jesus and taught her how to be born again. Let’s watch a video about her story. Play the “Anna’s Story” missions video. Then pray that more people in Nevada will know Jesus and follow Him.

What You Say:

Jesus taught that we must be born again. **As Christians, we want other people to know this, too. We can all have eternal life through Jesus.** Missionaries like Heiden and Neena Ratner in Las Vegas, Nevada, are leading people to Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for showing Your incredible love for us through Jesus. Help us love You and obey Your commands. Give us ears that can hear You and hearts that can feel You. We want to know You and be born again into Your family. Amen.

Activity: Make Oobleck

What You Need: disposable bowl, 1 cup of water, 1 ½ cups cornstarch, paper towels or wet wipes (for cleanup) spoon (optional)

Make Oobleck, a substance that acts like both a solid and a liquid.

1. First, pour 1 cup of water into a disposable bowl.
2. Gradually add 1½ cups cornstarch.
3. Stir thoroughly or mix with your hands.
4. Adjust the consistency of the oobleck by adding more water or cornstarch.

Show kids how the oobleck reacts to touch by slowly pulling your fingers through it. It will flow and drip like a liquid. Poke or punch the oobleck. Applying pressure to the mixture will make it will feel hard like a solid. If you wish, allow kids to experiment with the oobleck. Invite them to knead it, roll it, or pour it. Provide paper towels or wet wipes for cleanup.

Remind kids that **Jesus taught that we must be born again** to enter God’s kingdom.

What You Say

Without Jesus, we are spiritually dead. Our hearts are hard, and we love sin more than we love God. But God can soften people’s hearts. Jesus offers new life to those who trust in Him for salvation.

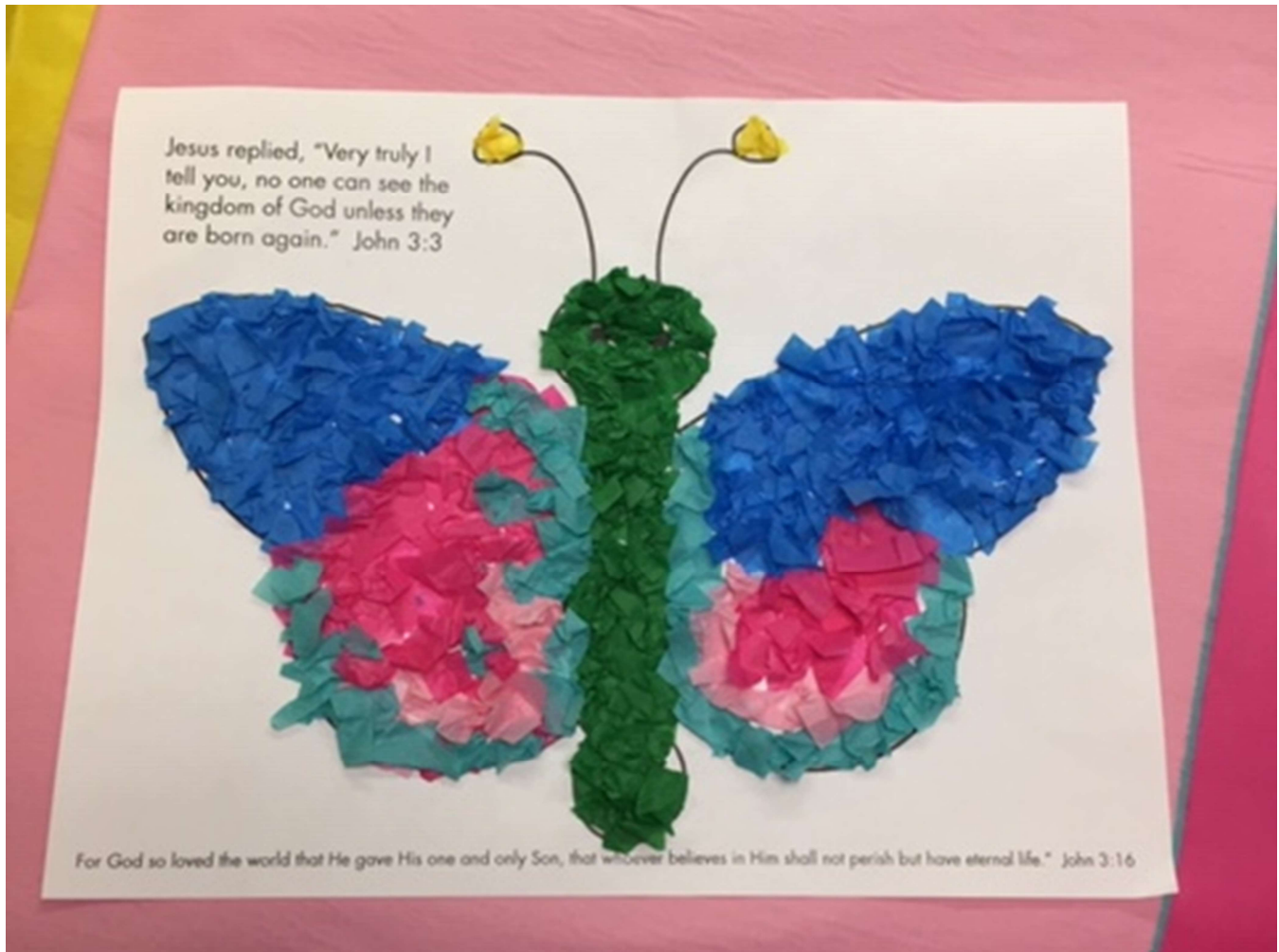
Craft: Butterfly

What You Say:

Our craft today is a butterfly. It is a reminder that a Christian is born again – one physical and one spiritual. Just like the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, “a new creature,” a person becomes “a new creature” when they accept Jesus as their savior!

What You Do:

1. Cut tissue paper into about 2” squares AND THEN cut those squares into 1” squares
2. Crunch tissue squares and glue onto the butterfly.
3. Make any design you would like, generally using green to cover the body of the butterfly.
4. See sample to give you an idea of the craft.



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