

Conversations: Jesus Engages Real People

John 1:43-51; John 4:1-42; Luke 7:36-50

(Black Bibles pages 887, 888, and 864; Children's Bibles pages 1307, 1313, and 1267)

Why are we here today talking about a man who lived 2000 years ago?
What an incredible impact made by Jesus of Nazareth.

- Did his physical appearance have anything to do with it?

Jesus meets the **skeptical** Nathanael: *"Can anything good come out of Nazareth??"* (John 1:43-51)

- What do we know about Nazareth?

- Jesus' origin from Nazareth was a real intellectual difficulty for Nathanael – but not for us. *Every society produces skeptical objections unique to it, yet people from other societies don't think they're problems at all!*

Jesus meets a **beginner**, the Samaritan woman at the well: *"Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."* (John 4:1-42)

- She's a beginner, but she's no dummy.

- She's a beginner, but she has a history.

- She's a beginner, *because* she is receptive.

Jesus meets a **struggler**, a sinful, weeping woman: "Do you see this woman?"-Jesus

(Luke 7:36-50)

- The woman who did not speak, yet said volumes.

- "Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Questions for reflection and application:

1. *Skeptics.* Nathanael objects to the idea that the chosen one, the Messiah, could come from Nazareth, but we don't struggle with that at all today. What skeptical objections to Jesus might we Americans have that arise from our value system in this time and place?
2. *Beginners.* Read John 4:1-26. The Samaritan woman is a beginner, *because* she was receptive – even to honest and hard truths. Do you think people remain beginners for a long time because they're not truly receptive? Is this true about you?
3. *Strugglers.* Read Luke 7:36-50. Jesus knew this was a real sinner, but what else did he know about her that was authentic and true? What words would you use to describe her? Have you approached Jesus with the same honesty?