



ENTER God's presence

Psalm 118:5-7,13-14

- ⁵ When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord;
he brought me into a spacious place.
- ⁶ The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?
- ⁷ The Lord is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies...
- ¹³ I was pushed back and about to fall,
but the Lord helped me.
- ¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my defence;
he has become my salvation.

- **Pray:** Lord God, you are our refuge and our strength. You alone are our salvation. Yet often we fear the judgement and opinions of others. Our world seems increasingly hostile towards you and those who put their hope and trust in you. So, we ask that you inspire and embolden us to trust you more completely and to not live in fear, because you are our strength and salvation. In Jesus name, Amen.



SHARE life together

1. What are your highs and lows for this past week?
2. Apart from Jesus, who is the person you trust most? Why?
3. What is the most difficult thing you have had to trust someone else with? (again, apart from Jesus)

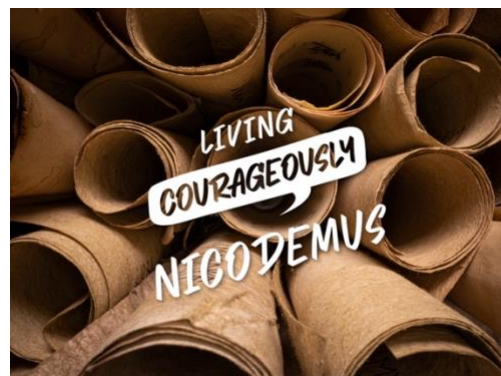


LISTEN attentively

Before you read **John 7:45-52** in your own Bible or online at Bible Gateway [HERE](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%207%3A45-52), you might like some context for the story. Jesus has been preaching in the temple during the festival of Tabernacles. He has performed miracles and dropped a lot of hints about who he is, stopping just short of proclaiming himself as God's Messiah. So our reading starts with the temple guard reporting these events to the Pharisees.

Week beginning:
Monday 17th June 2024

Worship series:
Living Courageously
#5 – Nicodemus



VERSE for the week

'Nicodemus, who had gone to him earlier and was one of their own number, asked, "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"'

Key Verses: John 7:50-51

Full Text: John 7:45-52



REMEMBER this week

You don't have to defend Jesus, just listen to him & courageously trust him.

4. Try to tell the story in your own words.
5. What verse/concept/teaching in this reading caught your attention and what was challenging/confronting/comforting about it for you?
6. What else do you know of Nicodemus from scripture? Have a look at John 3:1-15 if you need to jog your memory.
7. Nicodemus had a lot to lose by stepping out from his colleagues and their 'popular' opinion on the "Jesus issue". Reading between the lines a bit, where would you place Nicodemus in his faith journey at this stage? Do you sense any change from John chapter 3?
8. Have you ever felt compelled to speak an unpopular opinion in a hostile environment? What was it and how did it go?



Nicodemus first goes to Jesus with a couple of questions at night time, under the cover of darkness (John 3). It's pretty obvious that he doesn't want anyone knowing that he is talking with Jesus. Then in John 7, Nicodemus sticks his neck out a bit further. He doesn't exactly defend Jesus, but he makes a case for proper temple law and procedure to be implemented so that Jesus would have a chance to at least defend himself against the allegations. There is one more mention of Nicodemus in John's gospel. Have a look at [John 19:32-48](#). The process for taking custody of Jesus' dead body would likely not have been too different from something similar today. There would likely have been paperwork required and records kept about who had taken Jesus body from the cross. By being party to this, Nicodemus leaves a formal and traceable record of his connection to Jesus.

9. How would you describe Nicodemus' journey as a follower of Jesus from the three references to him in John's gospel?
10. Sometimes courageous faith takes time to develop. What do you think gave Nicodemus the courage to identify himself with Jesus at the end?

Nicodemus had a lot of questions. His first encounter with Jesus involved a lot of questions for Jesus. The second mention of him in John's gospel saw his questioning the wisdom of the Pharisees, the very group of which he himself was a part, these may have also therefore been questions for himself. But it seems that in witnessing Jesus' death, Nicodemus finds answers to his questions; at least answers enough to spur him into action.

11. What is one question that you would like to get an answer to from God? How would having that answer change your life?



MAKE IT REAL:

It can take courage to ask questions or to question popular opinion, especially when the people and culture around you are dismissive or aggressive toward your outlook or perspective. Sometimes we are asked to stand up and speak, other times, the best approach is to create the opportunity to let Jesus speak for himself.

12. Many Christians have tried to 'defend' Jesus and the teachings of the church through logical argument. In the church we call this form of argument 'apologetics'. How well do you think this kind of 'argument' based approach to mission works in the world today?

13. If we are not going to argue people into faith in Jesus, then how can we live or use our lives to create space for people to ask questions which might lead them to faith in Jesus?
14. What things have you done lately that might help people to know you are happy to be associated with Jesus? If nothing, then what do you think is holding you back?

Plan your weekly devotions or [download the Church Central app](#) for the daily [LifeWay Devotions](#)



PRAY intentionally

- **Praise the Father**, for his righteousness and mercy.
- **Thank Jesus** for his courageous sacrifice to lay down even his life for our benefit.
- **Thank God** for the invitation to see him at work, and to partner with him in the work, of bringing fullness of life to others.
- **Ask the Holy Spirit** to help you to courageously act and speak for the benefit of others.
- Continue to pray for wisdom and guidance for the LCANZ and the 'Way Forward' team as we all prepare for our next national convention of Synod in October. Pray that the meeting be led by the Holy Spirit, and that the church will come through the process released and excited to address the task of proclaiming the gospel to our various communities.
- Pray for LifeWay Ministries, particularly at Westside where God seems to be moving among the local school community that the work of the Spirit that is occurring across LifeWay would continue to bring transformation to people's lives.
- Pray for safe travel for Pastor Mark Schultz as he returns from Cambodia and for the ongoing work of Pastor Vibol with the people over there.
- Pray for those who are asking questions and searching for answers, that they may find the boldness to ask God and the courage and faith to accept his response.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross on their forehead or on the palm of their hand as you say...

[Name], all your questions are answered in Christ, Amen.