



TEACH IT MIDDLE SCHOOL SESSION 3

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the Session 3 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 3
- his or her own Bible, a pen, and a notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- a pack of colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- picture sets of butterflies, frogs, ladybugs, dragonflies, and their corresponding larvae that you have found using a search engine and printed out beforehand. Throw in some robot/vehicle picture sets from the movie *Transformers* for fun.
- optional: music for the Transformer exercise (something fun or light to serve as “musical chairs”-type music)
- optional: prizes for the first two students to have a correct match
- optional: a large cake and several tubes of icing (one for every two or three students). You may want to write “Happy Birthlife!” in icing on the cake.
- optional: cupcakes, markers, and a paper plate for each student

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

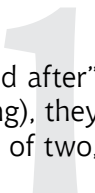
After the group has gathered, open the session in prayer. Spend a few moments in silence. As students pray silently, suggest that they let their minds move away from the distractions of the day and move toward things of God.

OPEN

Transformer

Before the session, use a search engine to find and print out individual pictures of butterflies, ladybugs, frogs, dragonflies, and their corresponding larvae. Just for fun, throw in a few sets of vehicle/robot pictures from the movie *Transformers*. Make sure you have enough pictures for each student to have one. (Since you’ll need an even number of participants, you may need to participate.) Also, you may want to mark the pictures in some way, so you (and only you) know what constitutes a correct match.

Tell your students that they each have one-half of a set (two pictures make a complete set) of “before and after” pictures of the same insect (or Transformer). When the music starts (a light or fun “musical chairs”-type song), they need to find the student who has the match to their picture. When they’re sure they have a complete set of two, they can sit down.



Play some music, and let the game unfold. Give prizes to the first two students who get a correct match. Then transition into the study with these questions:

What do all of these insects (and Transformers) have in common?

All of them become completely different creatures. They transform. They go through a metamorphosis.

How many of you have heard someone say that he or she was “born again”? Who was the last famous person you heard say that?

What is the famous verse that comes from John chapter 3? (Hint: You may have seen someone at a sports event hold up a card with this verse written on it.)


Does anybody know the situation in which John 3:16 was first said? Who said it? Who was there to hear 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 probably will be sketchy on the details. So dive right into John 3, asking the group to read John 3:1-11 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, they should:

1. In colored pencil, mark every mention of a guy named Nicodemus with a moon . (Students will quickly see why a moon is a good depiction.)

2. Notice how Jesus responded to Nicodemus by circling the words born and birth with another color.

When most have finished, ask what the group learned about Nicodemus. Then ask what Jesus taught him about spiritual birth. Write their responses about spiritual birth on the whiteboard. As you discuss the passage, the board will begin to look something like this (but don't sweat it if it's lighter on the details):

Spiritual Birth

-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)!

Some questions to discuss:

What was Nicodemus' attitude toward Jesus?

He was respectful and curious.

What's interesting about Nicodemus coming at night?

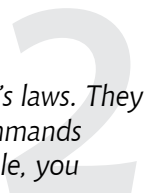
He was obviously hiding his interest in Jesus. He had a real curiosity, but he wasn't ready to go public with it.

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 Scripture sheets. As they read, have them circle every mention of those who believe.

When most have finished, ask your students what benefits they see in believing. As they tell you the facts of the passage, list them on the whiteboard. Have the students write this info on their journal pages.

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

Explain to your students that they'll spend the next few minutes in solitude, experiencing more of what the Bible says about spiritual birth. Share:

- 1. I'd like you to find places where you can get alone with God (it may mean moving to a corner of the room, a hallway, or an empty room nearby).**
- 2. Be sure to have your Bibles, journal pages, and pens.**
- 3. You'll be doing the Cross-Checking exercise on your journal pages.**

Students will read the following passages and list what they learn about spiritual birth. Their observations may look something like this:

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.

7. Taking It Inward

A New Kind of Birthday

After a few minutes of focused time with God, get the group back together and ask them to share how they responded to this question:

Going by these verses, what differences do you see between the two births—spiritual and physical?

Help your students see that our physical birth is corruptible and perishable (our human bodies will all someday die). 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.

This is exactly what Jesus was teaching Nicodemus in John 3—and what he wants to teach your group now. Have the group look back at John 3. Ask:

What connection do you see between who Nicodemus was and how Jesus answered his question?

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He relied on rules and rituals—religious activities—in order to have a relationship with God; Jesus was telling him that spiritual birth, not rule-keeping or church attendance, enables you to have a relationship with God.

In what ways are we sometimes like Nicodemus, defining our spiritual lives by things we can see, touch, and do? 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. Ahead of time, bake and ice a large cake (or two). You may want to write “Happy Birthlife!” in icing on the cake. Make icing tubes available, and let the students write their names and spiritual birthdays on the cake. Then celebrate!
2. Use paper plates to represent a “cake top.” Hand out the plates and let the students each decorate an individual “cake top” with their names and spiritual birthdays as if they're decorating a cake. Pass out cupcakes while they're working.