**Thesis:** Do you have questions for God? Have ever been confused about some aspect of his nature? Have you ever struggled to understand something you’ve read in the Bible? We’ve all had questions when it comes to our faith. In John 16, Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit will come and lead God’s people into all truth. If we’re willing to ask our questions and are open to receiving truth, God will give us all the answers we need.

**Introduction:** This is the Jesus Podcast, Biblical reflection coupled with cinematic storytelling. I’m Zak, your host from Pray.com. Listen along as we discover the importance of questions and, more importantly, the eternal impact of the answers that God gives.

**Context:** Imagine a secret meeting with the one person your peers are wholly opposed to. Imagine hiding in the shadows and security of privacy to meet with the politician, celebrity, or personality every single one of your friends hate.

This is precisely where Nicodemus finds himself on this quiet night. With nothing but the faint flicker of a few lamps, he enters the house in which Jesus was staying. He wants to inquire more about what Jesus was doing. The miracles. The teachings. The movement catching speed, and the true meaning behind it all. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Jewish religious leader. As such, there was much to deal with as Jesus’ ministry flipped traditional Jewish ideas and philosophies on their heads. While the majority of Pharisees were ready to do away with Jesus, it appears that Nicodemus has some more questions to dig deeper into the heart of what was going on. If you’ve ever had questions about God, the Bible, and faith, you’re not alone. Questions are good, but the answers God provides are even better.

**Message:** Throughout Jesus’ ministry, we see a variety of responses to what He was doing. Some gladly welcomed His work and teachings, while others found themselves angry at His claims.

But somewhere in between these responses, some simply met Christ with curiosity. They were unsure what they felt about His message. I think there’s a beautiful honesty to that posture. “I’m not sure who Jesus is, and I’m not ready to make any claims yet, but I’m willing to find out…”

We often find Jesus exceptionally receptive to these individuals. In fact, Jesus purposely created opportunities to draw them out of the crowds. Jesus frequently taught using metaphors and parables, earthly stories used to reflect a heavenly idea. The purpose of doing this was to create questions in the minds and hearts of the listeners, with the expectation that those truly curious about knowing more about God and His plan would approach Jesus to learn more.

Jesus doesn’t want people to follow Him with blind faith. He wants them to have faith grounded in an honest pursuit of truth. He wants us to have a faith that’s been tested by thought, questioning, and honest reflection. He wants us to grow in knowledge and understanding of the Lord. He wants us to grow in appreciation for the marvelous realities about God. He wants us to consider the mysteries of the universe, chew on them, and resign to wonder.

And what better way to learn about God than through asking questions?

Questions are tools of the human mind. How we use them will determine how useful they are to us. Just like with real tools, questions can be used to build up or break down. Oftentimes, the scribes and Pharisees used questions to try to break down Jesus’ claims to being the Son of God. These types of questions weren’t posed with the intention to gain understanding, but to confirm their own preconceived notions about God and push their own religious agenda. Unfortunately for them, this didn’t work.

In contrast to these types of questions, there are good questions we can ask. Questions asked with an openness to receiving new information or having our misunderstandings corrected. Questions posed with the purpose of deepening our relationship with God. In Luke 2, we even see Jesus as a young boy going to the temple to sit among the teachers and ask questions.

When we ask questions about God, we must avoid confirmation bias. We have to be open to our thoughts, feelings, and opinions about God changing. We have to ask our questions with humility, seek God with receptivity, listen with the desire to learn, and respond with acceptance to the answers God has to give us. And once we have those answers, we should reflect, meditate, and internalize what we learn. We have to take our head knowledge and allow seeds to be planted in our hearts.

Too often we open up our Bibles seeking to confirm what we already believe instead of allowing it to challenge our preconceived notions about life, relationships, sin, and social issues. Ask yourself real quick, when was the last time you opened the Bible and it truly challenged your perspective and heart? Jesus’ words are meant to challenge us, not keep us tethered to every belief and bias we already had.

In our story today, we find Nicodemus, a curious man caught in the tension between receiving and rejecting Jesus. Nicodemus is a fascinating case study of how our questions can help us follow Jesus.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. Pharisees were a lot like lawyers of the time. They were experts on the law, and settled disputes on interpretations, applications, and ceremonial matters. They investigated things that were happening in society, and deliberated on whether it honored the law or not.

Most of the Pharisees had already made their judgments on Jesus. As his peers passionately sought to condemn Jesus and had enough of backing to do so, Nicodemus chose to press in more before declaring his judgment on who Jesus was. On this quiet night, the ruling Nicodemus was to make in his heart was incredibly weighty as he faced the most remarkable case of his life: “Was this the Messiah, the Son of God, sitting before him?”

The name Nicodemus means “victory of the people”, and up until this point, he had lived up to the name with the respect he had gained among the people of Israel. But as he partakes in these midnight conversations with Jesus, Nicodemus isn’t looking to have victory over Jesus as the Pharisees typically would in their interactions with Him. He was looking for something much more profound. He wanted to know who Jesus truly was, what He was doing, and why He was willing to risk His reputation and life for His cause. In short, Nicodemus wanted to know if Jesus was really the One who God promised long ago in Genesis 3, who came to give people victory over sin and the grave.

It’s clear that this time with the Messiah was incredibly impactful for Nicodemus. While we might not know how satisfied he was with Jesus’ answers to his questions by the night's end, we’re given a glimpse into their impact over time as Nicodemus appears two more times in the gospels.

The next time we see Nicodemus is in John 7. In this passage, a group of Pharisees are upset with the temple guards for not having seized Jesus and bringing Him in.

We read in *John 7:45 Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” 46 “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied. 47 “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. 48 “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? 49 No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”*

It’s at this point that Nicodemus shyly chimes in…

*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?”*

While he may not have been ready to publicly declare faith in Jesus, we can see evidence that the seeds Jesus planted in John 3 are beginning to sprout. We don’t see Nicodemus again until John 19, after Jesus’ death on the cross. And it’s here that we see Nicodemus in a whole new light. The man who secretly came to ask his questions to Jesus and hesitantly tried to dissuade the Pharisees from condemning Jesus was now boldly and publicly honoring the Lord by assisting in His burial.

Church history hints that Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and the famous historian Josephus were all friends and spoke often about the ministry and work of Jesus into their old age.

See what happens when we ask God our questions and allow His answers to satisfy our souls?

To be whole, we must be willing to ask questions. But in addition to that, we must be willing to wrestle with the answers given to us. God doesn’t despise our questions if they’re asked with the genuine desire to know Him more. Maybe some of us are like Nicodemus, hesitant to come to God with our questions, fearful of what others might think in our searching for answers. But just like Nicodemus, if we’re willing to step into the light of the Lord, our minds will be illuminated. Trust that God knows what you need to hear. Believe with your heart that He has the answers to life you’re looking for. Be open to what He has to say and joyfully receive the truths that He wants to share with you.

In our next episode, we’ll meet a woman who embodies the label “Outcast.” She’s been rejected by her peers because of her scandalous reputation. She’s the last person a Jewish Rabbi would talk to… But Jesus isn’t a normal rabbi.

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