



A Conversation with Jesus

A first step into Sexual Wholeness

The heart of this study is that you would be able to more deeply grasp that journeying with Jesus invites us to live in freedom and fulfillment in the most intimate places in our lives—what the world longs for but hardly imagines.

What would it be like having a conversation with Jesus about your sex life?

Believe it or not, there's someone who could tell us. It's actually in the Bible. In the following John 4 study you will read a woman's account of Jesus starting a conversation about the most intimate part of her life. (You will find that Jesus offers freedom and fulfillment, rather than shame and rejection.) Though it happens to be a woman in this story, it could be anybody, regardless of gender. The insights and questions next to the study are meant to help you interact with this real person's story. Take time to pause after each question and enter into that conversation. This study can be explored on your own, yet highly encouraged to be shared in the context of a trusted discipleship relationship or in community with trusted friends (further description in the "What's next?" section).

John 4:4-42

(sometimes told as *The Woman at the Well*)

⁴Now [Jesus] had to go through Samaria.^a

⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.^b It was about noon.^c

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) *[Go to Questions 1, 2 & 3]*

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God^d and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."^e *[Go to Question 4]*

¹¹"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

¹³Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,^f

¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." *[Go to Questions 5 & 6]*

INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU WALK INTO THIS CONVERSATION AND DIALOGUE WITH JESUS

^a Samaria was the wrong part of the country for a Jew to go through. Many completely avoided it unless they needed to get somewhere faster. But as Jesus stopped and stayed two days, it's been suggested that Jesus went, not because he didn't have any option, but for this particular conversation.

^b Wells were the backdrop of biblical stories connected to relationships and marriage and how God revealed his redeeming plan through his people. There are relationship overtones in John's gospel including where Jesus performs his first miracle at a wedding (ch. 2) and his being called the bridegroom (ch. 3). This story points to deep truths beyond this topic; it hints at the idea that pure human intimacy is a reflection of what relationship with God is meant to be.

^c People would have come to the well in the morning, when it was cool and they were beginning their daily responsibilities. This woman was coming in the heat of the day. No one else would have been there.

1. Why would she come to the well when no one else was there?

2. What is your avoidance technique?

3. What are you believing about yourself, others, or even God that make you want to isolate?

4. What is the gift? What picture is Jesus painting about her need and what he is offering?

^d Look up Ephesians 2:8 for additional insight on the gift of God. Notice how Jesus does not force her to take the gift, or put her on the spot, but invites her.

^e Living water comes from a continual source (as opposed to water that can stagnate). Jesus uses this phrase to describe a deeper, spiritual source of satisfaction. Look up John 7:38, 39 for additional insight.

^f We're all thirsty. Jesus is using the pictures of wells and water to highlight this inner thirst. There are many "wells" and "waters" from which we can drink, but none of them will fully and lastingly quench our inner thirst.

¹⁵The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water^g so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

¹⁷“I have no husband,”^h she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.

¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.ⁱ What you have just said is quite true.” *[Go to Questions 7, 8 & 9]*

¹⁹“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”^j

²¹“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”^k *[Go to Question 10]*

²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you -- I am he.”^l

5. We’re all thirsty for something. What is your deep thirst?

6. What do you do to satisfy your thirst? How is that working for you?

^g At first glance, the woman seems to want what Jesus is offering. However, her reasons for wanting it leads us to believe she doesn’t understand what living water is and her desire for the water is simply to make her life a little easier. What Jesus offered her was greater and altogether different than the easier life for which she was hoping.

^h Technically, this is a true statement. But there is more to her backstory she doesn’t want to tell him.

ⁱ Jesus exposes her whole life, unfulfilled marriages, relationships. Imagine how this woman must have felt! In doing this he gently shows her need and true thirst.

7. What is she avoiding telling Jesus?

8. Are there parts of your story you avoid sharing? (What are you afraid of happening? Has something happened when you let someone in before?)

9. How do you expect him to respond? What doesn’t he say that he could have?

^j Here the woman deflects Jesus’ comment with a debate of that day among the Samaritans and the Jews to avoid talking about her sexual sin once again.

^k Jesus is connecting the conversation to deeper things again—from physical examples (water and places to worship) to spiritual realities. He says that worship points to devotion, seeking the ultimate source of what you’re living for. If what we’re thirsting after doesn’t satisfy, perhaps our true need is crying out for the one who can.

10. Knowing how he responded to her, how will Jesus (who knows your whole story) respond to you?

^l Some would label our thirsts, desires and passions “bad,” but they come from a longing for what is good, beautiful and noble. But the world, along with sin and brokenness, has twisted and warped our longings. Jesus says here that he is the one who explains and makes sense of it all. Our longings are meant to lead us to true worship.

(verse 27 omitted)^m

²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

²⁹“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”ⁿ

³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him. *[Go to Questions 11 & 12]*

(verses 31-38 omitted)^m

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”^o

⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

⁴¹And because of his words many more became believers.^p

⁴²They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” After the two days he left for Galilee.^q *[Go to Question 13]*

^m This section (verses 27, 31-38) where Jesus speaks with his disciples is beyond the scope of this Bible study, but even here Jesus points to hunger and thirst as beyond just a physical need—they’re meant to draw us deeper to God.

ⁿ The woman’s response tells a lot that the conversation doesn’t go into. She didn’t respond like someone condemned or shamed - she was transparent about her past life. She experienced something with Jesus she hadn’t in any other relationship and wanted others to know. She wanted to see if he was the Messiah (the promised one from God bringing true redemption and freedom).

11. What kind of people is God seeking after? (What does it mean to worship in truth? How does this woman’s life show it?)

12. In verse 28, which “thirst” does the woman realize she desires most? How does she demonstrate that?

^o You don’t need to have a perfect past to be used by God. God desires authentic, honest worshippers.

^p The woman’s willingness to seek Jesus and bring others, despite her past, brought hope for her community. (The Equipped Disciples series explains how her story is a model for you to tell others about what Jesus has done in your life. (<https://athletesinaction.org/resources/equipped/testimony/#.XJo-rShKjIU>))

^q In this story, thirst is a physical need connected to something more—how the woman sought to satisfy her desires in intimate relationships. Jesus opened her eyes to her core needs and desires. When God’s word speaks of desire, it can refer to craving or sexual lust, but it can also be an earnest longing for something good and noble. Likewise, sexual love is not hidden away in the Bible as something shameful, nor was it meant to be manipulated in ways that rob the kind of intimacy God intended. The connotation of desire in our culture is most often sexual, and in religious contexts, usually something that is bad. So, we respond by either suppressing it or trying to satisfy it with addictive habits. But our desires are created by God and intended to help us seek God and draw closer to him. Sadly, our desires have been terribly distorted and abused. In this story, Jesus gives us hope that they can be satisfied and redeemed, not only humanly, but also to bring us into true relationship with him in a way that brings joy, freedom and blessing to others.

13. Imagine you had a “well conversation” with Jesus, and he poked his finger into your sensitive past or present, how do you think you would respond?

What's next?

The conversation at the well didn't end there. Because of her interaction with Jesus, the woman left and came back to the well with others to talk with Jesus. This wasn't only about her—this conversation with Jesus is for each one of us. Just as Jesus came into this woman's life and she in turn invited others to join her, we all need people in our lives—community where we can be honest and find hope and courage to live out true freedom and worship. Paul Tripp, a Christian author, explains this as “intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace driven and redemptive communities.”

- Is this something you have in your life?
- Which aspects of this description of community are you lacking?
- Is this something you want?
- How can you move toward this?

If you believe you are dealing with addictive patterns in your life and long for a way out, Jesus offers hope, not condemnation. The process is often tricky and best navigated with guidance. Science has confirmed what the Bible has long said, “Sexual sin is against your body,” (1 Cor. 6:18) because it changes the physical composition of the brain. Understanding the brain and healing in guided-community are missing pieces that many strategies to fight sexual sin neglect.* It is key to breaking free from sexual bondage and staying pure.

Ted Roberts, Founder of Pure Desire Ministries says, “Sexual Bondage is not about sex, it's about how you've learned to medicate the pain in your life . . . [Fighting for freedom from sexual bondage] is going to challenge you . . . more than anything you have ever done in your life,” but there is hope. Jesus, who is both creator and the one who overcame death, can bring freedom.

Are you thirsting for freedom?

Let's explore—choose one of the resources to the right for your Next Step. As with the “Conversation with Jesus” study, welcoming a trusted discipler or friends into this process could benefit you greatly.

Resources For Next Steps

Living Free (for Men), <https://livingfree.org/>

Conquer Series (for Men), <https://conquerseries.com/>

Redeemed Sexuality, <https://www.ivpress.com/redeemed-sexuality>

or Sexual Sanity (for Women), <http://sexual-sanity.com/>

Desire Series (for Women), <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/life-and-relationships/women/desire.html>

The Sexual Wholeness Toolkit (Men and Women), <https://swtoolkit.org/>

The Faster Scale, <https://swtoolkit.org/>

Surfing for God, <http://surfingforgod.com/>

Pure Desire, <https://puredesire.org/>

Our Bodies Proclaim the Gospel MP3 (Amazing Vision), <https://shop.corproject.com/collections/digital-downloads/products/your-body-tells-gods-story-an-introduction-to-st-john-paul-iis-theology-of-the-body-mp3>

*If you are considering finding guided community for potentially addictive life patterns, “CSAT” counselors are professionally trained in these areas.