



Nicodemus Visits Jesus

Unit 6: Invitation to the Abundant Life

LAST WEEK

Jesus chases the moneychangers out of the temple, and makes a prophecy about his own resurrection (John 2:13-25).

THIS WEEK

A Pharisee, Nicodemus, comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness, asking questions and seeking understanding. As Jesus explains his ministry, the Pharisee becomes more confused (John 3:1-21).

Story Summary

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Jewish leader committed to teaching and following the details of the Jewish law. Though he saw Jesus was from God and performed the signs of God, he did not understand that Jesus is the way to a relationship with a loving God. Nicodemus understood physical birth, but he was confused when Jesus spoke of spiritual birth. Jesus explained that God, out of love for humanity, sent him not to condemn the world, but to restore humankind's fellowship with God.

The Point

Even those who have difficulty with Jesus' message and have a place in God's story.

Bible Nuts & Bolts: *Images of God*

How do you describe God? Our limited understanding and limited vocabulary can make it difficult to describe a limitless God. The Bible uses metaphorical images to describe God, such as Shepherd, Rock, Dove, King, and others. These metaphorical images of God help us "see" what God is like by comparing God to concepts we understand. We know what a shepherd does, so we get an understanding of God the shepherd as our caring guide. We know what a rock is, so we get an understanding of God the rock as a firm and solid foundation. It helps to use the variety of metaphorical images in Scripture to expand our limited understanding and description of God.

Practice: Fellowship

Jesus welcomed Nicodemus even though he had opposing views. He answered Nicodemus' questions even though at that time Nicodemus did not seem to understand or accept the offer for new life. Take time as a family to sit and listen to one another. Talk about things you may not agree on, and listen with love to each person's ideas. End with prayer thanking God for the love that holds you together.

NEXT WEEK

Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at a well. The ensuing conversation breaks several taboos, and brings the woman and her village to believe in Jesus (John 4:1-42).

Going Deeper

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? Consider the following basic pattern as a way of forming family devotions:

- ✦ Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time." Pray a simple prayer together.
- ✦ Take a moment to check in with each other; what are each person's "highs" and "lows" today?
- ✦ Read aloud from the Daily Bible Readings from below. Discuss the questions following each.
- ✦ End with a blessing, by simply tracing a cross on each other's forehead. The Lord's Prayer is a good way to end your devotion time. If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotions.

Note: This is only a suggested pattern. It will vary with your household's context and patterns. What works best for you? First thing in the morning? Over breakfast? Bed time? Be creative and flexible with how you practice and keep your devotions!

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday – Read John 3:1-21

Jesus offered Nicodemus new life in the Spirit.

- What do you find confusing about the conversation in this text?
- What are your thoughts about the new life Jesus offers you?

Monday – Read John 3:22-30

John the Baptist preached about and exalts Jesus.

- What have you received that you do not think was from heaven?
- What is meant by "he must increase but I must decrease"?

Tuesday – Read John 3:31-36

John continued to preach about Jesus.

- Where and when you have seen Jesus active in your life or the lives of others?
- How would you describe everlasting life?

Wednesday – Read Luke 3:19-20

King Herod was offended by John's rebukes and put him in prison.

- Justify Herod's reason for putting John in prison.
- Defend John by explaining why he should not have been put in prison.

Thursday – Read Matthew 11:2-6

John sent messengers to Jesus from prison.

- What person or message has helped you know who Jesus is?
- Why do you think John, who was preparing the way for Jesus, had to ask if Jesus was the Coming One?

Friday – Read Matthew 11:7-15

Jesus said that there was not a man born greater than John the Baptist.

- What was John's purpose?
- In what ways can you prepare others to hear about new life in Christ?

Saturday – Read Matthew 11:16-19

Jesus compared himself to John to show that the people did not know what they wanted.

- In what ways do people criticize or deny Jesus today?
- What do people seem to want in general? In this text?