

How Jesus Loved Nathanael

The Point: Jesus knows and loves us.

Scripture Connect: John 1:45–50

Supplies for all session 6 activities and options: Bible; white and colored paper; crayons; textured objects (keys, coins, leaves, wicker baskets, sandpaper, Lego® pieces, rough bricks); timer; tape; smartphone; laptop and internet connection (optional); metal forks; soft pear (or peach); paper towels; scissors; index cards; pens

The Basics for Leaders

The first time Nathanael heard about Jesus, he wasn't impressed. *The guy is from where? Forget about him.*

But then Nathanael *met* Jesus, and everything changed. That's when Nathanael realized that Jesus knew him from top to bottom, inside and out.

That's the sort of friend you want to make ... and keep.

In this session your kids will discover that Jesus not only loves them; he *knows* them too!

OPENING ACTIVITY-OPTION 1

FRIENDLY FINGERS

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: none

After all kids arrive, say: **Let's find out how our friends have been since we've seen them last!**

Gung-Ho Game

AND YOURS?

Time: about 15 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: none

Have kids sit in a circle. Explain that one person will step out of the room while the rest of the group decides on something they all have in their lives. (For example, pillows, teeth, or shoes.) Once the person who left returns, the group will talk about the object without naming it. That person will listen to the discussion and attempt to guess what the object is as hints creep into the conversation.

To begin, ask the child whose birthday is closest to Christmas to step out of the room. The rest of the kids will quietly decide on an object to discuss. Call back the Christmas child and give it a go!

After playing a few rounds, discuss:

- **If you were someone who left the room and came back, how did it feel that others knew something you didn't know?**
- **How would you feel if someone knew a lot about you but you didn't know much about that person?**

Thank kids for sharing, and then say: **With a show of hands, who's glad there are some things about you that others don't know?**

I'm raising my hand! But today we'll meet Nathanael, who discovered there was someone who knew way more about him than he realized.

That person was Jesus. And Jesus knows all about us too.

Turn to a partner and talk about this:

- **How do you feel knowing that Jesus is aware of all your secrets? Is that a scary thought? A happy one? Or do you feel something else?**

TIP

If all kids are giving pretty much the same answer, make it safe for dissenting opinions by asking, "Does anyone feel differently?" You'll invite a range of opinions and create a space where it's okay to be honest.

Whatever the reason, Nathanael wasn't impressed with Jesus until the two met. Then Nathanael realized Jesus knew his heart and even knew where he'd been sitting, something Jesus couldn't have seen.

Say: Jesus summed up who Nathanael was in just one sentence. Read aloud verse 47. If Jesus were to sum up who you are in one sentence, what might he say?

As for me, I think it would be something like ...

Briefly share how you think Jesus would sum up who you are.

What about you? If Jesus were to sum up who you are in one sentence, what might he say?

Allow time for kids to answer with a partner. Then ask:

- How would you *like* for Jesus to sum up who you are? Tell your partner.

Allow time for pairs to talk, and then continue.

Say: Nathanael wasn't perfect; nobody is. Jesus knew Nathanael through and through and still chose him as a friend. Jesus chooses you as a friend too, even though you're not perfect.

The question is this: Will you do what Nathanael did and choose Jesus?

CLOSING PRAYER

FORKY PRAYER

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: metal forks, soft pear (or peach), paper towels (for cleanup)

Give each child a fork, and you take one too. Ask kids to hold their forks with the tines pointing away from themselves. Explain that you'll toss the fruit to someone who'll catch it on his or her fork. Then that person will say something, remove the fork, and toss the fruit to someone else.

If the fruit drops, have someone stab it with a fork and keep going until the fruit is tossed back to you.

Say: I ask you to do something brave. When the fruit reaches you, confess something about yourself that you're not proud of, but that Jesus knows. Don't tell too much about that though.

Say: **Quick! We're about to go into hiding, and you need a disguise! Create a disguise using paper, scissors, and tape. Maybe you'll make yourself a fake mustache. Or a hat. Or an eye patch. Whatever it is, you've got just minutes to make it happen. Get hopping!**

Allow just a few minutes for kids to create disguises. For extra fun, take photos of them wearing their creations, and show the photos to the kids. (Don't post to social media!)

As a group discuss:

- How do people you know go about "disguising" their true selves? What do they say or do?
- How easy or hard is it for you to see through disguises? What tips you off to what people are really like?

Say: **With Jesus we don't have to hide who we are. He already knows we're not perfect or always kind. He knows and he still loves us.**

He loves us enough to call us his friends and also enough to help us change for the better as we grow closer to him. What a great friend to have!

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY-OPTION 2

TO KNOW ME IS TO LOVE ME

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: index cards, pens, tape

Tell kids they'll create name tags to wear as they leave. Give each child a pen and index card. Ask kids to write in the center of their card, "My name is _____" and "To know me is to love me." Have them keep all four corners of the card empty.

When they've finished, give them these instructions:

- In the top left corner, write whether you're a cat person or dog person.
- In the top right corner, your favorite pizza topping.
- In the lower left corner, a favorite hobby.
- In the lower right corner, a favorite superhero.