

# How Would Jesus Respond

In today's divided and fractured society where people are more self-centered than ever before, we need to ask ourselves, "How would Jesus respond?"

## Introduction

Today we live in a very fractured and divided world. The ability to communicate with others is getting easier as time goes on. This webcast is a great example of that. However, people are getting more self-centered and their communication with others is getting more and more inward-focused. How is a Christian in today's world supposed to respond?

There was a novel written back in 1897 titled *In His Steps* and was written by a minister in Topeka, Kansas named Charles M. Sheldon. It is a great novel and I highly recommend it. In it, he coins the phrase, "What would Jesus do?"

Since that time many have shared the phrase and asked themselves often, "What would Jesus do?" in different situations, especially in working with people who are not followers of Jesus. Today we are going to discuss this a little deeper and move into a more modern context by asking the question, "How would Jesus respond?" We will look at a few passages of scripture that show how Jesus responded to different situations. We will discuss how Jesus responds by listening, speaking the truth, and with grace.

## Jesus Would Respond With Listening

One of the things we always teach when we are speaking on leadership is effective communication. Relationships in your life will break down if you do not have effective communication. It does not matter if it is a marital relationship, friendship, business relationship, or something else; without effective communication, relationships break down and fall apart. The first and most important lesson in effective communication is listening to what is being said and trying to understand the other person's view of the subject. We often try to just share our own viewpoint without trying to understand the other person's.

We must respond to people's concerns, complaints, worries, and fears with active listening skills. When we actively listen we are not trying to formulate our answer to restate our own point while the other person is talking. We are listening to what they are saying and how they are saying it. We then can share a response that is Christ-centered and full of the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

One of the best passages that shows Jesus listening is found in John chapter 4. Here we read an account of Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman at a well. It is a long passage and we will only read a small portion, but we encourage you to read the entire chapter later on. Let's read John 4:19-26.

### John 4:19-26

(19) "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. (20) Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." (21) "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. (22) You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. (23) Yet 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. (24) God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (25) The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." (26) Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Jesus was asking the woman questions that would make her think and answer. They were not simple questions but were meant to start a conversation. Jesus then listened to her answer and responded appropriately. He did not already have a preformed thought, he responded to her by listening to what she had to say.

When you are talking with someone, you must always be asking yourself, "How would Jesus respond?" before you speak.

### Jesus Would Respond With the Truth

The next aspect we want to look at is responding with the truth. We live in a fallen and dying world filled with broken people who are desperate to be a winner and come out on top of others. The carnal nature of this world and the inherent sinful nature of humanity makes us want to only say what we have to, bend the truth, exaggerate the truth to make a point, or outright lie to get our own desires over anyone else's.

This is not a healthy way to respond to anyone about anything and Jesus certainly did not exaggerate the truth, bend the truth, or outright lie to convince someone of something. Jesus simply told people the truth and taught from his heart.

Let's look at a passage of scripture where Jesus is speaking to Pilate, the Roman Governor over Judea at the time of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. In this passage, we will see how Jesus speaks the truth plainly and without exaggeration to a man who can sentence him to death or release him freely. Let's read John 18:33-37.

#### John 18:33-37

(33) Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (34) "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" (35) "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" (36) Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." (37) "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Jesus could have easily held something back or exaggerated to save his own life, but he didn't. Regardless of the outcome, Jesus responded with the truth.

We can find ourselves in trouble or needing help. It is in our nature to exaggerate, bend the truth, or outright lie so we can at least survive and sometimes so we can profit. Christians must ask ourselves, "How would Jesus respond?" and always speak the truth completely and without exaggeration.



## Jesus Would Respond With Grace

The next aspect we want to share is how Jesus would respond with grace. It is easy to look down our noses at someone who repeatedly sins against you, others, or themselves. It is easy to shake our heads and avoid them at the very least, and point them out and ridicule them in public. But when we find ourselves in the situation where we are dealing with someone who repeatedly falls and sins we must respond with grace.

No better passage speaks to this than Jesus' interaction with the woman caught in adultery. Let's read John 8:2-11.

### John 8:2-11

(2) At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. (3) The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group (4) and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. (5) In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (6) They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. (7) When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, **"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."** (8) Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. (9) At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. (10) Jesus straightened up and asked her, **"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"** (11) "No one, sir," she said. **"Then neither do I condemn you,"** Jesus declared. **"Go now and leave your life of sin."**

There is so much in this passage of scripture. We could teach half a dozen different things with this passage, but today we are focusing on Jesus' response to the woman. Jesus showed honor and grace to this woman. He showed the love God has for her.

It is easy to point out people's failures and shortcomings. It is much harder to speak to them in truth with grace. But we see here Jesus doing just that. He was presented with a situation that, by the law of Moses, should have resulted in death by stoning. But Jesus wasn't as concerned about the actions of this woman as he was about the actions of her accusers.

Once he spoke to her accusers and pointed out that they too were not perfect and were sinners as well, he spoke to the woman. He asked her where are your accusers? Isn't anyone here to condemn you? I do not condemn you either. Go and leave your life of sin. This is grace, amazing grace. Jesus shows us how to respond with grace.

## Conclusion

Friends how we respond to people is just as important as what we say. We witness terrible things, experience terrible people, and find ourselves in terrible situations. In all of these, we must respond and when we respond we must ask ourselves, "How would Jesus respond?"

Jesus responds by listening, speaking the truth, and with grace. We encourage you to ask yourself that and respond the same way each day for the rest of your life.

