

The HeART of Conversation

Lesson 1: A Conversation of Messiah

Lesson 2: A Conversation of Parables



Speaker: Carol Helland

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

~Matthew 16:16

Saturday, January 27, 2024

Ladies' Mid-Winter Luncheon Agenda

9:15 – 10:00 Coffee and Fellowship

10:00 – 10:30 Welcome and Prayer

Opening Song: *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

Ice Breaker

Song: *In the Garden*

10:30 - 11:30 Message by Carol Helland

A Conversation of Messiah

11:30 – 12:30 Prayer/Lunch

12:30 – 12:50 Drawings for Door Prizes

Music Special: *He Shall Save*

Solo by Erin Plemel

12:50 – 1:50 Message by Carol Helland

A Conversation of Parables

1:50 – 2:00 Closing Comments and Prayer

Closing Song: *I Love to Tell the Story*

Lesson One: *Conversations with Messiah*

Speaker and Writer: Carol Helland

Scripture: I John 4:7-11

Introduction *Shalom Aleichem!* That's Hebrew for "*peace be to you*"; a blessing of "well-being"

Israel The manifestation of God's divine presence has not only a recorded history but a physical geography. From north to south, east to west, Israel offers an experience of biblical history like nowhere else. "*For the LORD has chosen Israel for His special treasure.*" ~Psalm 132:14

Setting is essential to the story. Who we are; what we think; what we do; and how we communicate are all intimately bound to where we are from. No one can fully know us until they understand the geography and places that shape us. The same is true of the Lord Jesus.

Walking the Trails and Sitting on the Temple Steps

Qumran: where ancient Essenes wrote and hid in caves **the Dead Sea Scrolls**—one of the greatest archeological discoveries of our time.

You don't have to tour Israel to feel close to God. We worship a Person—not a place. *God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth.* ~John 4:24 Only those who have the indwelling Holy Spirit can worship God acceptably.

Israel's 75th Birthday (May 1948-May 2023) In **1948**, after 2,000 years of displacement, Israel was again a sovereign nation in its own land. Israel is a modern miracle of God. There is no other way to explain its rebirth and prosperity in the face of constant opposition.

God is a God who loves; God is a Redeemer who saves. God promised to Israel that He would bring a King—a Messiah, and chose Israel to be the channel through which the Messiah would come. "*For salvation is of the Jews.*" (John 4:22). **Our Savior was a Jew.**

Current Population of Israel: Population around **9 million** (equal in size to New Jersey)—**one million** live in Jerusalem.

Aliyah: (“to ascend”) The Jewish people are returning home to Israel—over 4 million have made “*Aliyah*” since 1948.

Acknowledgments: Dr. Arnold Fruechtenbaum (*Ariel Ministries*); Dr. Randall Price (*World of the Bible*); my Savior Jesus Christ (1 John 4:19)

Lesson One: A Conversation of Messiah

How can we better connect with others through meaningful conversations? Gen Z has been referred to as the loneliness generation. Sixty-one percent of young people feel “serious loneliness” and nearly half of Americans report sometimes always feeling alone. Everyone wants a sense of belonging . . . to be noticed . . . to be acknowledged.

But we are all creatures of habit. It is far too easy to stay in the familiar ruts we dig for ourselves. ~Patrick Rothfuss

Our conversations can quell the epidemic of loneliness. God delights to use places—and people—to be the vessels through which He displays His power, grace, and love.

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. ~Mark 1:1

The “good news” was that “*Yeshua*” the Messiah has arrived. **Messiah means “anointed”—the title of the hoped-for Redeemer of Israel.** “*Yeshua*” is Jesus’ Hebrew name: “He saves.”

The Prophets Messiah Jesus is the only Person whose lineage, birth, character, teaching, career, reception, rejection, death, burial, and resurrection were recorded in 300 prophecies at least 500 years before His birth.

The **Kingdom of heaven** is offered in the Person of the King of whom John is the forerunner. The Jews of that day would automatically have understood John to be speaking of the Messianic kingdom. By calling the nation to repentance (a change of mind), John the Baptizer prepared the way for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, so people would be ready to meet and trust the Messiah. ~Matthew 3:3

Israeli food is so good: “Peter’s Fish” (tilapia in spicy tomato sauce); figs, dates, apricots, humus, olives, challah, Israeli salad, falafel; baklava; halva; and coffee.

Jesus' Baptism at the Jordan River (The River of Life for the people of Israel): It's not just the event but the **PLACE** of Jesus' baptism—mentioned over **180 times** in Bible.

Believer's Baptism: identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Only faith in Jesus Christ saves you. ~Ephesians 2:8-9

All marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. ~Luke 4:22

Time and again, the Lord Jesus sought out those who were lonely. He knew the best way to help people was not trying to judge them, or shame them, but respect them, love them, enjoy them.

A Conversation at Night (Nicodemus, John 3:1-21) Setting: Jerusalem

One always goes up to Jerusalem. *It's beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth* (Psalm 48:2). Psalms of Ascent are sung by pilgrims as they went up.

One of the oldest cities—the center of Israel and of the whole earth. *This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries around her.* ~Ezekiel 5:5

Jerusalem is the city at the center. *It is the center of mankind's hopes and God's purposes. God loves it; Satan hates it; Jesus wept over it; the Holy Spirit descended in it; the nations are drawn to it and Christ will return and reign in it. Indeed, the destiny of the world is tied to the future of Jerusalem.* ~Dr. Randall Price

Conversational Style: Jesus left room in His schedule for interruptions. Noticed how Jesus invested in Nicodemus. He was interested in the outcome of what Nicodemus shared with him and expressed concern about his life. He devoted time and energy because He cared. Nicodemus sensed the connection and could open up to Jesus.

John 3:16 **Jesus says that God must take the first step:** *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The first step is finished.* God has done all He needed to provide salvation for all. **But that provided salvation for all will not save anyone.** The **second part** is *"that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."* Until Nicodemus came to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, he would not have everlasting life.

No conversation is an accident or without divine purpose. You have everything you need by the power of the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel and have warm, loving conversations.

You can't hate someone whose story you know. We can take courage from the fact that people are longing to be in conversation again. We are hungry for a chance to talk. People want to tell their story, and are willing to listen to yours. People want to talk about their concerns and struggles. Too many of us feel isolated, strange, or invisible. Conversation helps end that. ~Margaret Wheatley

Addendum

A Conversation at Noon (Samaritan Woman, John 4:4-43)

Setting: Samaria, Jacob's Well

Conversational Style: The Lord Jesus shows us the ART of conversational turn-taking. It involves the back and forth of questions and answers, sharing of stories, thinking of conversation as a warm connection. People love to feel understood and really seen. And this woman had a story.

*"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that says to you: 'Give me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water" (10). **Jesus says that "living water" is found in Him. This living water brought eternal life—a permanent, present possession.** He was using imagery she would know.*

"Living Water" in the Desert: En Gedi ("David's Waterfall").

Notice how the Lord Jesus initiates an engaging and meaningful conversation. He allows the woman to talk about herself. She revealed to Jesus the daily embarrassment of having to come to the well alone. Jesus tells her to get her husband. Before anyone really understands the need for a Savior, they must see themselves as God sees them: a sinner in need of salvation by grace. *"I have no husband." "You have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband" (17-18).*

Woman: *"I know that the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will tell us all things."*

Lord Jesus: *"I who speak to you am He" (26).* The clearest statement ever made by the Lord Jesus that He is the Messiah is spoken to an adulterous woman from the despised Samaritan race. **And the woman put her faith in Messiah Jesus.** Immediately, she shared the message of Messiah Jesus with others. **And many believed:** *Now we believe, not because of what you have said, for we ourselves have heard and we know that this indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world (42).*

Lesson Two: *A Conversation of Parables*

And He taught them many things by parables.

~Mark 4:2

Scripture: Mark 1:14-22

Messiah Jesus loved the Galilee. He spent **60-70 percent** of His ministry in this region, particularly around the Sea of Galilee. It's where the Lord Jesus preached and healed for three and a half years.

The Sea of Galilee Jesus ministry evolved around the Sea of Galilee—**700 feet** below sea level and about **70 miles north of Jerusalem**. It's about **13 miles long** and **7.5 miles wide** and **150 feet deep**. The Sea resembles the shape of a harp. It's also called the **Sea of Tiberius** (John 6) or **Sea of Gennesaret** (Luke 5). The Sea has not changed since Jesus' day—the scenery, the smell, the sound of the water is exactly the same.

The Fish of the Sea At least **twenty-five native species** have been identified in the lake. Ordinary people of Israel seldom ate meat. Fish was their staple diet. Usually the fish was salted. The most important fish in the Sea was **sardines**. **Catfish** was number two and **Tilapia** number three.

Harbor at Magdala *And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.* ~Matthew 15:39

Along its shores, over **sixteen ancient harbors** have been discovered to provide safe mooring during the sudden storms that blow up on the lake. **There were many fishermen in Galilee.** In Jesus' day, **330 fishing boats** sailed the waters of the lake.

The "Jesus" Boat *Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him.* ~Mark 4:36. In **1986**, a severe drought lowered the water level several feet below normal. And there was the outline of a wooden boat, conclusively dated to the first century. **The boat could have been Peter's**, accommodating a crew of fifteen. This type of boat would have transported Jesus from one side of the Sea to the other. It is now on display in an exhibition hall at **Kibbutz Ginossar**.

Dragnets and Cast Nets *The kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad.* ~Matthew 13:47-48: This verse is an exact description of **dragnet fishing** on the lake. When Jesus told **the parable of the fishnet**, the disciples understood every nuance of the parable.

Jesus Chooses the First Disciples *And while He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw **Simon** and **Andrew** the brother of Simon, **casting about their net**, for they were fishermen.* ~Mark 1: 16 **John the Baptizer** identified Messiah to two of his disciples, **John and Andrew**, with the words: "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" ~John 1:36. Andrew brought Peter to the Jordon to meet the Messiah, who had given him the name "**Peter**," which means "rock." Jesus had several contacts with some of the disciples before His final call to leave everything and follow Him. (See John 1:35-44.)

Fishers of Men *And Jesus said unto them, "**Follow Me**, and I will make you to become fishers of men"* ~Mark 1:17. "Follow me"—an invitation from a Rabbi to a disciple. It was not merely "*Follow Me*" but "*Follow with Me.*" He welcomes them to enjoy His companionship. **Disciple means a follower and "learner" of Jesus.** His twelve were specifically chosen by Jesus to be with Him for training and to be sent out to preach. As such, they were called "**apostles**" meaning "**sent forth.**"

Phillip & Nathanael (Bartholomew) *The next day, Yeshua decided to go to the Galilee. He finds **Phillip** and says to him, "Follow Me!" Philip recruited Nathanael: "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45). "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Although Nathanael himself was a fellow Galilean, he held a low view of people from Nazareth.*

Nazareth At the time of Jesus, only a few dozen families lived in Nazareth who knew each other. Nazareth would be considered a "Podunk village," made up of country bumpkins. Nathanael found it hard to imagine someone great coming from a place that is small or remote or insignificant.

Jesus was not offended but paid Nathanael a compliment. ~John 1: 47-51

"Surely here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Jesus was making a contrast between this Israelite and Jacob, the first person to be called Israel. "*How do you know me?*" **"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,"** said Jesus. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? Memorizing Scripture and meditating on it.

The rabbis said that the best place to meditate upon Scripture was under a fig tree. And Nathanael realized that Jesus knew the exact passage of Scripture upon which he had been meditating. **Therefore, Jesus had to be the Messianic King.** *"Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel."*

Capernaum: Jesus Home Town *Leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum.* ~Matthew 4:13: **Nazareth and Capernaum are vastly different places.** Capernaum was located strategically down the international highway, the **Via Maris**, the most heavily traveled road of the ancient world, linking travel between Africa, Asia, and Europe. **Jesus was not hiding out in a remote location.** He chose Capernaum, so His message would reach as many as possible around the world.

Peter's House in Capernaum *When He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was heard that He was **at the house.*** ~Mark 2:1 Many substantial archaeological excavations have verified the location of Peter's home in Capernaum, a home where Jesus also lived.

The Call of Matthew *As He was passing by, He saw Levi the son of Alpheus sitting at the tax collector's booth. He said to him, 'Follow Me.'" And he got up and followed Him.* ~Mark 2:14 **As Jesus passed by, He sees Levi, Matthew, sitting at the tollgate on the Via Maris.** Capernaum must have been the place where import and export taxes were collected. **Tax collectors were hated.** So the Lord Jesus wanted the man no one else wanted. He offered His friendship to the man whom all others would have scorned. **Matthew did not leave behind his pen.** The first book of the New Testament was written by Matthew, which embodies one of the most important books of the Bible.

The Twelve Disciples *"That they should be with Him at all times."*

Peter & Andrew, sons of John. (The lists always place Peter at the top; Andrew lived under his brother's shadow; but he was quite content to be with Jesus and bring others to Christ.); **John & James**, sons of Salome, "Sons of Thunder"; **Philip; Nathanael** (Bartholomew); **Thomas; Matthew; James & Judas** (Thaddaeus), sons of Alpheus; **Simon the Zealot; Judas Iscariot:** Judas is always placed at the bottom because of his betrayal.

So many of Jesus' conversations involved these disciples with whom He had intimate conversations. He knew the importance of a relationship with Him. And He believed they should be in a relationship with one another. Toward the end of His ministry, He would refer to them as "friends." Friendships don't just happen. It takes time—often more than 200 hours.

We need each other, too. That's what Jesus was saying as He spent time with His friends—as He talked with them for mutual encouragement and joy. We need friends because **a friend loves at all times**. *The sweetness of a friend comes from her earnest counsel.*

The Parables *A large crowd gathered around Him, so He got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the crowd was by the sea on the land. He began teaching them many things by parables.* ~Mark 4:1-2

Why Parables? *When Jesus was at last alone, the twelve disciples, along with some others, came and asked Him, 'Why are You speaking in parables to them? And what does the parable mean?'*" Matthew 13: 10-23; Mark 4: 10-20

Jesus' parables method of teaching began on the same day that the national rejection of Messiah Jesus had occurred and the unpardonable sin was committed. Jesus' parables were to explain the course of God's kingdom program in light of Israel's rejection of the Messiah and His Messianic kingdom. People today cannot commit the unpardonable sin in the same way the Jewish leaders did when Jesus was ministering on earth. The only sin today that God cannot forgive is rejection of His Son.

The Parable of the Sower: The Parable of All Parables

It's like a sower who went out to sow. And some seed fell: 1. **Along the path;** 2. **On rocky places;** 3. **Among thorns;** 4. And **on good soil.**

Interpretation From the Gospel accounts, it appears that the **interpretation of parables** took place in the **private circle of the disciples.**

The **soil** represents the **heart** and the **seed** represents **God's Word; the sower** is the **servant** of God who shares God's Word with others. There is the **hard heart;** the **disappointed heart;** the **distracted heart;** and the **fruitful heart**—that is like good ground in reception and application of the Word. Like seed, the Word is alive and able to produce spiritual fruit (See John 15: 1-17.). Faith releases God's power in our lives. *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* ~Romans 10:17

According to the Lord Jesus, each of the soils is a picture of what's in our heart that makes a relationship with God (and others) possible. May we have a soft and tender heart toward God's Word. We need the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit to change our heart. Depend on your faithful Savior. Trust Him. What a privilege it is to know the Lord Jesus!

A Note from Carol

Are the circumstances and trials in your life revealing your need to know God personally through His Son, Jesus Christ? Dear Friend, God wants to give you new life in Christ. The Bible teaches us that God loves you. He wants you to know Him.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever (that means you!) believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

What prevents us from knowing God personally? We are sinners, separated from God, so we cannot know Him or experience His great love without seeing ourselves first.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Our sin leads to death and judgment.

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

And in as much as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally, be forgiven for our sins, and experience God's love, peace, and strength. He died in our place on Calvary.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).

After Christ's death, He rose from the dead.

Christ died for our sins . . . He was buried . . . He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . . (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but through me (John 14:6).

It isn't enough to simply know about these things. We must make a personal decision to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and then we can know God and experience His love and forgiveness. If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior, I encourage you to do so today.

By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son in the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the satisfaction for our sins (I John 4:9-10).