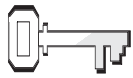


The Nighttime Visitor



References

John 3:1-21; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 167-177



Memory Verse

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”
(1 John 3:1, NIV).



Objectives

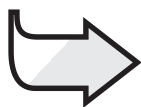
The children will:

Know that

God’s love is a gift that they can’t earn or buy.

Feel a desire to be born again in Jesus.

Respond by accepting Jesus and choosing to invite Him into their lives.



The Message

God’s love changes us.

Monthly Theme

God’s love is a gift; we don’t earn or buy it.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, has seen Jesus cleanse the temple and heal people. He comes to Jesus late one night and acknowledges Jesus as one who has come from God. Jesus tells him plainly that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again. This puzzles Nicodemus. Jesus explains that spiritual things are born of the Spirit, then points out what makes us want to listen to the Spirit—that God loves us all so much that He sent His only Son to die for us and to assure our eternal life.

This is a lesson about grace.

Apparently Nicodemus did not understand the spiritual rebirth process. Humanly speaking, new physical birth is impossible. But it is the work of the Holy Spirit to seek us, pursue us, blow like the wind wherever it pleases, lift up Jesus and share the message of God’s immense love, and give us a new spiritual birth with the promise of eternal life. That gift is ours—freely given by a loving God.

Teacher Enrichment

“Nicodemus held a high position of trust in the Jewish nation. He was highly educated, and possessed talents of no ordinary character, and he was an honored member of the national council. With others, he had been stirred by the teaching of Jesus. Though rich, learned, and honored, he had been strangely attracted by the humble Nazarene. The lessons that had fallen from the Savior’s lips had greatly impressed him, and he desired to learn more of these wonderful truths” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 167).

“There are thousands today who need to learn the same truth that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, ‘How can these things be?’” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 175).

Room Decorations

Use outdoor scenery with trees, bushes, flowers, etc., like a garden.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Butterfly Life Cycle</i> B. <i>Changing Babies</i>	nature book, live caterpillars or butterflies (optional) baby pictures of children in your class
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> gift box none
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	none chalkboard or whiteboard, chalk or marker Bibles, copies of Steps to Jesus (see activity)
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	Scenarios	none
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	A. <i>Butterfly</i> B. <i>Changed Heart</i>	butterfly pattern (see p. 150), heavy paper, crayons or colored markers, scissors black and white paper, scissors, stapler or tape, white and black crayons, heart pattern (see p. 150)

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Listen to last week’s memory verse and encourage the children to share any experiences from last week’s lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- nature book
- live caterpillars, etc. (optional) (see activity)

A. Butterfly Life Cycle

Study the life cycle of a butterfly from caterpillar to cocoon to butterfly. Bring in a book that shows the stages and, if possible, some mounted butterflies. Live caterpillars, chrysalises, cocoons, and butterflies would be helpful too.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **Wow—the change from a caterpillar to a butterfly is a big one, isn’t it? How can a caterpillar do that?** (God gave it the power to become something completely different than it was before.) **Can other things change as dramatically as a caterpillar? Can people change like that?**

Today we’ll find that Nicodemus learned something we want to learn too. The Bible tells us what it is: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). That means that God loves us so much that when we love Him in return, His love changes us to be like Jesus. That reminds me of today’s message:



GOD’S LOVE CHANGES US.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- baby pictures of class members

B. Changing Babies

If you planned for children to bring their baby pictures, collect the pictures and lay them out without identifying each. Let the children look at them. Then hold up each picture while the children guess who it is. Once they’ve guessed, tell them who it is.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **What did your Sabbath School classmates look like when they were young?** (Accept any answer, but don’t let them be unkind.) **Who has a baby at home right now? What do you or others do for the baby? In our Bible story today, Jesus tells a man named Nicodemus something important, and God wants us to know it too. Our memory verse tells us what it is: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). How can we become children of God? Today’s message tells us.**



GOD’S LOVE CHANGES US.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing from last week's lesson study and review last week's memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

"More About Jesus" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 38)

"I'm So Happy" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 65)

"Redeemed!" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 68)

"Into My Heart" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 125)

"You Must Open the Door" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 128)



Mission

Use a story from *Children's Mission*. Emphasize someone in the story who changed because of Jesus.



Offering

Collect the offering each week this month in a gift box to tie in with the idea that grace is God's gift to us. Express the idea that we can help share God's gift of grace around the world by giving offerings.

You Need:

- gift box



Prayer

Say a short prayer, thanking God for His gift of love and grace to us.

Bible Lesson

Experiencing the Story

Say: **While I tell this story, I want you to copy any actions I make.**

Include motions such as sneaking (looking around as if you don't want to be seen), questioning, holding baby, shaking head for no, etc.

Read or tell the story.

Crickets chirped in the grass. Night birds sang. Quietly, Nicodemus walked toward the place where he had been told that he could find Jesus.

When he found Jesus, Nicodemus said, "Teacher, we know You came from God! Your miracles tell everybody that You are from Him!"

Jesus smiled in the darkness. He knew that Nicodemus really wanted to believe in Him. But Nicodemus was an important Pharisee, and he was having a hard time believing that Jesus could really be God's Son. So Jesus looked steadily at him and said, "Nicodemus, miracles are not the most important thing! Unless you are born again, you will not see God's kingdom."

"Born again? What does that mean? How can I go back inside of my mother? I'm a grown man!" Nicodemus exclaimed.

"You're right, my friend," Jesus replied. "But I'm not talking about being born physically. I'm talking about being born spiritually. Truthfully, Nicodemus, unless you are reborn by God's Holy Spirit, you can't be part of God's kingdom."

"I'm not sure I understand," Nicodemus said thoughtfully.

"Think about the wind for a moment," Jesus replied. "You can't see the wind itself, but you can see what hap-

pens when the wind blows. You can see the treetops sway and hear the rustling of the leaves. When the Holy Spirit comes into a person's life, it's like that. You can't see the time when a person's life is changed, but you see what happens in their life because their heart—their mind—is new and clean."

It was quiet while Nicodemus thought about what Jesus was saying.

"Nicodemus, your physical life came from your parents, but a person's spiritual life comes from the Holy Spirit," Jesus continued. "When a person chooses to let God come into his or her life, God helps them change their ugly, sinful mind, and gives the person a brand-new one. That's being born again."

"Nicodemus, I have good news for you! God loves the world so much that He sent His only Son here, so that whenever someone believes in Him, God can give them that brand-new life! And that new life means they are born again! They will have the gift of eternal life!"

Nicodemus learned something that night that everyone must learn. Jesus loves us so much! He is ready right now to take our ugly, sinful minds and lives and give us brand-new ones! Will you let Him give you that new, clean life today? Will you be God's child? Will you be born again and take the gift of eternal life that He wants to give you?

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask:

What did Jesus mean when He told Nicodemus that only those who have been born again will see the kingdom of God? (Only those people who allow God's love to change them to be kind, loving, caring, forgiving, etc., will go to heaven when Jesus comes back for us.)

What is the difference between

being born as a baby and being born again in God's sight? How are people born again? (People change inside, in their lives and minds.)

Whom does God send to help people change? (God sends His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to work on a person's mind.)

How is the Holy Spirit like the wind? (We can feel it, but we can't see it. We can see the results, the actions.)

How will a person who has been changed by the Holy Spirit act? (They will show love and kindness, they will be happy, joyful, etc.)

How much does God's gift of salvation cost us?

Does God want to condemn the people in the world or save them?

Remember:



GOD'S LOVE CHANGES US.

Memory Verse

Write the memory verse on the board. **"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).**

You Need:

- chalkboard or whiteboard
- chalk or marker

Form three groups and have them stand in a triangle. Have them become a voice choir as follows:

Group 1: **See what great love the Father has lavished on us,**

Group 2: **That we should be called children of God!**

Group 3: **And that is what we are!**

All: **1 John 3:1**

Change parts and repeat until all know each part.

Bible Study Steps to Jesus

In advance, copy the steps listed below on paper for each child.

Distribute the papers and say: **These are texts that give us steps to accepting Jesus as our Savior. Let's study each one.**

Large class, divide into groups of seven and have an adult lead the study in each group.

1. God sent Jesus to save me (John 3:17).
2. God loves me and wants me to be part of His family forever (1 John 4:9).
3. All people have sinned and fallen short of God's perfect character (Romans 3:23).
4. Jesus never sinned, so He was the only one who could take the punishment for my sins (2 Corinthians 5:21).
5. God sent Jesus to be my Savior (1 John 4:14).
6. God makes me His child when I believe in Jesus and am sorry for my sins (John 1:12).
7. As God's child, I receive the gift of everlasting life, and God is with me now and forever (John 3:16).

Be alert. You may have some students who have not yet accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. If possible, review the above steps with each student (or alert your pastor or the child's parents), making sure the child understands and accepts each one. Help him or her to ask forgiveness for sins and to tell God they accept Jesus as their Savior and ask God to help them follow Jesus.

You Need:

- Bibles
- texts on paper for each child

3

Applying the Lesson

Scenarios

Ask the children to answer the question at the end of each scenario. (Add or use other scenarios that are more appropriate to your situation.)

1. Nyala has cheated in the past, but she has accepted Jesus, and He has changed her life. She didn't study for the spelling test today. She's not sure how to spell the second word, and the student next to her has written the word where she can see it. What will Nyala do?

2. Zhang doesn't like it when his friend's younger brother tags along with them. The little brother is annoying, and he wants to play soccer with the older boys. If Zhang has been changed by Jesus, what will he do?

3. Grant used to love to tease his sister, Claire. Claire made dinner tonight. She burned the vegetables, and the rice isn't cooked enough. Grant is tempted to say something mean about her cooking. But he's been changed by Jesus. What will he do?

4. Adria wants to go to her friend's house. Adria knows her friend is home alone. Adria really wants to see her friend's newly painted room. If Adria has been changed by Jesus, what will she say when her mom says she may go if her friend's mother is home?

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **How does Jesus change us when we ask Him to?**

Think of one thing that you would like to ask Jesus to help you change. Give students time to think.

Jesus wants to help you with tough decisions, to give you a new attitude, to help with problems that tempt you to sin. You can ask Jesus anytime and anywhere to make your heart (attitude) clean and pure. Your life can never be so dirty that He can't get it clean.

And even though we don't stay perfectly clean, when we sin we can always ask Him to clean our lives again.

Just keep on asking Jesus to help you to be more like Him. Remember,



GOD'S LOVE CHANGES US.

Sharing the Lesson

A. Butterfly

Copy the butterfly pattern (see page 150) onto heavy paper. Have the children color the butterfly and cut it out. They should also cut out the memory verse square and glue it to the back of the butterfly. As they work, ask them to think of someone they want to share their butterfly with, someone to whom they can tell today's story.

You Need:

- butterfly pattern (see p. 150)
- heavy paper
- crayons or colored markers
- scissors

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **With whom will you share your butterfly this week?**

Tell them about Nicodemus talking to Jesus. You can also tell them that you love Jesus and want Him to change you just like butterflies change from caterpillars.

Let's say our message together one more time:



GOD'S LOVE CHANGES US.

B. Changed Heart

Ask the children to cut out two hearts the same size—one of black paper and one of white. (See page 150.) Have them cut the paper together to make the hearts the same size. Then have them use a white crayon to write "GOD'S LOVE" on the black heart, and use a black crayon to write "CHANGES US" on the white heart. Have them staple or tape the hearts together at the top so the black heart can be lifted up to see the white heart underneath it.

Debriefing

Allow responses as you ask: **With whom will you share your heart this week? Tell them about Nicodemus' visit with Jesus and how Jesus can change hearts and lives from sinful to clean.**

Let's say our message together one more time:



GOD'S LOVE CHANGES US.

Closing

Offer a prayer similar to the following: **Dear Jesus, thank You for loving us! Give us new, clean hearts and minds. Thank You for a clean heart and for Your gift of eternal life. We love You, Jesus! Amen.**

You Need:

- black and white paper
- scissors
- stapler or tape
- white and black crayons
- heart pattern (see p. 150)

The Nighttime Visitor

References

John 3:1-21; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 167-177

Memory Verse

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1, NIV).

The Message

God’s love changes us.

When a mother says she’s going to “change the baby,” what does she mean? How is she going to change it? Into what? You know what she means. But what did Jesus mean when He said, “You must be born again”?

Crickets chirped in the grass. Night birds sang. Quietly Nicodemus walked toward the place where he had heard he could find Jesus. He didn’t want anyone else to see him talking to Jesus.

When he found Jesus, Nicodemus said, “Teacher, we know You came from God! Your miracles tell everybody so!”

Jesus may have smiled in the darkness. He knew that Nicodemus really wanted to believe in Him. But Nicodemus was an important Pharisee, a member of the Jewish council. He came to Jesus late at night because He didn’t want the other Pharisees to know.

Nicodemus knew that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. But He wasn’t sure that Jesus could really be God’s Son.

Jesus looked steadily at him.

“Nicodemus,” He said, “miracles are not

the most important thing! Unless you are born again, you will not see God’s kingdom.”

“Born again? What does that mean? I can’t go back inside of my mother!

I’m a grown man!” Nicodemus exclaimed.

“You’re right, my friend,” Jesus answered. “But I’m not talking about being born physically. I’m talking about being born spiritually. Truthfully, Nicodemus, unless you are reborn by God’s Holy Spirit, you can’t be part of God’s kingdom.”

“I don’t understand,” Nicodemus said thoughtfully.

“Think about the wind for a moment,” Jesus replied. “You can’t see the wind itself. But you can see what happens when the wind blows. You can see the treetops sway and hear the rustling of the leaves. When the Holy Spirit comes into a person’s life, it’s like that. You can’t see inside a person’s heart, their mind. But you see what happens in their life, because their life is new and clean. Their life is changed.”

It was quiet as Nicodemus thought about what Jesus was saying.

“Nicodemus, your physical life came from your parents,” Jesus continued. “But a person’s spiritual life comes from the Holy Spirit. When a person chooses to let God come into his or her life, God helps them change their sinful mind, and gives the person a brand-new one. That’s being born again.

“Nicodemus, I have good news for you! God loves the world so much that He sent His only Son here to save the world. When someone believes in Him, God can give them that brand-new life! And that new life means you are born again! And those born again will receive the gift of eternal life!”

Nicodemus learned something that night that everyone must learn. Jesus loves us so much! He is ready right now to take our sinful hearts and lives and give us new ones! Will you let Him give you that new, clean heart today? Will you be born again? Will you take the gift of eternal life that He wants to give you?

You might want to say something like this to Jesus: “Dear Jesus, thank You for



loving me! My life is sinful. Right now I want to give it to You. I ask You to give me a new, clean heart and mind instead. Change my life to be more like Yours. Thank You for Your gift of eternal life. I love You, Jesus! Amen.”

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- If possible, go for a walk with your family to a windy place. While there, read your lesson story together. Ask everyone to close their eyes and listen to the wind. Then talk about what each person has heard and felt. How does this remind you of the Holy Spirit?
- Thank Jesus for the wind. Thank Him for the Holy Spirit too.
- Make three large hearts. Write a part of your memory verse on each. Mix them up and ask your family to put them in the right order. Ask: What does it mean to be a child of God?

Sunday

- Ask your family to go with you to a dark place. While there, read John 3:1, 2 together. Ask: Why did Nicodemus go to Jesus at night? How did he know Jesus was sent from God? How do *you* know that Jesus was sent from God?
- Share the butterfly or heart made in Sabbath School with someone. (Or draw a heart and write the memory verse on it.) Tell them about Nicodemus and his visit with Jesus. Talk about how God’s love changes people.

Monday

- With your family, read and discuss John 3:3, 4. What is the difference between being born as a baby and being born again? How would you answer Nicodemus’s question?
- Ask to see your baby pictures. Talk about how you are different from when you were a baby. Are you growing in Jesus too? How can that happen?
- Sing some praise songs, then thank Jesus for loving you. Is His love changing your life?

Tuesday

- For worship today, share John 3:5-9 with your family. How did Jesus explain the work of the Holy Spirit to Nicodemus? How do you know when it is windy? How do you know when the Holy Spirit comes into your life?
- Find out how caterpillars turn into butterflies. (Hint: Look in an encyclopedia, or with your

parents’ permission, look on the Internet.) Draw a picture of the life cycle of a butterfly that lives in your country. How does that remind you of being born again?

- Thank Jesus for beautiful butterflies.

Wednesday

- For worship today, read and discuss John 3:10-15 together. Then read Numbers 21:4-9 to learn more about Moses and the snake. How is Moses’ experience with the snake like Jesus’ experience years later? Did the snake save those who looked at it? When and how was Jesus “lifted up”? (Read Mark 15:32.) Who was saved then?
- Look at a picture of a human heart. Is it really “heart” shaped? Does Jesus really “change” your heart? What does He change when people accept Him into their life? (Read Philippians 2:5.)

Thursday

- Read and discuss John 3:16, 17 with your family today. Ask your family to close their eyes and say these verses together. What gift has God given to the world? Why?
- Make and give someone a present (it can be small) just because you love them. How does it make you feel? How do you think God feels about His gift of Jesus to the world? How do you feel about it?
- Say your memory verse together, then thank God for giving us Jesus.

Friday

- For worship tonight, find out what happened to Nicodemus after that nighttime visit. Read together *The Desire of Ages*, pages 176, 177 (the last four paragraphs of chapter 17). What do you think Nicodemus remembered about his secret meeting with Jesus?
- Ask family members when and why they chose to accept Jesus’ love. Were they baptized? What was their life like before knowing Jesus? after? Do you want to be baptized too?
- Sing about Jesus and how His love changes people. Praise Him for His love that changes lives.