

International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: John the Baptist Introduces Jesus to the Crowd. John 1

How do you get to know new people? This question seems more crucial to those who have recently moved. When you meet new people, try to find out what the other person enjoys.

Do they participate in sports? What kind of music do they listen to? What kind of people do they hang out with? On a deeper level, we want to know if we can trust this person.

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

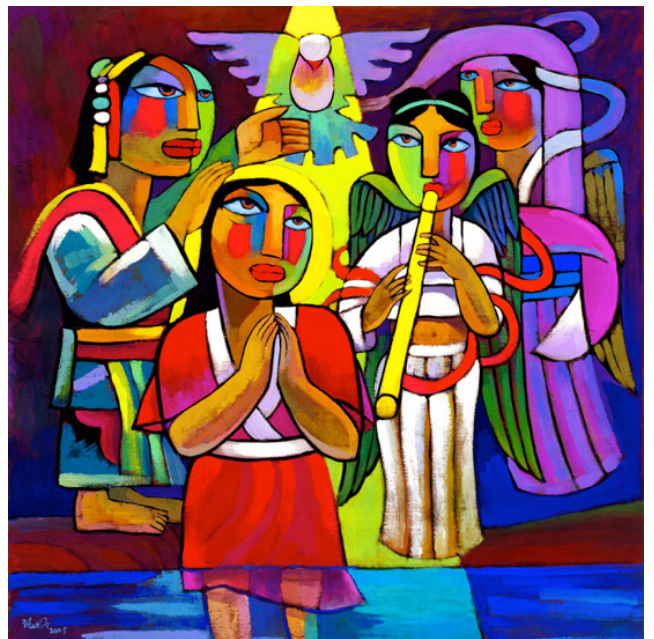
Give an example of someone who was recommended to you and who recommended them.

In the first century A.D., 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 when we disrespect 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
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*What do you think is happening in the painting?
Explain your answer.*

The gospel of John tells the story of John who recommended Jesus to the crowd gathered at the Jordan River in Israel.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, "Look! The Lamb of God! He takes away the sin of the world! 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.' I myself 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." John 1:29-31

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 and born 6 months before Jesus. How do you think Jesus could exist before John?

There is a lot to learn about Jesus. What kind of person was he? With whom did he spend time? How did he treat people who were excluded? 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?

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 the kinds of stories one can find in the New Testament.

What people did Jesus know?

He had personal friends and visited people in their homes and attended their weddings.

He spent time with people who were otherwise excluded: people with disease and evil spirits, women, tax collectors and prostitutes.

He knew the local religious leaders and had many conversations with them.

People found him attractive and came to him for advice.

What did Jesus teach?

Jesus taught people how to pray, what to do about worry, and how to handle money.

He told stories to illustrate what it means to love your neighbor.

Jesus used stories about sheep, coins, and sons, to illustrate how much God loves people.

What difficulties did Jesus deal with?

Jesus was tempted to be disloyal to his heavenly Father.

Jesus knew what it was like to be rejected by people, hated, and betrayed.

Jesus experienced public shame when he was crucified on the cross.

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

Which of these stories look most interesting to you?