

Are You an Undercover Christian?

John 3:1-3

The story of the preacher and the man: *“Son you need to join the Lord’s army.” “I am in the Lord’s army already pastor” said the man. “Why do I only see you in church twice a year?” “Oh, I belong to the secret service.”*

The majority of us are familiar with the term undercover cop or agent. One whose main purpose blend in while hiding his true identity. **Undercover:** *done or working in a secret way in order to catch criminals or collect information.*

Inspector Lee told LAPD officer Carter *“Get off the stage, we are here undercover”* They were cops but they didn’t want anyone around them to really know who they were and why they were there.

It seems to me that there are many Christians who live their lives as undercover Christians. We know they are Christians in the precinct (church), but outside of it, not one would ever know they are Christians. Either they do it intentionally, they don’t want people to know they follow Jesus; others may call themselves Christians, they have blended so well, that is hard to distinguish them as followers of Jesus; they have lost their true identity since their lives don’t reflect the qualities or worldview of the one they claim to follow. **Francis Chan** puts it this way *“There are many people who truly believe in their heart that they are followers of Jesus, but their lives look nothing like his”*

There was a religious man who was interested in Jesus, but he didn’t want to be seen with Jesus. He came at night to talk with Jesus.

John 3:1-3

Nicodemus: A Pharisee (he was a religious man that belonged to this sect)

-He was a member of the Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling council made of 23 to 71 members)

“Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

The *“we know”* the Pharisees, the religious people of the day.

Nicodemus here either did this on his own and didn’t want his peers know he did it; or he was sent by the other members to have a hearing with Jesus; to really get to know what Jesus was about. They had heard about Jesus, but if they truly knew he came from God why didn’t they follow him? So maybe Nicodemus is just trying to bribe Jesus with the statement “We know you have come from God.”

Jesus’ response. **(v.3) Truly truly I say to you (I tell you the truth), No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”**

Nicodemus had no idea what Jesus meant by that; they had a great conversation that day; Jesus spoke about spiritual things, but Nicodemus didn’t quite understand them. Jesus even told Nicodemus that the Son of man would be lifted up so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Jesus had just told him that his religion wasn't enough to enter the kingdom of God. He needed to be born again, born of the water and the Spirit. A religion doesn't get you into the kingdom of God, a person does, and Jesus gets you.

Imagine what Nicodemus learned about Jesus that day by just talking with him. He went and reported this to his peers.

John 7:50-51

John 7:32 The Pharisees had sent temple guards to arrest Jesus but they changed their minds after hearing Jesus speak. (v.46) ***"NO one ever spoke the way this man does."***

The Pharisees were trying to find a way to get Jesus and wanted to know who else had believed in him. Nicodemus was there in that meeting and he spoke.

v.51 "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" ESV IN other words, Nicodemus suggested that before they made a judgment on Jesus, they should hear him and find out from himself what he does. This was a bold move by Nicodemus, he himself had gone to inquire of Jesus. He had more information on Jesus than any of his peers.

Nicodemus stopped being an undercover follower of Jesus. After Jesus' death, he and another disciple who was also an undercover follower came forward to claim the body of Jesus from the Roman authorities. **John 19:38-42**

Nicodemus spent money for Jesus in order to give Jesus a proper burial. He could no longer hide. He didn't care to be seeing by others doing something for the man hated by many of his colleagues. Jesus' disciples hid from the authorities after Jesus died and here we have two men who used to be disciples of Jesus secretly; they were undercover disciples. They were not bold enough to let others know they were truly disciples of Jesus. But now, they appeared at Jesus' death to give him at least a proper burial. Funerals were done by family. They stopped being undercover disciples and showed themselves here to do something for Jesus out of their devotion for him.

Jesus expects his followers to not be ashamed of him.

Matt.10:32-33 **32**So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, **33**but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. ESV

Luke 9:26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. NASB

Jesus doesn't want secret followers, but followers who are not afraid to let others know they love Jesus. When you are an undercover Christian, you are not truly committed to Christ. Nicodemus and Joseph were afraid before to be seeing with Jesus. But now we see them publicly going to the Roman authority to request the body of Jesus to give him a proper burial. They spend money of their own to do this, and to come forward that day showed others their devotion to Jesus. They could no longer hide.

How are you showing others that you are truly a follower of Christ? Jesus doesn't want secret followers, but followers who are never afraid or ashamed of him.