

A TEACHER WANTS TO KNOW

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

ETERNAL LIFE

BORN AGAIN

NEW BIRTH

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

John 3:1-18

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students understand what “born again” means, to take that step, and to start their personal relationship with Jesus

MEMORY VERSE

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:16-18, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Adolescence is close for you students. They have already begun the search for the discovery of who they are. Some will look at their friends, sports heroes, or movie stars as models of what they want to become. Others will find definition in what they do: sports, good grades in their studies, hobbies, etc. Some will identify in great measure with their families or church people. Whatever path they take, this process can produce fear for preadolescents, even if they do not admit it. Remember when you were this age.

The church can provide a safe place where preteens can conduct their identity search. Who better to help boys and girls find themselves and their purpose for life than God and strong Christians as models?

In the first three lessons of the unit, the preadolescents learned about the difference Jesus made in the lives of the people he met. This lesson will help the students identify the most important difference Jesus wants to make in their lives. Like all people, they need a personal relationship with Christ as Savior and Lord.

This week, think about each of the students. Who are Christians? Who probably are not? How many are insecure? Ask God to help

you deal spiritually with each of them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

If you've ever held a newborn baby, you know what happens to us immediately. Looking at this person so small and full of joy and innocence, a huge smile illuminates our face. Seeing the babies' expressions, we begin to think about their potential. What will they be when they grow up? Where will they live the day they leave home? What great achievements will they make? What reputation will they have?

Babies remind us that each person comes to this life with a fresh and clean beginning. They do not have memories or history. Life is just beginning for them. Everything in their journey of life is ahead; there is no past that overwhelms them.

John writes of a man who learned that God's kingdom is full of newborn babies, people who experienced a fresh start and a new day. Whatever was in their past was left behind; they're only interested in the future. Nicodemus came to Jesus concerned about his past. Jesus told him that what really matters is the future—a future that will start fresh and new.

Nicodemus was an important man in his world. He was like a teacher who taught generations of students. He took his position seriously as a member of the Jewish council and as a Pharisee.

In addition to his religious beliefs and tasks, Nicodemus could not ignore the miracles performed by Jesus. And secretly at night, he sought the Lord with the desire to find the answers to his questions and doubts from another teacher, a fellow professional who came from God.

Jesus answered his question before he could ask it: "He who is not born again cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus was stunned. How can he be born again? What did Jesus really ask Nicodemus?

Jesus dismissed or ignored all the knowledge that Nicodemus had gained in his life. Jesus told this great teacher of Israel that he needed to be made new. Imagine suddenly understanding that you must forget everything you already know and start completely again.

The entrance to the kingdom of God is not achieved by human action. We cannot make our own means to enter. When we're born again, we give freedom to God to mold and guide us. Our old sin and guilt are removed, and we understand that we're clean and innocent again, like a newborn baby. Everything inappropriate that defines people, such as their status, failures, pride, history, etc., becomes part of the past by allowing God to perform the miracle of a new beginning and a consequent life.

Personal thoughts for the teacher:

What happened to you when you were born again into the family of God?

In what ways has your life been different since then?

How can you tell that story to our preadolescents?

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

The best gift

Pass out Student Activity Sheet #400-A (The Best Gift). Say: "Gifts are special and we enjoy them a lot when we receive them." Draw or explain on the gift box of the student activity sheet, the best gift you've received in your entire life. Allow time for the students to finish. What was your best gift? Explain how you felt upon receiving it.

Say: "Gifts can be diverse. They have all shapes, colors, types, and prices. Today we'll learn about a gift that costs us nothing, that comes from God, and that's the best gift a person can receive in his whole life."

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #400-B.

TEACH THE LESSON

Born again?

Today's story is found in John 3:1-18. Ask two boys to read the Bible story in the form of dialogue. One will represent the part of Jesus and the other the part of Nicodemus. You can read verses 1 and 2. Encourage the students to read with emphasis.

Once they finished reading the Bible, ask the following questions to help the preadolescents understand the phrase “born again.”

What is the relationship of believing in Jesus with being born again? (When a baby is born, a new life begins. The same happens when we say “born again.” Before being “born again,” we had no spiritual life. In other words, we did not know God, and we did not love him or obey him. But when we trust that Jesus is our Savior, God changes our inner selves. Now we want to love him and obey him. That is, a new relationship with God begins. That’s “born again.” This is another type of birth; it is spiritual birth.)

Verse 16 says that those who believe in Jesus will receive eternal life. So what does “believe in Jesus” mean? (We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that his death on the cross made it possible for God to forgive our sins. We trust that he loves us and helps us to change. What we used to do wrong (sin), now we do not do anymore. We used to deliberately do things that displease God, but not now. God’s promise of a new birth is for us now. Because we believe, now we can ask Jesus to forgive our sins and make us “born again.” In this way, we have a new relationship with God.)

What do you think is “eternal life”? (It is life that has no end. But it is also something else; it is a different life that God gives us. In this new life, we enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord; it is a relationship of love and obedience to him.)

At the end of this part, find out if the students have any questions. Then ask or review to see if everyone understood what was said. Ask them to explain how they would teach a friend about being “born again.”

Finish by saying: “Being born into this world is a wonderful event. We begin life with thousands of opportunities and possibilities. And being born in the spiritual life is extraordinary; it gives us the possibility of a relationship with God here on earth and for all eternity.”

CONNECT THE LESSON

Be sure to print Student Activity Sheet #400-C and #400-D (Cards of Love) back to back. Guide the students in what they’ll write on one side of the cards, and the scripture verse will be on the other. Ask them to think about specific names to whom they’ll give them.

This is a good time to pray for the people who will receive the love cards.

Then explain the verse on the other side of the cards. Remind the students of the importance of confessing their sins to Jesus. He is willing to forgive them and give them the opportunity to be “born again” as Jesus told Nicodemus. We can all receive the free gift of salvation.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

This is the last session of the unit. No doubt you have already planned to have a small celebration. Ask the students who learned the entire Bible passage to tell the group. Encourage those who have some portions left to learn. Talk about the importance of keeping the Word of God in our minds and hearts. You can give a small gift to the students who learned the biblical passage.

1st session: For God so loved the world / that he gave his one and only Son, / that whoever believes in him / shall not perish / but have eternal life.

2nd session: For God did not send his Son / into the world/ to condemn the world,/ but to save the world / through him.

3rd session: Whoever believes in him / is not condemned, / but whoever does not believe / stands condemned already / because they have not believed / in the name of God’s one and only Son. / (John 3:16-18)

4th session: Practice the whole text.

Practice several times playing different ways, such as:

Get in a circle and passing a ball or bag full of seeds from child to child, while repeating the parts of the text.

March around the room or the building and sing to the rhythm of a rap or hip-hop song.

Have competitions between girls and boys.

Mix the parts to assemble the text as if it were a puzzle.

Write the words on the board and delete them while they learn the text.

WRAP-UP

Pray

This may be the time for some of our students to enter the experience of salvation. Have a call to the “altar” and encourage the preadolescents, by faith, to enjoy this new birth. Tell them that they can accept the wonderful gift of salvation. Pray with them and for them. If there are students who accepted Jesus, ask them to tell about their new experience. Mention that they now have a new life because they are “born again” in their spiritual lives.

Encourage

Encourage the group to give thanks to the Lord for the gift of salvation and sing a song of praise for his love and forgiveness.

Invite

Encourage the students to attend the next session when we will start a new unit.