

## International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: Helpful Introductions and Recommendations, John 1

How do you get to know new people? This question seems more crucial to those who have recently moved without knowing many people in their new location. So, what do we notice when meeting new people?

We notice what others enjoy. Do they participate in sports? What kind of music do they listen to? What kind of people do they hang out with? We want to know if we can trust this person as a friend. As we read about Jesus, we learn how he interacts with his family and friends. How does he respond when faced with difficulties? How does he treat the poor? We want to be sure Jesus can be trusted.

Sometimes we meet another person because they are recommended to us. When a student struggles in chemistry, a professor might recommend a good tutor. Perhaps you signed up for a course because a friend recommended a certain professor. We listen to the recommendations of trusted people.

*Give an example of someone who was recommended to you and who recommended them.*

There was a great man who recommended Jesus to people living nearby. This man's name was John. Today we refer to him as, "John the Baptist." Though we may think him strange because he wore camel skin clothes and ate locust and wild honey, everyone who knew him, respected him. Crowds of people came to the Jordan River where he taught. Here are some definitions which will help the following story make sense.

**Lamb of God** is a term known to Jewish people. It refers to the lamb that was killed in a Jewish ceremony. The killing of a lamb is a picture to demonstrate that sin must be punished. The lamb is innocent and suffers in the place of people who are guilty.

**Sin** is behavior that shows we do not respect and honor God above everything else. Sin is also behaviors that show disrespect toward people. Greed, immorality, and cheating would be an example. Sin causes separation in our relationship with God and people.

**Baptism** means to place under the influence of something. Usually the word refers to water and a ceremony when a person is put under water and then brought up. Water is a symbol of purity and cleanliness. Christian baptism also shows one is trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.



The Baptism of Jesus by Hi Qi  
[www.heqigallery.com](http://www.heqigallery.com)

*What do you think is happening in the painting?  
Explain your answer.*

## **John 1**

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, "Look! The Lamb of God! He takes away the sin of the world!" <sup>30</sup> This is the One I was talking about. I said, 'A man who comes after me is more important than I am. That's because he existed before I was born.' <sup>31</sup> I did not know him. But God wants to make it clear to Israel who this person is. That's the reason I came baptizing with water."

*Why do you think John called Jesus, "the Lamb of God"?*

*How did John feel about his own importance in comparison with Jesus?*

*John was Jesus' cousin, born 6 months before Jesus. How do you think Jesus could exist before John?*

We would like to introduce you to Jesus by looking at his relationships with people. With whom did he spend time? How did he treat marginalized people? With whom did he disagree? How did he treat his close friends and enemies? What was his message and teaching? What did people say about him? What did he value? What did he want to accomplish? Our goal is to move closer to him, to know him personally.

You may be thinking, is Jesus real? Can he make a difference in my life? Why would someone follow him? Can he heal and help me? Does he know me? Does he care? The discussions from the Biblical texts will help clarify who Jesus is and what he offers you today.

### **Please discuss:**

*What are some of the stories you have heard about Jesus?*

*What would you like to know about Jesus?*

*What seems confusing about Jesus?*

Here is a sample of people and events we will look at in the coming weeks. Hopefully we can learn and find Jesus is real and personal in our lives.

### **People Jesus interacted with:**

*Personal friends:* The wedding at Cana- Jesus at a party

*The marginalized:* Jesus heals the diseased and social outcasts, talks to women in public, which was not allowed in those times, cast out evil spirits, and associated with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*Rulers and leaders:* the Pharisees and Sadducees

*People who come to him:* Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, rich young man, Mary

### **Teachings:**

Sermon on the Mount (prayer, money, worry)

the Good Samaritan (how we are to treat others)

the lost sheep, coin, son (God's love for those who do not know him).

### **Situations Jesus faced:**

*Conversations:* with disciples about competition, faith, authority, and emotion.

*Death:* how he faced difficulties, the significance of his death.

*Resurrection:* the reason why he can give life to people.

*Which of these stories look most interesting to you?*

*Share a story about Jesus you already know and explain why the story is important to you.*