

TWO CONVERSATIONS WITH JESUS

John 3:1 - 4:54

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Jesus

Key-locations: Jerusalem, Samaria, Galilee

Key-repetitions:

- Jesus gave people individual attention: two disciples of John the Baptist (Jn 1:35-39), Simon Peter (Jn 1:42), Nathanael (Jn 1:47-51), Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-16), the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-30) and the official whose son was sick (Jn 4:46-50).
- Jesus knew intimate facts about people without being informed (Jn 2:23-24). The way he treated people showed that he understood them: Nathanael (Jn 1:47-49); Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-16); the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-26).
- Believe/faith (Jn 3:12, 15, 16, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41, 48, 53).
- Jesus was called "Teacher" (3:2, 26; 4:31).

Key-attitudes:

- Jesus' frankness with Nicodemus.
- Nicodemus' cautious curiosity when he came to see Jesus at night.
- Jesus' sensitivity with the Samaritan woman.
- The feeling of the Samaritan woman that Jesus was trying to seduce her when he first spoke to her.
- The surprise of the disciples when they saw Jesus talking with a woman.
- The excitement of the Samaritan woman when she told

the village people about Jesus.

- The confidence of many in the Samaritan village that Jesus really was the Savior of the world.

Initial-situation:

When Jesus began the first year of his ministry, he was unknown outside of the town of Nazareth. John the Baptist was famous, and crowds were going to hear him and to be baptized by him.

Jesus began his public ministry at the Jordan River when he was baptized by John. Then, in the desert, he resisted temptations from Satan. Jesus returned to where John was preaching and baptizing. John told his disciples that Jesus was the "Lamb of God". Two followed Jesus, and they brought two more men to him. The four men went with Jesus to Cana, where he performed his first miracle by changing water to wine. Jesus then went to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover and cleansed the Temple courtyard of the people who were buying and selling.

Initial-problem:

Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to see Jesus one night.

Final-situation:

Many people in the Samaritan village believed that Jesus was the Savior of the world.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus and Nicodemus

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus. He was a member of the Jewish ruling council. One night Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we know you are a teacher sent from God. No one could perform the miracles you perform if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Nicodemus asked, "How can a person in his old age be born? He cannot enter a second time inside his mother to be born!"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. Don't be surprised when I tell you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean? How can this be?"

Jesus said, "You are a well-known teacher of Israel. But you don't understand these basics! I tell you the truth, I know what I'm talking about; I testify to what I have seen, but still you do not accept what I tell you. I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the Son of Man who came from heaven. In the same way that Moses in the desert lifted up the snake on a pole (Num 21:4-9), it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up. Then everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

"God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world as guilty, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is acquitted, but whoever does not believe is already condemned as guilty, because he has not believed in God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light came into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their actions were evil. Everyone who does what is wrong hates the light, and won't come into the light for fear that their actions will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth welcomes the light. Then the light shows that his actions were done through God" (Jn 3:1-21).

John the Baptist Testified about Jesus

After this conversation, Jesus with his disciples went into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them. He also baptized. John also was baptizing near Salim, a location where there was plenty of water. People were constantly coming to be baptized. John's disciples told him, "Teacher, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one you testified about; he is competing with us. He is baptizing, and everyone is going to him" (Jn 3:22-26).

John replied, "A person can receive only what God gives him. You heard me say, 'I am not the Christ but I was sent ahead of him to get things ready.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The best man who helps the bridegroom is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine. He must become greater; I must become less. Whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son does not see life, for God's constant anger remains on him" (Jn 3:27-36).

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John. Actually, Jesus didn't baptize, his disciples did the baptizing. Jesus knew the Pharisees heard about him, so he left Judea and went back to Galilee.

On the way, Jesus had to go through Samaria. He came to Sychar, a Samaritan town where there was a well that Jacob had dug. Jesus, worn out from traveling, sat down by the well. His disciples went into the town to buy food. It was about noon (Jn 4:1-6).

A Samaritan woman came to draw water about noon; it was customary for women to come to the well at sunup or sundown. Jesus asked her, "Will you give me a drink?"

The Samaritan woman replied, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" Because of racial prejudice, Jews didn't associate with Samaritans.

Jesus answered her, "You don't know what God gives. You don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you knew, you would have asked him, and he would give you living water."

The woman replied, "Sir, you don't have a bucket to draw with, and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you more important than our ancestor Jacob, who dug the well

and drank from it himself?"

Jesus answered, "Every person who drinks this water will be thirsty again. Anyone who drinks the water I give him will never thirst again. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him an artesian spring of water gushing a fountain of eternal life."

The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't ever get thirsty again and won't ever have to come back to this well again to draw water."

Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband and then come back."

She replied, "I have no husband."

Jesus told her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. You've had five husbands, and the man you have now isn't your husband. You spoke the truth."

The woman said, "Sir, I see that you're a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews insist that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus declared, "Believe me, a time is coming when you won't worship the Father on this mountain nor there in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't understand what you worship. We Jews understand what we worship. Salvation is made available through the Jews. Yet a time is coming; in fact, it has now come, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The Father seeks that kind of worshipers. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah, called Christ, is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Jesus declared, "I am he" (Jn 4:7-26).

Just then his disciples returned and were shocked to find Jesus talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want from her?" or "Why are you talking with her?" (Jn 4:27).

The woman left her water jar and went back to the town. She told the people, "Come, meet a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They left town and made their way toward him (Jn 4:28-30).

Meanwhile, his disciples urged Jesus, "Teacher, eat something."

Jesus answered, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

His puzzled disciples asked each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. As you look around, you would say, 'Four months more and then the harvest.' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! It is harvest time! The harvester is not waiting. Even now the reaper draws his wages, gathering in grain that's ripe for eternal life. The one who plants the seed and the one who harvests can be happy together. The saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Others have done the hard work, and you reap the benefits of their labor" (Jn 4:31-38).

Many of the Samaritans in that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." When the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and Jesus stayed two days. Many more Samaritans believed in Jesus because of his words.

They said to the woman, "We first believed in Jesus because of what you told us. Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world!" (Jn 4:39-42).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How were Jesus' encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman similar, and how were they different?
2. What did Jesus perceive to be Nicodemus' greatest need?
3. What did Jesus perceive to be the Samaritan woman's greatest need?
4. What did Jesus have to say about belief or faith to both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman?
5. What do you have in common with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. Jesus is omniscient. He has supernatural knowledge about people and events, without being informed (Jn 2:25). Nathanael (Jn 1:48), Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-15) and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:17-19) are three examples. Other examples: Jn 6:61, 64; 13:1, 11, 18-28; 16:19, 30; 18:4; 21:17.
2. To enter the Kingdom of God, a person has to have a totally new beginning that comes from God. The theme of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus was: How to enter the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:3, 5). Jesus said that Nicodemus needed to be born again. He used two symbols to explain the meaning of the new birth:
 - **Water.** To be born of water (Jn 3:5) implies repentance. In the historical context, John the Baptist baptized with water (Jn 1:31) and his baptism was known as the baptism of repentance (Mk 1:3-4).
 - **Wind.** The wind symbolizes the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:8). Jesus baptized with the Spirit (Jn 1:33; Mk 1:8). The Spirit convinces the world of sin, of justice and of judgment (Jn 16:8-11).
3. Jesus is the source of living water for people's deep unsatisfied thirst. The Samaritan woman had a thirst that was not satisfied by constantly swapping one man for another. Jesus offered himself as the source for satisfying her thirst (Jn 4:10-14). This living water flows into eternal life, that consists of Christ himself living within a person in the form of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39).
4. There is a double result of having the living water, the Holy Spirit within one's heart: one is interior and the other exterior.
 - **Interior results:** the Holy Spirit will continue refreshing and renewing the believer's spiritual life, as a spring gushing inside his heart, so that he never will thirst again (Jn 4:10).
 - **External result:** the Holy Spirit flows from the believer in Jesus, like an artesian well gushing forth a river of blessings to all who surround him, in order to satisfy the thirst of many (Jn 7:38).
5. God is worshiped in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:23-24). The person who is being honest with himself and with God and who truly desires to have an encounter with God as revealed by Jesus, will participate in true worship wherever he is.