

JESUS AND YOUR FUTURE

Lesson 1: Life Eternal

A 4-LESSON BIBLE STUDY

What we want students to learn: That a forever-future with God is found through faith in Christ.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To articulate their standing with Christ: whether they have come to saving faith with Him, and if so, how, and how this has impacted their life, both in the present and future.

Scripture Focus: John 3:1-18

Overview: Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus results in a wonderfully concise definition of what it means to gain eternal life in Christ. In context, the ultra-familiar John 3:16 serves as a crystal clear explanation of what eternal life is and how it is gained. In this lesson, you'll help lay the foundation for a discussion of your students' future by looking at how an eternal future is gained . . . and how it is rejected. You'll help your students think about where they stand with Christ, if they have come to a saving relationship with Him or not, and if so, how this has impacted them.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Your Future* Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your “*Jesus And Your Future* Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

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Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

The Details

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John, son of Zebedee, a fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus. John also penned the book of Revelation as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

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The Setting

In John 2 Jesus performed a miracle by turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana. After that He cleansed the Temple during Passover. At the end of the chapter, in verse 23, John tells us, “many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.” This brings us to chapter 3 and Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus. Nicodemus’ first words to Jesus were, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with them.” So, it’s pretty obvious that Jesus’ signs are garnering Him a lot of attention. The issue, however, is what kind of attention this is. Why are these people intrigued by Jesus? What did they know about Him? What do they want from Him? Nicodemus’ statement gives Jesus the opportunity to address his, and all of mankind’s, deepest need.

The Main Point

The main point for your students to understand is that eternal life is only found through being born again in Jesus Christ. We like to think that we are OK, have things under control, and can make it just fine on our own. However, the truth of the matter is that each one of us has a massive problem on our hands. We have a sin problem. And that sin problem means that we aren’t OK, we don’t have things under control, and we can’t do anything good on our own. Left to our own devices, we are going to die and spend eternity separated from God. The idea of this lesson is for your students to understand that while this seems extremely bleak, there is good news! And that news is found in John 3. We can be born again, we can be made new, and we can have an eternal future with God.

Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

The Lead In

- **Goal:** To help students begin thinking about what it means to be born again.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll need to arrange to show the following YouTube clip:
 - o <http://www.history.com/shows/american-restoration/videos/most-unique-item?m=5189719baf036&s=All&f=1&free=false>
- To make the point even stronger, you’ll want to show some of the before and after pictures from the following site:
 - o <http://www.history.com/shows/american-restoration/pictures/american-restoration-before-and-after>
- You’ll want to either be able to show the site in class, or have printed some of the examples to show students.

FIRST, ask the students if any of them have seen the show “American Restoration” on the History Channel. If any of them have seen it, ask them to explain the concept of the show. If not, explain to them that it’s a show about Rick Dale and his restoration business, “Rick’s Restorations.” According to their website, they “take unique, broken-down pieces of American history and bring them back to life.” Then, show the video clip to your students.

NEXT, when the clip is over, show students some of the before and after pictures from the website. Then, lead students in a short discussion. Ask:

- **What are some parallels we can draw between what Rick does on the show and what Christ does in our lives? What are some similarities we have with the items that he works on?**
 - o Answer: We are all in bad shape without Christ. We all come to Him in a broken, helpless

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state. We are all in need of restoration.

- **What are some differences between what Rick does to items on the show and what Christ does in our lives?**
 - Answer: The difference is that we need much, much more than some new parts and a nice paint job. We are desperate for a lot more than getting touched up. We need a complete overhaul. We have to be totally made new.

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by saying something like this:

- **This lesson is the first on a four lesson look at what Jesus had to say about our future. We'll start this series with an in-depth look at what a forever-future with God looks like. And we'll do it by looking at an interesting encounter between Jesus and a guy named Nicodemus. In the passage we're going to study today, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be "born-again." This implies that there's something very wrong Nicodemus' current state, something that has to be completely re-made. Jesus goes on to explain what we gain by being born-again and what we lose if we aren't. Let's take a closer look.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help students understand that a forever-future with God is found through faith in Christ.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, talk to the students a little bit about the beginning of Jesus and Nicodemus' conversation. Begin by having a student read John 3:1-6. Ask the students to talk a little bit Nicodemus' statement to Jesus in verse 2. Ask something like:

- **What type of discussion do you think Nicodemus was looking for? What had peaked his interest about Jesus?**
 - Answer: In John 2:23 we learn that Jesus had done many miracles at this point. This had obviously created quite a stir. Nicodemus recognized that no one could do these signs "unless God is with him." He, understandably, wanted to know more about this man that was doing such amazing things.
- **Do you think Jesus' response caught him off guard? Why?**
 - Answer: On the surface Jesus' response might seem to come out of left field a little bit. But Jesus knew more important things were at stake. He cut right to the heart of the most important matter and told him that he had to be "born again."

NEXT, make sure your students understand why we must be "born again" and the significance of what that means. Ask the students:

- **What are some things the Bible says about who we are apart from Christ?**
 - Answer: Paul refers to us as "enemies" of God in Romans 5:10. On several occasions the Bible describes us as "dead" in our sin (Ephesians 2:1-2 and Colossians 2:13).
- **What do you think it means to be "dead" in our sin?**
 - Answer: It means that we are completely separated from God and incapable of doing anything good on our own. What do dead men have the capacity to do? Nothing.
- **What does Scripture say about our eternal future apart from Christ?**
 - Answer: The Bible tells us that death is the consequence of our sin (Romans 6:23). It also says that those apart from Christ will experience "eternal punishment" (Matthew 25:45-46).

Say something like:

- **Think back to the video we watched and pictures we looked at in The Lead In from American Restoration. He took some broken, nasty, run-down pieces and made them look pretty much**

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brand new. It was pretty amazing to see the work he did on some pieces that looked pretty hopeless in the beginning. But, the reality is that he still took existing pieces and made them look better. In The Lead In we talked about the difference between us and these antiques are that we have to be totally made new, not just touched up and made to look better.

Ask the students:

- **After looking at what Scripture says about our lives and eternal future apart from Christ, does it make sense why Jesus says that we must be “born again”? Explain.**
 - Answer: Students’ answers may vary some. Remind them that Scripture says that we are dead in our sin. This isn’t merely metaphorical language. The result of our sin is death. So we need much more than a touch-up or tune-up. We have to be brought back to life. We have to be completely “born again.”

Explain to your students that the picture that’s being painted here seems a little bleak and depressing. And the reality is that life apart from Christ is hopeless. Explain that although Nicodemus was a little confused when Jesus first told him that he had to be born again, Jesus was telling him the greatest news he could ever receive. Remind them that you’ve talked about what Scripture has to say about our lives and eternal future apart from Jesus and while all of that is very true, Jesus provides a way for us to experience the exact opposite of life separated from Him.

THEN, have a student read John 3:3-6. Say something like:

- **So, Nicodemus is obviously thinking about a second physical birth. While our physical bodies definitely suffer the consequences of sin (decay and death), it’s not our bodies that must be born again.**

Ask the students:

- **What does it mean to be born of “water and the Spirit”?**
 - Answer: Have a student read Ezekiel 36:25-27. This is the rebirth that we need. We need cleansing, thus the reference to water. We need new hearts and new spirit, thus the reference to the Spirit. The picture painted here in Ezekiel is someone being made completely new. This isn’t a touch-up. It’s out with the old and in with the new. This is how destructive our sin is, it completely ruins everything about us. But this is how great our God is, He is able to overcome the power and destructive nature of sin and give us a new heart and new spirit.
- **What do you think it means to “enter the kingdom of God”?**
 - Answer: The kingdom of God is both a present and future reality. It’s the reign and rule of God in the lives of his people. Forgiveness, peace, satisfaction, and fulfillment in Christ can be experienced now. That’s the present part. However, sin is still here in this world, but the future reality is that it Christ will return and there will be no more sin, pain, suffering, or tears (Revelation 21). Being born again means that we get to enter His kingdom and experience it’s reality both now and in the future.

Say something like:

- **Experiencing spiritual rebirth and the kingdom of God stands in stark contrast to our discussion of life apart from Christ. This is good news! The question we have to ask now is: How does this happen? We know that Jesus says we have to be born again, but how is someone born again? Who or what makes being born again even possible? How do we experience this spiritual rebirth that we’ve been talking about? Let’s see what the Bible has to say about it.**

NEXT, have a student read John 3:16-18. When he or she is finished, say something like:

- **John 3:16 is easily the most recognizable verse in all of the Bible. If you’ve only memorized one Bible verse, this is the one. Because of that familiarity, sometimes it can be easy for us to just rattle the verse off out of memory and not really pay attention to the amazing truth that it con-**

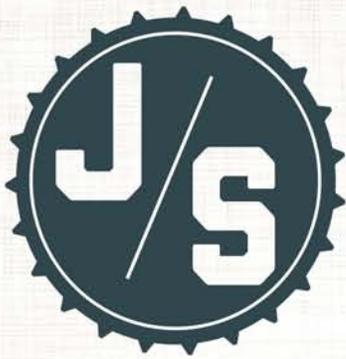


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THE JESUS STUDIES

You don't need to be reminded of the issues teenagers deal with as they try to live out their faith in a world that's often opposed to their core beliefs. Navigating these issues can be rough. Teenagers get so many mixed messages; the world says one thing, their friends may say another. And we hope they know enough about their faith to know how to make sense of it all. We hope . . .

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