

ONE CONVERSATION AWAY:

How a Single Encounter with Jesus Can Change Your Life

The opening chapter of John's Gospel says that Jesus "came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe" (1:9), and Jesus himself said he came "to seek out and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). It's a good reminder that every Christian's mission should be to introduce as many unbelievers as possible to Jesus. The overwhelming majority of non-Christians are closer to Christ than you might think, and all it takes is one real encounter with Jesus to change everything. In this series we'll explore four unique conversations that Jesus had with everyday people - a young fisherman, a middle-aged mother, a religious elder, and a woman with a sordid past - and we'll see how one interaction with Jesus can change a life forever.

January 18, 2026 - The Pharisee's Redemption

Have you ever experienced some kind of encounter with God that changed your life? Briefly describe what happened, and what changed in the aftermath.

John 3:1-2 - Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

In the first twenty-four words of this passage, John tells us three important things about Nicodemus:

1. **Nicodemus was a _____**
Who were the Pharisees, and why were they so often at odds with Jesus?
2. **Nicodemus served on the _____**
What was the Sanhedrin? What does it say about Nicodemus that he was a member?
3. **Nicodemus came to Jesus _____**
Why might Nicodemus have decided to visit Jesus under the cover of darkness?

Have you ever taken your questions and doubts to Jesus in the safety of the darkness? Why or why not?

What does it say about Jesus that he doesn't turn people like Nicodemus away - even in the middle of the night?

John 3:3-8 - Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus' compliment in verse two?

What comes to mind for most people when they hear the phrase "born-again Christian"?

What did Jesus mean when he said you must be "born of water" and "born of the Spirit"? (See John 1:12-13)

What is the relationship between "the wind" and "the Spirit"?

If you are a _____,
you are a _____
...but what if you're a Christian who doesn't *feel* reborn?

John 3:9-15 - “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 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 one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

What is the significance of Jesus’ reference to Moses and the snake in the wilderness? (See Numbers 21:8-9) How and when would Jesus be “lifted up”?

What difference does looking at Jesus lifted up - and believing in him - make in a person’s life?

In what way was Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus a “bad news, good news” proposition? Why is it important to understand the “bad news” before receiving the “good news”?

John 19:38-40 - Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

What does this passage tell us about how Nicodemus was changed by his encounter with Jesus?

What would you like Jesus to change about your life, your outlook, or your circumstances?

Are you willing to trust him with your questions and doubts?



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