



LESSON 5

NICODEMUS VISITS JESUS

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Sent Jesus Because He Loves Us

SCRIPTURE: John 3

GOD'S BIG STORY: A pharisee named Nicodemus is curious about Jesus, so he visits Him seeking answers. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he can have eternal life through Him!

WORD OF WONDER: God so loved the world. He gave His one and only Son. —from John 3:16

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: If you could ask Jesus any question, what would you ask?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder: From John 3:16
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions
- Craft: Jesus Loves Me!
- Game: Sneaking to Meet Jesus
- Responding in Worship: God and Us
- Closing Game: Heart Hunt



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Sent Jesus Because He Loves Us

SCRIPTURE: John 3

WORD OF WONDER: From John 3:16

This week you'll share the vital truth that God sent Jesus because He loves us. But before you start planning, preparing, and practicing, take time to let this familiar (but mind-blowing!) truth sink in: God sent Jesus because He loves you too. While we're leading kids, it can be easy to forget that we're a part of God's big story too—and that we can experience the same wonder that kids do!

I invite you to read about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1–21. Imagine what Nicodemus may have felt as Jesus broke down His message of love and salvation. Did Nicodemus rejoice in knowing the truth? Did he fear the immediate danger the truth could pose for him? Did he sense that his life and all he thought he understood about God had just changed? Did he feel Jesus' love for Him?

For two millennia, the message Jesus spoke to Nicodemus has changed lives ... for eternity. God's love is for you. God's promise is for you. Jesus is for you. Remember it. Celebrate it. Cherish it. And let it change your life ... for eternity.

—**Andrae Jones**

Nextgen Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Nicodemus was a religious leader and Pharisee. The Pharisees were very influential Jewish religious leaders during the time of Jesus. They focused on legalistically keeping God's law and even went beyond that to keeping the traditions of the elders.

WHAT?

Nicodemus believed that Jesus was a teacher from God, but he seemed confused about what Jesus was teaching. Jesus explained salvation to Nicodemus, giving a deep theological explanation to someone who would have known God's Word inside and out!

WHERE?

Nicodemus visited Jesus in Jerusalem, where the religious leaders of the Pharisees lived and where the leaders of the Sadducees, who controlled the temple, would have been. Although there was great theological depth and religious practice in the city, many of these religious leaders missed Jesus' message.

WHEN?

Nicodemus came to visit Jesus at night, perhaps because he was afraid to be seen with Jesus. We don't know what Nicodemus believed, but he helped bury Jesus after His death (John 19). We can hope that Nicodemus came to believe Jesus is the Messiah!

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

Jesus' words to Nicodemus include the most popular verse in the Bible—John 3:16. This verse states plainly what we see throughout Scripture: God loves us so much that He made the way for us to be saved from our sins and live forever with Him. The way is Jesus!

LESSON 5 **EARLY ELEMENTARY**

Small Group

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Sent Jesus Because He Loves Us

SCRIPTURE: John 3

WORD OF WONDER: From John 3:16

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "**I'm curious..**" before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **If you met someone new and could ask them three questions, what would you ask?**
- **Have you ever asked a question no one could answer? What was it?**



Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, inflated balloon or ball (1), marker, paper heart (optional)

WORD OF WONDER

God so loved the world. He gave His one and only Son.

—from John 3:16

Allergy Caution: Be aware of latex allergies or sensitivities among your kids and volunteers before doing this activity.

Ahead of time, inflate a balloon and draw a heart on it, or use a ball and tape a paper heart to it. Gather kids in a circle and say the verse (with motions) several times.

- **GOD**—Point up to God.
- **SO LOVED**—Hands on heart.
- **THE WORLD**—Hands in a big circle over your head.
- **HE GAVE HIS ONE**—Point up with one finger.
- **AND ONLY SON**—Hold your hands out on either side (like a cross).
- **FROM JOHN 3:16**—Hold your hands together as if opening a book.

We're going to say the verse again, but this time, as we go around the circle, each of you will say one word of the verse. When it's your turn to say a word of the verse, jump as high as you can! Go around the circle saying the verse with the kids, one word at a time, until you get to the end and the last kid jumps.

Then bring out the balloon or ball. The heart on the balloon (or ball) reminds us that God sent Jesus because He loves us. We're going to say the verse again, and this time, we're going to pass the balloon (or ball) around the circle while we say the verse, one word at a time, like we just did. You'll pass the balloon after you say the word of the verse. When we get to the end, toss it in the air as you say the last word of the verse!

Encourage the kids to pass the balloon (or ball) while saying the verse.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **Who loved the world?** (God)
- **How does God show love for everyone in the world?** (by sending Jesus)
- **How do you show others that you love them?**

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Tell kids today's true story comes from the Bible and is found in John, the fourth book in the New Testament. Ask kids who they think wrote the book of John and let them answer (answer: Jesus' friend and disciple, John).

Today we are reading a story about a man named Nicodemus who lived in a town called Jericho. Nicodemus wanted to see Jesus, but there was a problem that made it hard for him. Jesus noticed Nicodemus in a surprising way. Listen closely to hear what Jesus did and how Nicodemus' life changed.

[Read the God's Big Story Script below from John 3:1–8, 16–21](#)

One night, a man named Nicodemus came to see Jesus. Pretend to tiptoe quietly like it is nighttime. Nicodemus was a teacher who knew a lot about God, but he wanted to understand more. Put your hand on your chin like you are thinking. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again to see God's kingdom." Open your hands wide like you are imagining something big. Nicodemus did not understand at first. Tilt your head like you are wondering.

Jesus explained that new life comes from God and the Holy Spirit. Stretch your arms up high like you are reaching for God. Hold up a small paper or foam heart and show it to the children. Jesus gives us new hearts that are alive with His Spirit. Pass the heart around so each child can touch or hold it briefly.

Jesus also said He gives living water to everyone who believes in Him. Hold up a small cup of water and invite children to dip their fingers in it or take a tiny sip if appropriate. This living water is a picture of the new life and joy Jesus gives. God loves everyone so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us. Point to your heart. Jesus said that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. Smile big. But those who do not believe will not see this new life. Shake your head slowly.

Jesus reminded Nicodemus that God did not send Him to judge people but to save them. Hold your hands out like you are giving a hug. Everyone who trusts Jesus can have life that lasts forever. Stretch your arms wide.

God's love is amazing, and Jesus is the way to be close to Him. Put your hand on your heart and remember the heart and living water as signs of new life in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

SUPPLIES: play dough

Gather the kids in a circle. **In our story today, Nicodemus asked Jesus some questions and got some answers that surprised him. We're going to use play dough to help answer our questions today. You'll get a turn to sit in the middle of the circle and make something out of play dough to help answer a question.**

Invite one kid to sit in the middle of the circle. Give the kid a lump of play dough and ask a question, allowing the kid time to create something with the play dough to answer the question. It's OK if the play dough creation is abstract—it doesn't have to be perfect. The play dough creation can be any shape related to the answer. For example, a ball could be a person's head (Nicodemus), or a cross could represent Jesus. After each question, choose another kid to sit in the middle of the circle with the play dough and answer a question.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- **Who visited Jesus in today's story?** (Nicodemus)
- **What kind of person was Nicodemus?** (Pharisee, leader, teacher)
- **Why did Nicodemus visit Jesus?** (to ask Jesus questions)
- **What is God's kingdom?** (It's where God is in charge, and all things are being made right.)
- **What did Jesus tell Nicodemus a person needed to do to see God's kingdom?** (be born again)
- **Why did God send Jesus?** (to save us)
- **What questions would you ask Jesus if you met Him?**
- **How does Jesus help us?** (When we trust in Him, we get to live in God's kingdom forever.)

God loved us so much that He sent Jesus. We can choose to believe in Jesus and follow Him. Let's talk to God now in prayer to thank Him for the love of Jesus!

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for sending Jesus to us.

Head to Large Group!

Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.

Responding in Worship: Play Dough Creations

SUPPLIES: play dough (enough for each kid)

RESOURCES: music from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Prepare a lump of play dough for each kid.

In our story today, we learned about when Nicodemus talked to Jesus. Jesus told him that people must be “born again” to live forever with God. Jesus died on the cross so we can be forgiven for our sins. When we trust in Him, we can be saved. We’re going to use play dough to make anything you think about or feel as I read some verses from the Bible. You could make a heart, a cross, a J for Jesus, or any shape you want. Make anything and be creative!

Give each kid a lump of play dough and read the following verses to them while they listen and shape their dough.

- **John 3:16:** “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.”
- **1 John 3:1 :** “Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins.”
- **Romans 5:8 :** “But here is how God has shown his love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- **1 John 4:19 :** “We love because he first loved us.”

God can speak to us through His Word, the Bible. When you read the Bible, pray and ask God to speak to your heart. Then listen for Him. We can thank God for sending Jesus.

Game: Sneaking to Meet Jesus

SUPPLIES: tape

RESOURCES: [Jesus Picture Sheet \(1/SG\)](#)

Ahead of time, print the Jesus Picture Sheet. Tape it to the wall. When you’re ready to play, gather the kids together across from the picture.

Today we learned about a time Nicodemus wanted to talk to Jesus, but he had to sneak around the other Pharisees to do it. Many other Pharisees were nervous about Jesus. They did not trust what Jesus said about God. Nicodemus sneaked out to meet Jesus at night to talk with Him. We don’t need to sneak out to meet with Jesus! We can talk to Jesus anytime through prayer, but we’re going to try sneaking out like Nicodemus.



You’ll sneak across the room to the picture of Jesus when I’m not looking, but when I turn around to face you, you all need to freeze. Encourage the kids to line up across the room from the Jesus picture while you face your back to them. They can sneak and tiptoe toward the Jesus picture. Play several rounds.

Leader Tip: Invite kids to move across the room in different ways: crawling, jumping, dancing, etc.