

Lesson Plans for Jesus and the New Testament

Correlated with Curriculum Guidelines for Adolescent Catechesis and Confirmation, Diocese of Buffalo, 2004.

Lesson Plan #1: *Jesus Who is this Person?* (Jesus and the New Testament pp.78 – 79)

A. Whom do you say that I am?

(When sharing always sit in a circle so that everyone can see each other. Make sure that everyone is participating.)

1. **Read Matthew 16:13-20** (*Have someone volunteer to read.*)

2. **Icebreaker:** Divide the group in half to form two groups. Form two single line of young people and hand the first person in the group a marker. On the count of three the first person runs up and answers the question, Who do you say that I am? How would you describe Jesus? Runs back hands marker to next person and that person goes up and writes his or her answer and he or she runs back and gives the marker to the next person in line this continues until the facilitator says the time is up. There can be no repetition of words.

Was it easy or difficult to answer that question?

Where you surprise with some of the answers that were given by others in the group? If so which ones?

Can you think of other answers that we may have forgotten?

How is it that we know these answers?

How is it that your relationship with Jesus affects your knowledge of how you identify with Him?

We can learn a lot about others through our sharing. Other ways is through growing personally in our relationship with that person. What are some ways we can grow in our relationship and our knowledge of Jesus? In this next section we are going to learn a little more about Jesus and who He is.

3. **Small group:** Each small group will be given a scripture reading which gives an example of one of the qualities of Jesus. They are to read and study the scripture as a group and decide what quality of Jesus it represents. They are then asked to develop an advertisement by means of commercial, rap, or ad in the newspaper or magazine which will teach other teen one of the answers to the question Who do you say that I Am?

Scripture:

Group 1: John 8:3-11, Luke 5:17-25 (Forgiver)

Group 2: Luke 19: 1-10, Luke: 15:11-31 (Compassion)

Group 3: John 9:1-7; John 5: 1-8 (Healer)

Group 4: Mark 6:30-44 (Miracle maker)

4. **Presentations:** Have each group read the scripture reading and then present their advertisement.

What were the qualities of Jesus presented in the advertisements?

Do you think that the advertisements would attract teens to Jesus? Why or why not?

5. Reflection: In what ways do you know Jesus better now than when you were younger? What attracts you to Jesus? In what ways would you be more like him? How can we be sure that our source of information about Jesus is true and accurate?

Closing song: “*Path of Life*” pg. 102 of “Spirit Song”

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Lesson Plan #2: *The Gospels* (Jesus and the New Testament pp. 79-80)

SUPPLIES: Masking Tape Bibles
Chalk & Chalkboard OR Newsprint & Markers

TIPS FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION

Let them answer the questions – waiting for answers is important
Reflective listening – repeat back what they say so that everyone hears it
As discussion goes on invite responses from the introverts (more quiet students)

ICEBREAKER/ACTIVITY: Communication Game – You will whisper a sentence to one student, who will then pass it on to the rest of the students. The last student has to say the sentence aloud, and then you state the original sentence. It is very rare that these two sentences will be the same.

5 min.

ORAL TRADITION: Today's lesson is about the Gospels. Before we discuss them specifically we need to understand how they came to be written down. It was 70 years after Jesus' death before the Gospel of Mark was written. Prior to writing people passed on stories via oral tradition. In our first activity we saw how just one sentence can get changed as it is transferred from person to person. This happens with oral tradition too. Please keep this in mind as we explore the Gospels.

5 min.

GROUP GOSPEL ACTIVITY: Divide the class into 4 groups. Each group will be given an audience to write a Gospel (based on the content in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) for. You will give each group a description of their audience. The group needs to read that first and then begin to comprise their Gospel. They can do this on a piece of newsprint/posterboard. It is to be divided into 3 areas: PARABLES & TEACHINGS; MIRACLES & NARRATIVES; IMAGES.

20 min.

Four Audience Descriptions:

GROUP 1: This Jewish group believes that the world is going to end soon. The final judgement could come tonight or tomorrow. They are very afraid that civilization as they know it is coming to an end. They are looking for hope.

GROUP 2: This Jewish group wants to know everything about Christianity. They love to learn and are interested in becoming Christians.

GROUP 3: This Jewish group is very creative and they think in abstract ways. They prefer images and poetic verse over declarative statements. They want to know about Christianity.

GROUP 4: This group is not Jewish. The Christians who converted from Judaism do not accept them, but they are interested in Christianity. Everything they have heard about it has been told them from a Jewish perspective. They want to be accepted as Christians.

LARGE GROUP REPORTING: Tell each group to select a reporter to share their audience and their Gospel with the group.

5 min.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The italicized words are potential responses from the young people.

What did you notice about the reports?

The parts of the Gospels chosen reflected the audience.

All four groups did not choose the same parts of the Gospels.

5 min.

What are you taught in school about writing?

Know your audience

Why do you think I had you do this activity?

To see what it was like to write a Gospel

The four audiences are based on the groups that the four canonical Gospels were written for. Group 1 is Mark's Gospel, Group 2 is Matthew's Gospel. Group 3 is John's Gospel. Group 4 is Luke's Gospel.

BRAINSTORM THE TRAITS OF THE FOUR CANONICAL GOSPELS: This can be done on newsprint or the chalkboard. Have one of the young people do the writing. There is information at the end of the lesson about the traits for the catechist.

10 min.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE:

The Bible is the inspired Word of God.

As Catholics we interpret the Bible with historical critical versus literal.

Our first Communication Activity illustrates why this is important.

Synoptic (similar) Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke

5 min.

EUCCHARIST: Discuss the Last Supper in John and the Synoptics. John's Gospel has the Washing of the Feet with the Last Supper. The Synoptics have the bread and the wine becoming Jesus' Body and Blood. The Washing of the Feet reminds us of service as the Body of Christ at work.

5 min.

CLOSURE:

Get 3/5 responses to the following depending on time:

I now know . . .

I still wonder about . . .

I understand . . .

5 min.

CLOSING PRAYER: One Solitary Life (you may select readers or read together)

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book.

He never held an office.

He never owned a home.

He never had a family.

He never went to college.

He never traveled more than two hundred miles from the place where he was born.

He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

While he was still a young man the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth, and that was his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the kindness of a friend.

Nearly twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is still the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress.

5 min.

I am far within the mark when I say that
All the armies that ever marched,
All the navies that have ever sailed,
All the parliaments that have ever sat,
And all the kings that have ever reigned,
All put together, have not affected the life of man
Upon this earth as much as that One Solitary Life.

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Lesson Plan #3: *The World of Jesus* (Jesus and the New Testament pp.80-81)

Begin with an icebreaker: Pass around a roll of toilet paper. Have each student take “as much as they think they will need”. Only after all have taken some, tell them that for each panel of tissue they have to say one positive thing about themselves.

Divide the class into 3 groups: one group gets Mk.10: 13-16, one gets Mt. 25:35-40, one gets Jn. 14:1-14. Allow them to explore positive things about Jesus – How many panels of tissue would be needed for each reading?

Social Classes in the World of Jesus

Today we are talking about Jesus as a Jew and the world he lived in. Every society, it seems, gradually develops a series of social classes or groups: the “haves” and the “have-nots”, the prestigious and the scorned, the politically powerful and the oppressed. Jesus’ world was no different. Social standing in Jewish society had a lot to do with money. Jesus talked often about the rich and the poor, primarily because the gap between the two was so great. Jewish society also had its very poor, who were comparable with today’s homeless people.

Jesus challenged his society’s social structure by:

- Making the poor and the weak the center of his message and those to be most honored
- Telling the story of the good Samaritan. (Lk. 10:25-37; Mt. 22:34-40; Mk.12:28-34)
- Freely associating with women and accepting them as central participants in his ministry
- Embracing the sick and the “unclean”, and attacking the people with wealth and power who refused to share with those in need.

Jesus was more than a social revolutionary, more than someone committed to changing the social conditions of the people. He proclaimed a freedom deeper than freedom from social, economic, or political oppression. But it can never be ignored or minimized that his message included the condemnation of all social oppression—hunger, racial and sexual discrimination, political domination, and all the things that kept people from experiencing the fullness of life that was due them as sons and daughters of a loving God.

Activity: Role play the parable of the Good Samaritan. Have class participate as fully as possible.

Ask the question: Why were the people who were poor, outcasts, and life’s downtrodden attracted to Jesus? Who are today’s outcasts and how would Jesus respond to them?

Religious Practices and Persons

The features of Judaism that play a part in the Gospel stories where we get to know Jesus are the holy city of Jerusalem, the Temple, central religious practices such as feasts, and key religious-political groups and persons, including priests, scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and tax collectors. The Temple had been the center of the Jews’ religious life, but the Romans destroyed it in 70C.E. So after the time of Jesus synagogues became important for the Jews. The Sabbath was recognized as a central and sacred sign of Yahweh’s presence with the people so the Sabbath was kept holy.

Three major religious feasts of the Jews were:

Pentecost – celebration of Yahweh’s giving the Law to Moses.

The Day of Atonement – a time for the Jews to solemnly repent of their sins.

Passover – the miraculous liberation of the Israelites from Egypt.

The **Sadducees** were mainly the aristocracy of the priestly caste. They were liberal in politics but very conservative in religion. They rejected all attempts to add to or interpret the Law, and they rejected any belief in a resurrection after death.

The **Pharisees** were conservative in politics but liberal in religion. They were open to new developments in Jewish thought.

Optional activities: Arrange for a presentation by a rabbi on the major religious practices of contemporary Jews. **Or:** Organize a field trip to a synagogue, with a tour and a rabbi's explanation of the synagogue's role in Jewish religious life.

Waiting for a Messiah

From the time of King David – about one thousand years before Jesus—“the One who is to come” was spoken of and described in different ways by different people. Over the many years of waiting, the Son of David that the people yearned for took on mythic qualities.

By the time the Jews were living under the complete domination of the Romans, the Messiah had taken on the image of a mighty warrior-king, a great military leader, one who would overthrow the Romans and make the Jews a mighty and free nation once again. This militaristic image of the Messiah would clash dramatically with the life and message of Jesus and have major implications in the Gospel story.

Activity: Imagine what it would be like to yearn for a messiah in today's world. List five or more qualities that such a person would have to possess in order to be recognized as a great leader by people today.

FYI: Jesus seldom if ever referred to himself as the Messiah or Christ. In Mark's Gospel, the first Gospel written, there is only one case when Jesus may vaguely have been doing so (Mark 9:41). In other scriptural passages, Jesus is called the Messiah by others: Mark 5: 1-20, Mark 10:46-52, Matt.16:13-20, Mark 14: 53-65.

Closing Prayer: Read Phil. 2: 5-11. Reflect on how this passage teaches us about the humility of Jesus.

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