

The HeART of Conversation

Lessons from Messiah Jesus

Women's Bible Study Series: September 2023-May 2024

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Introduction *Shalom Aleichem!* That's Hebrew for "*peace be to you.*"

Israel The manifestation of God's divine presence has not only a recorded history but a physical geography. From north to south, east to west, Israel offers an experience of biblical history like nowhere else. "*For the LORD has chosen Israel for His special treasure.*" ~Psalm 132:14

Setting is essential to the story. Who we are; what we think; what we do; and how we communicate are all intimately bound to where we are from. No one can fully know us until they understand the geography and places that shape us. The same is true of the Lord Jesus.

Walking the Trails and Sitting on the Temple Steps

Qumran: where ancient Essenes wrote and hid in caves the Dead Sea Scrolls—one of the greatest archeological discoveries of our time.

You don't have to tour Israel to feel close to God. *We worship a Person—not a place. God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth.* ~John 4:24 Only those who have the indwelling Holy Spirit can worship God acceptably.

Israel's 75th Birthday (May 1948-May 2023) In 1948, after 2,000 years of displacement, Israel was again a sovereign nation in its own land. Israel is a modern miracle of God. There is no other way to explain its rebirth and prosperity in the face of constant opposition.

God is a God who loves; God is a Redeemer who saves. God promised to Israel that He would bring a King—a Messiah, and chose Israel to be the channel through which the Messiah would come. "*For salvation is of the Jews.*" (John 4:22). **Our Savior was a Jew.**

Current Population of Israel: Population around 9 million (equal in size to New Jersey)—one million live in Jerusalem.

Aliyah: ("to ascend") The Jewish people are returning home to Israel—over 4 million have made "Aliyah" since 1948.

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Lesson One: A Conversation of Messiah

How can we better connect with others through meaningful conversations? Gen Z has been referred to as the loneliness generation. Sixty-one percent of young people feel "serious loneliness" and nearly half of Americans report sometimes always feeling alone. Everyone wants a sense of belonging . . . to be noticed . . . to be acknowledged.

But we are all creatures of habit. It is far too easy to stay in the familiar ruts we dig for ourselves. ~Patrick Rothfuss

Our conversations can quell the epidemic of loneliness. God delights to use places—and people—to be the vessels through which He displays His power, grace, and love.

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. ~Mark 1:1

The "good news" was that "Yeshud" the Messiah has arrived. **Messiah means "anointed"—the title of the hoped-for Redeemer of Israel.** "Yeshud" is Jesus' Hebrew name: "He saves."

The Prophets Messiah Jesus is the only Person whose lineage, birth, character, teaching, career, reception, rejection, death, burial, and resurrection were recorded in 300 prophecies at least 500 years before His birth.

The **Kingdom of heaven** is offered in the Person of the King of whom John is the forerunner. The Jews of that day would automatically have understood John to be speaking of the Messianic kingdom. By calling the nation to repentance (a change of mind), John the Baptizer prepared the way for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, so people would be ready to meet and trust the Messiah. ~Matthew 3:3

Israeli food is so good: "Peter's Fish" (tilapia in spicy tomato sauce); figs, dates, apricots, humus, olives, challah, Israeli salad, falafel; baklava; halva; and coffee.

Jesus' Baptism at the Jordon River (**The River of Life for the people of Israel**): It's not just the event but the **PLACE** of Jesus' baptism—mentioned over **180 times** in Bible.

Believer's Baptism: identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Only faith in Jesus Christ saves you. ~Ephesians 2:8-9

All marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. ~Luke 4:22

Time and again, the Lord Jesus sought out those who were lonely. He knew the best way to help people was not trying to judge them, or shame them, but respect them, love them, enjoy them.

A Conversation at Night (Nicodemus, John 3:1-21) Setting: Jerusalem

One always goes up to Jerusalem. *It's beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth* (Psalm 48:2). Psalms of Ascent are sung by pilgrims as they went up.

One of the oldest cities—the center of Israel and of the whole earth. *This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries around her.* ~Ezekiel 5:5

Jerusalem is the city at the center. It is the center of mankind's hopes and God's purposes. God loves it; Satan hates it; Jesus wept over it; the Holy Spirit descended in it; the nations are drawn to it and Christ will return and reign in it. Indeed, the destiny of the world is tied to the future of Jerusalem. ~Dr. Randall Price

Conversational Style: Jesus left room in His schedule for interruptions. Noticed how Jesus invested in Nicodemus. He was interested in the outcome of what Nicodemus shared with him and expressed concern about his life. He devoted time and energy because He cared. Nicodemus sensed the connection and could open up to Jesus.

John 3:16 Jesus says that God must take the first step: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The first step is finished.* God has done all He needed to provide salvation for all. **But that provided salvation for all will not save anyone.** The second part is *"that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."* Until Nicodemus came to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, he would not have everlasting life.

A Conversation at Noon (Samaritan Woman, John 4:4-43) Setting: Samaria, Jacob's Well

Conversational Style: The Lord Jesus shows us the ART of conversational turn-taking. It involves the back and forth of questions and answers, sharing of stories, thinking of

conversation as a warm connection. People love to feel understood and really seen. And this woman had a story.

You can't hate someone whose story you know. We can take courage from the fact that people are longing to be in conversation again. We are hungry for a chance to talk. People want to tell their story, and are willing to listen to yours. People want to talk about their concerns and struggles. Too many of us feel isolated, strange, or invisible. Conversation helps end that. ~Margaret Wheatley

*"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that says to you: 'Give me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water' (10). **Jesus says that "living water" is found in Him. This living water brought eternal life—a permanent, present possession.** He was using imagery she would know.*

"Living Water" in the Desert: En Gedi ("David's Waterfall").

Notice how the Lord Jesus initiates an engaging and meaningful conversation. He allows the woman to talk about herself. She revealed to Jesus the daily embarrassment of having to come to the well alone. Jesus tells her to get her husband. Before anyone really understands the need for a Savior, they must see themselves as God sees them: a sinner in need of salvation by grace. *"I have no husband." "You have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband" (17-18).*

Woman: *"I know that the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will tell us all things."*

Lord Jesus: *"I who speak to you am He" (26).* The clearest statement ever made by the Lord Jesus that He is the Messiah is spoken to an adulterous woman from the despised Samaritan race. **And the woman put her faith in Messiah Jesus and was saved.**

Immediately, she shared her faith with others. And many believed: *Now we believe, not because of what you have said, for we ourselves have heard and we know that this indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world (42).*

Conclusion: Deep Wells We have many life experiences of God's faithfulness from which to draw and share Jesus' "living water"—the Saviors' love, joy, and hope—to encourage others; help them grow; and usher their souls to God's greatness. **No conversation is an accident or without divine purpose.** You have everything you need by the power of the Holy Spirit for warm, loving conversations.

Lesson Two: A Conversation of Parables (Sea of Galilee; towns of Jesus' day)