

Week 5 | Was Jesus a Golden Retriever?

Key Scriptures: John 3:1-9, John 19:25-27, John 19:38-40

Objectives:

- Seeing that an unwillingness to change course can keep you from deeper connections
- Understanding the impact of showing up for people
- Patience is essential in supporting a Golden Retriever in their change process

Scripture References:

John 3:1-9 (NKJV) | 3 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2** This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." **3** Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born ^{again}, he cannot see the kingdom of God." **4** Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" **5** Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." **9** Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

John 19:25-27 (NKJV) | 25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" **27** Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

John 19:38-40 (NKJV) | 38 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. **39** And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. **40** Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

Last Week | Jesus is a Lion. Lions are bold "doers". Sometimes it's difficult for lions to slow down and listen to others around them, but a wise lion will take the time to listen and value the people around them. Jesus wants us to be bold. Boldness = willingness to take risks. Boldness isn't always loud and we all can be bold, because our boldness comes from God. We first have to see the needs around us that will drive us to step out and be the hands and feet of God for our world.

This Week | Is Jesus a Golden Retriever?

Golden Retriever Overview | Naturally kind-hearted people who love to help. They offer loyalty and dependability to those they love. They show up to comfort the wounded and hurting. However, their unwillingness to confront difficult situations or people can keep them stuck and frustrated. All in all, a Golden Retriever is a great person to have in your life because they will typically always be there for you in difficult times.

When Two Golden Retrievers Meet

Read John 3:1-9

Here we see a healthy Golden Retriever and an unhealthy Golden Retriever. Jesus came to totally

change everything. It was no longer about laws and rules, but about desire and relationships. In contrast, Nicodemus was so incredibly loyal to the religious customs, council and resistant to the idea of change that it held him back from experiencing Jesus on a deeper level.

Have you had any relationships or ideas that you were loyal to that kept you from experiencing Jesus on a deeper level?

Golden retrievers are creatures of habit. They are slow to change and love routine. Nicodemus was accustomed to predictability and traditions. Jesus let him know that you can't predict what the spirit is going to do.

How does the need for control and predictability in our life keep the Spirit from moving?

Showing Up When It Matters

Read John 19:25-27

Share a time when someone showed up for you in your time of pain.

Share a time when someone was absent in your time of pain.

How did that impact your relationship with those people?

John 13:23 (NKJV) | ³ Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

John 12:3 (NKJV) | ³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair

Mary and John were both found at the cross. We see displayed with these two disciples, more than any others, a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus throughout his ministry. So we shouldn't be surprised that those were the two there for Jesus in his darkest hour. Jesus has definitely been there for us in our darkest hour.

What are some things that can hold us back for being there for others?

Read John 19:38-40

From David Guzik's commentary, here a few powerful things to point out about these verses...

*It is not precisely said, but the implication is that Joseph and Nicodemus removed the body of Jesus from the cross themselves. They were wealthy and influential men who could find servants to do the work for them; **yet they did this themselves.***

The removal of the bloody, dirty body of Jesus from the cross and the iron spikes that held it must have been difficult both practically and emotionally.

Bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury: Joseph and Nicodemus did what they could to wrap the body of Jesus with the myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds Nicodemus brought - which reveals both Nicodemus' wealth and appreciation for Jesus.

Before the body was wrapped it had to be prepared. One of the customs of the Jews in preparing a body for burial is the requirement to remove all foreign matter from the body and to carefully wash it.

They examined His entire body and found broken pieces of thorn all over the head. They saw His bloody,

matted hair; the terrible bruising of the face, the areas of beard pulled out, the dry and cracked lips. They turned the body over to see His shoulders and arms are riddled with splinters; each one was removed with care. The back, from the shoulders down, was a bloody open wound from the terrible scourging suffered before the crucifixion. His hands and feet were smashed and bloodied. On the front – just beneath the rib cage – there was a gaping wound made from the spear thrust that confirmed His death. Worst of it all were the eyes that did not open; the voice that did not speak.

We can only imagine what deep, life-long impressions this left upon both men and how for the rest of their life the smell of those particular spices would bring back every mental detail.

*As these two men did this – men who were experts in the law – they must have known that they were fulfilling prophecy; the prophecy in Isaiah 53:9 that said “the Messiah would be with the rich at His death”. Here the body of Jesus was, at the hands of two rich men – who customarily would have had a servant do such humble, bloody work. **Yet they knew they had to do it themselves.***

Sometimes we have a tendency to look in the Scriptures and beat Nicodemus up for not abandoning everything and following Jesus instantly or publicly. But this is what we can appreciate about Nicodemus - he shows up at the end. He shows up in the grief and in the pain with his allegiance, with his loyalty.

For those dealing with slow- to-change Golden Retrievers, don't become discouraged. It takes them some time to get the courage (boldness) to make the change. After all, the transformation in Nicodemus isn't revealed until the cross. Could it be that a trip to the cross is what is truly needed for genuine change?

Until Next Week | Take some time to search your heart. Who is that person in your life that God is asking you to be patient with while He transforms them? Could that person be you?

Was Jesus a Golden Retriever?

By: April Ashley

What is loyalty?

- Making something or someone a priority and doing so in small and discrete but meaningful ways.
- Staying true to someone or something even when other things call attention.
- A way of showing support for a person or thing.

What characteristics would you expect to see in a loyal person?

- Selfless
- Emotionally intelligent
- Supportive
- Faithful
- True-heartedness
- Consistent

What is the opposite of loyal?

- Disgrace
- Lying
- Indifference
- Disloyalty
- Dishonor
- Dishonesty
- Unfaithfulness

This personality type is also called **Phlegmatic** and has the following characteristics:

Unassuming	Warm	Indecisive	Can't say "no"
Agreeable	Cooperative	Stubborn streak	Unenthusiastic
Intuitive	Trusting	Resists change	Unemotional
Imaginative	Considerate	Will of iron	Puts things off
Empathetic		Hides feelings	

Scripture References:

This week's scripture builds on to last week's where we talked about Jesus driving out the merchants from the temple, overturning their tables.

1. John 3:1-9 (from Leader's Guide)

Why do you think he went to Jesus at night? Is that significant?

Thoughts: He went to see Jesus under the cover of darkness (both literally and spiritually). He didn't want anyone to know he was going to see a man viewed by others as a troublemaker. Afterall, he held a position with a reputation to uphold.

It almost seems like Nicodemus is left pretty confused by his conversation with Jesus. Could it be because Jesus is using words with two meanings? Jesus spoke of being born of water and the Spirit, but Nicodemus asked how a man can be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

Do we see any Golden Retriever characteristics here? (Indecisive, Resists change, Avoids conflict)

Nicodemus did not follow Jesus due to his fear and doubt. How many of us experience this? We know truth and yet sometimes struggle with going "all in" in the face of doubt. Are we afraid of rejection? Are we afraid of the unknown?

2. John 7:45-52

Rejected by the Authorities

⁴⁵ Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" ⁴⁶ The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" ⁴⁷ Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? ⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? ⁴⁹ But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." ⁵⁰ Nicodemus (he who came to ^[a]Jesus ^[b]by night, being one of them) said to them, ⁵¹ "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" ⁵² They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet ^[c]has arisen out of Galilee."

Thoughts: This time we see that even though Nicodemus has not yet become a true disciple, he does find the courage, in the daylight, to speak up for fairness and urge others to be open minded. We still see loyalty to the law and perhaps an emerging loyalty to Jesus.

What characteristics of a Golden Retriever do we see here? Unassuming, Considerate, Empathetic

3. John 19:38-40 (from Leader's Guide)

Thoughts: Now here we see 2 "secret" followers of Jesus come together and go public. Let's think about this.....Could it be there is strength in numbers? Nicodemus moves from the cover of darkness, to public open-mindedness, and finally to a public expression of love for Jesus.

One thing that sticks out to me is that Nicodemus never gave up on his search for the truth. What an incredible example of loyalty!