

Chat: Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Job Walk Into A Life...

Below is an excerpt of a chat I had with Goggle's Gemini A.I. model in early August 2026. Conversing with an A.I. certainly does not provide perfectly trustable information, but it is surprisingly good at researching many published documents online and summarizing them in its responses. It has people studying how it works to ensure that opposing views are represented so it is less biased than many people assume.

If you enjoy the short story that I direct Gemini to write later in this chat, you can refer to it at:

<https://peaceandgodwill.com/nicodemus-joseph-of-arimathea-and-job-walk-into-a-life/>

My prompt:

Write a short assessment of the characters Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, restricting yourself to canon Bible letters but include every mention of them. Conclude with the idea that there are no significant references to either of them in the post-canon writings

of any early church father so this must mean that neither character went on to have any major role in Church development. Do not create any charts or tables or ASCII text graphics; restrict yourself to bulleted lists where appropriate.

Gemini's response:

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are prominent, wealthy Jewish leaders whose canonical appearances are localized entirely within the New Testament Gospels.

Nicodemus

Nicodemus appears exclusively in the Gospel of John across three specific passages:

- **John 3:1–21:** A Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus visits Jesus under cover of night. He acknowledges Jesus as a teacher sent from God but struggles to comprehend Jesus's teaching on being "born again" from above.

- **John 7:50–51:** During a Sanhedrin debate over arresting Jesus, Nicodemus speaks up procedurally, asking, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"
- **John 19:39–42:** Following the crucifixion, Nicodemus publicly steps forward to assist in Jesus's burial. He brings an extravagant mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about seventy-five pounds to prepare the body.

Character Assessment: Nicodemus is portrayed as a cautious intellectual who moves from seeking Jesus in secret to defending legal fairness, and ultimately to committing a public act of devotion at Christ's death. While his presence at the cross demonstrates immense personal courage and profound devotion, his lavish gift of burial spices aligns with traditional Jewish royal honor rather than an explicit commitment to Christian discipleship, leaving it doubtful whether he ever fully crossed the line from sympathetic insider to active follower.

Joseph of Arimathea

Joseph of Arimathea appears in all four canonical Gospels, specifically during the burial account:

- **Matthew 27:57–60:** Described as a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus. He asks Pilate for Jesus's body, wraps it in clean linen, and places it in his own newly rock-hewn tomb.
- **Mark 15:43–46:** Identified as a prominent council member waiting for the Kingdom of God. He "gathered courage" to ask Pilate for the body, purchased fine linen, and buried Jesus.
- **Luke 23:50–53:** Highlighted as a righteous council member from the Judean town of Arimathea who did not consent to the council's decision regarding Jesus. He secures the body and lays it in an unused tomb.
- **John 19:38–42:** Confirms his role alongside Nicodemus, adding that Joseph was a disciple in secret due to fear of the religious authorities before taking the step to ask Pilate for the body.

Character Assessment: Joseph represents a figure of influence and righteousness (my note: meaning Bible text confirms him as a disciple) who dissented from the ruling elite. His wealth and social standing enabled him to secure a royal-style burial for Jesus, stepping into public allegiance at the moment of Christ's execution.

Despite their dramatic roles in the gospel narratives, neither Nicodemus nor Joseph of Arimathea appears in the Book of Acts or any New Testament epistles. Furthermore, there are no significant references to either of them in the authentic post-canonical writings of the early Church Fathers, indicating that neither character went on to play a major role in the leadership or historical development of the early Christian Church.

My prompt:

Consider two fictional characters, Fred and Barney. Fred is a wealthy person who is always willing to donate to his local church's fundraising efforts. He freely affirms to other church members that God rewards him with a good life so he is happy to "give back" to religious-based charities, but he is reserved

about mentioning his church life and friends in other social and work settings. Although he attends services regularly and is occasionally intrigued by the pastor's message, he mostly sees his local church as a social club to enhance his networking abilities. He secretly feels that giving a little time to God most weeks and observing a few religious behavioral rules benefits his position in God's eyes somehow. Barney is a lower economic class person who believes that salvation comes from a growing relationship with God based on prayer and Bible study that eventually results in receiving an indwelling Spirit from God that will guide his conscience in this life and ensure his acceptance in Heaven for the next life. Barney peripherally knows Fred and they meet for some reason. Write a thorough conversation between them that starts with Barney noting his observations about Fred's life. Barney then compares Fred to the examples of Nicodemus (curious and later helpful to Jesus but uncommitted) and Joseph of Arimathea (not sharing much at first but clearly a follower who later takes risks that reveal his faith). He tries to point out how Fred's sin nature is deceiving him to believe that legalistic and prosperity-based Christianity is not acceptable to God as a replacement for developing a prayer and Bible study

based active faith relationship with Him. Include some polite back and forth as Fred attempts to defend his position and Barney refutes him with comparisons to the Bible characters. Finish with a quick summary of how Job thought he had a good relationship with God by revering Him and living by legalistic behaviors and gauged God's opinion of him by the prosperity he enjoyed, but ultimately God caused a major rebuilding of his character so he could humbly learn the difference between his Creator and himself as a created being.

Gemini's response:

The sun was just beginning to dip below the horizon as Fred and Barney sat on the tailgate of Barney's aging pickup truck. They had met by chance at a local community center where Fred was dropping off a sizable donation check and Barney was volunteering his time. Observing Fred's smooth handshakes and easy interactions with the center's directors, Barney had quietly watched the wealthy businessman navigate the room. Now, as the evening cooled, the two men found themselves sharing a moment of quiet conversation.

"You certainly know how to move through a crowd, Fred," Barney said, wiping grease from his hands with a rag. "That check you wrote today is going to help a lot of families. But if you don't mind me asking... why do you do it? I see you around the church, but I rarely hear you mention your faith when we're anywhere else in town."

Fred smiled, adjusting his watch. "It's simple, Barney. I've been blessed with a good life and a successful business. God takes care of those who honor Him, so I'm happy to give back. The church is a great institution—it keeps the community grounded, provides good networking, and frankly, I think it's just good practice to give God His due. A few hours on Sunday, keeping on the right side of the commandments, writing a check when needed... it keeps things in balance. It works for me, and clearly, God approves of the arrangement."

Barney nodded slowly, looking out over the parking lot before meeting Fred's eyes. "Fred, I say this with respect, because you're a generous man. But watching you, I can't help but feel you're caught in a dangerous

trap. You're treating God like a business partner in a contract, rather than a Father who wants your heart."

Fred chuckled, though his stance stiffened slightly. "A trap? Barney, I'm living comfortably, helping people, and supporting the church. How is that a trap?"

"Because your heart is divided," Barney replied gently. "It reminds me a lot of two men in the New Testament: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Both were wealthy, influential men who moved in high society, much like you. But their spiritual journeys show two very different paths."

"I know the names," Fred said, leaning back.

"Nicodemus was a Pharisee who came to Jesus at night, right?"

"Exactly," Barney said. "Nicodemus was curious. He respected Jesus as a teacher and recognized God's hand in His work. But he came under cover of darkness because he had a position to protect. He was intriguing himself with Jesus's message, but for a long time, he stayed on the fence—uncommitted, observing religious forms while keeping his status intact. He liked

the intellectual and social aspect of religion, but he resisted the total transformation Jesus demanded when He told him he had to be 'born again.'"

Fred tapped his fingers on his knee. "Well, I wouldn't say I'm hiding. I just keep my professional life and my religious life separate. It's practical. Is that really such a crime?"

"It's not about crime, Fred; it's about where your trust lies," Barney explained. "Look at Joseph of Arimathea. He was also rich and a member of the high council, and at first, he was a secret disciple out of fear. But when the true test came at the Crucifixion, Joseph didn't just write a check or stay reserved. He risked everything—his wealth, his political standing, his reputation—by stepping directly to Pilate to claim Jesus's body and giving Him his own new tomb. His faith drove him to an active, self-sacrificing commitment, regardless of the cost."

"Are you saying I'm fake just because I don't risk my livelihood every day?" Fred asked, his tone growing defensive. "I follow the moral rules. I give my time and

money. Doesn't the Bible say God blesses those who obey Him?"

"The Bible says God desires a relationship, not a transaction," Barney answered firmly but kindly. "Your human nature—what scripture calls the sin nature—is deceiving you into thinking that prosperity is proof of God's favor, and that legalistic adherence to rules can buy His goodwill. You're using religious activity as a safety net and a social club, but a true relationship with God isn't built on what you can barter. It's built on a daily, indwelling Spirit that changes your conscience from the inside out—something that only comes through persistent prayer, studying His Word, and absolute surrender."

Fred fell silent for a moment, looking down at his polished shoes. "So you think my prosperity has made me blind?"

"I think it's made it easy for you to substitute comfort for conviction," Barney said softly. "It reminds me of Job."

Fred raised an eyebrow. "Job? Job was struck with disasters. I'm doing fine."

"Job is described in the Bible as 'blameless and upright'—a man of immense personal integrity and high moral character," Barney explained. "He lived by every legalistic standard imaginable, but personal integrity isn't the same thing as a genuine, active relationship with God. Job believed his good life and immense prosperity were the natural proof of his flawless, moral behavior, and he gauged God's opinion of him by the wealth and health he enjoyed. But when all of that was stripped away, Job didn't just lose his possessions; he lost his self-righteous premise.

Through his suffering, God brought about a total rebuilding of Job's character so he could learn the true difference between mere human morality and a real relationship with his Creator. Job had to realize that God doesn't owe us anything based on our performance, and he finally discovered who he actually was in God's eyes. In the end, when God spoke out of the whirlwind, Job finally understood the vast difference between his Creator and himself as a created being. He said, 'I had heard of you by the

hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.' He moved from transactional, rule-based religion to profound, humble awe."

Barney stood up from the tailgate and put a hand on Fred's shoulder. "Fred, you don't need to wait for a whirlwind to rebuild your life. Don't let your wealth and good standing convince you that you've got God figured out. He doesn't want your spare hours or your leftover wealth to secure a place in Heaven. He wants *you*—a daily, humble walk where He guides your heart, not just your public reputation."

Fred looked at Barney, the initial defensiveness melting into quiet reflection. "I... I've never really thought about it as a transaction before, Barney. I thought I was just doing what was right."

"That's how subtle self-deception is," Barney smiled gently. "Start spending real time in prayer and reading the scriptures for who God is, not for what He gives you. You might find that the life He offers is far richer than anything money or networking can buy."

Note:

The way a single Gemini chat thread works means that Gemini will refer back to every prompt and response as it researches its next response. So I trained Gemini first by making it write a detailed assessment of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea before I quickly referred to them in my prompt to write the short story. When I asked Gemini to include Job in the story, it did not have any previous ideas to refer to about him. So this story is actually the second version that Gemini wrote. In the first one Job was introduced as a “man of righteousness”, which I took offense to because it indicates a certain type of relationship with God (for example Gen 6:9 “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.”). But Job was actually introduced differently in the Bible so I made this prompt afterwards that gave Gemini a guide to how to read the Bible about Job then write what I think is an improved version I included above.

My prompt:

This is absolutely perfect except for one fatal flaw. You are introducing Job as initially being "righteous" which implies being approved by God. However the Bible

describes him as "blameless and upright" which refers to personal integrity, not necessarily a reference to a relationship with God. The lesson of Job is how he learns the difference between the two ideas by learning who he exactly is in God's eyes. Rewrite your story exactly as is except change your introduction to Job to reflect what I have said in this prompt.