



Introduction

God can handle your questions. In fact, God is bigger than your questions. Today, we are starting a two-part series about shame, and I want you to realize that it is perfectly fine for you to have questions for God and to ask God questions.

Maybe you have experienced difficult situations in life and are wondering why they happened. Maybe you are confused about something related to God or the way things work in this world. Today, I want to encourage you to ask God your questions. There is no shame in your questions.

I want you to turn to John 3, and we are going to read about a man named Nicodemus who had several important questions for Jesus.

John 3:1-17 ESV – *“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.’ 3 Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ 4 Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ 5 Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’*

9 Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ 10 Jesus answered him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up

the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'"

Nicodemus reminds me of human curiosity. As children, we are naturally curious and full of wonder. Spend any amount of time with a young child, and you will realize that curiosity is how kids interact with the world. I bet some of you who have younger brothers and sisters hear these kind kid-like questions all day:

- Why is the sky blue?
- How do birds fly?
- What are clouds made of?
- Why do I have to go to bed?
- Why can't I have candy for breakfast?
- How does the TV work?
- Why do I have to share?

Young children ask an average of 200-300 questions per day. A psychologist who researched children estimated that between ages 2-5, children ask an average of a total of 40,000 questions!¹ At some point—maybe around preteens and adolescents—we slow down asking questions. This may happen as we grow up or because something stifles investigation and curiosity. Whatever the reason, as we age, we lose the childlike wonder we had as children.

As you are getting older, I imagine you are asking questions like these:

- What will I wear today?
- Can I have some money?
- What's for dinner?
- Will my teacher stop asking questions?
- How long will this message be?

¹ <https://amorebeautifulquestion.com/why-do-kids-ask-so-many-questions-but-more-importantly-why-do-they-stop/>

Questions are a part of being human. It's how we learn and grow.

Nicodemus was a smart man. In fact, he was a Pharisee, which was a religious leader in the First Century. He came at night to talk with Jesus—the Son of God—to ask some very serious questions. Why did he come to Jesus at night? I imagine perhaps Nicodemus was worried about what his friends would think of him talking with Jesus and asking these questions. Nicodemus was curious, but he didn't want to be ashamed to ask his questions. Nicodemus was a leader with important power and privilege, and yet he had a need to ask Jesus some questions.

Nicodemus asked Jesus essentially three simple questions: Who are you (verse 2)? What do I need to do (verse 4)? How can I be sure (verse 9)?

Unlike other Pharisees and religious leaders who asked Jesus questions to trap Jesus or test Jesus, Nicodemus' questions were genuine, honest, and curious. He truly didn't know the answers to his questions, and he wanted Jesus to give him direction.

I bet if you are honest, you have some questions for Jesus as well. Are you brave enough to ask those questions, or does the shame of asking questions keep you from asking?

[Teacher's Note: You may invite your students to write down a question they have for God on a piece of paper. This action may especially be helpful as a follow-up in small group time after the message.]

I love questions. God isn't afraid of your questions. God is not intimidated by your questions. Don't be ashamed of the questions that you have. I can promise you that God will not shame you for your questions, curiosities, and yearning for knowledge. In fact, I think God likes questions.

Nicodemus' Questions & Jesus' Answers

Let's dive into each of Nicodemus' questions and Jesus' responses.

Nicodemus' first question is: Who are you? *"2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.'"* Nicodemus had heard about Jesus and His reputation, but he wanted to

know directly from Jesus exactly who Jesus was. Nicodemus' question was a very practical and honest question. He had heard about Jesus, but he wanted to know who Jesus Himself would say that He was. This is a question of identity and authority. However, Jesus did not answer Nicodemus' question directly. Nicodemus wants a precise and real answer, but Jesus put the question back on Nicodemus.

Jesus' response to Nicodemus' first question: *"3 Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"* In other words, Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'Look with your own eyes. You see what I am doing and hear what I am saying. Jesus was saying that the things of God can only be understood by someone who is a part of the Kingdom of God. This answer was a challenge to Nicodemus, but it was not filled with shame. Jesus told him that the answer to his questions was less about facts, and more about experience. In other words, Jesus told him that to know who He was, Nicodemus needed to be born of the Spirit and then follow Jesus.

Nicodemus' second question immediately after Jesus' challenge was another practical and direct question: What do I need to do? *"4 Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'"* In other words, he was saying, "Jesus, you say I have to be born again to understand these things. How am I supposed to be born again if I am an old man?" Put simply, Nicodemus was confused and wanted to know what to do. Nicodemus was thinking about the physical impossibility of being born again.

Jesus' response to Nicodemus' second question was a direct answer, but it wasn't exactly what Nicodemus was looking for: *"5 Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'"* Jesus corrected Nicodemus and guided him into deeper understanding by telling him that the new birth He

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