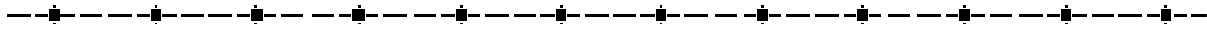


GOD'S BIG PLAN

Be Born Again John 2:12-3:20

Supporting Scriptures: John 1:10-13; 1 Peter 1:13-25; 1 John 3:7-10, 5:1, 4-5, 10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19-20; Matthew 18:20; Psalm 119:9; Hebrews 10:25



Lesson Goals: To see that all have sinned.
To see that the punishment for sin is death.
To see that God has provided salvation from the penalty that sin deserves.

Scripture Memory God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far. (Review the previous stories, focusing on the ones that specifically point to Christ's birth. Encourage more and more students to share.)

What is your church like? Is it big or small? Does it have a steeple, is it a school auditorium, or do you meet in someone's house or apartment? People meet in lots of different places.

How do you normally act at church? Do you come in, ready to learn or is it just another place you go to have something to do? Do you run and jump and shout or are you respectful of the place God has given you to learn about Him? Can you think back to the temples, or churches, that we have talked about in some of our other lessons? What do you remember about them? They were pretty special places, weren't they? It's where the people offered the blood of animals as a sacrifice for the wrong things they had done, their sin. How many temples can you remember? (Two.) Who built the first temple? (King David's son, Solomon.) There, God lived among His people in the form of a cloud. That temple was destroyed and the people were taken captive. When the Israelites went back to Jerusalem, they built the second temple. But that temple had also been destroyed. So how was there a temple during the time of Jesus? Well, the Roman Empire made Herod king. King Herod wanted the Israelites to obey him, so he made them happy by building them a new temple, the third one. Let's see what they were doing there one day when Jesus visited the temple.

READ: John 2:12-14 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

It was almost time to celebrate the Passover again and just as the boy Jesus had celebrated the Passover in Jerusalem every year with His parents, so He continued as an adult. So, Jesus went from the town of Capernaum, where He had spent time with His family and His disciples, to Jerusalem. While He was there, Jesus went to the temple. As Jesus walked around, He found people selling cattle, sheep and doves. He saw other greedy people changing one kind of money for another. But the temple was where people went to meet with God. Jesus became angry. These people weren't there to meet with God, they were there to make money. So Jesus took some ropes that were there and made a whip. He chased away the sheep and the cattle. He scattered the coins of the moneychangers and turned over their tables. He even ordered the people with the doves to get them out of the temple saying, "How dare you turn My Father's house into a market!"

The people there in the temple wondered who Jesus thought He was to do all of this. “Prove you have the right to do this,” they demanded. Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple. I will raise it up again in three days.” But they were confused. It had taken forty-six years to build this temple. How could this man rebuild it in only three days? But Jesus wasn’t talking about this building that King Herod had built. Jesus was talking about the temple of His body. This temple made of stones wasn’t where God would choose to live among His people. Jesus was God walking around and living among His people.

One night after that, one of the Jewish leaders came to see Jesus. He was a very important teacher in Israel. His name was Nicodemus. Nicodemus said, “We know you are a teacher from God. No one could do the things you are doing without God’s help.” Jesus didn’t chit chat with Nicodemus. Jesus knew why Nicodemus was there and He didn’t waste any time. “What I’m about to tell you is true. No one can see God’s kingdom without being born again.” But Nicodemus was confused. “How can I be born again when I’m old. I can’t go back inside my mother!” Anyway, Nicodemus was an important man. He was a teacher. He was part of Abraham’s family and he went to church, at the temple. Wasn’t all of that enough to get to heaven?

So Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “You have to be born again to get to heaven.” Nicodemus wasn’t born into God’s kingdom by being born a part of Abraham’s family. God’s kingdom, the things that are important to God, had to be born in Nicodemus. Jesus continued, “Nicodemus, God loved you so much that He sent His One and Only Son. Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life.” But Nicodemus still didn’t understand. He left that night, but He left with a lot to think about.

Review:

Let’s review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

Have you had a lot to think about? Are you like Nicodemus? We all are. It doesn’t matter what family we are born into. Family can’t get you to heaven. And it doesn’t matter what kinds of things we do, no matter how important. Actions, or doing good, can’t get you to heaven. The things that are important to God have to be born in you. God loves you so much that He sent His One and Only Son. If you believe in Him you will not die. Instead, you will have eternal life. You’ll see God’s kingdom. You’ll go to heaven. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, [the Promised One from God] is born again because of what God has done.” When we believe and choose to follow Jesus, He cleans the sin out of our lives like He cleaned out the temple. Do you remember Jesus saying, “Destroy this temple. I will raise it up again in three days?” Jesus wasn’t talking about the building. Jesus was talking about His body. Jesus was talking about something that would happen a few years later, the reason He came. Jesus gave His life in place of yours. He carried all the sin that you and I and everyone else has ever done. Jesus died and was buried. But, after **three days**, Jesus rose from the dead. The temple of His body was raised, the resurrection! Will you accept God’s gift for you today? He knows all about you and He loves you very much.

If you have already chosen to believe in Jesus and follow Him, did you know that you are now the temple of God, the church? When we believe in Jesus and follow Him, God puts the Holy Spirit in us. God’s Spirit lives in us the way God lived in the temple building long ago. The Bible tells us in 1 John 3:9 that, “Those who are born again because of what God has done will not keep on sinning. God’s very nature remains in them. They can’t go on sinning.” Have you ever felt sick at your stomach or bad when you sinned? Me, too. That’s because God’s Spirit lives in us. God’s Spirit let’s us know if we are disobeying. When that happens, talk to God. Ask Him to forgive you for doing the wrong thing. Tell Him that you want to be obedient, not disobedient. And God will forgive you. He will wipe away that sin and He won’t remember it again.

Planning for Next Week
Lesson 33 • Jesus Teaches from the Mountain
Matthew 5-7

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “I like to go to church,
I like to go to church.
I like the happy songs we sing,
I like to go to church.”

SHARE: How do you normally act at church? Do you come in, ready to learn or do you just think about playing? Do you run and jump and shout or are you quiet and ready to listen? One day, Jesus went to church. As Jesus walked around, He found people selling animals. They were selling cows, sheep and doves. He saw other greedy people changing one kind of money for another. But the temple was where people were supposed to meet with God. Jesus became angry. These people weren't there to meet with God, they were there to make money. So Jesus took some ropes that were there and made a whip. He chased away the sheep and the cows. He scattered the coins that were being changed and turned over the tables. He even ordered the people with the doves to get them out of the temple saying, “How dare you make My Father's house into a market!” Jesus was angry because the people were doing bad things at church. Jesus wants us to come to church being obedient and ready to learn.

One night after that, a leader came to see Jesus. He was a very important teacher in Israel. His name was Nicodemus. Nicodemus said, “We know you are a teacher from God. No one could do the things you are doing without God's help.” Jesus didn't chit chat with Nicodemus. Jesus knew why Nicodemus was there and He didn't waste any time. “What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can see God without being born again.” But Nicodemus was confused. “How can I be born again when I'm old. I can't go back inside my mother!” Anyway, Nicodemus was an important man. He was a teacher. He was part of Abraham's family and he went to church, at the temple. Wasn't all of that enough to get to heaven?

So Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “You have to be born again to get to heaven.” Nicodemus wasn't born into God's kingdom by being born a part of Abraham's family. Jesus continued, “Nicodemus, God loved you so much that He sent His One and Only Son. Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life.” But Nicodemus still didn't understand. He left that night, but He left with a lot to think about.

Do you know that God also loves you? He loves you so much that He sent His One and Only Son. When you believe in Him, you'll get to go to heaven.

PRAY: Thank you, God, for loving me. Help me to be obedient at church.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Print the memory verse on black or dark blue construction paper. Decorate it with star stickers to remember that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night.
- Make Valentine-like cards to share the gospel with friends. Use paper heart doilies. On a cardstock heart inside, print John 3:16. Go with your students to make visits and give their cards.
- Talk about 2 Corinthians 5:17. This verse explains what it means to be “born again.” Explain even further with a comparison of caterpillars to butterflies.
- Make tissue paper butterflies with chenille stick (pipe cleaner) bodies.
- Reenact the story.
- For adults or older students: Talk about Numbers 21:5-9, Moses lifting up the snake in the wilderness. Those who looked at the snake on the stick were saved from death. This story points us to John 3:14 and Jesus’ death on the cross. Belief in Him saves us from death and offers us eternal life.