



SESSION 1 of 4

Nicodemus

MEETING AIM

To think about how God sent Jesus because he loves each and every one of us and wants us to be with him in heaven.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 3:1-21

BACKGROUND

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a respected religious leader. He came to Jesus at night because he didn't want the other Pharisees to witness his curiosity. He leaves this conversation still pretty confused but when he appears again later in John's Gospel we see that he has been changed by his encounter with Jesus (John 7:50-51 and John 19:39).

If you have fostered or adopted children in your group you might want to think about rewording or adding to the section where Nicodemus asks about babies being born from their mother's tummies.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays, or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy which you pass around for the child talking to hold as they speak. Explain that you're going to hear a story about someone who went to speak to Jesus. Ask the children: "If you could ask Jesus any question, what would you ask him?"

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: paper; collage materials; glue; pens and pencils

Tell the children that you're going to hear all about a man who met Jesus and heard about what it looks like when we join God's family. Ask the children to think about what their families look like and make their family tree. Give the children a pre-drawn family tree (or blank paper if they'd rather collage their own) and invite them to draw a picture of their family and decorate it.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a doll; a globe or picture of the world

Gather the children together and explain that the story is about a man called

Nicodemus. He wanted to speak to Jesus. Nicodemus was a man who studied God's laws and tried really hard to obey them. Ask the children if they think it's easy to follow the rules all the time. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, which meant he was a religious leader who helped try to teach other people about God too. The Pharisees didn't like Jesus though because they felt like he didn't listen to the rules they wanted everyone to listen to. Tell this story:

Nicodemus wanted to ask Jesus a question, but he didn't want the other Pharisees to see him. In those days it was really dark at night-time. They didn't have streetlamps like we do now. So, one night Nicodemus went to speak to Jesus.

Let's pretend to be like Nicodemus. *Dim the lights and invite the children to join you in knocking on the door and pretending to sneak inside the room.*

He found Jesus and he said: "We all know that God has sent you to teach us. You wouldn't be able to do all the miracles we've seen if God wasn't with you."

Jesus replied: "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again!"

Nicodemus was confused. *Ask the children if they can make a confused face.*

He asked: "But how can someone be born again, especially when they are already old? Surely when we're grown-up we're far too big to get back into our mother's tummies to be born again?"

Can you imagine? We're all much bigger than babies now! *Hold up the doll.* I definitely don't think we'd fit!

Jesus answered Nicodemus and explained how babies are born after they grow inside a mummy's tummy and also we can be 'born again' and join God's family too.

Nicodemus was still confused. *Ask the children to make their confused faces again.* Jesus reminded Nicodemus of God's great rescue plan.

God sent Jesus to the world. *Hold up your globe or picture of the world.* Because he loves everyone, and anyone who believes in God gets to live with God for ever and be part of his family. Nicodemus couldn't do anything to make God love him more.

Nicodemus was still confused. *Ask the children to make their confused faces again.* It sounded different to what he'd known before.

Jesus was saying that God loved the whole world. Everyone. Good people and bad people, rich people and poor people, young people and old people! Those who love him and those who hate him. None of us have to do anything to make him love us. He already does. And he loves us still even when we mess up. He invites us all to be part of his big family. All we have to do is choose to believe in him, to love him back.

Nicodemus probably left Jesus feeling pretty confused. We don't know what he said at the end of the conversation but later in the Bible we see him standing up for Jesus (John 7:50-51), and then he's there helping when Jesus dies (John 19:39). I think he let God start changing his heart, making his life look totally different and new.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns in contributing:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What did Jesus tell Nicodemus?
- Sometimes people found what Jesus said confusing. What do you do when you feel confused?
- What do you think heaven will be like?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper outlines of people; pens; pencils; glue; collage materials

Give each child an outline of a person and invite them to decorate a picture of themselves.

When they've finished, stick their pictures all onto one big collage, you could use your world picture from earlier. (Let the children do two pictures if they'd also like to take one home.) Say: "God loves everyone. He loves all of us. He loves [name each child individually and point to their picture as you do]."

5 PRAYER

You will need: collage from 'Creative response'

Look at your collage together and say this prayer:

"Thank you God that you love us all. Thank you that we don't need to do anything to make you love us but that when we believe in you and choose to invite you into our lives we get to be part of your family and live with you one day in heaven for ever."

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SESSION 2 of 4

The woman at the well

MEETING AIM

To think about how Jesus loves us no matter who we are.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 4:1-38

BACKGROUND

For Jesus to speak to a woman, let alone a Samaritan woman, and to use her cup, was against Jewish custom. Jesus shows us that he knew the woman's history, and he also knew what was customary, and still he accepted her. He makes it clear that God's great rescue plan is for all people, not just the Jews.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays, or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy which you pass around for the child talking to hold as they speak. Ask the children: "What's your favourite drink?" Thank God that he's with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: cups; big containers for water; clean-up equipment

Use four containers to put two 'wells' at one end of the room and two 'towns' at the other end (add more if you want more than two teams). Fill the 'wells' with water and have the children ready at that side of the room. Invite the children to fill up their cups and take it in turns to take their water to fill up the 'town'. Be ready to wipe up any spills!

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a jug of water and a cup; a large bowl or container

Gather the children together and tell this story:

Pour yourself a glass of water and drink some. Mm, water is so refreshing. When I'm feeling really hot and thirsty it's the best thing! In our story today we're going to hear Jesus talk about water.

Jesus and his friends had told lots of people they met how much God loved them. The Pharisees (the religious leaders) didn't like this so Jesus decided to leave Judea, where he'd been, and go back to Galilee.

On the way, he travelled through a place called Samaria. It would have been very hot and dry and when Jesus got there, he was tired. While his disciples went into the town to buy food, Jesus sat down next to a well. *Put your container in the middle and fill it with water. Shall we all come and sit next to our well like Jesus did?*

A Samaritan woman (a woman from Samaria) came to get water from the well. Jesus asked her: "Will you give me a drink?"

The Samaritan woman said to him: "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (Jews didn't talk to Samaritans in those days so it would have been very surprising for her when Jesus spoke to her!)

Jesus replied: "If you knew who I was, and if you knew how good God is, you would have asked God to give you living water."

"Sir, you don't seem to have a bucket, how are you going to collect this living water?!" she asked.

Jesus answered: "Everyone who drinks the water from this well will get thirsty again, but if someone drinks the water I give them, they won't ever get thirsty again!"

The woman said: "Well if you give me this water then I won't have to keep coming back to the well!"

Jesus carried on speaking to the woman and told her exactly what her life was like. Jesus knew that she had made a lot of bad choices and her life was quite messy. She was very surprised and said: "God obviously speaks to you. I know that the Son of God is coming. When he does, he will explain everything to us."

Jesus told her: "That's me!"

When Jesus' friends came back they were surprised to see Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman. The woman went into the town and told everyone she saw all about meeting Jesus and what he'd said.

Jesus didn't judge anyone. He didn't care that Jews weren't supposed to talk to Samaritans. He cared more that everybody knew about how much God loved them and how Jesus had come to rescue everyone, not just some people.

Because of what the woman told them, lots of Samaritan people came to know Jesus and accept his offer of living water. Cool refreshing water! *Give the children each a cup and let them take a drink from the well.*

This water is refreshing, but the 'living water' that Jesus gives is even better. It's like a refreshing glass of water for our whole lives! Jesus loves us no matter what we have done and he came because God loves each and every one of us.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns in contributing:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think the woman felt when Jesus spoke to her?
- How do you think the disciples felt when they saw Jesus speaking to the woman?
- Do you ever find it hard to talk to some people?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: card; felt-tip pens; pencils; stickers and decorations to stick on; glue
Remind the children that God sent his Son Jesus because he loves every single person on earth. No matter what they look like, or what they've done, God loves them all. Because we know how much God loves us we can share that with other people.

Show the children how to fold the card in half to make cards to give to someone we'd like to share God's love with. Ask the group who they want to give their card to.

5 PRAYER

You will need: cards from 'Creative response'

Invite each child to hold the card they made and ask God to show them who to give it to. Explain that sometimes they might have a feeling or that he'll pop the person into their head, or that they could choose their person. (You might want to do this before the activity if you want to decorate cards with people in mind).

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SESSION 3 of 4

The man by the pool

MEETING AIM

To think about how the man didn't have to do anything special to be healed and how we can be grateful that God loves us all no matter what we've done

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 5:1-15

BACKGROUND

It's likely in those days that some kind of bubbling spring fed the Pool of Bethesda but the people would have believed that an angel stirred the waters causing them to bubble. They would sit and wait in the hope that they'd be the first in to get healed. Jesus didn't come just to heal 'deserving' people, the man didn't do anything special and he also didn't seem particularly grateful but Jesus came for all of us regardless of what we've done.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays, or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy which you pass around for the child talking to hold as they speak. Ask the children: "What one thing could you thank God for this week?" Thank God that he's with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: strips of paper and pens or pieces of fabric and fabric pens

Explain that today you're going to need a mat for the story. Depending on the age of your children invite them to weave a mat out of paper or decorate a piece of pre-cut fabric with fabric pens. If you're weaving a mat, place five or six strips of paper next to each other vertically. Weave a different coloured strip horizontally over one vertical strip and under the next. Continue to do this with other strips of paper until you make a square mat.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: antacid tablets (such as Alka-Seltzer); a clear bowl or jug; water; mats from 'Intro activity'; play people (such as Playmobil)

Gather the children together and tell this story:

One day Jesus went to Jerusalem for a Sabbath day. That was the day when everyone rested, they did no work and focused on worshipping God. Just inside the city, near a place called Sheep Gate outside the Temple, was the pool of Bethesda. Use Alka-Seltzer tablets to make a bowl of water bubble as you explain what the pool was like.

A big crowd of poorly people – some were blind, some couldn't walk, some couldn't move at all – lay near the pool. They would wait near the pool because they believed it would bubble up and that the first person to go in would be healed. So they waited and waited and hoped they'd be able to get in first if the water bubbled up.

One of the men lying there had been sick for 38 years. That's a really long time to have waited by a pool! Give each child a person and invite them to lie it down on their mat. Invite them to act out the next bit of the story as you tell it.

Jesus saw him and knew that he had been ill for a long time. He asked him: "Would you like to get well?"

"I can't, sir" the sick man said, "because no one can put me in the pool when the water bubbles up. Other people always get there first."

Jesus said: "Stand up. Pick up your mat and walk."

Immediately, the man was healed! He didn't have to get someone to put him in special bubbling water, all it took was Jesus' power and then the man rolled up his mat and he started walking! You could stop the story here if you're doing a session with children under 3.

There were some strict Jewish leaders who didn't like it when people broke the rules so when they saw that the man was carrying his mat they said: "You can't work on the Sabbath. The law says you're not allowed to carry a sleeping mat."

The man told them: "The man who healed me told me: 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

"Who would say such a thing?!" they demanded.

The man didn't actually know because Jesus had disappeared into the crowd of people. Later on Jesus came back to find him and said: "You're well again now. It's time for you to start making good choices." The man hadn't been living a life following Jesus and probably made lots of bad choices. Jesus didn't heal him because he'd done anything spectacular or good. Jesus

chose to heal the man because he loved him. Just how he loves everyone.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns in contributing:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How do you think you'd feel if you'd been sick for a long time and suddenly you were healed?
- Why do you think Jesus healed the man?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: biscuits; icing; jelly babies

Invite the children to make their own man on a 'biscuit mat' and talk about the story as you decorate biscuits together. If you don't give children biscuits or sweets in your sessions, then you could skip this and just do the prayer activity. Alternatively, you could make a man out of fruit (grape for a head, orange segment for a body and sticks of apple for arms and legs).

5 PRAYER

You will need: card; collage materials; glue; pens or pencils

Tell the children that God is so powerful and there are so many stories of Jesus performing amazing miracles in the Bible. You can pray and chat to God for people you know who are hurting or ill too.

Ask the children to think about someone they know who is ill or who is sad who they would love to pray for that they might get better and that they'd know how much God loves them.

Invite the children to make and decorate a card for that person. You might want to pre-write a verse from the story in the cards. Invite the children to pray for the people they made the card for and ask God to help them show that person love this week.

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SESSION 4 of 4

The man born blind

MEETING AIM

To think about how Jesus came to help people see God and to know how much he loves them.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 9

BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter people had picked up stones to stone Jesus but he'd managed to slip away. Now in this passage he seems completely unflustered as he comes across the blind man. Jesus uses this healing to show again how he is the light of the world, and how he came not only to heal physical blindness but to also open people's eyes spiritually. He makes it clear that the man is not blind as a punishment but that God intends to use the healing to show his power and love.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the children to sit together in a circle. Encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays, or special events. It can be helpful to have an object or cuddly toy which you pass around for the child talking to hold as they speak. Ask the children: "How would life be different if you couldn't see?" Explain that later on you'll hear about a man who had been blind his whole life. Thank God that he's with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: obstacles; blindfolds
Create an obstacle course, but not too complicated a one (and risk assess it so that it's safe to complete). Don't let the children see it before they start the activity. Put the children into pairs and challenge them to complete the obstacle course with one child blindfolded and one child directing and helping them. Then let them take off the blindfold and do the obstacle course again. (Be sensitive to those who don't want to be blindfolded.)

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: doll; cup of water; dirt (or cocoa powder); large container of water
Gather the children together and tell this story:

One day, as Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind since he was born. *Hold up your blind man doll.*

Jesus's friends asked him: "What did this man, or his family, do wrong that meant he was born blind?"

Jesus replied: "They didn't do anything wrong to cause it, this happened so that God can show his amazing power. God sent me to the world so that I could share his light with all the people I meet."

Jesus spat on the ground and made some mud from the dirt. He put it on the man's eyes. *Make some mud from water and dirt or cocoa powder and rub it on your doll's eyes.*

He told the man: "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam." *Wash your doll in your 'pool' (large container of water).*

The man did and then he could see for the first time in his life!

The man's friends and neighbours and the religious leaders couldn't believe he was the same man who had been blind. The religious leaders were also angry that Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath, a day when people were supposed to rest. Those people missed how amazing God's power and love was.

Later on, Jesus found the man again and he told him who he was: Jesus, the Son of God. The man believed him and he worshiped Jesus and was thankful to God. He saw how amazing God's power and love was.

Jesus explained how, as well as healing people who were actually blind, he came to the world to help people to see God. In a way, it was like they were blind to knowing what God was like, so he was helping them to see. To see how much God loved them and how Jesus came to the world for them.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns in contributing:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What do you think it would be like to suddenly see if you'd been blind for your whole life?
- Why do you think Jesus healed the man?
- How do you think the man felt when he was healed? And then when he knew who Jesus was?

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: dolls; cup of water; dirt (or cocoa powder); large container of water
Set out the dolls and other elements from the story and invite the children to play with the story equipment. They might choose to re-enact the story or simply play with the dolls, mud and water. Let the children lead the play and join in with them as they direct you. As you play, continue chatting about the story and be ready to answer any questions the children have about the story or Jesus himself. Remember, it's fine to say that you don't know, but make sure you help the children find the answer to their question!

10 PRAYER

You will need: paper hearts; paper and pens
Invite the children to find a space where they can sit and 'catch' from God. Invite them to get comfortable and say it's OK if they don't want to join in but remind them that others might want to. Invite the children to ask God: "What do you love about me?" and leave some space. You might like to extend this time and play some music as you spend time together with God.

As you all come back together give the children each a paper heart. Explain that Jesus came for every single person on Earth because God loves each and every one of us. Invite the children to draw or write what they felt God was telling them on their heart. If they're not sure you could continue your catching time or invite them to draw a picture of themselves to remember that God loves them.

You could also pray for the children in advance and give them each a verse to stick onto their heart.

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