

# BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Week 4 Jesus and Nicodemus

Sermon Title: The Friendship of Inquiry

## **INTRO//**

-Hey Faith Students! Welcome to the best night of the week!

Tonight we are continuing a brand new series called: "Birds of a feather" Tonight let's explore the profound friendship between Paul and Silas. Their bond teaches us valuable lessons about loyalty, support, and the strength we can find in true friendship.

## **REMIND THEM**

- Comes from the saying "Birds of a feather flock together"
- The saying means that similar people stay together
- The community we keep reflects who we are and who we're becoming, so who we keep around us/in our circle is important!

-This week we will look at the story of Jesus + Nicodemus and how their friendship encouraged one another to praise God despite their circumstances, and it led to breakthrough. That's the kind of community and friendship we need to seek! Those are the type of people we need to surround ourselves with!

**Introduction:** Tonight we will explore a profound moment of friendship and spiritual inquiry between Jesus and Nicodemus. Their conversation, found in John 3, teaches us about the nature of true friendship and the importance of seeking understanding, even when it feels risky.

## **Illustration//**

**Has there ever been a time where you wanted to have a serious conversation with a friend and you just didn't know how to approach the situation or maybe even know how respond to a situation that was uncomfortable for you as the friend.**

## **Scripture//**

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. **2** 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."

**3** Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again,[a] you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

**4** "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

**5** Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.[b]

**6** Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.[c] **7** So don't be surprised when I say, 'You[d] must be born again.' **8** 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."

**9** "How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.

**10** Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? **11** I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. **12** 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? **13** No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man[e] has come down from heaven. **14** And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.[f]

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

**18** "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. **19** 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. **20** All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. **21** But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.

Pray//

### **Transition//**

I want you to think of a friend in your circle that some tough questions need to be asked or addressed in their lives.. Without JUDGEMENT!!! This is key...

**I. The Context of Nicodemus:** Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a leader well-versed in religious law. Yet, he approached Jesus at night, indicating a struggle between societal expectations and personal curiosity. This sets the stage for a friendship that transcends fear and judgment.

- **Point:** True friendship often begins with a willingness to be vulnerable. Nicodemus steps out of his comfort zone, showing us that seeking truth is worth the risk.

### **Social Status and Influence:**

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, part of a prominent religious group that upheld strict adherence to the Law. His status gave him significant influence in Jewish society, highlighting the risks he faced in seeking Jesus.

See Social Status and Influence during then and still today seems to be more important and have more of a hold on our generation than having a 1 on 1 relationship with JESUS..

**SOCIAL STATUS IS ONLY TEMPORARY!!**

As a respected leader, Nicodemus had to navigate the tension between his role in the community and his curiosity about Jesus, who was viewed with skepticism by many religious leaders.

Nicodemus wanted a relationship with Jesus but he was more worried about his role than his relationship.....

**2** 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."

We see he even visited him after dark....

**II. The Nature of Their Conversation:** As they converse, Nicodemus asks sincere questions, and Jesus responds with grace and depth. He speaks of being "born again," inviting Nicodemus to consider a spiritual rebirth.

Scripture//

**4** "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.[b] 6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.[c] 7 So don't be surprised when I say, 'You[d] must be born again.'

- **Illustration:** Think of friendships where tough questions are welcomed. Those conversations can lead to profound growth and understanding, much like the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Ask those tough questions in your friendships!!

Just some generic tough questions to think about...

What's something you feel you've been avoiding in your life, and why?  
How do you define success, and do you feel you're living up to that definition?

What are some of your biggest fears, and how do they affect your daily life?  
When was the last time you felt truly happy, and what contributed to that moment?

What's a struggle you're currently facing that you haven't shared with anyone?

How do you cope with stress, and is there a healthier way you'd like to handle it?

- **Point:** In friendships, we should create safe spaces where we can ask questions and **express doubts without fear of judgment**. Just as Jesus met Nicodemus with kindness, we too should approach our friends with love and openness.

Galatians 6:28: Says that carrying each other's burdens fulfills the law of Christ.

**III. The Transformative Power of Truth:** As the conversation unfolds, Jesus reveals the core of His mission: love and salvation. He shares one of the most famous verses in Scripture—John 3:16—highlighting God's incredible love for humanity.

5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life".

- **Point:** True friendship not only seeks understanding but also leads to transformation. Jesus offers Nicodemus a new perspective on life, encouraging us to do the same in our relationships with our friends!

#### **IV. The Friendship Impact on Nicodemus:**

Defending Jesus (John 7:50-52)

**50** Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, **51** "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"

**52** They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

Because of the relationship Jesus built with Nicodemus.... Nicodemus became an advocator for Jesus

#### **Final Act of Devotion (John 19:38-40)**

**38** Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. **39** He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. [a] **40** Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

- After Jesus' crucifixion, Nicodemus comes forward with Joseph of Arimathea to care for Jesus' body. He brings a significant amount of spices, demonstrating his respect and commitment. This act not only shows his loyalty but also indicates that he has embraced the truth of Jesus' identity.

#### **ALTAR + RESPONSE//**

- Reflect + think about what kind of friends circle you have and what impacts that is having in your and are you having the real conversations and asking the hard questions....

- There are friends in your life right now that want to come to you and ask you about Jesus but they are afraid just like Nicodemus was..... Give them a space to make that happen without being judge...
- Let them ask you the hard questions..
- Or maybe you are here tonight and you are like Nicodemus and you want to have a relationship with Jesus but you just don't know how....
- Or maybe you are afraid that your social status maybe affected.... Jesus loves you and wants to have a friendship with you just like he did with Nicodemus.