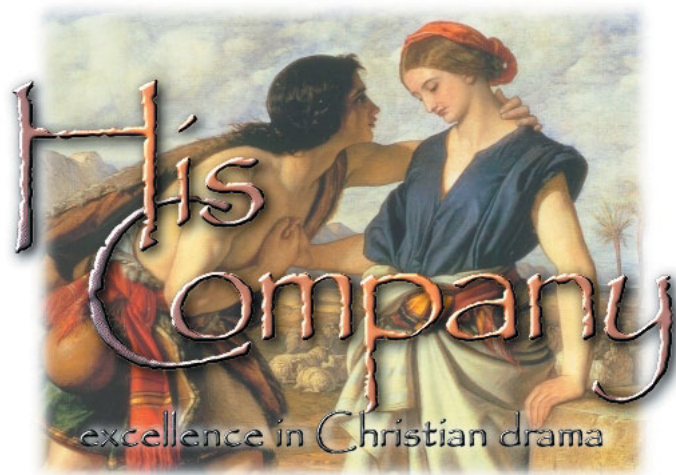


TO A NEW LIFE BORN

JESUS & NICODEMUS

by
David S. Lampel



AUTHOR’S NOTE

This sketch is a fleshing out of John 3, wherein Nicodemus has an audience with Jesus. The sketch ends (optionally) with Nicodemus singing “If I Follow Jesus” (from The Old Rugged Cross by John Lee; words and music by David Baroni and Niles Borop):

5

Have I met Messiah? I want to believe,
but the other Pharisees tell me He’s out to deceive.

10

Everything I’ve heard Him say and
all I’ve seen Him do, make it hard to doubt
that what His followers say is true.

CHORUS:

15

If I follow Jesus, what will the people say?
Will I be able to bear it
If my family turns away?
If I follow Jesus, the thought makes me afraid.
But my soul keeps crying:
Please don’t turn away.

20

He wants a decision, but what am I to do?
Risk my life and reputation on what He says is true?
I don’t know where He’s going,
But He says that He’s The Way.

25

And though it breaks my heart to leave,
I know that I can’t stay.

CHORUS

(Trax not necessary; piano recommended)

CHARACTERS

30

Jesus
Nicodemus

SCENE

35

*House lights down.
Stage lights up.*

Jesus enters. He is tired after a long day of ministering to others. His shoulders sag; He sighs, wearily lowers his head and closes His eyes.

40

Nicodemus enters.

Nicodemus

45 *(formally, yet with an underlying air of anticipation)*
Rabbi, I don't mean to intrude. Your disciple outside gave me entrance.

Jesus

You are welcome, councilor.

Nicodemus

50 I am Nicodemus.

Jesus

And I am honored by a member of the Sanhedrin. What brings you at such a late hour?

Nicodemus

55 *(after thinking for a moment; looking about nervously)*
Discretion.

Jesus

(with a knowing smile)

Ah yes. Discretion.

Nicodemus

60 Please, don't think ill of me. I'm just— cautious. Even I have my detractors; there are those who wouldn't be pleased with my speaking with you.

Jesus

65 And why have you come to speak with me? And in the middle of the night?

Nicodemus

(anxiously; going to Jesus)

70 Questions. I can no longer trust the information that falls on my ears. Too many around me offer answers that have little to do with the truth.

(firmly)

And I want to know the truth.

Jesus

75 The truth can—at times—be disturbing.

Nicodemus

(sarcastically)

More disturbing than the council?

Jesus

80 What do you think is the truth about me?

Nicodemus

(choosing his words carefully)

Well, we know that you've come as a teacher from God.

(almost to himself)

85 You must be from God; no one could perform these miracles, unless God is with him.

Jesus

I tell you the truth, unless one is born again, he cannot even see the kingdom of God.

90

Nicodemus

(shaking his head; almost interrupting)

They warned me you would speak in mysteries! All right. My first question: How can a man be “born” when he is already old? Is this one of your mysteries? Have you devised a way for a man to re-enter his mother's womb and be born for a second time?

95

Jesus

You're born of your mother once. But unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you'll not enter the kingdom of God.

100 *Nicodemus tries to interrupt, but Jesus is firm.*

Jesus

No, listen. You came seeking the truth, and the truth is: That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.

105

Nicodemus

(keying off the word “water”)

Uh, the water. You said “water.” Now, we Jews have always had the baptism by water. Is this what you refer to? Must one be a Jew first?

Jesus

110

But you only baptize those new to the faith.

Nicodemus

(chiding himself)

Of course, it’s only for the Gentiles.

(trying a different angle)

115

Many have associated you with the baptizer, John. Is this the water you speak of?

Jesus

Those who are baptized by John, do so as a symbol of their repentance. It’s an act of submission to God. And with that repentance comes the Spirit.

120

Nicodemus is still unsure.

Jesus

125

Don’t try to reason through it. Nicodemus, when the wind hits your face and you hear it whistle by your ears, you know it is a real thing, don’t you? Yet, you have no idea of its origin—or its destination. You only know that it’s real. The Spirit is from God. You cannot see it, or touch it, or know where it is going. But you can feel it. It is real.

130

Nicodemus

Rabbi, I mean no disrespect, but,

(throwing up his hands)

how can this be?

(struggling)

135

You are either the wisest man that has ever lived or, you— well,— that is—

Jesus

(with gentle incredulity)

140

And you, the teacher of Israel, don't understand these things? You came to me for truth.

Nicodemus

I came to you for answers.

Jesus

145

Do you wish only answers that are pleasing to the ear? I tell you what I know and have seen and you still don't believe me!

Nicodemus

But I want to believe!

Jesus

150

Nicodemus, I've spoken to you of earthly things and you don't believe; how can I speak to you of heavenly things?

Nicodemus

From where do you get your knowledge of heaven?

Jesus

155

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven: the Son of Man.

Nicodemus

And, you are——

Jesus

(affectionately)

160

Nicodemus, you know it already. That's why you came to me tonight. You knew it up here—in your mind; you came tonight so that you might know it here—in your heart.

Nicodemus

Do you realize what you're saying?

165

Jesus

Yes, I know. Do you, Nicodemus?

(Jesus waits, while Nicodemus struggles with his response; then)

170

Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so too, the Son of Man must be lifted up—so that whoever believes in Him, may have eternal life.

God loved the world so much, that He gave that world His one and only Son, that anyone who would believe in Him would not perish, but have eternal life!

175

(as Jesus exits)

Nicodemus, listen to your heart.

Nicodemus is left alone on stage. Intro to song begins as Jesus exits. During the intro, the inner struggles of Nicodemus are evident; Nicodemus sings.

180

IF I FOLLOW JESUS

Have I met Messiah? I want to believe,

But the other Pharisees tell me

He's out to deceive.

185

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And all I've seen Him do,

Make it hard to doubt

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CHORUS:

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Please don't turn away.

He wants a decision, but what am I to do?
Risk my life and reputation on what He says is true?

I don't know where He's going,

But He says that He's The Way.

200 And though it breaks my heart to leave,

I know that I can't stay.

(repeat CHORUS)

(from The Old Rugged Cross, by John Lee, words & music by David Baroni & Niles Borop)

205 *As music fades at end of song, Nicodemus turns to where Jesus exited.*

Nicodemus

(excitedly; 'wait for me!')

Jesus!

210

Nicodemus exits.

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