

Upfront Bible 3

Jesus is the kind of friend who takes our questions seriously

John19:38-42, John3:1-16

Characters:

Nicodemus

Joseph

'Q' -Ideally Q is dressed in jeans and a plain t-shirt with a question mark. Each time Q asks a question, which is almost every sentence, s/he pulls out a question mark post card, holds it up, and then drops it on the ground.

Nicodemus & Joseph are heaving a body bag across the stage. In addition, Nicodemus also is carrying a large bag labelled 'spice'. It is obviously heavy and they are both struggling. They also look uncomfortable and unaccustomed to this kind of task.

They are so preoccupied with their 'body' that they don't notice Q coming from the other direction, engrossed in reading.

In the best tradition of slapstick, they look like they are about to bump into each other, but at the last minute swerve, still without realising how close they were, and still unaware of each other. However, having passed each other safely, they decide to go back the other way - and this time, they do bump into each other.

Nicodemus & Joseph drop the body and the other character drops the book.

Q: *(rushing to the body, panicking)* Is he alright? Is he dead? Oh no! Did I kill him? How could I be so clumsy? Can you forgive me? What are we going to do?

N: *(handing the book back)* It's ok, he was already dead.

Jo: We were just on the way to bury him

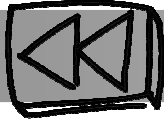
Q: Oh. Are you funeral directors?

Nic: No we're just concerned friends. Hi, I'm Nick.

J: And I'm Jo, great to meet you.

Q: Would you like some help?

Jo: Yes that would be great; we are on a tight time line.



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Nic: It's almost sun-down, and time for the Sabbath

Q: What's that – the Sabbath?

Nic: A day each week when the whole community rests and no one works, and it starts at sundown, the night before.

Q: Do I get a rest too – I'm a visitor here?

Nic: Yes, it's for everyone

(They all re-group around the body and set about trying to lift it.)

Q: So, who is this?

Nic: A friend

Q: *(looking under the sheet, whistles and shakes their head)* ... a friend who's been taking the punishment it seems. Was he beaten up?

Jo: Yes, as a matter of fact he was.

Q: What did he do?

(By this point the body has been carried to a table and laid out ready for burial dressings)

Jo: I find myself asking the very same question. What did he do? How did he end up like this? How could someone as good as he was finish like this?

(With each of these questions, Q passes a card to Jo, who holds it up and then drops it to the ground.)

Nic: If you don't mind me saying, you do ask a lot of questions.

Q: Have you noticed that?

Jo: That was just another one!

Q: Do you mind?

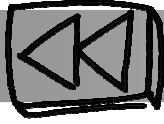
Jo: Another question!

Nic: No, we don't mind at all. I've got plenty of questions myself. But I have a question for you ...

Q: Why don't you ask it now?

Nic: You were reading a book when we bumped into you – what was it about?

Q: Would you like me to read you some?



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- Jo: That would be great. We've got a bit of work to do wrapping and spicing this body.
- Q: *(Looking through the pages)* What has just happened? ... That's the bit where he was arrested; they held a trial at night, illegal and unfair. That's the bit where he gets killed. Terrible. And he's such a great guy.
- J: Wow, I know what you mean.
- Q: Ok, from here ...

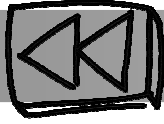
John 19:38 Joseph from Arimathea was one of Jesus' disciples. He had kept it secret though, because he was afraid of the Jewish leaders. But now he asked Pilate to let him have Jesus' body. Pilate gave him permission, and Joseph took it down from the cross.

³⁹Nicodemus also came with about seventy-five pounds of spices made from myrrh and aloes. This was the same Nicodemus who had visited Jesus one night. ⁴⁰The two men wrapped the body in a linen cloth, together with the spices, which was how the Jewish people buried their dead. ⁴¹In the place where Jesus had been nailed to a cross, there was a garden with a tomb that had never been used. ⁴²The tomb was nearby, and since it was the time to prepare for the Sabbath, they were in a hurry to put Jesus' body there.

Q reads, moving away from the body and J& N initially. But as s/he reads, and realises that the scene in front correlates to what is in the book s/he is reading, s/he moves around the scene gesturing, indicating the parallels. It will be worth re-reading some of the lines from the earlier section to link up with the scene. Use your intuition – and make this reflect the natural process of understanding occurring to Q.

(As Q finishes reading, Nic and Jo finish winding the cloth)

- Nic: Ok. Into the tomb.
- Q: Shall I give you a hand?
- Nic: That would be great.
- Jo: Thanks heaps.
- (exit around the back)*
- (Q re-enters waving Nic & Jo off)*



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Q: So many questions! What was all that about? Do you think it was a co-incidence? Nic? Jo? Dead body? Sabbath? Spices? And where have I heard that name before? Nicodemus ... (*leafing back through the book*) Was he the guy who asked questions? Could it be the same Nicodemus?

Ah - Chapter 3....

John 3¹There was a man named**Nicodemus!** who was a Pharisee and a Jewish leader. ²One night he went to Jesus and said, "Sir, we know that God has sent you to teach us. How could you work these miracles, unless God were with you?" **Great question Nic. How could Jesus work these miracles, unless God were with him?**

³Jesus replied, "I tell you for certain that you must be born from above before you can see God's kingdom!"

⁴Nicodemus asked, "How can a grown man ever be born a second time?"

Another question: How can a grown man ever be born a second time?

⁵Jesus answered: "only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God.

⁷Don't be surprised when I say that you must be born from above. ⁸Only God's Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going.

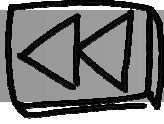
⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

Another question: How can this be? Or as I would say 'What?' (with funny quizzical face)

¹⁰Jesus replied:

Everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life. ¹⁶God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

As this is read, Nicodemus re-appears from the other side of the stage, speaking animatedly (in mime) with another character, who keeps their back to the audience all the time. Only Nic's face is seen. They exit at the end of the reading.



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Q: Whoah! Did you get that massive answer? How seriously does Jesus take Nic's question? Do you reckon Nic and Jesus became friends? What does Jesus think of my questions? Is Jesus the kind of friend who takes our questions seriously?

And is it too late to ask him?

(These questions are asked as Q exits across the stage, though through the audience would also be effective. Following the final question, an MC or leader in team t-shirt (the important thing is that they are a straight character) takes the stage.)

Leader/MC:

That's one question we know the answer to. Jesus didn't stay dead. Jesus alive and Jesus living – so it's not too late to ask questions. Jesus **IS** the kind of friend who takes our questions seriously.

