



TEACH IT COFFEEHOUSE SESSION 3

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- his or her own Bible
- optional: the student journal page for Session 3 (Using the student journal page is optional in the coffeehouse setting since table space will be limited.)

You'll also need—

- a pack of pencils with erasers
- optional: statements to read for the Open exercise
- optional: a food item from where you're meeting that can represent a birthday cake (enough for each student to have a bite)
- optional: a printed picture of a birthday cake with room to write names on the cake
- optional: a few spare Bibles for students who've forgotten theirs

2. Session Intro

GOALS OF SESSION 3

As students experience this session, they will—

- gain a true understanding (as opposed to a cliché understanding) of the phrase *born again*.
- make a connection between their spiritual birth and God's eternal time clock.
- be invited to acknowledge their spiritual birth in a unique way.

PRAYER

After the group has gathered, lead your group in prayer. Spend a few moments in silence, giving students an opportunity to forget the distractions of the day and begin focusing on God. Invite them to picture their favorite scene of Jesus and to put themselves in that scene by imagining details such as smells, sounds, the time of day, and so forth.

OPEN

Who Said It?

Read a famous statement and ask students to guess who said it and why. Use the examples below, and include a few statements from popular culture that fit the theme of "first words uttered," which launched something like an event or era, e.g., "Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!" (Indianapolis 500) or "No, I am your father" (Darth Vader to Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars: Episode V -The Empire Strikes Back*).

The Eagle has landed.

—Neil Armstrong; the first lunar landing

Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you.

—Alexander Graham Bell; the first words spoken over his invention, the telephone

We must hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

—Benjamin Franklin at the signing of the Declaration of Independence

Because it is there.

—George Leigh Mallory, when asked why he wanted to climb Mount Everest, the first to attempt this feat

What hath God wrought?

—Samuel Morse; the first words transmitted by telegraph, in Morse code

Transition into the study with these questions:

Do you notice a common theme surrounding these statements?

Many of them were uttered at the dawn of something completely new; that's why we remember them.

If you had to recite the most famous Bible verse of all time, what would it be?

Someone will undoubtedly mention John 3:16. Sometimes it even shows up in professional sports arenas!

Does anybody know the situation in which John 3:16 was first said? Who said it? Who heard it?

Jesus said it to a Pharisee named Nicodemus in a private meeting.

3. Digging In

Nic at Night

Many students will know that Jesus said John 3:16, but they may be sketchy on the details. So dive right into John 3, asking the group to read John 3:1-11 using their Bibles. As they read, they should—

- 1. Use a unique symbol to mark every mention of a guy named Nicodemus.**
- 2. Notice how Jesus responded to Nicodemus by marking the words *born* and *birth*.**
- 3. If you're hesitant about marking in your Bibles, write lightly so you can erase the markings later. If you're still not comfortable with it, that's okay. Just eyeball the passage and remember any info about the words *born* and *birth*.**

When most have finished, discuss these questions as a group.

What did you learn about Nicodemus?

Answers might include:

- He was a Pharisee (v. 1).*
- He was a member of the Jewish ruling council (v. 1).*
- He came at night (v. 2).*
- He called Jesus "Rabbi" and "teacher" (v. 2).*
- He must have been struggling with who Jesus was (v. 2).*
- He was Israel's teacher but didn't understand (v. 10).*

What did Jesus teach him about spiritual birth?

Answers might include:

- You can't see God's kingdom unless you're born again (v. 3).*
- You can't enter the kingdom unless you're born of water and the Spirit (v. 5).*
- There's a difference between being born of the flesh and born of the Spirit (v. 6).*
- You must be born again (v. 7)!*

What was Nicodemus' attitude toward Jesus?

He was respectful and curious.

What's significant about when Nicodemus came to Jesus?

He was obviously hiding his interest in Jesus. He had a real curiosity, but he wasn't ready to go public with it.



4. Insight

Deep Background

As the discussion unfolds, you may want to give some background on this scene:

-The Pharisees were members of a religious sect who prided themselves on how strictly they kept God's laws. They were really into rules—in fact, they actually invented new rules to keep people from breaking the commands God had given. The problem was, their rules took the place of a real relationship with God. For example, you could obey all the rules and still not have a heart for God. This was the main issue for which Jesus rebuked them. Eventually, the Pharisees became the ringleaders behind Jesus' crucifixion.

-Mention that Nicodemus shows up two more times in John. The students may be interested in looking at these scenes (John 7:43-53 and 19:38-42) on their own this week. John is the only Bible book that mentions Nicodemus.

-The word for again (as in "born again") can also be translated "from above." In fact, you may want to encourage your students to think "born from above" when they see "born again." This can help them break away from the cliché meaning that often surrounds the phrase "born again."

5. Digging Deeper

Belief Benefits

Now probe a little deeper into Jesus' response to Nicodemus' question about what it means to be "born again." Ask the group to read John 3:10-21 using their Bibles. As they read, have them circle references to those who believe.

When most have finished, ask your students to share any benefits they see for believing. If you're using the optional student journal pages, students can write the info in the space under Digging Deeper.

Benefits to Those Who Believe

-They have eternal life (v. 15).

-They won't perish (v. 16).

-They are not condemned (v. 18).

-They live by the truth, come into the light (v. 21).

Now ask this question—and there is a right answer:

What was Jesus asking Nicodemus to believe?

That he could be reborn from above. Eternal life was possible for Nicodemus if he believed in Jesus Christ and was born from above.

But what does it really mean to be "born again" or "born from above"? God's Word has more to say on the subject—and that's what the group will look at next.

6. Cross-Checking

Do Over

Ask for volunteers to read these passages to the group and then discuss the question below.

What words or phrases from John 1:10-13 and 1 Peter 1:22-25 describe the process of spiritual birth?

Possible responses may look like—

John 1:10-13

We are children born of God, not of natural descent, human decision, or a person's will.

1 Peter 1:22-25

We're born again of imperishable (not destructible) seed through the enduring word of God.

If you're using the optional student journal pages, have students write this info in the space provided under Cross-Checking.

7. Taking It Inward

A New Kind of Birthday

Help students process the perspective of spiritual versus physical birth by discussing these questions:

Going by these verses, what are the differences between a physical birth and a spiritual birth?

Students should see that our physical birth is corruptible and perishable. But our spiritual birth is imperishable, incorruptible, and of God (not of man). Once we're saved, our lives are now governed by God's eternal clock—not the earthly one.

How can we show in our daily lives that our spiritual birthday is more important than our physical birthday?

In what ways are we sometimes like Nicodemus, obeying all the rules and still not having a heart for God? What do you think Jesus would say about this?

Responses may include: the number of "quiet times" we've had in a week, how many Bible books we've read, or how often we come to church.

8. Wrapping It Up

It's Party Time!

If our spiritual lives—and spiritual birthdays—are so important, we should be aware of them. We should even celebrate them. Ask your group members to think about their own spiritual birthdays. See if each can come up with a date that can serve as a spiritual birthday. Some may know the exact date; for others, it may be less precise. If so, ask them to simply pick a year and a day that can represent their spiritual birthday.

Finally, some students may not yet believe. Without singling them out, acknowledge this possibility and ask if anyone would like to use today's date, signifying that he or she wants to be born from above *today!* Be sure to follow up with any students who want to do this.

Once everyone has a date in mind, close the session with one of the following options:

1. Ask for volunteers to share their spiritual birth date and how it came about. After several or all have shared, celebrate by passing around a food item from the place where you're meeting.
2. Pass around a printed picture of a birthday cake and invite students to write their names and spiritual birthdates on the cake. Be sure students know they have the option to pass. Have someone take a picture of the cake with his or her phone.