



Based on the texts of John 3:1-21, 7:25-52, and 19:38-42

[Author's Note: This message is perfect for a Good Friday service, or an occasion where you want a powerful Gospel presentation. It could also be used when teaching on forgiveness, salvation, or redemption. In my ten years of youth ministry, this was my most successful message.

This message is a first-person narrative. This means that YOU—as the speaker—are Nicodemus in this story! Nicodemus only appears in the Gospel of John, so this narrative is told from the perspective of an older Nicodemus who finally had the courage to tell his story to the final Gospel writer—John the apostle. The feeling of this message is regret for his lack of boldness during the life of Jesus, but he finds this courage later on once he buries Jesus. Just like the redemptive story of Peter found in the Gospel of John, this is the redemptive story of Nicodemus.]

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE: First, review the texts from John (John 3:1-21, 7:25-52, and 19:38-42) so that you're familiar with the story.

Next, be sure to have John 3:16-17 memorized, since they are such powerful and famous verses.

Finally, review this transcript, but I would not use it for your presentation of this message. Remember, you are Nicodemus! Instead, use the message outline found in this resource during your presentation so that you are not dependent on notes.

I never thought I would receive the opportunity to talk to you today. For so many years, I haven't told many people my story because I lost everything, and I was ashamed of who I was before my new life. My former life was completely turned upside down. I was content simply serving the church. However, John, the apostle and church leader, approached me as he was compiling a historical account of the life of the man who changed my life: Jesus. John said that because I'm born again, I don't need to be ashamed. I am forgiven! I'm so glad John asked, and I'm so glad I get to share my story with you today.

I was part of the group called the Pharisees, and I, Nicodemus, was one of the prominent teachers. I was young and in my 20's, a bright scholar and a student of our Jewish culture as much as I studied the Torah.

I distinctly remember one winter that was so cold and so dry, people said it made new records for our time. I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is that the hearts of my people could not be more cold and dry: though we depended so much on Adonai, we had not heard from him in over 400 years. My people had our part in battles and wars in that time, but we found ourselves under the control of the Romans. We wanted so badly to hear from God, and we needed the promised Messiah more than ever before.

I remember that season so well because a man named John the Baptist came on the scene. He was an odd one. He was an Essene, a religious fanatic who came from the wilderness. He also ate bugs and wore scratchy camel hair: certainly not my taste as a prominent, rising leader in Jerusalem. However, some were saying he was a prophet. As weird as he was, this was the voice from God we had so desperately been waiting for!

John had a great following and baptized people, declaring that he was preparing the way for the Messiah. He also spoke out against the Pharisees, which made most of us really mad. I thought it was good! The old guys in our group were pretty stuck in their ways, so they needed to be shaken up a little bit!

Upon seeing Jesus, John declared that Jesus was the coming Messiah. He even baptized Jesus, and eyewitnesses say God spoke to Him. Who was this man? Jesus went on to gather disciples, perform miracles, and teach powerful messages. He looked like much more than a prophet. Perhaps He was the one we were all waiting for?

I had to follow up. I knew Jesus would be back in town soon for Passover, and though He already had a small following, I found a way to connect with him to meet. I wanted to avoid the crowds seeing me with Jesus, because by that time the Pharisees began to hate Jesus too. I didn't get it. Still, this meeting needed to happen in secret, so I met him on a warm evening on a rooftop under the clear sky of an almost full moon at Passover in the spring.

What I *really* wanted to ask Jesus was, "ARE YOU THE MESSIAH, and ARE YOU BRINGING THE KINGDOM?!" but I thought I would come at this less aggressively. Instead I started by talking about His miracles, asking if He came from God. He responded that I couldn't see the kingdom unless I was born again.

Now, I'm pretty educated, even in science, and a human being birthed twice wasn't really something that seemed possible. Once someone is born and becomes an adult, they can't fit in their mother's womb. He explained that He was talking about a spiritual rebirth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I was still confused. Jesus went on to say:

John 3:10, 15-17 (NIV)

¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

First, Jesus called me out about being Israel's teacher of teachers, yet having no idea what He was talking about. I admit I was a bit flustered like my fellow Pharisees always were, but the rest of His message was so powerful that it changed me.

Jesus said that He would be like the Bronze serpent from the book of Numbers, which was a symbol of salvation. He went on to explain that to be born again is to be given life. Jesus came to be our salvation, so that we could be saved from our sin and condemnation. I learned that night that **Jesus came to give us life.**

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