

# CONVERSATION & COMMUNITY

## THEOLOGY ON TAP | SEPTEMBER 5, 2017

What's your favorite way to talk with someone else?

What have you learned in life that you could only learn in talking with someone else?

What's in a word?

### Conversation:

The word comes from the Middle English word *conversatio(n)* meaning:

As a Noun:

1. way of life, conduct or behaviour
2. monastic life
3. conversation

And as a Verb:

1. To interact with, pass time with
2. to turn around or over
3. to ponder
4. to consort or associate with
5. to abide or dwell

The word is made up of the Latin word

**CON** and **VERSO**

with                      to keep turning/going round, spin, whirl,  
                                to manoeuvre or stir  
                                to turn over and over

And so the word involves a connotation of togetherness, community, interaction and exchange.

In modern English it means:

1. talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information is exchanged.
2. No generally accepted definition of conversation exists, beyond the fact that a conversation involves at least two people talking together. Consequently, the term is often defined by what it is not.
  - a. A ritualized exchange such as a mutual greeting is not a conversation, and an interaction that includes a marked status differential (such as a boss giving orders) is also not a conversation.

- b. An interaction with a tightly focused topic or purpose is also generally not considered a conversation.
  - c. Summarizing these properties, one authority writes that "Conversation is the kind of speech that happens informally, symmetrically, and for the purposes of establishing and maintaining social ties."
- 3. From a less technical perspective, a writer on etiquette in the early 20th century defined conversation as the polite give and take of subjects thought of by people talking with each other for company.
- 4. Conversations follow rules of etiquette because conversations are social interactions, and therefore depend on social convention. Specific rules for conversation arise from the cooperative principle.
- 5. Conversation is generally face-to-face person-to-person at the same time (synchronous) - possibly online with video applications such as Skype, but might also include audio-only phone calls. It would not generally include internet written communication which tends to be asynchronous (not same time - can read and respond later if at all) and does not fit the 'con'='with' in 'conversation'.

## Questions for Discussion:

**When do you know that you're having a conversation? When are you not having one?**

**With whom can you have a conversation?**

**Christian Theology speaks of Creation of the Universe as God speaking aloud, inviting creation into being through a conversation. Jesus of Nazareth is seen as the embodiment of God, the living Word of God – continuing that conversation – in the world. How do you react to that?**

*"<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness."* Genesis 1:1-4

*"<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."* John 1:1-5

**How are we struggling theologically, socially, politically to have conversation today?**