

Demonstrations of the lessons and songs in this series, are available at: cefonline.com/freedemos/gnc

INTRODUCTION

All his life Nicodemus had been doing good deeds to earn favor with God but then he met Jesus who told him he needed to be born again—completely changed. His good deeds would never make him right with God. The children you teach need to know that it is only by faith in Jesus that they can be saved from sin and made new. Reading their Bibles and going to church on Sunday, although those are good things to do, will not save them. In this lesson they will learn that when they have trusted Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit changes their hearts to help them do good like Jesus did.

Concepts covered in this lesson include:

- **Salvation:** Faith vs. works—I can be saved if I trust what Christ did for me. God has prepared good works for me to do after I trust Him.
- **Salvation:** Reverses Effects of Sin—When I believe in Jesus, He frees me from the power and penalty of sin. Jesus changes me from the inside out. I am a new creation.
- **Holy Spirit:** The moment I trust Christ as Savior, God the Holy Spirit comes to live within me. As the Holy Spirit changes my heart, I am able to be more like Jesus.
- **Jesus:** Savior—Jesus is the only one who could take the punishment for my sins because He is the only perfect man.



WORD UP!

“Jesus gives new life!”

If I go to church every week and read my Bible every day and live a good life, would that save me from my sin so I can be with God forever? (*Allow response.*) No! All those things are good, but they can’t save anyone. Jesus is the only one who has the power to give us new life so we can have a special friendship with God. Listen carefully throughout club for the words “Word Up!” for you to know when to stand and say, “**Jesus gives new life!**” (*Say with children.*)



SMALL GROUP TIME

“What Does it Mean to Praise God?” (Optional discussion)

Last week we talked about the fact that Jesus is the almighty God and we can praise Him. What does praise mean? If you want to praise someone for something, what would you say? (*Allow response.*) You might say, “You did a good job!” or “Nice work.” Maybe your teacher or your parents have said those things to you. They were praising you for what you did. You can praise God for what He does and also for who He is. Praising God means telling Him how much you appreciate who He is and what He has done.

What is something you have learned about what God has done? What is something you have learned about who He is? (*Allow responses.*) Here is a piece of paper. Try to draw a picture of something God has done or something that shows who God is. (*Allow time to draw.*) You can praise God for these things! (*Have children take turns showing what they drew and saying, “God, I praise you for _____.” Demonstrate for children with your own picture.*)

Materials

Word-Up! Booklet
(See GNC Resource Pack.)

Show the card and have the children repeat the statement: “**Jesus gives new life!**” Tell them that anytime you call out “Word Up!” they are to shout the phrase back. Call it out during transition times, times when they are restless or just anytime!

If you wish to add actions to the Word Up!, touch right middle finger to left palm, then left middle finger to right palm when you say “Jesus.” Stretch hands away from you as if giving a gift when you say “give.” Wave hands above head when you say “life.”

Materials

Paper
Crayons



LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Preschool Help

If teaching young children, be sure to include examples for this introduction that young children would relate to. Examples may include, obeying your parents, sharing your toys, saying please and thank you, etc.

Close your eyes and think about something you have done that was good. Maybe you helped a younger brother with his schoolwork. Or maybe you gave someone a compliment. Maybe you followed all the rules in your class today. What's one good thing you have done? (*Allow response.*)

Did you know that God tells us in the Bible about a man who thought he did all the right things? He tried his hardest to follow all the rules. His name was Nicodemus (*nick-oh-DEE-mus*). Can you say that with me? (*Say with children.*)

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

Slide 1

The night was dark and quiet. The only sound was the soft shuffling of sandals as Nicodemus, an important leader in Israel, hurried through the shadowy streets of Jerusalem. Nicodemus had some questions and he hoped he could find answers!

What were his questions? Who was he going to see? Nicodemus was an expert on the Old Testament—the part of the Bible written before Jesus was born. (*Show how big Old Testament is in your Bible.*) He had been studying this part of God's Word for a very long time. He knew all about God's law and taught the Israelites about it.

Slide 2

He belonged to a group of religious leaders called Pharisees (*FARE-uh-sees*). The Pharisees were thought of as the religious experts at the time. People looked up to them as examples to follow. They were very strict about keeping God's laws—they even made their own! For example, God told His people that His commands should be in every part of their lives.

Slide 3

So they decided to put God's words into little boxes like this (*show a picture of or hold up a phylactery*) and strap them around their heads and arms. If they wanted people to think they were very holy, they made the boxes bigger!

Slide 4

The Pharisees added rules of their own to God's laws until they had hundreds to remember and obey. The Pharisees prayed every day so others would notice; sometimes they would go to a busy place and pray loudly. Some of them looked down on people who were not as good as they were. They thought they were honoring God but they were not. They were known for trying to follow the laws to make themselves look good instead of following them because they loved God.

Preschool Activity

Have children stand up and tiptoe quietly as they pretend to be Nicodemus hurrying through the streets of Jerusalem.

Teacher Help

To make a phylactery wrap a small square box in black paper and glue it to a ribbon. The ribbon can be tied around the head so the box is in the center of the forehead. It can also be tied around the arm so the box is near the heart.

Materials

"Phylactery" picture
(See GNC Resource Pack.)
Or phylactery

Preschool Help

Tell preschoolers that the Pharisees were showing off. They didn't follow God's rules because they loved God but because they loved themselves. They wanted other people to think they were good and important.

Slide 5

But there was someone in Jerusalem who was going to do something no one else had ever done! He was going to keep all of God's laws perfectly! This teacher was doing things only God could do. Who do you think He is? (*Allow response.*) Jesus! Do you remember what He did in last week's story? (*Allow response.*) He turned water into wine and His disciples believed in Him.

Slide 6

Nicodemus arrived at the place where Jesus was staying and they sat down to talk. He said to Jesus, (*read John 3:2*). Nicodemus knew that only God could do the miracles that Jesus did.



Jesus was different because He is completely God and man. He came to the Earth He created to show how much He loves and cares for His creation. You are part of what God created and He loves you very much. At the beginning of John 3:16 it says, (*quote with children*). He wants you to know who He is. He wants you to know that He is holy—completely without sin and perfect in every way, different from every other person.

Only Jesus could do the miracles He did because He is God. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that being good could not save him from sin. Jesus loved Nicodemus. Jesus used words and examples to help Nicodemus understand that he could not save himself no matter how hard he tried. Jesus told Nicodemus that he would have to be born again to see God's kingdom. (*Read John 3:3.*)

Slide 7

This was very confusing for Nicodemus. He asked, "How can I be born again when I am old?" What was Jesus talking about? Could Nicodemus be born as a baby again?

Jesus meant that in order to be saved from the punishment of sin and no longer be dead in sin, Nicodemus needed to be completely changed and made new on the inside. Only God the Holy Spirit could make him new—alive instead of dead in sin!



You were born dead in your sin. (*Read Ephesians 2:1-2a.*) This means if you have not trusted in Jesus, your spirit (the part of you that can have a relationship with God) is dead. You and I are born dead in our sins. You might think that if you are really good, you will be saved from sin's punishment. But there is no good thing you can do to save yourself. You choose to do things that go your way instead of God's. Can you think of some wrong things children your age do? (*Allow response.*) These things are sin. You sin when you do what you want instead of what God wants for you. God hates sin because He is completely holy and separated from sin. The punishment for your sin is to be separated from God. All the good things you do are not enough for a good and holy God. Even people who go to church every Sunday might not be saved. Going to church does not save you and doing good things does not get rid of your sin. We are born in sin.

Preschool Help

Help young children understand that Jesus always showed love to God and to others. He was never mean and never unkind.

Preschool Song

"Jesus Loves Me" v. 1

Materials

Visualized Bible Verse Booklet
(See GNC Resource Pack.)

Preschool Activity

Show the children a picture of a baby and explain that it is not possible for someone to become a baby again, but it is possible for God to make someone new on the inside. Being born or adopted is the way people usually become part of their family. When you believe in Jesus as your Savior, you are made new inside so you can become part of God's family. This is called being born again.

Preschool Song

"Jesus Loves Me" v. 2

Lesson 2

Materials

Point between "God gives His Law" and "God's people go to the Promised Land" on the Timeline.
(See GNC Starter Resource Pack.)

Preschool Activity

Children would enjoy watching you take a piece of aluminum foil and rolling it into a snake as you tell this portion of the story.

If desired, you may use a picture of the bronze serpent and a picture of the cross to help illustrate this teaching of Jesus.

Materials

"Bronze Serpent" picture
"Cross" overlay
(See GNC Resource Pack.)

Cut out cross, using lines on back of picture for guide then place over picture of bronze serpent to show children this was a picture of Christ's work on the cross.

Materials

Visualized Bible Verse Booklet
(See GNC Resource Pack.)

Preschool Song

"I Believe the Bible" vv. 3-4

Materials

Word Up! Booklet
(See GNC Resource Pack.)

Nicodemus was born in sin but Jesus wanted him to know that to be born again is to be made new—alive instead of dead in sin. But Nicodemus was still confused. He had always thought that keeping God's laws was enough to save him. What Jesus was telling him was very different.

To help Nicodemus understand, Jesus reminded him of something that had happened hundreds of years earlier. The Jewish people were traveling from Egypt to the land God had promised to give them. Even though God had miraculously cared for them, the people grumbled and complained. They were angry with their leader, Moses, and with God. Instead of thanking God for the loving way He provided for them, they sinned against Him by complaining.

As punishment for their sin, God sent venomous snakes among the people. Many people were bitten and died. Others cried to Moses, begging him to ask God to remove the snakes. Moses prayed for the people and God answered by making a way for the people who were bitten to be healed. God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and lift it up on a pole. God told Moses, "Anyone who looks at the snake of bronze will live."

Slide 8

Moses followed God's instructions. The bronze snake was lifted high on a pole and Moses told the people that anyone who looked at it would be healed. Those who believed God and looked at the bronze snake lived just as God had said.

Nicodemus would have known that story very well. When Jesus finished telling the story, He said, (*read John 3:14-15*).

Slide 9

Jesus was telling Nicodemus that He was going to be lifted up on a cross. He would die for the sins of the whole world.

Then Jesus told Nicodemus the best news ever—the words of our memory verse! Say it with me. (*Say John 3:16 with children.*) Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that He came to Earth so Nicodemus could be born again and not be dead in his sins.

Slide 10



Jesus made it possible for you to be born again too. Jesus, the Son of God, perfectly obeyed His Father. He never sinned against God. The Bible says Jesus had no sin in Him. (*Read 2 Corinthians 5:21a.*) Jesus did not come into the world to tell you how bad you are. He came to the world to take your punishment for sin. **Only Jesus can give you new life.**

Slide 11

Say with me, "**Jesus gives new life!**" (*Say with children.*) When Jesus bled and died on the cross, all your sin was put on Him. (*Read 1 John 1:7b.*) He didn't have any sin of His own but He willingly gave His blood so you could be forgiven and not be dead in your sins anymore. He came back to life on the third day and is alive and

ruling in Heaven today. When you believe in Jesus, He gives you new life and gives you the power to do good and live for God. That is good news! When you trust that Jesus has done this for you, you are born again and are no longer dead in your sins.

Slide 12

Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know He came to Earth so people could be born again and not be dead in their sins. Nicodemus had so much to think about when he was finished talking with Jesus. Jesus cared for Nicodemus and told him true things that Nicodemus had never heard before. What happened after Nicodemus talked to Jesus that night? Did he believe?

CLIMAX

The Bible doesn't tell us when it happened, but there was evidence that Nicodemus was changed! He had new life!

Slide 13

Say with me, **"Jesus gives new life!"** (*Say with children.*)

CONCLUSION

After Jesus suffered and died for sin on the cross, the Bible mentions Nicodemus' name again. He was one of the men who helped bury Jesus' body. This important Pharisee who had once come to Jesus at night was now showing others his love for Jesus. God had changed Nicodemus on the inside—he was born again, a new person because of Jesus!



If you've been born again, you are a new person because of Jesus. The Bible says, (*read 2 Corinthians 5:17*). Think about what God has done for you. He has forgiven your sin—something no one else could do! He has given you new life. Say with me, **"Jesus gives new life!"** (*Say with children.*) He has changed you on the inside so you can now live to please God. Maybe before you believed in Jesus, you said a lot of bad words when you were angry. But now God is helping you to change the way you talk. Or maybe you used to be disrespectful to your parents or teachers but now God is helping you show respect to them. God gives you the power to say no to sin. **The Holy Spirit will change your heart and help you do good.** Does your life show that you have been changed on the inside? Take time each day to thank God that you are a new person in Christ! Ask Him to help you do good.

Because of knowing Jesus, Nicodemus' life was changed. Knowing Jesus can change your life too.

Materials

Word Up! Booklet
(See GNC Resource Pack.)

Preschool Activity

Show the children strips of cloth like those that would have been used to prepare Jesus' body for burial. Let them touch the cloth and smell perfumes or spices as you explain what Nicodemus would have likely done to help bury the body of Jesus.

Preschool Song

"God Is So Good" vv. 1,3

Lesson 2

Important Reminder

Remember, it is not the prayer that saves the child. Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit convicting the child of his or her sinful condition and drawing him or her to trust completely in Christ and His work on the cross. The prayer is the child's expression of that belief to God. (See "Guiding a Child to the Savior" on the inside front cover.)

Preschool Invitation

When presenting the invitation to preschoolers, use John 3:15 and "believe in" terminology. Ask those who have questions about believing in Jesus to stay with you while the others move on to another activity.

INVITATION



Have you believed in Jesus as the only one who can save you from being dead in sin? No matter how many good things you do or how many rules you obey, your good works can never save you. (*Read John 3:15.*) It is by believing, trusting only in Jesus, that you can be saved from the punishment of sin and be born again. When you believe in Jesus you are no longer dead in your sins, but you will be a new person in Christ. You will have everlasting life! This is life that starts the minute you believe and lasts forever with Jesus. Have you believed in Jesus as your Savior and been born again? Please bow your head and close your eyes. If you would like to believe in Jesus as your Savior today, will you show me by standing up? (*Acknowledge responses.*) You may sit down. Everyone open your eyes. If you stood up and want to talk with me, meet me (*designate time and location*) so we can look at the Bible to see what it means to have everlasting life.