

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY



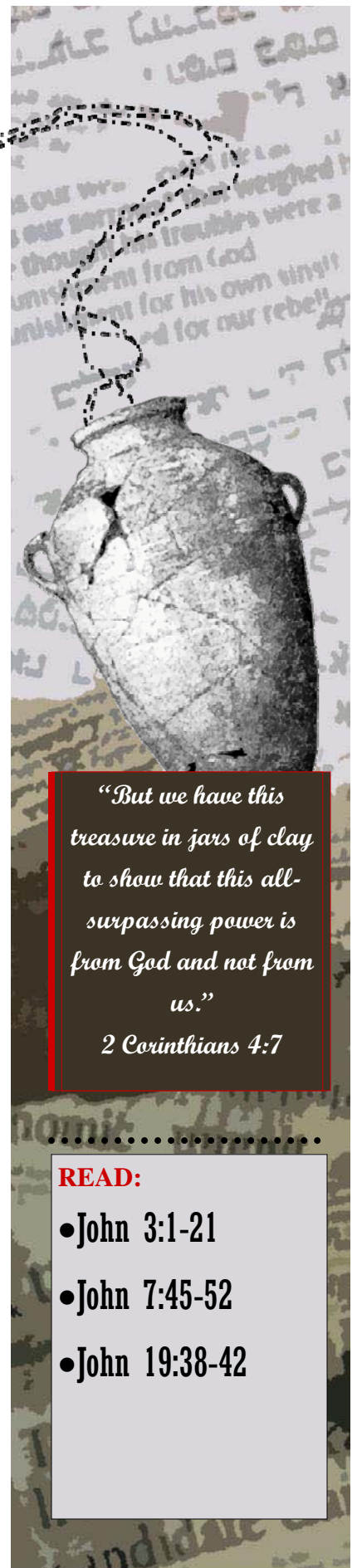
Nicodemus

Whenever I look at the few meager accounts of Nicodemus in Scripture, I am challenged to do some self examination. It is so easy to criticize his nighttime encounter with Jesus. It seems like a child sneaking a cookie while no one is looking. Yet, I can feel for Nicodemus. As a Pharisee, and a member of the elite Sanhedrin, he had much to lose by aligning himself with the “enemy”. It is no wonder that he wanted to make very sure who this Man was before he did anything rash and risky. It was a far different matter for him than following the family footsteps and expectations into the church. He would be doing quite the opposite in fact, forsaking a respected career path and ministry, defying the religious institution and authority that was considered to be established by God. He would be sacrificing what had always been his identity and security of salvation. Everything about his old self would have to die.

So, in a way, I have a great deal of respect for Nicodemus. This was no small matter to be taken lightly. It was worth counting the cost, and the cost would be great. I admire the fact that he chose to investigate the matter, to hear the truth straight from the Savior’s mouth. Belief was the beginning, and understanding would follow...but this was a question of commitment. Was Nicodemus ready to FOLLOW Jesus? To walk as Jesus walked, to take up His cross and follow Him? Was he prepared to die to who he had been and be reborn as something, someone, totally new?

As we look at the journey Nicodemus walked toward following Jesus, I am challenged with the same questions. Am I a casual observer of Christ, or a true follower. Do I proclaim my faith because it is easy to do in an environment that praises and expects such action, or is it something I would do no matter what the price? Have I counted the cost of following Jesus and found it a price that I am willing to pay? Is there any price too great? What has following Jesus cost ME? What risks have I taken for His name?

And, the most sobering thought....if it has not cost me anything, am I really following Him?



“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

2 Corinthians 4:7

READ:

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

Believing from a Safe Distance John 3:1-21

The Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish court and was comprised of 70 members, one of which was Nicodemus. As a Pharisee, he knew Scripture well, and adhered not only to the Old Testament law, but to the Jewish traditions as well. He held a revered and respected position in the Jewish community.

What time of day did Nicodemus choose to make a visit to Jesus? _____

What might some reasons be for that? _____

Which reason do you think is most likely? _____

How did Nicodemus address Jesus? _____

What does that indicate about his beliefs concerning Jesus? _____

What do you think he wanted out of his visit with Jesus? _____

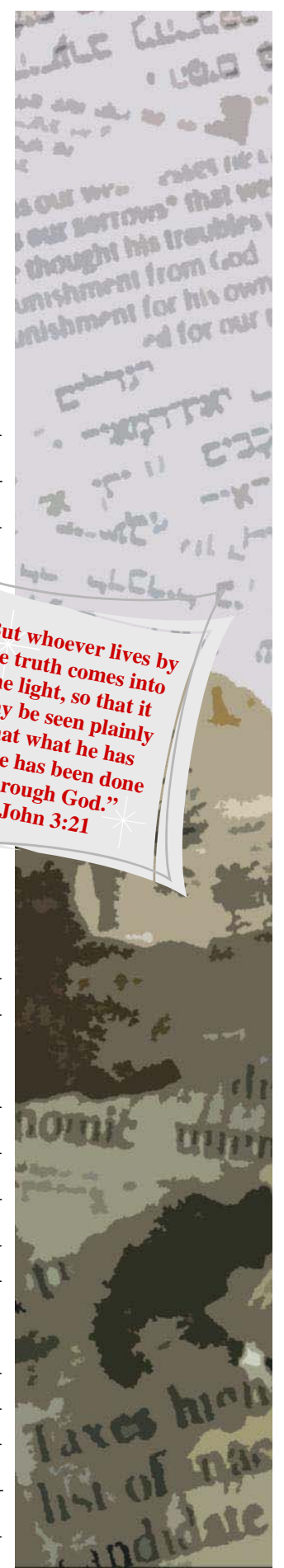
In v. 3, what statement does Jesus make to Nicodemus? _____

What is the cost of rebirth? _____

What has being born again cost you? _____

What did Jesus condemn in v. 19-21? _____

*“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”
John 3:21*



Out on a Limb John 7:45-52

What did the Pharisees send officers to do in John 7:32? _____

What did the officers report when they returned empty handed? _____

The Pharisees claimed that it was because of their superior knowledge of the law that they did not fall for the claims of Jesus as the ignorant crowds did.

What are some things religious leaders today might justify by a superior knowledge of Scripture? _____

What do you think it was about this incident that prompted Nicodemus to speak? _____

How did Nicodemus challenge the mocking of the religious leaders in v. 51? _____

In what way was he still playing it safe? _____

How did the Sanhedrin respond to Nicodemus? _____

How had the commitment level of Nicodemus changed from that in John 3? _____

How was this commitment beginning to interfere with his life? _____

How has your commitment to Christ interfered with your life? _____

**“Take up
your cross
and
follow me.”
Matt. 16:24**



Paying the Price John 19:38-42

Who was another man afraid to openly follow Christ? _____

What do we know about him from Mark 15:43? _____

What did he do in Luke 23:50-51? _____

What risk was he taking after the crucifixion of Jesus? _____

In what way did Nicodemus join him in revealing a devotion to Christ? _____

This degree of extravagance was comparable to the preparation of a king for burial. What statement was Nicodemus making at this point? _____

According to v. 42, where was the tomb located? _____

How easy would it have been to keep what they did secret? _____

Where were the other disciples at this point? _____

What kind of relationship do you think Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus had with each other? _____

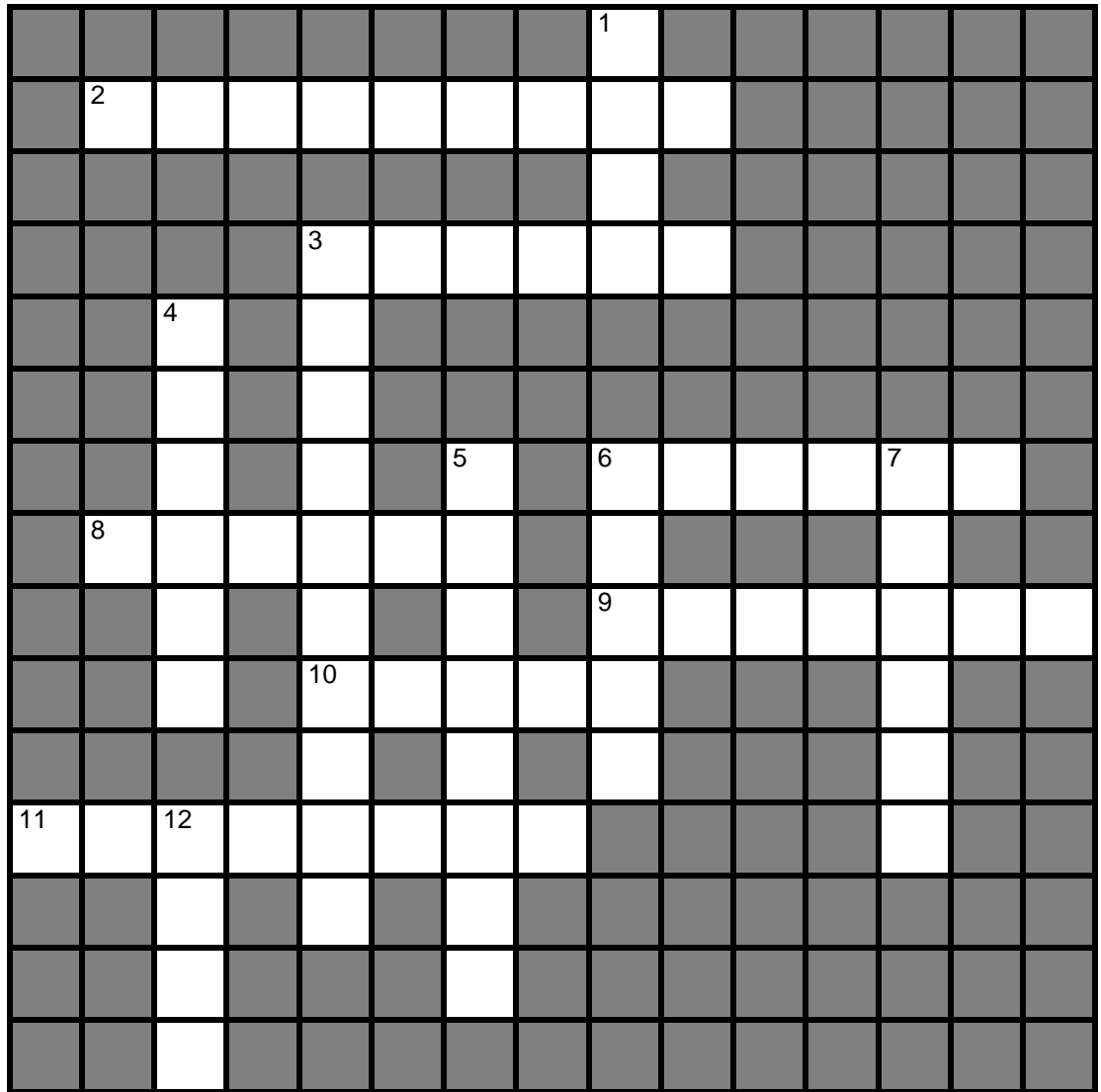
How would that relationship help their commitment to Christ? _____

Do you think that Nicodemus continued to grow in commitment from this point? _____

What do you think the future was like for Nicodemus? _____



PUZZLE PAGE



Across

- 2 one of seventy on this council (9)
- 3 his encounter with Jesus brought this to Nicodemus (6)
- 6 proximity of the tomb to the city (6)
- 8 religious background (6)
- 9 "Are you also from _____" was the derision he received (7)
- 10 with aloes totaled 75 pounds worth (5)
- 11 where secret things are done (8)

Down

- 1 provided enough spices for Jesus to be buried like one (4)
- 3 his level of this changed (10)
- 4 joined this man in taking care of the body of Jesus (6)
- 5 religious position (8)
- 6 when Nicodemus came to Jesus (5)
- 7 initially, Nicodemus had _____ with reservation (6)
- 12 something Nicodemus grew in willingness to take (4)



**Puzzle
answers:**

								¹ K						
	² S	A	N	H	E	D	R	I	N					
								N						
				³ C	H	A	N	G	E					
		⁴ J		O										
		O		M										
		S		M		⁵ P		⁶ N	E	A	R	⁷ B	Y	
	⁸ J	E	W	I	S	H		I				E		
		P		T		A		⁹ G	A	L	I	L	E	E
		H		¹⁰ M	Y	R	R	H				I		
				E		I		T				E		
¹¹ D	A	¹² R	K	N	E	S	S					F		
		I		T		E								
		S				E								
		K												

To ponder:

For Nicodemus to follow Christ, required him to turn completely from the life familiar to him. That same requirement is made of any of us, no matter what our lifestyle. It is not just a matter of turning from a sinful way of life, it is turning to follow Christ, wherever He goes.

How comfortable are you with asking God to interfere with YOUR life? Would you rather have just a little Jesus, or a lot? Do you trust Him with the plans for your life, whatever they may be?



Down Victory Road
www.downvictoryrd.com