

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – February 23, 2025

Theme: "The Impact of Unsung Heroes in the Bible" **Topic:** Nicodemus and Joseph:
Standing for Christ

Text: John 3:1-21, John 7: 45-52, John 19:38-42

Key verse: John 19:40 *"Then they took the body of Jesus and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury."* (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: Nicodemus is best known as the religious leader who came to Jesus at night. And nothing in his conversation with Jesus that night suggests that he took Jesus' teaching to heart. And considering the tone of Jesus' answers to his questions, one would wonder if it made any sense to him, and if anything will come out of that secret meeting with the Messiah. For while he was more interested in theological questions, Christ was drawing his attention to his need to be born again; a concept he seemed not to understand. Yet, we see him speaking up or acting at pivotal moments in Scripture. Joseph of Arimathea's faith, on the other hand, remained even more secret until much later, especially after Jesus' crucifixion. Yet, these two, and most unlikely at that, are the ones who take crucial action in the fulfillment of God's salvation plan concerning the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

1. **Read John 3:1-21; 7:50-51, and John 19:39-42 (a) To what would you attribute Nicodemus' journey from a secret follower to a bold defender of Jesus? (b) How does Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus about being born again emphasize the importance of personal belief and spiritual rebirth? (John 3:3-7, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17) (c) We do not hear about Joseph of Arimathea until John 19. What can we learn from him as we pursue the Kingdom of God and the advance of the gospel in our generation?**

True faith can lead to profound personal change and a deeper commitment to Christ: Scripture does not say when, but at some point, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea became disciples of Jesus Christ. Initially, they kept their faith in Christ quiet, but at some point, they could not be quiet. For instance, in John 7:50-51, Nicodemus spoke up against an obvious abuse of the Law. Imagine what it must have been like to be in Joseph and Nicodemus' shoes – prominent members of a group that was vehemently opposed to something or someone you strongly believe in and affiliated with; to sit in all those meetings of the Sanhedrin, plotting Jesus' downfall. And then to later speak up in defense of Jesus in front of the same group (John 7:45-52, Luke 23:50-53). Or to now boldly ask Pilate for Jesus' body to give Him a proper burial (John 19:38-42). Their actions teach us the importance of standing up for our faith, even in the face of opposition.

2. **Read John 7:50-51, John 12:42-43, (a) What can we learn from Joseph of Arimathea's courage in asking Pilate for Jesus' body? (b) What risks did Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea face in standing up for Jesus? (c) What does Nicodemus and Joseph's courage teach us about the cost of discipleship, and how can we apply the lessons in our own lives?**

At the time Joseph and Nicodemus openly stood with Christ, Jesus was not the most popular man in all Judea. In their great courage in supporting Jesus despite the risks, these two highlight the importance of standing up for our faith even in the face of opposition. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea faith in Christ was not confined to the meeting rooms of the Sanhedrin. They took it public as well as to the gentiles – to Pilate, to request for Jesus' body. And when that was granted, providing a proper burial place and the needed spices for proper embalment! Despite the potential consequences, he ensured that Jesus received a dignified burial (John 19:40). This teaches us the importance of showing compassion and care for others, even when it requires personal sacrifice. Nicodemus also showed compassion by bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes for Jesus' burial (John 19:39). Their actions remind us to act with love and kindness towards others. Cross-references: Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 3:8, Galatians 6:2.

3. **Read Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 3:8. (a) Let participants share an instant when they felt like showing kindness to someone but stalled because of potential risk. (b) In what ways can we emulate Nicodemus and Joseph's acts of compassion in our daily lives? (c) How can the actions of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea inspire us to show greater loyalty and commitment to Christ and His mission?**

Prayer: *God Almighty, thank You for the example of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus – their faith, courage and compassion even in the face of danger. Transform me so that I will be so committed to You and to Your cause no matter the risk. Amen.*