

Your Influence and God's Kingdom

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Joseph of Arimathea is not one of the better known characters in the Bible, but maybe he should be. His is one of the few stories mentioned in all four Gospels (Matt. 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42). That cannot be said for Zacchaeus, the woman at the well or the Good Samaritan. Even Peter's famous confession, "Thou art the Christ!" does not receive the same degree of coverage. Clearly the Gospel writers all recognized something significant about Joseph's action. What Joseph did was not miraculous or headline news. He simply took Jesus' body and placed it in his own newly constructed tomb.

We don't know much about Joseph of Arimathea. Scholars are uncertain where Arimathea was. Matthew indicates Joseph was a rich man, a business leader who became Jesus' disciple (Matt. 27:57). Mark adds that he "took courage" and approached the brutal Roman procurator Pilate who had recently sentenced Jesus to death, and requested His body (Mark 15:43). Pilate would have been familiar with the prominent citizens under his supervision and he may have known who Joseph was. However, Pilate was notorious for his cruel treatment of those he governed. Asking for Jesus' body after His execution as a traitor was tantamount to admitting you were one of His followers. That took guts. Luke records that Joseph was a member of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin. He was a "good and just man" who had disagreed with his peers concerning Jesus' death sentence (Luke 23:50-51). John reveals that Joseph followed Jesus secretly because of his fear of the Jewish religious leaders (John 19:38).

Isn't it interesting that Joseph was intimidated by religious leaders who zealously debated theology and searched for heretics, yet he courageously approached the ruthless Roman governor? This notoriously brutal man ordered peoples' crucifixions and here was Joseph requesting a condemned traitor's remains. Why did the Gospel writers commend Joseph so highly? He stepped up boldly for Christ when others were despairing. Peter and Matthew may have followed Jesus longer than Joseph had, but that night they were hiding from Pilate while Joseph was negotiating with him. Joseph was a successful businessman. He was used to dealing with hard-nosed people! His position in the business community afforded him unique connections, skills and respect. At this historic moment, the businessman Joseph stepped up and leveraged his business experience and contacts to participate in Christ's work in his world.

As a business person, God has granted you unique contacts and resources that are largely unavailable to religious leaders. You might never step into the pulpit when your minister is away, but you have access to business, government, entertainment, sports, financial and world leaders. These are all avenues which may be closed to your pastor. Take an inventory of your business relationships and resources as well

as your community contacts. Through your unique position in the business world you have the exciting opportunity to invest in God's kingdom and to serve Jesus. Like Joseph of Arimathea, intentionally use your position in the marketplace for the cause of Christ.