



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 that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him. —John 3:16–17

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: If you could ask Jesus any question, what would you ask?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: God and Us
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Looking to the Cross



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: John 3:16–17

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!

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: John 3:16-17

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 ...

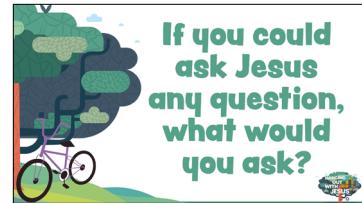
Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

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 Activity

WORD OF WONDER

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. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world.

He sent his Son to save the world through him.

—John 3:16–17 (NIV)

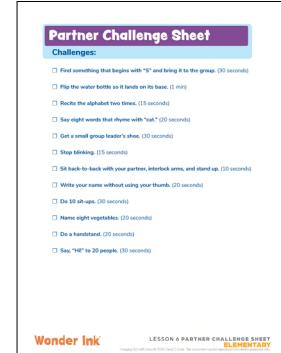
SUPPLIES: Bible, small whiteboards (1 per small group), dry-erase markers (1 per small group), erasers or cloths (1 per small group), stopwatches (1 per small group), unopened bottle of water (1 per small group)

RESOURCES: Partner Challenge Sheet (1 per small group)

Ahead of time, write the Word of Wonder (John 3:16–17) on small whiteboards (one per small group) and print a copy of the Partner Challenge Sheet for each small group.

Today in God's big story, we learned about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus spoke the words of our Word of Wonder as He explained to Nicodemus what it means to be "born again" (John 3:3). Let's say our Word of Wonder together! Open your Bible to John 3:16–17. Read John 3:16–17 out loud several times together.

Let's have fun practicing our Word of Wonder by doing a partner challenge! Pair kids up within their small group (groups of three are also OK). Each pair will complete a challenge from the Partner Challenge Sheet in the time listed. If completed successfully, the pair will erase four words from the verse on their group's small whiteboard. Then kids in that group can say the verse again. Repeat challenges until the verse is completely erased.



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). Invite kids to open their Bibles to John 3 and invite your volunteers to help as needed.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a teacher of God's law. He came to Jesus at night because he had questions about God's kingdom. Jesus explained that people must be born again through the Spirit to truly know God and have eternal life. As you read, think about what it means to be "born again" and why God sent Jesus to save the world.

Read John 3:1–8, 16–21 or invite two confident, willing readers to each read one section of the passage aloud while everyone follows along.

Elementary Questions

- **Who visited Jesus in today's story? Why did he visit Jesus?** (Nicodemus, a Pharisee [Jewish religious leader] and member of the Jewish council. He had heard about Jesus but was curious and wanted to know more about Him.)
- **What is one thing Jesus told Nicodemus?** (Possible answers: No one can see God's kingdom unless they are born again; Moses lifted up a bronze snake to save people, like Jesus would be lifted on a cross to save people; God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so people could have eternal life. See John 3:5–21 for more details.)
- **God sent His one and only Son to earth. According to Jesus, why did God do this?** (Because He loves the world and wanted to save all people from their sins—the wrong things they do—so they could have eternal life.)
- **What do you think it means to believe in Jesus?** (Possible answers: Believing that Jesus is the Son of God and is our Savior; We accept his gift of forgiveness for our sins; We become forever friends with Jesus.)
- **When we choose to believe in Jesus and follow Him, what does God promise?** (Our sins—the wrong things we do—are forgiven and we will live forever with God.)
- **Have you decided to believe in and follow Jesus? Tell about it.**

God loves us so much! Did you know there is nothing you could ever do to make Jesus not love you? When we choose to believe in Jesus, we become children of God and He gives us eternal life. He becomes our forever friend, and we will live forever with Him. Let's thank God now for the amazing gift of life with Him!

Leader Tip: Be ready to talk with kids about what it means to believe in and follow Jesus! Tell them your own story of how you came to faith in Jesus and what walking with Him looks like in your life. Consider referring to the Salvation Path resource and inviting your ministry leader and kids' parents into the conversation!

Preteen Questions

- **Who visited Jesus in today's story? Why did he visit Jesus?** (Nicodemus, a Pharisee [Jewish religious leader] and member of the Jewish council. He had heard about Jesus but was curious and wanted to know more about Him.)
- **Of everything Jesus said to Nicodemus, what stood out to you most?** (Possible answers: No one can see God's kingdom unless they are born again; Moses lifted up a bronze snake to save people, like Jesus would be lifted on a cross to save people; God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so people could have eternal life. If needed, invite kids to look back at John 3:1–21.)
- **Why did God send Jesus to the world? How would sending Jesus change the world?** (God sent Jesus because He loves the world and wanted to make the way for all people to be saved from sin—the wrong things they do—and live forever with Him.)
- **If you could describe God's love for us, how would you describe it?**
- **What do you think it means to believe in Jesus? What does this look like in your life or in the lives of people you know?**

- Have you decided to believe in and follow Jesus? Tell about it.

God loves us so much! Did you know there is nothing you could ever do to make Jesus not love you? When we choose to believe in Jesus, we become children of God and He gives us eternal life. He becomes our forever friend, and we will live forever with Him. Let's thank God now for the amazing gift of life with Him!

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises. Have them sit in a circle and thank God for His love and for sending Jesus to us. Encourage one or two kids to pray for requests and praises that have been mentioned.

Head to Large Group!

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

Elementary Responding in Worship: God and Us

SUPPLIES: tape, chairs (3), sticky notes (2 per kid), writing utensils (1 per kid)

RESOURCES: [Chair Signs Sheet \(1 sign set\)](#), [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print one set of Chair Signs and tape each sign to a separate chair. Set the three chairs to the side. (Make sure the chairs are lightweight and that you can lift and move them easily.)

In God's big story today, Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born again to have eternal life. God sent His Son because He loves you and had a plan to rescue the world from sin—all the wrong things we do—and death. God sent Jesus because He loves us.

One night Nicodemus came to Jesus, and Jesus told Nicodemus that believing in Him would change everything. Let me show you what I mean.

Place the GOD and YOU chairs side-by-side. **God made people in His image. God was with the people He made and had a relationship with them. In the same way, God made you to have a relationship with Him.**

But people broke God's rule, and sin came into the world. Sin is disobeying God. Sin is the wrong things we say and do that separate us from God, and it's not a part of His perfect plan. Show the SIN chair. When sin came, it changed the relationship God intended for people to have with Him. Sin separates us from God, and all of us have sinned. Put the SIN chair between the GOD and YOU chairs. For many years, people continued to sin. But God desperately wanted to have a relationship again with the people He created and loved.

So, God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue people from their sin. Jesus would die on the cross. Jesus was willing to do this because He loves us. God was willing to allow Jesus, who He loves, to die because God loves us. This all took place (remove the SIN chair and move GOD and YOU chairs back



together) **so you, I, and every person can have a relationship with Him.**

Choosing to follow Jesus means that He is your forever friend, and there is nothing that separates you from Him. You get to sit in the YOU chair, close to God, now and always. Let's reflect on how much God loves us and wants us to be beside Him now and forever.

Give each kid two sticky notes and a writing utensil. Invite kids to write their names on one sticky note.

God sent Jesus because He loves you! What would you like to say to God in response? Invite kids to write or draw their responses to God on their second sticky note. Play a song from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#), and as it plays, invite kids to stick the note with their response to God on the GOD chair. Invite them to stick the note with their name on it to the YOU chair as a symbol that God sent Jesus because He loves them personally!

Leader Tip: Some kids may have questions about choosing to follow Jesus! Invite their families to join you as you talk and pray together. The Salvation Path resource also includes helpful Bible references and information!

Preteen Responding in Worship: Looking to the Cross

SUPPLIES: butcher paper, scissors (prep only), tape (prep only), sticky notes (several per kid), writing utensils (1 per kid)

RESOURCES: [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, cut a large cross out of butcher paper and tape it to the wall where kids can easily reach it.

In today's part of God's big story, as Jesus talked with Nicodemus about what it means to be born again into new life, He references a true story from the Old Testament. In this story, God's people encountered venomous snakes, and God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Anyone who is bitten could look up at the snake and stay alive. Jesus told Nicodemus that in a similar way, He—the Son of Man—would be lifted up on a cross and all who look to Him will live forever!

The next words Jesus told Nicodemus are our Word of Wonder. Open your Bible to John 3:16-27 and give each kid several sticky notes and a writing utensil. **Let's read Jesus' next words from our Word of Wonder two times. As we say the verse, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you.**

Invite kids to write the words or phrases that stood out to them on their sticky notes. They may also choose to draw a picture or symbol of what stood out to them.

Once kids are finished writing and drawing on their sticky notes, ask these questions and allow kids to share their answers:

- **What words or phrases stood out to you? Why that word or phrase?**
- **What does that word or phrase tell us about what God is like?**
- **God sent Jesus because He loves you! What do you want to say to God in response?**

Invite kids to write or draw on a sticky note anything they want to say to God in response to His love. (Hand out additional sticky notes to kids who need them.) **Let's spend a few minutes looking to the cross where we see God's love for us displayed in Jesus!** Play a song from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) and invite kids to stick their notes on the cross as they worship.