



April 16, 2023

UNIT 20 SESSION 1

Jesus Told Nicodemus About Eternal Life

John 3

KEY PASSAGE:

Romans 5:8

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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.

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, ask kids about their week, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY What are some chores you have to do around your house? What is your least favorite? Can you earn anything by doing chores?

Activity Page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "The New Creation" on the activity page.

SAY God gives us new life through faith in Jesus. Everyone Jesus saves will live with Him forever in the new creation. In today's Bible story, we will learn about a man who did not understand how to have eternal life.

Session Starter (10 minutes)

QUESTIONS

Form kids into groups of three or four. Lead kids to think of questions they would like answered about Jesus and/or the world around them. Provide some examples to help prompt the discussion such as "Why did God create snakes?" "Did Jesus have homework?" "Did Jesus have a favorite color?"

Direct kids to share their questions as you write them down on a dry erase board. Encourage kids to remember that we may not know all the answers to the questions, but we can trust that God knows everything. Review the list of questions and discuss how God does not discourage our questions.

SAY There are so many questions we might ask God! He knows everything and we can trust Him even if we don't know the answer. But God does answer some of our questions in His Word. In today's Bible story, a man had an important question for Jesus. Let's read our story to learn what he asked and how Jesus answered him.

LEARN: THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL



LEARN the Bible Story

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus!

Use The Gospel: God's Plan for Me as a reference.

Key Passage Activity (10 minutes)

Romans 5:8

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Romans 5:8 together.

SAY *Jesus told Nicodemus how to have eternal life by believing in Him. Our key passage reminds us that God proved His love for us and by sending Jesus to die for our sins so we can have life with Him forever.*

Guide kids to sit in a circle with their legs crossed. Lead kids to use their hands and knees like drums and create a rap with the key passage. Say two words to repeat at first. Then add a few more words of the key passage. Continue leading kids to add a few words of the key passage at a time until it is complete.

LOVE God by Applying the Story

Bible Skills & Review (10 minutes)

Distribute Bibles. Guide kids to open their Bibles to John 3. Explain that John is found the New Testament. Remind kids that the Gospel of John teaches about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 3:16 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud. Consider pointing out the location of Jerusalem (H5), where Nicodemus met Jesus at night on the New Testament Israel Map.

SAY The salvation that Nicodemus wanted could not be earned through good works or obeying the law. Jesus told Nicodemus that the only way to be saved, forgiven, and have the gift of eternal life was to believe in Him.

God gave His only Son so that sinners could be saved. Jesus died while we were still sinners, showing that God's love for us is not based on how 'good' we are or how much we obey His law. God loves us because He made us, and He gave His Son, Jesus, so we could live with Him forever.

Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the kids to discuss their answers.

SAY *Have you ever had questions or been confused like Nicodemus?
What did you do?*

Help kids understand that it is OK to have questions or not understand everything. Tell kids that God has answered the most important questions for us in His Word. Explain that He has told us how the world was made, why we were created, how sin cursed creation, and how Jesus came to redeem what sin had broken. Remind kids that they can turn to His Word to help them answer questions, go to a trusted adult, pray, and ask the Holy Spirit to help give them wisdom.

SAY How did this Bible story teach that Jesus can be found in the Old Testament?

Remind kids that the Pharisees knew the law and studied Scripture. Tell kids that Nicodemus would have been familiar with the story of Moses and the bronze serpent. Lead kids to discuss how the bronze serpent was like a shadow that showed a picture of what Jesus would one day come to do. Remind kids that just as people looked to the serpent and trusted God to save them, so do we look to Jesus on the cross and trust Him to save us from our sin.

SAY How did today's Bible story make you more grateful for God's love for you?
How can you show God you are thankful for His love?

Answers will vary. Remind kids that God loves them and gave His most precious Son for them. Lead kids to discuss how they can show their love for God by loving others and telling them about how Jesus can save them from their sin.



LIVE the Mission

Activity Choice (10 minutes)

BORN AGAIN

Explain to kids that you will list several examples and they must decide if they describe someone who has been born again. Remind kids that being born again means that through faith in Jesus we have been given new, everlasting life. Tell kids that if the example describes someone who is born again, they should hold a thumbs up. If it does not, kids hold up a thumbs down.

Consider using the following examples or choose your own: forgiven, receive the Holy Spirit, believes in Jesus, works for salvation, saved from sin, given eternal life, promised an eternal hope, faces eternal death, enters the kingdom of God.

SAY We can know that God loves us because He gave us Jesus to forgive the sins of the world. Everyone who believes in Jesus is born again. We have new life that saves us from death, judgment, and separation from God. Jesus is the greatest gift we can ever receive!

Give each kid a small gift box to color. Inside have them write on a piece of paper...Jesus!

Have them give the gift to someone to open and practice sharing the good news that Jesus is the greatest gift!

Reflection and Prayer (5 minutes)

Ask the kids the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Pray with your group!

God, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Your one and only Son to save the world and forgive our sins. Help us share Your love with others. Amen.

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.