

# ONE

## STORY

### SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

**WEEK 40**  
**John 3:16**

#### BEFORE THE SESSION:

- Pray for each of your group members by name
- Look over the questions on the right and choose the ones that are most appropriate for your small group. If you're really feeling motivated, you might even think of a few on your own.
- Think through how you might prompt your group a little if they have difficulty getting started in discussion.
- Take a look at the accountability question below. Lead members to gather one on one or in same sex clusters to discuss it over coffee this week.

#### THIS WEEK'S BIG IDEA

Jesus is at the heart of the Gospel.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTION

Just like in Nicodemus' time, people in our world try to get to God by being "religious" and keeping all the rules. Are there any areas where you are "religious"? What are ways you can overcome this mentality?

#### TO PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Matthew 5-9, 11-12; Mark 2-3; Luke 6-7, 11; John 5;

#### AS YOU READ...

...Think about what God's plan is for your life.

## CONNECT

(10 min.)

Choose one or both of the following questions to begin your time together as a group.

1. Describe a time you misplaced something valuable (phone, car keys, wedding ring, etc.), which prompted you and your family to go on an all-out search until the object was found.
2. Describe a time when you faced a spiritual crisis that wouldn't let you rest. Maybe you wrestled with finding answers or struggled with a specific aspect of your faith. Who helped you walk through your questions? What happened when you found answers?

## EXPLORE

(40 min.)

Say something like, "Today we will talk about how Nicodemus secretly seeks Jesus to answer his questions about God." Then guide your group through these questions.

3. Read John 3: 1-3. In verse 2, what does Nicodemus first say to Jesus?
4. It's funny how Nicodemus doesn't actually ask Jesus a question, yet it's clear he wants to know something. Jesus always knows the real thing we want to ask even if we don't just come right out and say it. In verse 3, how does Jesus answer Nicodemus?
5. Read John 3:4-8. What questions does Nicodemus have with the whole "born again" thing? Why do you think Jesus would talk to a religious leader – someone who supposedly already knew everything about God – about being spiritually "born again"?
6. Read verses 16-21. Which word or phrase in this passage speaks to you as the heart of the gospel?
7. How do Jesus' descriptions about salvation contradict the religious hypocrisy we see in our world today? How does this passage also reveal that a loving God cannot tolerate sin?
8. John 3:16 is one of the most well known Bible verses of all time. How does it change your understanding of this verse to read it in context with the story of Nicodemus?

## TRANSFORM

(10 min.)

Just as this passage indicates, the whole gospel is about us being "born again" for the glory of God. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

9. How has the gospel totally transformed your life? What is one area of your old life you are still holding on to? This week, what is one step you can take to let go of that area so that Christ may continue His work in you?

# This Week's Study Notes:

## So What's The Story?

In John 3, we see a seasoned Pharisee suddenly wrestling with everything he's ever known about God. Make no mistake -- Jesus was not popular among the religious leaders, yet Nicodemus knew there was something legit about this man. Burdened with his questions, Nicodemus resolved to visit Jesus at night so his co-workers wouldn't find out.

## Scripture Notes

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin—the religious and political governing body of Judea. Comprised of 71 members and presided over by the high priest, its self-perpetuating membership included priests, elders, and scribes. Concerned with works-based religion, much of Jesus' conversation with "Nic" emphasizes the grace that prompts salvation. In John 3:3 the phrase "born again" can be translated in two ways—"born again" or "born from above." The former highlights the radical reorientation to life resulting from trusting Jesus while the latter accents the reality that spiritual life is a gift from God, not something earned by virtue of one's performance (1:12-13). Interestingly, in John 3:15, the phrase "eternal life" is first used here, but later repeated many times throughout this Gospel. Its meaning is not simply tied up with the quantity of time one exists, but also with the quality of fullness, goodness, and perfection of life with God.

Finally, Jesus' description of "light" vs "darkness" deals with the good news of the gospel in contrast to the evil nature of man. John 3:16-18 sum up the human situation which makes the gospel so necessary. The problem is not a lack of understanding of the "light," but a decided preference for the "darkness." This point is echoed in Romans 1:18 where Paul speaks of people suppressing the truth of God in order to pursue a life of sin and wickedness.

## Leader Tips

### AS YOU READ THIS WEEK...

- Think about and pray for each member of your small group.
- Think through the following questions:
  1. Whom does God bring to mind as I read these verses? Why?
  2. What needs to change in my own life as a result of what I'm reading?
  3. Whom do I need to tell about these verses?

### FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY WE RECOMMEND...

- Bible Commentary: [Bible.org](http://Bible.org)
- Bible Commentary: [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org)
- Pronouncing Biblical Words: [Netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm](http://Netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm)

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