

**Interview with Nicodemus  
based on John 3:1-2,14-21**

Host	Today, sisters and brothers, we are honoured to have a visitor with us. A man who has met Jesus face-to-face. Please welcome Nicodemus!
Nicodemus	Thank you. I'm very pleased to be here.
Host	Nicodemus, we have just heard some of your story, but we'd like to get to know you better. I know you are a Pharisee, someone who is committed to God's word and God's law; and you are a member of the Jewish Political and Religious Council, the Sanhedrin. It's an impressive CV. Tell us, how did you end up with such an influential position?
Nicodemus	Actually, I didn't have such a grand start in life. I grew up in a village near Jerusalem. But my parents were very keen that I had a good education. I made it through the Jewish school system and got myself apprenticed to a Rabbi. I don't think I've ever seen my parents so proud, as that day when I left home to follow my Rabbi. The years went by, and I learnt a lot about the Scriptures, about interpretations according to our Pharisee tradition, about the temple and the festivals. I eventually became a Rabbi myself, and after more time, I was elected as one of the 71 judges on the Sanhedrin. I have served there ever since.
Host	And what is your role on the Sanhedrin?
Nicodemus	As a Court we meet every day, apart from Sabbath and Festival days. There's lots of business to attend to, court hearings where we have to make judgements and rulings; presiding in the temple during Festivals; and I advise the teachers of the Pharisee tradition.
Host	From village boy to Jerusalem big-name! Do you ever get stopped on the street by people wanting to take selfies with you?!
Nicodemus	I do often get recognised, especially at festival times when lots of people see me at the temple.
Host	Now, we know that you met Jesus in-person one time. I'd love to hear more about that encounter.

Nicodemus	<p>Yes, before that meeting, I had heard about Jesus. And I'd caught glimpses of him around the place during Passover Festival. Passover is a busy time – lots of visitors to the city, a lot going on in the temple. Jesus had actually caused quite a stir one day in the temple when he threw over the tables of the money-changers and was making strange claims about “destroying the temple and raising it up in three days”. I'm afraid he got a bad reputation with many of my colleagues in the Sanhedrin after that. To them, what he did and said was unforgiveable.</p>
Host	<p>What did <i>you</i> think about him? I'm picking up that you didn't necessarily share the same view?</p>
Nicodemus	<p>I was curious.</p> <p>We Rabbis are trained to know the Scriptures and to interpret them. As Pharisees, we believe in the resurrection of the dead, and so I was curious when Jesus started saying these things about raising the destroyed temple. For me, this sounded like he was talking about resurrection. I wanted to find out if he was one of us Pharisees, or if he was talking about the fulfilment of some other prophecy. I was intrigued about this man. I was a little sceptical, but certainly curious.</p>
Host	<p>So you sought him out.</p>
Nicodemus	<p>Yes, with it being Passover, we didn't have our daily meetings of the Sanhedrin, so I had a bit more flexibility of my time during the day. But I really didn't want to be recognised and have hundreds of people following me. So I waited until it was dark. At the time, I told myself that going under the cover of darkness was the only option, because of the crowds. But in retrospect, I wonder if I was more influenced by my own sense of self-preservation and not wanting to be exposed as someone who was interested in Jesus.</p>
Host	<p>How did you find him?</p>
Nicodemus	<p>I had made some secret enquiries about where he was staying and managed to find the house without too much trouble. I was let in by a woman, and I made it clear to her that I wanted a private audience with Jesus. So she took me up to the roof garden, so that we wouldn't disturb the others who were sleeping inside the house. It was very dark up there, but she gave me an oil lamp, and</p>

	that provided just enough light to see by and just enough darkness to keep me hidden from any nosy neighbours who might be looking. And then she fetched Jesus. I think he might have been asleep already.
Host	And was he willing to speak with you?
Nicodemus	Yes, he was very hospitable and willing to hear my questions. Actually, he didn't outright answer any of my questions. But he spoke just like a Rabbi, like the wisest Teacher I have ever met. And all this wisdom was just for my benefit, there was no one else listening in. I think he could sense that I was open to what he had to say, and so he spoke from the heart.
Host	What do you remember from the conversation?
Nicodemus	Actually, what really stands out to me from that night was the way we met. There we were sitting in the darkness of night, focussing on the pool of light created by the lamp, the light meeting our faces and creating long shadows behind us.  And then he started speaking about light and darkness, about hating and loving, about truth and evil. In that monochrome setting, the contrasts really stuck out. Everything seemed so clear.
Host	But the world isn't that simple, surely. We don't live in a world of black or white, light or dark, right or wrong, do we?
Nicodemus	No, that's right. But we Rabbis like to use these literary devices sometimes to help us get to the real truth. We like to rule out impossibilities when we are interpreting texts. And so when he spoke about being born again, we can of course rule out literally being born again from your mother's womb. It just cannot be. So there must be another interpretation. So I was not put off by what he said.
Host	How did you interpret then what he said about light and darkness?
Nicodemus	When it is dark, like the night when I met Jesus, your eyes are naturally drawn to the light. The light brings definition, warmth, direction, clarity. If there is light but we choose to ignore it, the darkness seems even darker. The shadows make objects seem bigger. In the darkness we can get confused, stumble, lose our

	way.
Host	But dare I say it, you chose the darkness, Nicodemus. You chose to hide under the cover of darkness when you sought out Jesus...
Nicodemus	I know. As I said, I was afraid. I was trying to protect my pride, and my standing. It is not easy to go against the flow. But I came to Jesus in darkness and under cover, and he agreed to meet me. And we sat there in semi-darkness, with just a small lamp. And Jesus shined a bit more light for me. And I left with a feeling that I had uncovered a little bit more of the truth.
Host	Jesus also said something to you that has since become one of the most famous Bible verses ever. Can you remember the words by-heart?
Nicodemus	Of course! I think the verse you mean is this one: He said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but have eternal life."
Host	Do you realise, you were the very first person ever to hear those words?! Why do you think Jesus chose you when he made this now-famous teaching?
Nicodemus	Well, as a Teacher, it was revolutionary. We Pharisees believed in the promised Messiah, but we also believed he would come to destroy the Gentile world. The Scriptures are full of our people coming up against enemies: Egypt, the Philistines, the Babylonians. And in my day we had the Romans, the Samaritans... We were waiting for the Messiah to win a victory against them all. But this message was very different. The message here was that God <i>loved</i> the world; he didn't want to destroy it. And the message was that God loved <i>the world</i> . That means not just us Jews, but Gentiles too. Everyone we have typically regarded as 'unclean' or enemies – Samaritans, Romans, Gentiles, 'sinners' – they are all included in God's offer of love and eternal life. This went beyond anything we had ever comprehended in the Scriptures.
Host	What did you make of what Jesus said next, about the Son being sent not to condemn the world but to save it?
Nicodemus	Yes, this hit home too. You know, in the Sanhedrin, we elders have

	<p>the official role to judge and discern what is right according to our laws. We have that privilege and responsibility. Who is right according to the law?, what appropriate fines must be made?, what is doctrinally correct?... And of course it would be natural to assume that the Messiah would supersede all of us judges, as the supreme judge. But Jesus suggested not. Judgement seems not be the guiding role of the Messiah, but salvation, and through the power of love.</p>
Host	<p>What impact did this have on you?</p>
Nicodemus	<p>I was struck by Jesus' clear and pertinent teaching. A lot of this was new to me, but I discerned truth there. You know, he described <i>me</i> as "the Teacher of Israel", and that really stuck with me later. I had uncovered truth through this nighttime conversation and, as a person with significant influence, I had the opportunity to bring this truth to light in the way we worked as a Council and did business in the temple and taught the people.</p>
Host	<p>That is a massive responsibility. How did you cope? What did you do?</p>
Nicodemus	<p>I'm afraid I have lived in those shadowy places between bright light and darkness. I found it incredibly difficult to live this new truth while retaining my place in the structures of Jewish court. I had some notable moments of boldness, like when I argued for Jesus to receive a fair trial when he was arrested. But really, it has not been easy.</p>
Host	<p>Some people call you a 'secret disciple', because you came forward after Jesus' crucifixion to prepare him for burial. Someone told me that the amount of herbs and ointment you bought was the same that would have been used for a royal burial. Is that true?</p>
Nicodemus	<p>It was my tribute. By that time, I was absolutely convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, God's Son, and that he was sent by God not to judge but to save the whole world. I had lived in the shadows long enough. I wanted to live in the light.</p>
Host	<p>All this happened because you were curious. You are known nowadays in many Christian traditions as the Patron Saint of Curiosity. What would your advice be to us here today?</p>

Nicodemus	<p>Curiosity brought me to Jesus. Curiosity brought me to encounter truth, and my life was changed. In the light of that lamp on that dark night, I caught a glimpse of God’s redemption plan. And it was greater than I had ever imagined. So, follow your curiosity.</p> <p>But, a word of warning, you might be surprised at what you discover. You might find out that God loves people who you hate. You might discover a new aspect to life that could upset your current lifestyle.</p> <p>But my advice to you is to follow your curiosity, even if it means a secret trip under the cover of darkness. Jesus will meet you there in the shadows.</p>
Host	<p>Nicodemus, your encounter with Jesus has inspired many paintings, plays and poems. One poet, Henry Vaughan, wrote:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>There is in God, some say, A deep but dazzling darkness</i></p> <p>Does that ring true?</p>
Nicodemus	<p>Absolutely. Those are wonderful words. That night was for me a “dazzling darkness”.</p>
Host	<p>Thank you Nicodemus for sharing your story with us today.</p>