

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

ALWAYS TWO,
THERE ARE

STUDENT LESSON

Movies are incredibly complex beasts to produce. With probably THOUSANDS of different pieces coming together, it's a lot like one HUGE orchestra with a conductor for each instrument! There's the script, the actors, the costumes, the sets, the lighting, the cameras, assistants, sound guys, stunt guys, coffee guys, tea guys, guys who drive the golf carts, guys who drive the coffee and tea guys IN the golf carts. ALSO (get this) THEY DON'T EVEN HAVE TO BE "GUYS!" I know. Crazy. Well, in the mess of a zoo that a production can be, somewhere there has to be a movie that's engaging, entertaining, and maybe even fun to dissect!

My favorite part is the dissection part, tearing apart a movie and talking about all of its best plot points, trivia, and favorite performances! Some of my favorite performances aren't actually the main characters. Sometimes it's an older movie with an up-and-coming star that's big today. Sometimes they're already a big star but they're given a little, tiny role just to make the audience laugh or speculate. These are called CAMEOS! You may have heard of some famous cameos. Some recurring cameos are Stan Lee cameos in Marvel movies, Bruce Campbell in Sam Raimi movies, or John Ratzenberger in Pixar Movies¹. Then there's the one-time cameos like David Hasselhoff in the SpongeBob Movie.

Anyway, sometimes I like to look at these cameos a bit more deeply than maybe the creator intended. What are they doing there? What's this character like? I'm sure you've had a cameo where you'd love to see a movie of JUST this guy for 120 minutes. That's where we relate to our section in John this week. We're introduced to a guy named Joseph (from Arimathea). He's brought up earlier in other Gospels, so we know he's interacted with the disciples and Jesus at SOME point. Then we see the return of, none other than, Nicodemus!?!?! This is like *Spider-Man: No Way Home* at this point! Boy, would I love to hear how they both ended up working together to lay the Son of God in His tomb.

Open it

1. **Do you have a favorite cameo in a movie? What about in the Bible? Do you have a favorite lesser-known character?**

¹ You'll know his voice when you hear it. Think of the Underminer in *The Incredibles*, Hamm in *Toy Story*, or Mack in *Cars*.

Day 2 — Today’s Theme: Joseph and Nicodemus

Read John 19:38–42.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA! Rich boy, (secret) follower of Jesus, and... IMPORTANT JEWISH LEADER?? This is quite a dense character we’re introduced to here. He’s only mentioned in one space chronologically in the Bible: right here, right now. All four Gospels confirm that this is the man that retrieved Jesus’ body from Pilate.² Using the four accounts of this time between Jesus’ death and resurrection, we can gather up a great idea of how important Joseph’s part is in this story. Below I’ve assembled a list of everything we learn about Joseph from this passage and from which book. Not a single Gospel mentions every single detail. John is the only Gospel to mention Nicodemus at all, so it’s cool that he makes a reappearance in the climax of the Gospel!

About Joseph	Book Featured	Pilate/Tomb	Book Featured	Preparation of body	Book Featured
From Arimathea	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Asked Pilate	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Joseph took the body	Matthew, Mark, Luke
Rich man	Matthew	Asked Pilate Boldly	Mark	Joseph wrapped in a clean linen cloth-	Matthew, Mark, Luke
Follower of Jesus	Matthew	Put Jesus in a tomb that was cut	Mark, Luke		John
Secret Follower/scared of other Jewish leaders	John	Put Jesus in his own tomb he had cut	Matthew	Joseph AND Nicodemus took Jesus’ body	John
“Waiting for the kingdom of God to come”	Mark, Luke	Placed in a tomb not used before	Luke, John	Joseph AND Nicodemus both wrapped it with the spices	John
Good and religious/ just righteous man	Luke	A tomb in a garden because it was nearby	John	Nicodemus brings 75lbs of myrrh and aloes	
Part of the Jewish council	Mark, Luke	He personally rolled the large stone over the entrance	Matthew, Mark		
Important member of the Jewish council	Mark				

Only after reading all four accounts of Joseph can we get the full story. It was only because of Joseph’s position that he was able to build up the confidence to ask Pilate for Jesus’ body. His wealth was the reason Jesus was buried as a rich man in a brand-new tomb. His partnership with Nicodemus allowed them to get Jesus buried before the Sabbath Day.

Looking back at our own lives, there are many things that God blesses us with that we don’t recognize as useful until way later. For Joseph, he had his wealth, his position, and the tomb that was meant for himself.

² Matthew 27:57–61, Mark 15:42–46, Luke 23:50–55, John 19:38–42

6. What are some blessings in your life that you've seen God repurpose for His glory?

7. How can you use the things God has given you (time, talents, treasures) to serve God in greater ways?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Marys, Joanna, and Salome³

Read John 20:1–2.

Strange! Another cameo in John's gospel! Mary Magdalene is the only one mentioned in these verses. However, combining the information from the other Gospels, we can confirm there were at least five others there! Funny enough, most of the people collectively there were named Mary and ALL of them were women. If you read all the Gospels, just like with Joseph, they give us enough information to get an idea of the crowd that was there. We'll only be focusing on the Mary that comes from Magdala. Mary Magdalene plays an important role there as she's soon to be the first person to see Jesus alive!⁴ Why her? Not sure. That's for next week!

Here, at the beginning of John 20, Mary only arrives at the tomb, notices it's empty and then immediately jumps to the conclusion that "**they** have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him."⁵ This causes a panic in Peter and John. Was she wrong in assuming the worst? Considering who they were up against, the possibility of the Romans or Pharisees stealing the body wasn't that farfetched. It's not every day that someone come BACK to life! Lazarus had people present to witness the exact moment he walked out of the tomb. Jesus up and left the tomb and nobody knew where He went!⁶

Mary's jumping to the conclusion that Jesus had been stolen is a reaction we're likely to have. Even Peter and John had a similar reaction!

8. **Despite the fact that everything follows in accordance with God's plan, we still tend to be anxious about the future. What causes us to be so anxious about the future? Why *SHOULDN'T* we be anxious?**

Mary, Joseph and Nicodemus were scarcely mentioned in the Gospels—with Nicodemus only in John. While it was only a short time, all play vital roles in the burial of Christ and His resurrection testimony.⁷ God even uses Joseph and Nicodemus' involvement to fulfill a prophecy in Isaiah.⁸

9. **How does knowing the possibility of having a short but important role in God's bigger plan give you confidence in your walk?**

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/women-empty-tomb/>

⁴ Mark 16:9

⁵ John 20:2

⁶ That's not to say His grand revival was silent. Matthew 28:2 tells us there was a "strong earthquake."

⁷ They actually fulfill the prophecy of Jesus' being crucified as a criminal and buried as a rich man.

⁸ Isaiah 53:9

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Peter and the Other Disciple

Read John 20:3–10.

The first time I read this last section, I laughed quite a bit. John speaks of another disciple quite frequently throughout his Gospel. Biblical scholars claim that this is, in fact, just John talking about himself in the 3rd person. Why does he do this? Maybe to sound humbler when presenting this Gospel? But wouldn't that make him sound like a secondary source to his own writings? I'm not sure. But we're all pretty sure that this other guy is John. I found it really funny how he describes himself in this passage: "they were both running, but the other [totally much quicker, younger, good-looking] disciple ran faster than Peter [the slower, uglier disciple that Jesus maybe didn't love as much?]" Wait, your Bible doesn't quite say that? Well, that's okay. I've got the MLT.⁹ Yours probably does tell us about how even though John got to the tomb first, Peter was the one who went in first.

I haven't seen *The Chosen* TV show yet, but I can totally picture these verses in my head.¹⁰ How old do you think John is here? 30? 40? John is estimated to be 13–16 years old at this point. Imagine what John had just experienced. The entire, brutal crucifixion. The responsibility of comforting Jesus' grieving mother, the mother of his best friend of the past three years. Imagine going through the same experience. Now imagine going to Jesus' tomb and He's **not there**. John's one GLANCE at the strips of linen caused him to hesitate. Once he entered the tomb, **he saw and believed**.

10. Do we need to see Jesus directly make miracles happen to believe in Him? How do we see Jesus in other ways?

Note: This study was written by Micah Hett. www.villagebible.church/students.

⁹ Micah Living Translation, the *totally real*, not made-up translation that I'm writing.

¹⁰ John 20:5–9