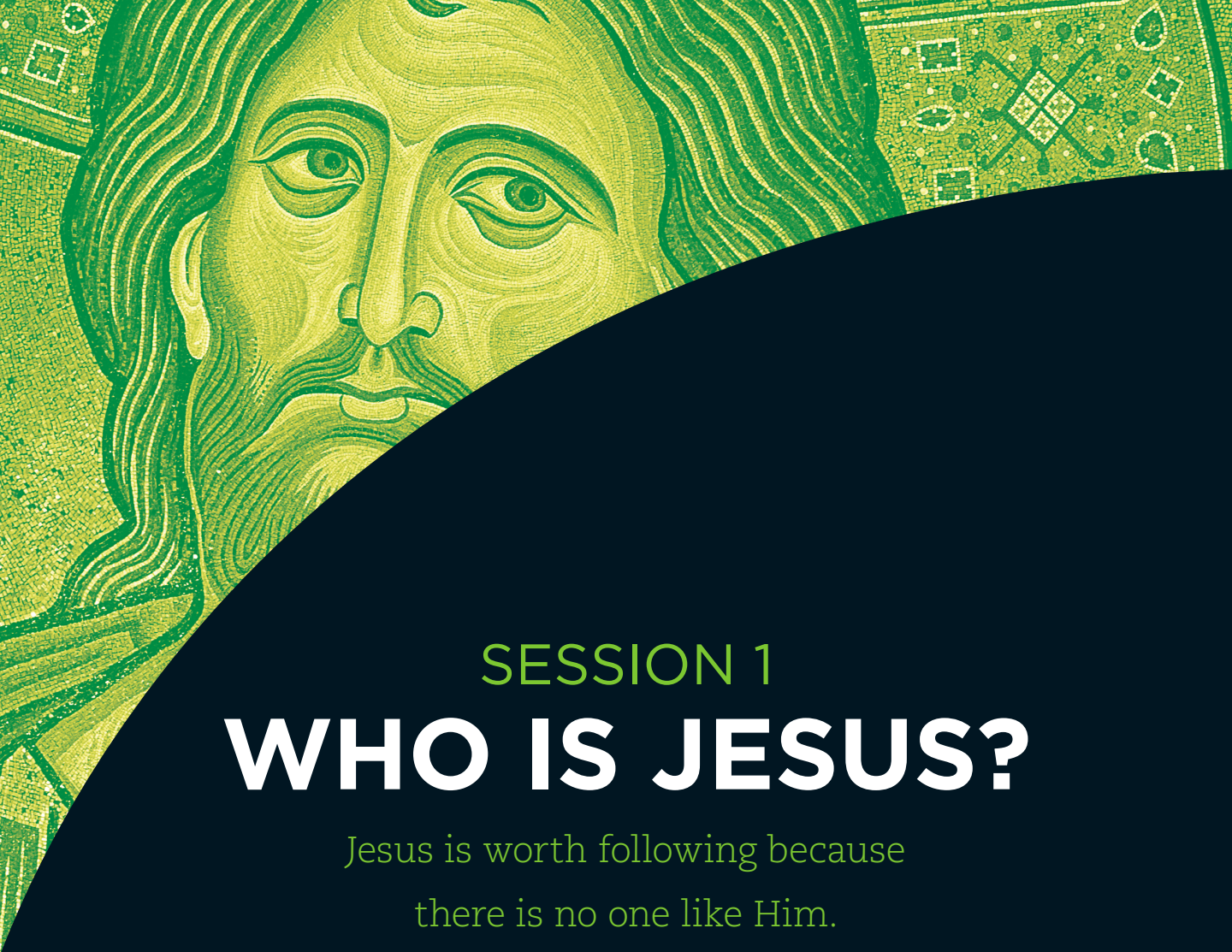




THE
JOURNEY
VOLUME 2

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SESSION 1

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is worth following because
there is no one like Him.

REFLECT

Welcome to *The Call*. The goal of this resource is to help you explore the process of growing and maturing as a disciple of Jesus. Throughout the following sessions, we'll examine the identity of Jesus as well as the identity and characteristics of a true disciple. In this session, we'll begin by gaining a better understanding of who Jesus is and why we should choose to follow Him.

What have you learned about Jesus over the course of your life?

Who do people say Jesus is today?

PRAY

Take a break from your discussion to approach God in prayer. Use the following guidelines as you connect with Him:

- Thank God for the opportunity to join with other disciples of Christ in order to gain a better understanding of who Jesus is.
- Praise God for the ways He has worked in your life and the things He has done.
- Ask for an open mind and heart to best see what He wants to reveal to you today.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ. Most people have heard of Him. Most people have an opinion of Him. If you're looking for excitement, try going to a public area and asking people, "Who is Jesus?" You'll likely get a variety of answers and reactions.

The fact is, no one else has changed history and affected our culture more than Jesus. More books have been written about Him, more music composed for Him, more art reflecting Him, more architecture and buildings designed for Him, and more organizations and foundations created in His name than for any other person.

He changed history. In the name of Jesus, hospitals and orphanages have been built, the care for the elderly and homeless have been emphasized, and organizations for the hungry and needy have been created. Churches have been established in His name on every continent in the world. All this for a Man who never wrote a book, never attended a university, never ran for office, never led a company, and lived 2,000 years ago.

The question remains, who is Jesus?

Was He simply a Jewish carpenter turned preacher? Was He a political zealot? Was He a false teacher who deceived the people? Was He a misguided miracle worker? Was He a lunatic with a death wish? Was He a spiritual guru or teacher? Was He one among many or was He one of a kind? At the end of the day, everyone must answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

In this session we're going to look at the uniqueness of Jesus. We are going to see what makes Him stand head and shoulders above the rest, and why He is worth following with all of your heart.

What is your reaction to the statement, "At the end of the day, everyone must answer the question, 'Who is Jesus?'"

KNOW THE STORY

According to tradition, Jesus was 30 years old and living in Nazareth when He left His work as a craftsman and began His ministry. From this point forward, Jesus began to reveal His identity to a handful of men who would later turn the world upside down.

³⁵ Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and noticed them following Him, He asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are You staying?” ³⁹ “Come and you’ll see,” He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about 10 in the morning. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which means “Anointed One”), ⁴² and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which means “Rock”). ⁴³ The next day He decided to leave for Galilee. Jesus found Philip and told him, “Follow Me!” ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!” ⁴⁶ “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him. “Come and see,” Philip answered. ⁴⁷ Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said about him, “Here is a true Israelite; no deceit is in him.” ⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Jesus answered. ⁴⁹ “Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰ Jesus responded to him, “Do you believe only because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹ Then He said, “I assure you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

JOHN 1:35-51

***Notice all of the different names (or titles) given to Jesus.
Why do you think there are so many?***

***Notice the two times the phrase “Come and see” is used.
What are people being invited to see?***



UNPACK THE STORY

SON OF MAN

In this story, Jesus begins to reveal His identity to a few men. Each name or title for Jesus unveils an aspect of His identity as the God-Man.

Several of the titles attributed to Jesus in the first chapter of the Gospel of John reflect His humanity. “Rabbi” was a term of respect given to a spiritual teacher (see John 1:38). “Lamb of God” referred to His physical death on the cross as a substitute for our sin (see John 1:36). But the phrase “Son of Man” was special (see John 1:51)—it was Jesus’ favorite way to refer to Himself. In fact, the Hebrew term is found 81 times in the New Testament Gospels, 30 of those in the Book of Matthew alone.

Why is it important to understand Jesus’ humanity?

The phrase “Son of Man” was a reference to His humanity. By using this term, He was declaring Himself to be a part of mankind. Jesus was a human, just like you and me. He wasn’t a mythical person. He wasn’t a legend. He wasn’t an illusion that only appeared to be human. Jesus was a real, historical person. Hebrews 2:17 says that Jesus “had to be like His brothers in every way” so that He could help us in our time of need. John, one of Jesus’ disciples, spoke of Jesus this way:

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.

1 JOHN 1:1 (NLT)

John was saying, “We have heard Jesus, we have seen Him with our eyes, we have touched Him with our hands!” Jesus was fully human.

What questions or observations do you have about Jesus’ humanity?



Jesus was a human, just like you and me. He wasn’t a mythical person. He wasn’t a legend. He wasn’t an illusion that only appeared to be human. Jesus was a real, historical person.

SON OF GOD

Another title given to Jesus was “Son of God.” Nathanael declared, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49). This term is a clear statement of Jesus’ divine nature. While Jesus claimed to be fully human like you and me, He also claimed to be fully God, which is not like anyone else in human history.

Read the following conclusions from eyewitnesses to all that Jesus said and did.

- Peter—Acts 2:29-36
- John the Baptist—John 3:25-36
- John the Apostle—1 John 5:11-13
- Thomas—John 20:24-28

What are your observations from these passages?

What did the people closest to Jesus conclude about His identity?

Jesus wasn’t just another moral teacher or spiritual leader. He was much more than that. Other religious leaders point to the way, but Jesus declared, “I am the way.” Others claim to have some knowledge of truth, but Jesus said, “I am the truth.” Others point to a path for living, but Jesus said, “I am the life” (see John 14:6). His claims set Him apart from everyone else.

Jesus claimed to be the “Son of Man”—fully human and the fulfillment of the promised Messiah. He also claimed to be the “Son of God”—God in the flesh who created the world, has authority over all things, and is coming again to judge and to rule. Ultimately Jesus backed up these claims by raising from the dead and showing Himself to be alive. The claims of Jesus are clear. But the response to His claims is a choice every person must ultimately make.

Was Jesus crazy when He made these claims? Was Jesus lying to the people around Him? Or was He who He actually claimed to be? One thing is sure, Jesus didn’t leave us the option of labeling Him a good moral teacher. A good moral teacher doesn’t claim to be God—unless it’s true.



Jesus didn’t leave us the option of labeling Him a good moral teacher. A good moral teacher doesn’t claim to be God—unless it’s true.

Jesus is worth following because no one is like Him. He is completely unique. He stands in a class all His own. When we were far from God, estranged from Him and chasing our own way, Jesus came to us. But His coming wasn't celebrated with worship and obedience. His own people rejected Him. Yet to those who receive Him, to those who acknowledge Him and worship Him, He gives life. Consider how Paul states this in Philippians 2:5-11:

⁵ Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. ⁷ Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, ⁸ He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth— ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Why did Jesus become a man according to Philippians 2:5-11?

For those of you who can or would like to, take this opportunity to get on your knees for prayer. As you pray, acknowledge Jesus for who He is and what He has done. Commit your life to obeying and following Him. Pray for one another, that as a group you will worship and follow Him closely this week.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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In addition to studying God's Word, work with your group leader to create a plan for personal study, worship, and application between now and the next session. Select from the following optional activities to match your personal preferences and available time.

↑ Worship

- Read your Bible. Complete the reading plan on page 16.
- Connect with God by engaging the devotional on page 17.
- Read Philippians 2:5-11 again. The conclusion of this passage states, "At the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Begin each morning this week kneeling before Jesus. Worship and praise Him for who He is and what He has done in your life.

➡ ← Personal Study

- Read and interact with "Jesus: Fully Human" on page 18.
- Read and interact with "Jesus: Fully God" on page 20.

← ➡ Application

- Share with others. Take the time to share something you have learned this week. Maybe you can start at home with your family. Or maybe you know someone at work or in your neighborhood who has spiritual questions. You may also want to share your favorite verse with friends through social media.
- Memorize John 14:6: "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"
- Start a journal. Select one of the following passages and read it slowly several times. Consider what it's telling you about Jesus. Write down your thoughts and observations: John 1:1-14; 14:1-6; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-4.
- Other:



WORSHIP

READING PLAN

Read through the following Scripture passages this week. Use the space provided to record your thoughts and responses.

Day 1

Isaiah 9:1-7

Day 2

Isaiah 44:6-23

Day 3

John 6:22-33

Day 4

John 6:34-59

Day 5

John 8:12-29

Day 6

Romans 8:31-39

Day 7

Hebrews 2:5-18

WHO DO YOU SAY HE IS?

Before people can come to know Christ personally, they have to “come and see” who Jesus is. They have to do their own investigation. How did the prophecies of the Messiah point to Jesus? What does the evidence say about Jesus? Who did Jesus claim to be? What did others say about Jesus’ identity?

Look at some of the following prophecies about the coming Messiah and how they were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. [Note: These prophecies were written in the Old Testament 500-1,000 years before the birth of Jesus.]

The place of His birth (Micah 5:2/Matthew 2:1)

The miracle of His birth (Isaiah 7:14/Matthew 1:18)

His triumphal entry (Zechariah 9:9/John 12:13-14)

Betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9/Mark 14:10)

His rejection (Isaiah 53:3/John 1:11)

His death with sinners (Isaiah 53:12/Matthew 27:38)

His hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16/John 20:27)

He was mocked and ridiculed (Psalm 22:7-8/Luke 23:35)

Soldiers gamble for His clothes (Psalm 22:18/Luke 23:34)

No bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20/John 19:33)

Soldier pierced His side (Zechariah 12:10/ John 19:34)

He would be a sacrifice for sin (Isaiah 53:5-12/Romans 5:6-8)

His resurrection (Psalm 16:10/Acts 3:15)

His ascension (Psalm 68:18/Mark 16:19)

We started this session with the statement: At the end of the day, everyone must answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” Everything in this life and the next depends on how you answer that question.

Take some time to consider your personal conclusions about Jesus.

What stands out to you most about Jesus?

What makes Him unique?

What questions are you still wrestling with?

Who do you say He is?

JESUS: FULLY HUMAN

The term “Son of Man” identified Jesus as fully human. You may ask, “Why is this important? Wasn’t it obvious that Jesus was human?” During the late second century, a group of people taught that Jesus wasn’t fully human; He only “appeared” to be human. One of the early church leaders named Ignatius fought against that erroneous teaching. He wrote that Jesus “was really born, and ate, and drank, was really persecuted by Pontius Pilate, was really crucified and died . . . and really rose from the dead” (Ignatius, *Epistle to the Trallians* 9).

Look up the verses below and identify how Jesus’ humanity is seen in each situation.

John 4:6-7

Luke 2:52

John 11:33-35

Matthew 4:1-2

John 19:28-30

You may also ask, “What relevance is it for me today that Jesus was fully human?” The answer is simple: Because Jesus experienced every range of human experience—pain and loss, anger and suffering, love and joy, hunger and thirst, temptation and disappointment—He can identify and sympathize with our hurts and weaknesses. Every emotion or experience you have gone through, Jesus has been through. And in your darkest moments you can turn to Him. He understands. He’s been there.

Another reason Jesus used the term “Son of Man” for Himself was because this term was a prophetic title given to the Messiah. The Promised One would come from God, deliver people from their sins, and make them right with God. Look at the following prophecy about the coming of the Son of Man.

¹³ I continued watching in the night visions, and I saw One like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before Him. ¹⁴ He was given authority to rule, and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

DANIEL 7:13-14

In this vision, how did Daniel describe the Son of Man?

Daniel saw the day coming when the Son of Man would be revealed as the Christ—the Messiah—the One who would bring the people back to God. And this was exactly who Jesus claimed to be. In John 1:41, Andrew found his brother and said, “We have found the Messiah!” (which means ‘Anointed One’). Nathanael declared Jesus as the “King of Israel” (John 1:49), another reference to Jesus as the Messiah.

Read the verses below. How did Jesus claim to be the Messiah?

John 4:25-26

Matthew 16:13-18

Matthew 26:63-64

What stands out to you most about Jesus’ title as the “Son of Man”?

What is your reaction to Jesus’ claim to be the Christ?



JESUS: FULLY GOD

The Bible gives us several facts about Jesus that prove His divine nature.

First, Scripture tells us that Jesus existed before time. Jesus has always existed. Before time and space, before anything was created, Jesus existed. He existed eternally with God the Father, and through Jesus all things were created. In a confrontation with religious leaders, Jesus said, “You are from below ... I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23). When they appealed to Abraham as their father, Jesus boldly declared, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). In that statement He declared Himself to be God, existing before Abraham.

How does Colossians 1:15-20 describe Jesus’ pre-existence and authority?

Not only did Jesus exist before time and create all things, He chose to come into the world.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴ Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it.

⁹ The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. ¹² But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:1-5,9-14

What promise do we have in verse 12?

Jesus also became a Man. Jesus came into this world, but He didn't come as a conquering king or a wealthy aristocrat. He came as a simple baby, born in a manger. He came in silence, on a clear night, in a small town in Israel called Bethlehem. He was born to common parents. Yet His birth was miraculous. God was becoming one of us.

Look at the birth accounts in Luke and Matthew. How did the angel describe this birth to Mary in Luke 1:26-37?

Why is Jesus given the title "Immanuel" in Matthew 1:20-23?

God came to us in the person of Jesus. He was in every way "God with us." Jesus never ceased to be God, but He emptied Himself (see Phil. 2:7) and became a man so that He could die for our sin on the cross.

Jesus claimed to be God. While the Bible is full of statements about Jesus' identity as God, none are more powerful than the words of Jesus Himself. Take a moment to read Matthew 25:31-32; John 10:22-33; 14:6-7.

How would you summarize the claims Jesus made about Himself in these passages?

Jesus demonstrated His divine power. Jesus not only claimed to have authority, but He also demonstrated His authority in many ways:

- Jesus demonstrated His authority over sickness (see Luke 4:40).
- Jesus demonstrated His authority over demons (see Luke 4:33-36).
- Jesus demonstrated His authority over sin (see Luke 5:20-25).
- Jesus demonstrated His authority over death (see John 11:43-44).

Ultimately, Jesus' greatest demonstration of His authority and the greatest vindication of His claim to be God was His own resurrection from the dead. Jesus told His disciples He would die and be raised to life again (see Matt. 16:21), Jesus was raised from the dead (see Matt. 28:1-10), Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection (see Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:3-8), and His disciples boldly proclaimed Jesus' resurrection (see Acts 2:29-32; 4:1-2).