



*Beginning in Jesus, Student Edition: Six Sessions in the life of Christ*  
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## SESSION 1

# JESUS: THE TEACHER

### ★ LEADERS, READ PAGE 108.

Justin never really knew his father because he died of cancer when Justin was just three years old. As a teenager, Justin doesn't have many memories of his dad, but he does have a lot of photos and stories that have helped shape his dad's legacy. Because of those photos and stories, Justin has grown up with a desire to be more like his dad.

The stories he's heard over the years make him feel proud that he had such a great dad. His father was a man who followed God's ways, loved his family, and worked hard to make a living. He was adored by many, and everyone describes him to Justin as "one of the greatest guys I've ever met." He was tender, patient, wise, and a great father—and everyone says he loved his son.

Even though his time on earth was short, Justin's dad made a significant impact on others, including Justin. In fact, even though he never knew his dad, Justin's hero is his dad.

As you study the Bible passages in this book and discuss them with your small group, you'll meet (or be reacquainted with) someone you've never seen face-to-face, either, but is more worthy than anyone of hero status—Jesus. You'll learn more about the legacy that Jesus passed on to you. The stories you'll read were written so that as you learn more about Jesus, you'll want to be like Jesus even more.

As you study Jesus with this book, there is an important question you'll want to answer at some point: *Do you really believe Jesus is worth following?* If he's not, you'll keep searching for something or someone to follow. If Jesus is worthy, this study will help you follow him with great enthusiasm, align your life to his teachings, receive his love, and tap into his life-changing power.

This book series, your own study, and your group's discussion will provide chances to look at Jesus in deeper and more meaningful ways—you'll get to know Jesus better! And the great thing about being in a group is that you're not searching, learning, and discovering alone—your group can become an environment where you develop stronger relationships. It's within this group that you'll likely grow, learn, and fall more in love with Jesus. Life isn't meant to be lived alone—doing life together is the way to live it up. Let the journey with Jesus begin!

## **FELLOWSHIP: CONNECTING YOUR HEART TO OTHERS\***

**Goal:** To share about your life and listen attentively to others, caring about what they share

As you study the life of Jesus, you'll notice that people expressed their first impressions of Jesus in different ways. Some were amazed, some afraid, some mad, some confused. You'll develop your own impressions of Jesus as you continue to learn more about him.

Because you're learning in a small group setting, you're

not learning alone. You may already have formed impressions of the other people in your group without knowing much about them. This fellowship section (which is in all six sessions) will provide an opportunity for your group's members to get to know each other better. When you open up a little bit of your life and share pieces of your story, you'll get to know each other better.

Just as the stories of Jesus will give you a clearer picture of him, others' stories will give you a clearer picture of who they really are. To get the most out of this group, it's worth taking a risk and revealing some of yourself and carefully listening to others' hearts. While it can seem scary at first, it does get easier to open up. The benefits of getting to know each other in this way are huge. Be sure to have someone keep an eye on your time in this section, or you may spend your entire time here and not get any further!

Just a reminder: There probably isn't enough time in your small group session to answer every question. Instead choose which ones you'll answer, and then answer the others on your own time. Have fun!

1. Who is one of your current heroes? Why?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you think you know about Jesus?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Nothing....a little....a little more than a little...some....a lot...no, really a lot...more than my pastor

3. What do you want to get out of this small group experience? If your group hasn't discussed the small group covenant on page 18, please take some time now to go through it. Make commitments to each other that your group time will reflect those values (and any additional ones you add). One sign of a healthy small group is that it begins each session by reading the covenant together as a constant reminder of what the group has committed to.

## DISCIPLESHIP: GROWING TO BE LIKE JESUS

**Goal:** To explore God's Word, gain biblical knowledge, and make personal applications

We all have our own understandings of right and wrong—our own systems of values and judgments we consider true. Unfortunately, we often miss the mark with our limited wisdom and believe things are true even when they're not.

For example, as a child I was convinced that chocolate and cookies made a healthy lunch. That was my truth. But I learned actual truth from reliable sources and saw the ignorance of my ways. If you've bought into lies and myths, you need to hear the truth about them.

Jesus spent a lot of time teaching people the truth about God. He taught all kinds of audiences—from gigantic crowds to small groups. He even taught one-on-one to help individuals discover and understand truth. As a teacher, Jesus wasn't interested in just imparting information; rather, he taught to change lives.

***Read Mark 1:14-28.*** (If you don't have a Bible, the passage is on page 113.)

- 1 According to this passage, what is Jesus teaching?
2. Why do you think Jesus said the "time has come"?
3. In your own words, what does *repent* mean?
4. What is the "good news"? Is there anything from the passage that can help answer this question?

5. In your opinion, what's the connection between "repenting" and "believing the good news"?
6. Why do you think the disciples were so quick to leave their jobs and families behind to follow Jesus?
7. What is the Sabbath? What is a synagogue, and why was Jesus teaching there?
8. According to this passage, what did Jesus do to demonstrate his authority?
9. When did others first recognize his authority? In your opinion, why is this significant?
10. Why is authority important for a teacher? What happens when a teacher lacks authority?
11. Let's get personal: In your opinion, how is it possible to ignore Jesus' teaching when he has authority?



### MINISTRY: SERVING OTHERS IN LOVE

**Goal:** To recognize and take advantage of opportunities to serve others

We don't have the opportunity to do what the first disciples did and follow Jesus around as he taught and cared for people. But you do have the privilege of putting Jesus' teachings

into action. One of the major themes of Jesus' life was service. Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

In each session you will be given an opportunity to think about service (or ministry), discuss it, or act on it. What you'll learn by serving is that you're never more like Jesus than when you serve.

- 1 In Mark 1, Jesus not only taught, but he also ministered to the man possessed by an evil spirit. As you continue to study Jesus, you'll see that as he taught he also served and cared for the needs of others. What needs do you think Jesus—and you—would see if you walked through the following environments in your own life? List a few needs under each one.

Your City:

Your Campus:

Your Home:

Underline one of these needs you just wrote down; that's the need you will try to meet this week. Tell your group which one you underlined. (These needs don't have to be newsworthy. You don't need to build a house! The goal isn't getting on the front page of the paper; it's developing your heart for serving others...just like Jesus.)

2. If you do meet a need this week, come back to this space and write down (a) specifically what you did, (b) what you learned, and (c) how you felt. Be prepared to share your experience the next time your group meets.





## EVANGELISM: SHARING YOUR STORY AND GOD'S STORY

**Goal:** To consider how the truths from this lesson might be applied to your relationships with unbelievers

When Jesus called his disciples away from the fishing boat, he said he would make them fishers of men. He used their profession—what they already knew how to do—and connected it with evangelism.

1. In the same way, what could you envision Jesus using from your life—a hobby, sports team, workplace? Where are you involved with others? How might Jesus connect your interests to evangelism? Don't be afraid to laugh at some of the ideas—they may be funny.
2. Based on what you've studied today, how would Jesus respond to unbelievers? What message do you think he would want them to hear about the kind of teacher he is?
3. Do you feel comfortable sharing that message? Why, or why not?

It's vital for your group to decide at this first session whether you can invite friends to join your group. Talk about the structure of your group and stick to your decision. If you decide the answer is no, you may be able to invite friends to join you in the next EXPERIENCING CHRIST TOGETHER book—there are six of them, so there's plenty of time! If you're a small group leader, see the Small Group Leader Checklist on page 108.



## WORSHIP: SURRENDERING YOUR LIFE TO HONOR GOD

**Goal:** To focus on God's presence

According to the Scriptures, when Jesus called the fishermen to become his followers, they left "at once" and "immediately." Those are words that describe a powerful response to a personal call.

You'll find three prayer resources in the appendices in the back of this book. By reading them (and possibly discussing them), you'll find your group prayer time more rewarding.

- Praying in Your Small Group (page 156). Read this article on your own before the next session.
- Prayer Request Guidelines (page 158). Read and discuss these guidelines as a group.
- Prayer Options (page 160). Refer to this list for ideas to add variety to your prayer time.

1. You may have read the passage from another Bible translation. What other words are used to describe how the fishermen responded to Jesus' call to follow him?
2. What phrase best describes your reaction to following Jesus and his ways? Circle one, and explain why in the space below.
  - I, too, followed immediately!
  - I asked a lot of questions before I left my old ways to follow Jesus.
  - I haven't left my old ways yet.
  - Jesus who?
  - I followed Jesus because others followed.
  - I followed Jesus when I was younger, but I've since returned to my old ways.
  - Other:
3. Take one minute of silence and really think about what you would do if Jesus looked you in the eyes and said, "Follow me." Share your response.

Small group sessions will usually end with prayer. This is your opportunity to talk to God and tell him what's on your heart and ask for his help to follow his ways so you can become more like Jesus.

If your small group is new, don't feel pressured to have everyone pray out loud if they're not comfortable. Group members can pray in silence, and God hears those prayers too.

### AT HOME THIS WEEK

One of the consistent values of our LIFETOGETHER books is that we want you to have options for growing spiritually on your own during the week. To help with this "on your own" value, we'll give you five options. If you do these, you'll have more to contribute when you return to your small group, and you'll begin to develop spiritual habits that can last your entire life. Here are the five you'll see after every section. (You might try to do one per day on the days after your small group meets.)

#### Option 1: A Weekly Reflection

After each session you'll find a quick, one-page self-evaluation that reflects the five areas of your spiritual life found in this book (fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism, and worship). After each evaluation, you decide if there's anything you'll do differently with your life. This page is all for you. It's not intended as a report card that you turn into your small group leader. The first evaluation is on page 32.

#### Option 2: Daily Bible Readings

On page 140 you'll find a list of Bible passages that will help you read through an entire book of the Bible in 30 days. If you choose this option, try to read one of the assigned passages each day. Highlight key verses in your Bible, reflect on them, journal about them, or write down any questions you have from your reading. We want to encourage you to take time to read God's love letter—the Bible. You'll find helpful tips in "How to Study the Bible On Your Own" (page 142).

Of the five options listed here, mark the option(s) that seem most appealing to you. Share with your group the one(s) you plan to do in the upcoming week. This helps you keep one another accountable as you continue to study and grow on your own.

### Option 3: Memory Verses

Memorizing Bible verses is an important habit to develop as you learn to grow spiritually on your own. “Memory Verses” (page 145) contains six verses for you to memorize—one per session. Memorizing verses (and making them stick for more than a few minutes) isn’t easy, but the benefits are undeniable. You’ll have God’s Word with you wherever you go.

**“I HAVE HIDDEN YOUR WORD IN MY HEART THAT  
I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST YOU.”  
(PSALM 119:11)**

### Option 4: Journaling

You’ll find blank pages for journaling beginning on page 150. At the end of each session, you’ll find questions to get your thoughts going—but you aren’t limited to answering the questions listed. Use these pages to reflect, write a letter to God, note what you’re learning, compose prayer, ask questions, draw pictures, record your thoughts, or take notes if your small group is using the EXPERIENCING CHRIST TOGETHER DVD teachings. For some suggestions about journaling, turn to “Journaling: Snapshots of Your Heart” on page 147.

For this session, choose one or more of the following questions to kickstart your journaling:

- I’m excited to be in a group because...
- If someone asked me to describe Jesus, I would say...
- Jesus as a teacher would want me to know...

### Option 5: Wrap It Up

Go back through the session and answer the questions your group didn’t have time to discuss.

## LEARN A LITTLE MORE

**Goal:** To help you better understand the Scripture passage you studied in this session by highlighting key words and other important information

### *After John was put in prison (Mark 1:14)*

John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin. John's ministry prepared people for Jesus (see Mark 1-8). Jesus would face the same fate as John and be handed over to the authorities for a death sentence (Mark 15:15).

### *The kingdom of God (1:15)*

This describes a kingdom in which God's way dominates (Matthew 6:10). It will be a kingdom of goodness, joy, and beauty. Our planet withdrew from God's kingdom when humans (whom God had put in charge) rebelled against God's ways (see the beginning chapters of Genesis). The Bible tells us that God desires to bring us back into his kingdom.

God created the nation of Israel (the Jewish people) to be a gathering place of his kingdom, to attract the rest of humanity to join his kingdom. As the Bible teaches in the Old Testament, Israel repeatedly failed to obey God's ways and commands. As a result, God allowed different empires to oppress them. By Jesus' birth, the Roman Empire dominated the people of Israel. Many Jews were desperate for a leader who would throw out the Romans and restore God's kingdom on earth, both politically and spiritually. The Bible contains many prophecies about a leader who would be called the Messiah (the Hebrew word for "anointed one"; the Greek word for messiah is *Christ*). Jewish history records several self-proclaimed messiahs, but none brought the kind of change the Jews were looking for.

Jesus is the prophesied Messiah, and God's kingdom was the central message of his teaching. But Jesus had no intention of being a military Messiah and destroying the Romans to establish a political kingdom. Instead he invited everyone

to stop pursuing their own agendas and rejoin God's kingdom. God's kingdom was (and is) immediately available to anyone who followed Jesus. But only in part. Jesus will ultimately bring his kingdom in all its fullness when he returns.

### *Repent (1:15)*

In the language of the New Testament, this word means "to change your mind" or to think about things in a radically different way. A related Hebrew word for repent means to change course or to look for what you need by going in a completely different direction.

### *Fishers of men (1:17)*

The Greek word for men in this verse is anthropos and refers to all people, both men and women.

### *Galilee...Capernaum (1:14,21)*

Galilee is the region where Jesus did most of his ministry. Capernaum is a town on the Sea of Galilee, home to both Peter and Andrew (two of Jesus' disciples).

### *Sabbath (1:21)*

God created the earth in seven days; he worked for six and rested (literally, he "ceased") on the seventh day. God did this as a model for us to follow. He certainly doesn't need the rest, but we do! The idea of the Sabbath is for people to stop and take a "time out" from our busy lives to refocus on God. For many Jews, the Sabbath is a celebration, spent in prayer and with family. Out of a misguided desire to observe the Sabbath as God intended, the religious leaders of Jesus' day created many rules governing human conduct on the Sabbath. These detailed rules started with Scripture but were closer to human tradition than God's revelation.

### *Synagogue (1:21)*

The synagogue is a place where local groups of Jewish people assemble for worship, prayer, and instruction in the Law of

Moses. The main meeting day is on the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). Typical meetings include recited prayers and a reading from the Scriptures, followed by an explanation or sermon. The synagogue is also a center for community activities not directly related to worship and prayer.

Originally, the primary place of worship for the Jews was at the temple in Jerusalem. During their exile from their land and captivity by the Babylonians (which began in 586 B.C.), the synagogue arose as a new place of worship, serving as an alternative to the temple that was now out of reach.

### *Teachers of the Law (1:22)*

These teachers were also known as “scribes.” Although portrayed as a unified group, the New Testament doesn’t provide much detail about their distinctive characteristics. Based on their portrayal in the Gospels, “They were the scholars of the day, professionally trained in the interpretation and application of the Law. Jesus often came into direct conflict with them.”

## FOR DEEPER STUDY ON YOUR OWN

1. Read the surrounding context of this passage for better understanding (Mark 1:1-28). Make a list of recurring themes or words you find in this passage.
2. The Sermon on the Mount is arguably Jesus’ most famous teaching. Read Matthew 5-7 and note anything that stands out to you.

3. Isaiah 50:4-11 is an Old Testament portrait of a disciple. Jesus lived this way. What features of this portrait seem most significant to you?

### **A WEEKLY REFLECTION**

Take a minute to reflect on how well you've been doing in the following five areas of your spiritual life this week—a 10 means you were amazing. This reflection can serve as a spiritual gauge to help you consider some very important areas. This is for your personal evaluation and growth; it's NOT a test—no one else needs to see it.

#### **FELLOWSHIP: CONNECTING YOUR HEART TO OTHERS'**

*How well did I connect with other Christians?*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

#### **DISCIPLESHIP: GROWING TO BE LIKE JESUS**

*How well did I take steps to grow spiritually and deepen my faith on my own?*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

#### **MINISTRY: SERVING OTHERS IN LOVE**

*How well did I recognize opportunities to serve others and follow through?*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



## EVANGELISM: SHARING YOUR STORY AND GOD'S STORY

*How well did I engage in spiritual conversations with non-Christians?*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## WORSHIP: SURRENDERING YOUR LIFE TO HONOR GOD

*How well did I focus on God's presence and honor him with my life? Was my relationship with God a primary focus?*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When you finish, celebrate the areas where you feel good and consider how you can use those strengths to help others in their journey to be more like Jesus. You might also want to take time to identify some potential areas for growth.