

## GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Nathaniel: Jesus Engages With A Skeptic

*Jan 11, 2015*

#### **Passage:**

John 1:43-51

#### **Summary:**

Dealing with skeptics can be challenging. Let's be honest: They have great questions. In fact, many of their questions are our questions as well. Sometimes their questions trouble us because they expose our deep doubts. It creates uncertainty and sometimes even animosity with us and them. In John 1, Nathaniel was a skeptic that Jesus handled well. He was not offended by Nathaniel's difficulties, he simply invited, conversed and then let Nathaniel's friends help him see what it meant to be one of Jesus' disciples. "Come and see" is an amazing invitation to explore what Jesus is all about. We don't have to be defensive gatekeepers, but more of a tour guide, leading people through what it means to follow Jesus. Thankfully, we don't have to leave our brains behind as we do this. In fact, as Nathaniel found out, following Jesus may require more thinking than we ever wanted to do in the first place.



#### **Questions:**

1. Why is it understandable that Nathaniel would be skeptical about anyone important coming from Nazareth? Would a person's hometown affect the way you viewed them or what they had to say?
2. Consider our culture's openness with talking about Buddha or Islam. What causes hostility in people when it comes to talking about Jesus?
3. Read Romans 1:18-25. Do you understand the argument it is making? What is it saying about what is going on behind the scenes when people reject God? Why is this important to know when you are discussing God with people?
4. Why do you think saying, "Well the only reason you reject God is because your foolish heart is darkened, your mind is futile and you are suppressing the truth" is not a helpful approach to take. Look at the response of Philip in John 1:46. Why might the invitation to "Come and see for yourself" be a better approach to take?

## Mary: Jesus Comforts A Friend in Grief

*Jan 18, 2015*

### Passage:

John 11:17-27, 28-36

### Summary:

Grief and pain are a part of life. Nobody gets through the human journey without experiencing it on some level. This is a broken world and sin, death, disease and pain are a part of our reality. Thankfully, Jesus is willing to engage all of us in it. As we look at the John 11 story of a grieving sister (Mary) with troubling questions of her own, we will see that to those suffering, Christianity is both intellectually credible and existentially satisfying. That is, it passes the test of the intellect and actually works to comfort us when it is applied. By the end of this encounter with Jesus, Mary knew there was a plan for all the suffering and also that Jesus was there to both grieve and to suffer with her. When we are suffering like Mary did, we know that our troubles do not disprove God, in fact, they are an opportunity to bring him glory through it.



### Questions:

1. Have you ever had someone help you through a time of grief?
2. When have you had to help someone through difficult times?
3. Sometimes we deal with grieving people like a philosophy professor, sometimes like a preacher and sometimes like a friend? How do you recommend dealing with someone experiencing grief?
4. Read John 11: 28-36. What is the significance of Jesus steering away from a theological discussion and just grieving with Mary. What is the significance of the way Jesus deals with this situation? Why is it so assuring that God is one who grieves with us?
5. When is a good time to encourage a hurting person with biblical truth and Scriptural promises? How would you do this?

# Thomas: Jesus Encourages A Doubting Disciple

Jan 25, 2015

## Passage:

John 20:24-29

## Summary:

Are you scared of your doubts or do you embrace them as an opportunity to grow stronger? Those who are scared of their lingering, nagging doubts think that by avoiding them they will go away somehow. They never really do. Instead, they fester and slowly erode our faith, our confidence in God, and our relationship to him. On the other hand, those who see their doubts as an opportunity will use them to explore the deep questions of the Christian faith and wrestle with some of the answers. In the end, they will hopefully grow deeper in their appreciation for the rich resources of the intellectual side of Christianity and be strengthened in their personal relationship with Jesus. The disciple Thomas is famous for his doubts. As he encountered Jesus he came face-to-face with the evidence for his resurrection, his response was one of deep devotion and even a willingness to die for what he experienced. May that be true of all of us who struggle with doubt today.



## Questions:

1. Do you agree that doubt is not a Christian problem but a human problem? Why or why not? What are some common things that people find themselves doubting?
2. Why do you think that doubt is something we don't talk about much in church or Community Group?
3. Drew Dyck, in his book *Leavers*, wrote that a person not dealing with their doubts was one of the greatest factors leading to people leaving the church. Would you agree with this? Have you ever seen it in another person? Have you ever been tempted to walk away from Christianity because of your nagging doubts?
4. What do you think that our doubts are rooted in?
5. As mentioned in the sermon, the three kinds of doubts are: Intellectual, Emotional and Volitional. While we all struggle with all three in some way, which of the three kinds of doubt are you the most susceptible to? How might acknowledging this help you work through it?