

John 3:14-17

## Play Jenga.

It's a game most know so you can dive right in.

- Set the game up on a table that is accessible for students to move around it.
- If you need or want to make this a group game – divide the group into two or more groups.
- Have teams take turns by sending one player at a time to pull game pieces

When the Jenga tower falls, restart at least once and play again.

Game Debrief:

- How did it feel when the tower fell?
- How great is it to start over and begin again?
- Did any of you feel like you had to help fix a former player's move?
- Have any of you ever broken a limb or torn your ACL?
  - What happened?
  - What did it take to recover?

How the game connects to the lesson:

When something breaks, it's so nice to know you can recover and start over.

(If you have a story of recovery from an injury, you can share that as well.)

Recovery can be long and hard, or as simple as restacking Jenga. To heal properly you have to trust and follow the instructions those that know how to help you. When we do, we heal in a way that helps us continue. When we don't, it can mean more work, or even losing the ability to use what you are working to heal.

- Did any of you watch the Winter Olympics?
- What was your favorite sport to watch?

Think about this. Most of the Olympic athletes have an injury in their past – some were incredibly serious and took a long time to recover from. The Olympics are amazing – but have you ever watched the Paralympics? People overcoming incredible odds to play a sport and compete at this level?

This is Oksana Masters:



She plays many sports but competes in Cross Country Skiing in the Paralympics. (As of this writing she hasn't competed yet – so it would be good to get a current standing)

- What do you notice about her?
- What do you think might have happened to her?

You can print/project this picture of Oksana receiving her medal in 2014 –

[https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/styles/mainpicture\\_612/public/images/20150306/140703141846864\\_SOC\\_MH\\_140310\\_180558\\_7479.jpg?itok=ZNGtrkbM](https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/styles/mainpicture_612/public/images/20150306/140703141846864_SOC_MH_140310_180558_7479.jpg?itok=ZNGtrkbM)

How this happened matters – the story behind the story. It's called context. Oksana was born in the Ukraine and was exposed to radiation from a nuclear plant explosion before she was born. She was born with limb impairments and left in an orphanage. She was eventually adopted by an American woman, and by 14, she won medals in rowing and then went into skiing.

Just as knowing Oksana's story helps us better understand her and appreciate all that she must have overcome to compete at an Olympic level. It's the same with the Bible. Discovering a verse's context can help us understand its meaning.

### Bible Study:

- How many of you know John 3:16? What does it say?

Often this verse is spoken alone because it contains a summary of the gospel, yet there is more here. There is a context that helps us see even more into what Jesus was seeking to share.

## Read John 3:1-17

- Nicodemus is talking with Jesus and John tells us that he was a Pharisee. Do you know what a Pharisee was? If not, find out!
- In verse 14, Jesus is trying to help Nicodemus understand being born again. What does he say?
- What was Jesus referring to?

It's a context that Nicodemus understands but we might not. To understand that context, we need to go back to the book of Numbers...when Moses and the Israelites are in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.

## Read Numbers 21:4-9

- What's happening here? Why?
- We often think of snakes as bad in the Bible, but how is God using this one?

How do the people recover from the snake bites?

Jesus is trying to help Nicodemus understand what is to come. To do that, he had to go back to an older story that Nicodemus would understand.

- What was Jesus trying to help Nicodemus understand?
- How does the story of the Israelites help Nicodemus understand Jesus' words?

## Re-read John 3:16-17

- As you hear John 3:16-17, how does knowing the context help us better understand what Jesus is saying?

Just as you may have had to follow some instructions to heal, Jesus is giving Nicodemus instructions on how he can experience God's saving grace. He had to believe. Just as the snake pointed to God for recovery from the bites, Jesus is the hope for recovery for those dying in their sin.

Jesus tells us that he came because he loves us. He is telling Nicodemus that he came to show the way to salvation, even though Nicodemus doesn't understand it in that moment, he will later. Just as Nicodemus couldn't save himself, we can't either. We need God's help to find recovery. We may fail from time to time, yet Jesus tells us that he doesn't condemn us – but he wants to save us because he loves us.

All we need to do is look to the cross and receive his healing grace. We then must trust that he can transform us, change us, restores us, and save us.

**Connection through Art:** If you'd like a creative way to engage with this scripture through art, check out exploring john 3:16-17 through art on the Youth Worker Collective: [youthworkercollective.com/exploring-john-316-through-art](https://youthworkercollective.com/exploring-john-316-through-art)

Be sure to close in prayer in gratitude for what Jesus has done so that we, like Nicodemus, can be born again.