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**Stories of the Master**

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~ **A Visitor in the Dark** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read the text in which we find the story. This story is found in John 2:23-3:22.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

**1. Read the text of the story from the New American Standard Bible and from the Easy Read Version**

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**New Living Translation (NLT)**  
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John 2:23-3:22 - NASB	John 2:23-3:22 – NLT
<p>2:23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup> and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.</p> <p><b>John 3</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; <sup>2</sup> this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Nicodemus *said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”</p> <p><sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”</p>	<p>2:23 Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus didn’t trust them, because he knew all about people. <sup>25</sup> No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person’s heart.</p> <p><b>John 3</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. <sup>2</sup> After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi,” he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.”</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”</p> <p><sup>4</sup> “What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”</p> <p><sup>5</sup> Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. <sup>7</sup> So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.”</p> <p><sup>9</sup> “How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked.</p>

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<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>15</sup> so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> “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. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things? <sup>11</sup> I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony. <sup>12</sup> But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

<sup>18</sup> “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. <sup>20</sup> All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

## 2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- Pharisees were one of several Jewish sects, the others being Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes, and Herodians.
- The Pharisees believed their interpretation of the Laws of Moses was the correct one and that all Jews should embrace their way of thinking. If people did, God would bless Israel by sending His Messiah and bringing deliverance.
- The Pharisees also added to the Law of Moses with the “traditions of the elders” (see Matthew 15:2). They sometimes held this to be on a level equal with the Law of Moses. It is not that they thought they were writing Scripture but that they were making God-ordained applications of the Law of Moses for their time. They were attempting to be relevant and make the Law applicable for their situation.

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- Passover was one of seven Jewish festivals for Israel, and arguably the most important as it commemorated the beginning of the nation when God delivered them from Egypt. See Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23:4-8.

**3. Answer these reflective questions.**

**The story begins in John 2 with Jesus performing miracles in Jerusalem, people “believing in Him,” but Jesus refusing to “believe in them.” Why do you think Jesus avoided these people and did not trust them? Do you know people today who say they believe in Jesus but you wonder if they really do believe in Him?**

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**In your own words, explain why Jesus said a person cannot enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again.**

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**Jesus compared the person who is born again to the wind that we feel but which we cannot explain where it comes from or where it goes. In what ways do you think the work of the Spirit in a born again person is like the wind?**

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**Read the following verses and write down what you can learn about being born again.**

**Titus 3:5** - He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

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**1 Peter 1:3** – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

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**1 Peter 1:23** – for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

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**1 John 2:29** – If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

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**1 John 3:9** – No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

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**1 John 4:7** – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

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**1 John 5:4** – For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

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**Read about the serpent in the wilderness in Numbers 21:6-9. Why did Jesus use this example? How would it have instructed Nicodemus? How does it speak to you?**

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**Read John 3:16-21. What are two or three great lessons you learn from this passage?**

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