

Rich Thirsty Hungry

Conversation Guide ... For Twos or Groups

Some thoughts before you begin ...

I hope you enjoy bringing the stories of Rich Thirsty Hungry into your conversations and reaching for more of what God might be saying to you through them. A lot of groups have chosen to partner the stories from the Bible with the stories in the book (first one, then the other) over six weeks or more so that the conversations carry both the historical account as well as the imaginative possibilities for us today.

And here's something more I'd like you to know as you get started: I deeply value the stirring of wonder about God and what He is offering us. I'm not afraid of the stories being questioned, or things in the stories that may not sit well with you. Please share these places together and ask what the Lord might be saying through your own response. I would be so humbly honored if the stories were somehow used toward the Lord gaining deeper territory of our hearts.

Story One: The Long Road

1. Jacob has early life experiences that leave him with anger and resentment. What stands out to you about his early life events and his response to them?
2. How have your life experiences shaped your choices? Can you trace early events that forged negative responses to authority, or to God?
3. How would you describe Jacob's father's parenting style? Have you had other models that have these characteristics? Models that have greatly differed?
4. When Jacob reaches the end of his rope on the pig farm, what did you find yourself feeling? What has been your own experience of coming to your senses? What did it take?
5. Before Jacob ever reaches home, grace is in motion throughout his journey back. Where do you see grace showing up in the story?
6. What have been the touches of grace that have guided you home?
7. As the moment of return gets closer, fear and intensity build for Jacob. Where and how do you connect with those feelings in similar moments of reckoning in your life?

8. Talk together about the scene of the father seeing Jacob, and Jacob encountering the father's welcome. Consider each viewpoint present. What stands out to you? How does this scene affect you as you read it? What are the possible implications for your life?
9. The older brother's anger is real. What is it all about for him? Is his frustration more with Jacob, or his father? When we feel the same way, who and what are we really struggling with?
10. The ring says, "You still belong." What is your understanding of what Jacob still belongs to?
11. What else gets your attention about this story?
12. Is the epilogue scene a real possibility for you? Why or why not?

Story Two: The Story of Cole Carson

1. Prior to coming into awareness of Jonathan Sanders, how do you think Cole would describe what his needs were if he were asked?
2. Jonathan begins showing up in his world long before Cole is aware of anything amiss or unsettling. What are some of the early ways God has gotten your attention and built your curiosity?
3. Cole first learns about Jonathan Sanders from afar and is drawn to him. What is drawing to you about the character of Jonathan as you get to know him in the story?
4. In the revealing conversation following Jonathan's public address at the Grand Hyatt, Cole discovers his deeper question in a shocking moment of self-discovery. When has this happened for you? ... A critical question of God that you become poignantly aware of?
5. Jonathan's response to Cole was undoing for him. What is your reaction to their conversation and interaction?
6. The story didn't end there for Cole. What transpires in his life afterwards in the following days, weeks, and months that are interesting to you? How does all of this affect Cole?
7. Cole concedes to attending the meeting with Gretta for "Concerning New York". How did this scene and the purpose of this group strike you?
8. Cole's agitation builds after the meeting in the booth where he hears clearly the involvement level of the participants, and then receives the confidential invitation to join them. What is your understanding of his anger at this invitation?
9. Upon seeing Jonathan Sanders two weeks later, he says to Cole "There's no club in following me. It's just following me, in whatever club you find yourself in, wherever

- your life takes you.” What is your understanding of this, and what is challenging to you about this possibility?
10. The epilogue tells of two generous outpourings of Cole’s life, yet he never was able to say “yes”. What do you make of this?
 11. How has your own story taken noticeable turns after genuine experiences of being invited and knowing God more?
 12. What else gets your attention about this story?

Story Three: Thirsty

1. The story begins and with one of Celeste’s earliest memories of an encounter with religion. What is your upbringing with regard to faith, or pillars of family beliefs? What early messages do you remember receiving from childhood about God?
2. Abuse takes many forms and often occurs in multiple ways as it does in Celeste’s home growing up. How would you describe your own experiences with abuse, be it firsthand or alongside someone close to you, and how has this played a part in your journey?
3. We see Celeste trying to fill the void in her life through the attention of men, beginning at a young age. Do you have voids you have had to face, and if so, how have you tried to fill and overcome them?
4. In the scene where Celeste returns to church seeking forgiveness, what stands out to you? How is this similar or different from religious experiences you’ve encountered?
5. In some ways, Celeste is a survivor. How is she surviving her disappointments and failures?
6. Celeste has a hard time acknowledging the truth of her broken story particularly with respect to the fathers of her children. What do you make of this?
7. What stands out to you about the interaction at the water machine outside of the market?
8. What would you be thinking if you were one of his friends in the Suburban?
9. What emotions do you imagine experiencing as Celeste is being confronted?
10. What do you think breaks through Celeste’s hard shell of pain? And, how is this similar in your experience of facing painful things in your own life?
11. In the end, Celeste can only say “Thank you” over and over. Can you relate with this moment? Share one of these times in your life.
12. What else gets your attention about this story?