

## **NICODEMUS**

Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus tried to help the people he encountered understand God and God's kingdom.

Late one night, one of the Jewish religious leaders, named Nicodemus, visited Jesus. He was a wealthy and powerful man and a sincere man of faith.

Nicodemus said to Jesus, *"It's obvious God has sent you to teach us. No one could do these amazing miracles if God weren't with them."*

Jesus replied, *"The truth is . . . unless you experience a new birth, you'll never see God's kingdom."* Nicodemus said, *"Well, how can a grown man do this? I can't climb back into my mother's womb and start over!"*

Jesus answered, *"Entering God's kingdom requires a different kind of birth— one of water and spirit. Don't be surprised by this—only God's Spirit can give new life in the kingdom."*

*"How can this be true?"* Nicodemus asked.

Jesus replied, *"You're the most respected teacher in Israel, but you don't know these simple truths? If you won't believe me when I teach you about everyday things, how will you believe me about God's kingdom?"*

Jesus continued, *"Out of great love God has sent me—God's only son. I'm here to rescue people, not to judge them. Many will still choose to live in darkness. But anyone who believes in me and follows my ways will find life that is complete and eternal."*

## **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL**

Soon, Jesus and his disciples traveled through the region of Samaria.

Because of centuries of deep ethnic hostility between Samaritans and Jews, most Jews chose to avoid this area and travel around it. But Jesus still chose to walk right through Samaria. When Jesus' disciples went to a nearby village to buy some food, Jesus— tired and thirsty under the hot midday sun—sat down on the edge of a well.

Before long, a Samaritan woman came alone to draw water from the well. This was unusual—women typically traveled in groups and drew water early in the morning to avoid the heat.

As the woman approached, Jesus asked her, *"Would you give me a drink?"*

At that time, Jewish men would never speak to—or even make eye contact with—a woman who was alone in public. Also, a Jew wouldn't drink from a Samaritan's bucket, as it would be considered unclean.

Surprised, the woman said, *"Why would you, a Jew, speak to me, a Samaritan woman . . . much less ask me for a drink?"*

Jesus replied, *“If you knew who I am, you would be asking me for a drink, and I’d give you fresh, living water.”*

*“But you don’t have a rope or a bucket—where will you get this ‘living water’?”* the Samaritan woman asked.

*“Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. It will be a fresh spring within them, giving them endless life,”* Jesus said.

*“Please, sir, give me this water!”* the woman exclaimed. *“Then I’ll never be thirsty and won’t have to come to this well again!”*

Then Jesus told her, *“Go and bring your husband here.”*

The woman replied, *“I don’t have a husband.”*

*“Well that’s true,”* Jesus said. *“You’ve had five, and you aren’t married to the man you live with now.”*

*“I see that you are a prophet,”* the woman said to Jesus. *“So tell me why you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place to worship, while we Samaritans say that it’s here at Mount Gerizim?”*

*“Believe me,”* Jesus said. *“Soon people will not go to a mountain or to a city to worship God. The time has come for true worshipers to worship God in spirit and truth.”*

The woman replied, *“I know the messiah is coming and will reveal all of this to us.”*

Then Jesus told her, *“I AM the messiah you speak of!”*

The woman left her water jar and ran back to the village, telling everyone, *“You must meet the man who told me everything I’ve ever done. Could he be the messiah?”*

The Samaritan villagers gathered around Jesus and begged him to stay with them. So Jesus spent two days teaching the Samaritans about God’s kingdom, and many believed that Jesus was the true messiah.

### **DEFENDING A SINFUL WOMAN**

Some time later, early in the morning, Jesus stood outside the Temple in Jerusalem. A crowd gathered, so Jesus sat down and began to teach them. As Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and religious leaders brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd for everybody to see.

*“Teacher,”* they said to Jesus. *“This woman was caught in the act of adultery. The laws given to Moses say that we should kill such women by stoning. What do you say about this?”*

The leaders were trying to trap Jesus. If he went against Moses’ law, he would be discredited as a teacher. If he said “kill her,” he would be arrested by the Romans, who didn’t allow Jews to execute someone.

As the Pharisees and the crowd looked on, Jesus stooped down to the ground and began writing in the dust with his finger. The Pharisees became impatient and demanded that Jesus give them an answer.

So Jesus stood up and said, *“All right, put her to death. The person who has never sinned can throw the first stone.”*

Then, Jesus stooped down and continued writing in the dirt. Everyone stood silent. One by one, the woman’s accusers walked away, from oldest to youngest. Only Jesus and the woman were left there, surrounded by the crowd.

Then Jesus stood up again and asked the woman, *“Where are they? Did no one step forward to judge you?”*

*“No one, sir,”* she said.

*“I don’t judge you either,”* Jesus said. *“Go—and live in God’s better way.”*