

## **Crossway Church**

### *Community for the Curious*

If Crossway church has a “target” audience, it is curious people. Some curious people are individuals who are **far from God** and other curious people are **followers of Jesus Christ**. Curious people who are far from God are those individuals who have not yet committed their life to Jesus Christ, yet they are open to biblical truth. At Crossway we make the assumption that if a person does not know Jesus Christ but is attending Sunday morning or another church environment they are, on some level, curious. Non-curious people who do not know Christ stay as far away from church world as possible. Curious followers of Jesus Christ are those individuals who profess Jesus Christ and recognize that they have not yet arrived in their spiritual journey. They understand that the Bible is an in-exhaustive resource of truth and are open to varied understandings of this truth. The curious Christian recognizes that they are not standing on the mountaintop of holiness and theological understanding, but are at the bottom of the mountain working their way up.

The story of **Pilate** in the Bible is an example of a man who was not curious, while the story of **Nicodemus** is one of curiosity. In **John 19:38-39** we have a record of Pilate’s interaction with Jesus. **Pilate’s** story reveals the biggest killers to curiosity that we must avoid in our life personally and in our church community corporately. Pilate was more concerned with preserving his own position, influence, and place in Roman society than releasing an innocent man. The Jewish people were known to be a powder keg ready to explode at anytime. Eventually it would blow with Rome marching into Jerusalem and destroying the temple in AD 70. Pilate knew that if he let Jesus go, it would have caused

serious tension with the Jewish leadership. That politically suicidal news would make its way back to Rome and even his marriage to a relative of Caesar would not save his position. Better to send an innocent man to death, even after the warning of his wife and the clear cross-examination that declared his innocence, than to risk losing your political position.

**Self-preservation** always kills curiosity in a person and is a form of idolatry. Self-preservation people are never truly curious, never open to conviction, healing and the different ways of seeing the work of God in the Bible. Self-preservation also kills a church that is reaching the curious. A self-preservation church always drifts toward insiders and complexity. When the church engages inside language, and complex church systems it creates a culture that makes it difficult for curious people to feel welcome as they explore the truth of Jesus Christ. A culture of self-preservation starts with personal questions of preference. Do I like the music? Do I like the community group? Do I prefer the kid's ministry? It looks to self to evaluate ministry instead of looking at the curious people who are waiting to have a nontoxic place to explore Jesus (curious un-churched and curious Christians alike). A self-preservation Christian and their church poses a **constant threat** to reaching a new generation for Christ.

**Nicodemus** and his story in **John 3** is a clear example of what a curious person and church culture can look like; as curious people and churches are watchful. Nicodemus was observing Jesus. He was seeing the miraculous signs that Jesus was doing and it stoked his curiosity. Other Pharisees, like Nicodemus, witnessed the signs but it did not drive them to seek Jesus out. Nicodemus had his spiritual radar up and he recognized that this Jesus was, at the very least, a special Rabbi teacher. Curious people

are watchful, looking for how God could be working even in the unexpected. Curious people see God working in the painful circumstances of life. Curious people are not threatened by different perspectives, but willing to seek understanding even in the unfamiliar. Curious people and churches explore the new and undiscovered even when it makes them fearful. Nicodemus was afraid to be seen with Jesus so he came at night but he still came. It's okay to be a little fearful, but Nicodemus did not let fear squelch his curiosity, as did Pilate. One of the fears that many people have is in the **open-minded exploration** of the Bible. Jesus was presenting Nicodemus with a completely different understanding of the prophesied Messiah and the way to the Kingdom of God. As you move through John 3, Nicodemus and Jesus have a real conversation about the Kingdom of God from the perspective of Jesus. Questions are asked and answered. Jesus challenges Nicodemus, wondering why a well-schooled man does not understand these truths, yet though confronted, real conversation results. Jesus doesn't beat up Nicodemus for his questions; Nicodemus doesn't attack Jesus for his answer but there is a sense of authentic relational conversation.

This leads Jesus into one of the more familiar and powerful verses in the Bible, **John 3:16**, revealing that God loves the entire world, and salvation uniquely comes through the very Son of God. In this conversation Jesus doesn't restrain himself but gives Nicodemus real insightful answers. Like Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus, curious churches have conversations about the beauty and the challenge of the Christian story. Curious churches are filled with people who stay curious throughout their spiritual journey.

## **Community for the Curious**

- Teachable: Open to biblical and theological truth
- Freedom/Expectation: to ask questions and to seek answers honestly and openly
- Major on majors / Minor on minors
- View of Christianity as a journey not a destination
- Variety of opinions allowed/encouraged / celebrated
- No prejudice or favoritism
- This process is communal and is birthed through growing relationships
- A come as you are community
- Commitment to necessary change