

Great Book Discussion Questions for *A Good Man is Hard to Find*

1. In the story "A good Man is Hard to Find," why does the misfit say "Jesus thown everything off balance. . . Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead . . . and he shouldn't have done it."? What does he mean by this expression? Is he blaming Jesus for his troubles, or does he blame Jesus for something else?
2. What was the illness that Harry (Bevel) Ashfield's mother had in "The River"? Was she cured of her illness? Was Harry cured of his loneliness?
3. In the story "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," the author contrasts the spiritual with the worldly in unfamiliar ways. The two cousins in the story call themselves temples of the holy ghost, and the hermaphrodite seems to say something similar. While the girls are thought of as being immature, the hermaphrodite is seen as being dangerous (the carnival closed the day after the hermaphrodite appeared). Is Flannery O'Connor saying that religion is dangerous, or is she saying that the appearance of religion (without the belief and practice) is dangerous? Perhaps her view of religion is not as easily described; can you describe it?
4. In the story "Good Country People" the Bible salesman appears to be naive and awkward, while Hulga appears to be formidable and intelligent. By the end of the story, the roles have reversed. What has changed? Was Hulga ever as worldly as she thought? How were the Bible salesman and Mrs. Freeman similar? What was the primary sin of the Bible salesman? What was Hulga's primary sin?
5. There seems to be an undercurrent in many of the stories that the characters populating the stories are isolated, fearful and distrustful. What causes their distrust? What are they afraid of?
6. O'Connor uses religious images throughout her stories. What do you make of these images? How does she view organized religion? Several of the female characters are very religious sounding, but they don't seem to be very good people. What do you make of this? Several of the male religious figures seem passive or resigned; why is this?
7. The treatment of black people in these stories seems at times indifferent, and at times offensive. How do these black characters compare with the religious characters, the male characters, or the women characters?
8. The stories seem to portray Europeans as backwards, unintelligent and lacking in "proper" religious attitudes. In fact, Europeans seem to be one step above the poor black people who populate the stories. What do you make of this? Why do the characters seem to look down on Europeans?