



DESIRE

LESSON FOUR: TESTIFY

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Like a lot of families we knew, we were not regular church attendees when I was a child. It could have been that my father, an Airman in the Air Force, worked odd hours at Langley Air Force Base where he was stationed when he was not overseas. Later he worked for National Airlines and Pan Am Airlines and often worked 2nd or 3rd shift. It could have been that my father was raised in one denomination and my mother was raised in another denomination. After they married, they visited each other's childhood church, but had not agreed on one to attend as a family by the time their children arrived. However, God had other plans for us.

Sometime during my 9th grade year, my parents announced we were going to start attending a church every week. There we were, the following Sunday, at the local church in our town. Not long after that, the priest was invited to our home for dinner. I remember wondering what caused the change in my family's fabric, but I was so grateful that we would begin going to church weekly that I didn't think too much about it. The change was swift and dramatic. We changed overnight into a family who attended weekly services and catechism classes. My parents signed up to provide snacks after services on a monthly rotation, my mother joined the Altar Guild, my father became a lector, and my sister and I were baptized a couple of years later. As I recall this time in my life, the only reason I can determine for the cause of this change was Jesus.

Pondering that answer led me to recall a time when I taught in a small Christian school. I absolutely loved teaching the curriculum there as it was rich in Scripture and application. I fondly recall one of my 8th grade students who wrote "Jesus" as the answer to each test question on the assessments I gave to check their understanding of the great writers we studied such as Eusebius, the Venerable Bede, and St. Augustine among others.

The more I think about this, I realize my former student had it right all along; Jesus is the answer to every question you face.

Friend, what are you struggling with? Are you desiring for your life to change? Well, just as my student wrote on her test questions that "Jesus is the answer," it's true.

Have you met Nicodemus yet? Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish Supreme Court in Israel in its day. A Pharisee was a person who was part of the Jewish religious party who were known for their strict observance of the Law, Jewish rites and observances, and they staunchly insisted on the importance of their oral traditions concerning the Law. One example of the Sanhedrin's beliefs in motion is found in John chapter 9, where John recounts a time he witnessed Jesus' miraculous healing of a man who was born blind. In the time period in which Jesus and His disciples lived, it was presumed and taught that if a child was born with a birth defect it was the result of some sin the parents committed or due to a sin committed by the child in the womb. In John 9:2 you read, "*His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'*" Jesus quickly corrects this belief when He said in John 9:3, "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned,*" said Jesus, "*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*" Read the red letters that are said by Jesus Himself again. "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned,*" said Jesus, "*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*" Are you aware that the primary purpose we are on this planet for is to worship God so that the work of God might be displayed in **your** life? Yes, God uses every life to proclaim He is God, from the smallest and most vulnerable to the biggest and strongest.

Nicodemus had heard about Jesus. He was aware of the miracles Jesus had performed; I imagine he must have been very curious, too. John chapter 3 records the nighttime meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus, and John 3:2 tells us that Nicodemus specifically chose to come to Jesus at night. Many biblical scholars believe Nicodemus came after dark for reasons to conceal his identity from the Sanhedrin and fellow Pharisees and also to allow him the time to have long talks with Jesus which weren't possible during the daytime hours due to the crowds of people who followed Jesus. It is here where the reader learns about the reason we must be born again. Jesus says in John 3:3, "*I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*" These secret meetings Nicodemus had with Jesus had an obvious life-changing impact on Nicodemus because he was there when Joseph of Arimathea went before Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus after His crucifixion. Recall that due to Christ's crucifixion occurring on the Feast Day of Passover, there was a great urgency to remove His body from the cross and place Him in a tomb before the Sabbath began at sundown. On the day of Jesus' crucifixion, Nicodemus joined Joseph of Arimathea in Jesus' burial and provided seventy-five pounds which was considered a very large amount of money at that time and was equivalent to what was spent on royal burials. Nicodemus brought with him a mixture containing myrrh and aloes for Jesus' body and helped to wrap His body with the spices and strips of linen. It is believed that Joseph of Arimathea provided the never-before-used-empty tomb for Jesus' burial.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word *testify* as to make a statement based on personal knowledge or belief.

YOUR TURN: Can you think of someone you would be willing to testify for you on their behalf? Perhaps the person who comes to mind is a parent, a sibling, a friend, or an extended family member. After reading the Scripture that is listed below, think of how Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea showed their great love for Jesus through their actions.

Create a table by folding a piece of paper in half vertically. On the top of the left side of the paper write the title "Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea" and write down how the actions of these two men testify that they believed Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. On the top of the right side of the paper write the title "My Life" and jot down examples of how your life reflects the truth of Jesus being the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Some examples of how your life testifies to the truth of Jesus being the Messiah could include telling others about Jesus and serving others.

John 3:1-21

John 9:1-33

John 19:28-42

Luke 23:50-55

Mark 15:42-47

Matthew 27:57-61