

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Second Sunday in Lent**  
**Gospel Lesson for Adults**

**Scripture: John 3:1-17**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week’s Gospel**

What color is the wind? What shape is the love of a parent for a child? Some things are easily quantified. In some matters, we simply fall, trustingly, into the arms of faith.

**Theme: The Choice to Risk Believing**

**Before Class:** You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the passage for the group. During the rest of Lent, we have long passages to read each week; for the next four Sundays the passage is from The Gospel of John.

**Beginning:** Invite the group to be aware that Bible passages come to us with three levels:

- 1) The account of the historical event.
- 2) The meaning for our community here and now.
- 3) The implications for us individually.

**Option:** Ask the group if anyone has an insight to share about forgoing whining and complaining and looking for positive ways to get our needs met.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for your patience with us and for sending your son, Jesus, to help us understand what you call us to be. Amen.

**The Scripture: John 3: 1-17** Invite three people to read – a narrator, one as Jesus, the other as Nicodemus. The script with the reading divided into parts is at the end of this lesson.

**Questions:**

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage.
- Describe the dilemma of Nicodemus. (He is a devout Pharisee with a sneaking hunch that Jesus is more than just a teacher who has come from God, yet he can make little sense out of Jesus’ abstract teaching.)
- What does Nicodemus understand when Jesus tells him that he must be ‘born from above?’ (Nicodemus is unable to think of “born” in any other context than the birth of an infant.)
- Where is Jesus trying to lead Nicodemus? (The distinction between flesh as a scientific fact and Spirit as a larger way of looking at reality.)
- Jesus uses for earthly things (like the example of the wind) which we cannot see but know to be true. What other examples could we add of things we know to be true, but we are unable

to see? (Our skin is constantly replacing itself, we breathe, our hearts beat, gravity keeps us from falling off the face of the world, the earth is in constant revolution, etc.)

- Heavenly things are harder to describe. What are some of the spiritual realities we could name? (The fragile miracle of life, love of one person for another, love of God for each of us, resurrection, life everlasting, etc.)
- What might make all this easier for us to grasp than it was for Nicodemus? (The Crucifixion and the Resurrection have happened, and we have 2000 years of testimony to the truth of the message of Jesus.)
- I wonder how Nicodemus' struggle with the message provides us with greater empathy for those in our lives who have been unable to accept the message of Jesus? (To be able to articulate honest doubt puts one on the potential path to conversion, but does not guarantee that conversion will happen. These people may be looking to our behavior for signs of our belief.)
- I wonder how Nicodemus' struggle helps us in our times of doubt?

**Getting Closure:** Invite the group to sit in a comfortable position for a moment or two of silence. If you have people in the group who were not with you last week, explain that this is not a time of intense intercession but of emptiness, giving God the space to act within us. (If the group resonated with this time last week, perhaps you will choose to extend the time this week.)

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for those who come to us in hope of seeing you. Help us to point to you in ways they can see and help us to see you even when we doubt. Amen.

### **John 3:1-17**

**Narrator:** Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him,

**Nicodemus:** ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’

**Jesus:** ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’

**Nicodemus:** ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’

**Jesus:** ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’

**Nicodemus:** ‘How can these things be?’

**Jesus:** ‘Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.’

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