



seeking:

How do we
begin again?

children's curriculum

JOHN 3:1-17

by Rev. Anna Strickland

MAIN IDEA: *I can always start over when I need to.*

engaging the story

storytelling materials

- **night:** A dark blue, purple, or black piece of felt, fabric, or paper.
- **Jesus and Nicodemus:** Clothespin people, Godly Play® people of God figures, or felt figures.

scripture retelling

(Stage directions are in italics. Words to speak aloud are in **bold** text.)

This story takes place at night. Lay the night sky backdrop.

There was a man named Nicodemus. Hold the Nicodemus figure.

Nicodemus was a very smart man who tried to learn everything about God and follow all of God's teachings. He was a leader in his community, and the people trusted him. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Place the Nicodemus figure and the Jesus figure on the night sky backdrop. As each person is speaking in the following exchange, place your hand on the figure.

He said to Jesus, "We know you are a teacher who has come from God because you do such miraculous things that show us God's kingdom."

Jesus responded, "You're right. To see God's kingdom, you have to be born anew."



scripture retelling *(continued)*

Nicodemus was confused. He asked, "That's impossible, isn't it? You can only be born once. How could someone start their whole life over?"

Jesus answered him, "You're thinking about the birth of a body, but I'm talking about the birth of a spirit. The spirit is like the wind. You can't see it, but it's there."

Nicodemus asked again, "How is this possible?"

Jesus responded, "Aren't you a teacher? Why don't you know this? I will tell you what I know to be true, that God loves the world so much that God sent me to bring life to everyone, not just life of the body, but life of the spirit."

This is one of our sacred stories.

wonder wall

Ask the children what questions they have about the story. Add these questions to your "Wonder Wall." To model, you might ask some of the following questions:

- I wonder... Why did Nicodemus come at night?
- I wonder... How are spirits born?
- I wonder... Did Nicodemus tell other people about this talk with Jesus?

discussion

- What do you think Nicodemus was feeling when he came to Jesus?
- Have you ever had to start over? What happened? How did that feel?
- Do you ever feel stuck, maybe on a homework problem or a puzzle? What do you do? What helps you get unstuck?

prayer

Dear God, thank you for the chance to start over, again and again, as many times as we need to. Help us to keep going when we feel stuck and to help others that need our encouragement. Amen.

extension activities

Depending on time, you might add one or more of the following activities. We also recommend making storytelling materials available to children to retell the story, either as an option for independent play during the Sunday School hour, as a take-home kit, in worship bags, or any combination of these. Instructions and templates to create felt storytelling kits for children are included separately with this resource.

Activity A) Play a Game: Begin Again Maze

Materials:

- Masking/painters tape, or sidewalk chalk, or string and tent stakes.
- A carpet square or kickball base.
- Alternatively, for printed mazes: lamination machine and hot glue or puff paint (*optional*).

extension activities *(continued)*

Activity A) Play a Game: Begin Again Maze *(continued)*

Instructions:

Create a life-size maze for children to walk through using masking/painters tape on the floor, chalk on the sidewalk/concrete, or string and stakes in the grass. You might Google search, "how to make a maze." Lots of designs will come up for you to try to emulate. Mark the entrance to the maze with a carpet square or other marker. Whenever children reach a dead end, say, "Begin again!" and have them start back at the beginning. For a seated version of this activity, print and laminate a variety of mazes for children to complete with their fingers. Go over the lines of the maze with hot glue or puff paint for a more tactile experience.

Activity B) Read a Book: *After the Fall (How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again)*

After the Fall (How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again). Written and illustrated by Dan Santat. Roaring Brook Press, 2017.

In this book, Humpty Dumpty learns that starting over can be hard, but so rewarding. Read the book together or make it available for older children to read independently. You might also choose to read this book as a children's moment in worship or send a video read-aloud to parents during the week.

Activity C) Creative Expression: Spirit Wind Pinwheels

Materials:

- Pinwheel templates for each child *(included)*.
- Pencils, crayons, markers, and/or stickers.
- Tape or glue.
- Thumbtacks.
- Unsharpened pencils with erasers.

Instructions:

Print a pinwheel template for each child to decorate with crayons, markers, stickers, pencils, etc. Both sides of a pinwheel show, so encourage children to decorate both sides. Cut out the pinwheel square, then cut along the dashed lines. Bring all the dotted corners to the center dot and secure with tape or glue. Press a thumbtack through the center of the pinwheel into the eraser of an unsharpened pencil, leaving just enough space for the pinwheel to spin freely. Talk about how the wind moves the pinwheel even though we can't see it, just like the Spirit moves in ways we can't always see.



about the creator

Rev. Anna Strickland, Operations Support &
Content Creator of A Sanctified Art

Anna Strickland (*she/her*) looks for the Divine in the everyday like treasure in clay jars and first encountered God in the integration of her spiritual self and artistic self. She is a native Austinite and graduated from the University of Texas where she now works as a college minister, especially serving LGBTQ students.

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God. Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.