



## Portrait of Christ

*Sketches in the Gospel of John*

Inductive Discovery Lesson 4  
**John 3:1-36**

### Jesus: The Teacher

No one knows why he came at night. Was he reluctant to be seen with the young man who caused such a commotion during Passover? Or maybe he thought this was his best chance for uninterrupted conversation. Whatever the reason, Nicodemus came with stirrings he couldn't answer.

The blanket of night didn't hinder Jesus from seeing hunger in an old man's soul. Jesus passed over formalities and went straight to the heart. *Unless you are born again, Nicodemus, you cannot see the kingdom of God.* The certainty of Jesus' statement tugged at his heart, but Nicodemus struggled to wrap his mind around such a thought. It wasn't the symbolic language that threw him—but the truth behind it was hard to grasp. Is it really possible to have a new heart and mind? *How can these things be?*

Nicodemus didn't understand it that night, but his conversation with the Teacher began a new work in an old man who eventually came to believe.

**Working Text for John 3:1-36**  
New International Version (NIV)

**1** Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. **2** He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.” **3** In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” **4** “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” **5** Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

**9** “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. **10** “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? **11** I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. **12** I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? **13** No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. **14** Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

**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. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. **19** This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. **20** Everyone who

does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

**21** But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

**22** After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. **23** Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

**24** (This was before John was put in prison.) **25** An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. **26** They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.” **27** To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’ **29** The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. **30** He must become greater; I must become less.

**31** “The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. **33** The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. **34** For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. **35** The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. **36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”









## **INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?***

**Look for a spiritual lesson.** Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as: “Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

## **APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?***

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to ***put it into action.***

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new insight for me, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

### **John 3:1-15**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

### **John 3:16-21**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

### **John 3:22-36**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

## **Summary**

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Give a simple title to the chapter to help you remember what it says.  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Take A Closer Look

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.  
John 3:16

### *Memorize God's Word*

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize from and re-write the verse here.

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### *Meditate on God's Word*

While you memorize this verse, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea—the longer it steeps, the richer the flavor. So give yourself permission to slowly savor God's Word! Use the questions below (like a tea bag) to keep dipping into this verse.

(Challenge alert: You won't always see an obvious answer directly from the verse.)

**Look up.** What does this verse show you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, or His promises.)

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**Look around.** What does this teach you about life or people in general?

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**Look within.** What does this teach you about yourself?

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**Look ahead.** Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

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**Look alive!** Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

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## ***Make God's Word Your Prayer***

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.

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## **God's Word Bearing Fruit**

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter?  
How will you put what you have learned into practice?

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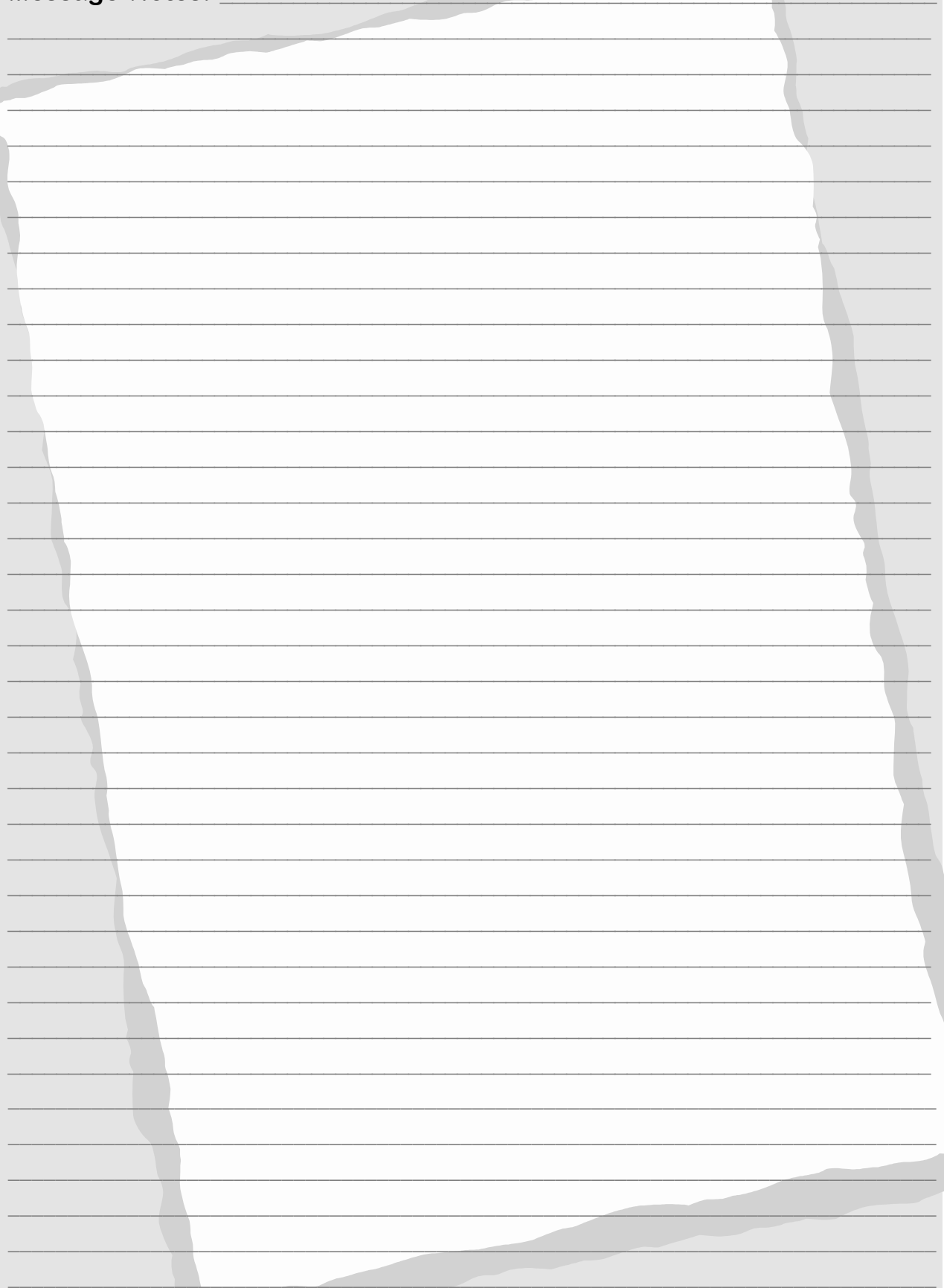
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## **Something to Think About . . .**

God loves us; not because we are loveable but because He is love;  
Not because He needs to receive but because He delights to give.

C.S. Lewis

**Message Notes:**



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