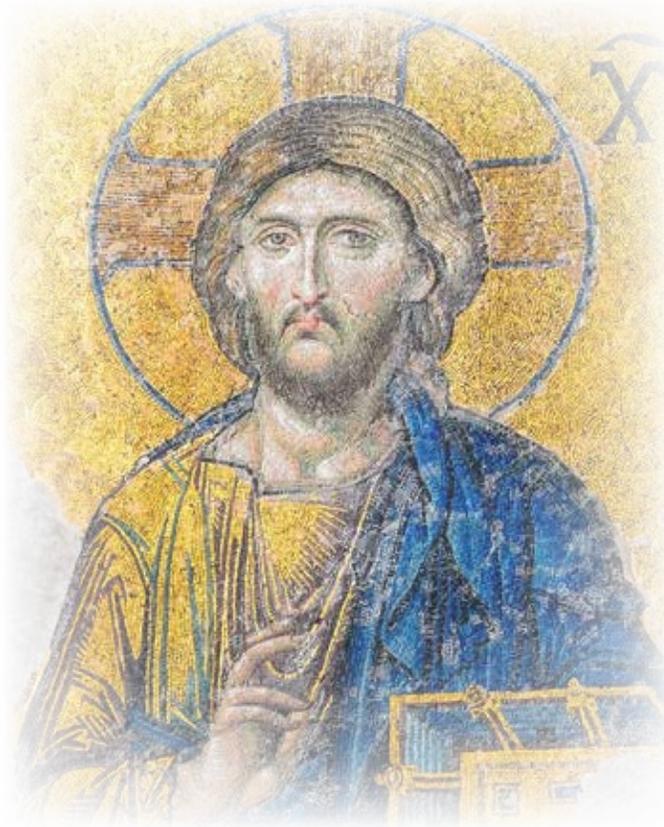


Session 5



WHO
IS JESUS?

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WHO IS JESUS?

Just a Good Man or Lord of Our Lives?



LEADER PREPARATION OVERVIEW

Who is Jesus? Today most people agree that Jesus was a historical figure, a first-century Jew who was crucified by the Romans in the city of Jerusalem. Many would even agree that he offered some good moral teachings such as “love your neighbor,” “turn the other cheek,” and “don’t judge.” However, the idea that Jesus is not just a moral or spiritual teacher, but God himself, is as controversial now as it was in Jesus’s own time. It’s much easier to put Jesus into the same category as Buddha, or Mohammed, or Confucius—a spiritual messenger, a prophet, a philosopher, but certainly not divine.

However, that is exactly what Christians profess in the Creed—“I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.” Jesus is not just someone sent from God; he himself is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.”

This is not just something the early Christians invented. Jesus himself made the claim to divinity. If Jesus is not God, then, as C.S. Lewis famously noted, he is either a liar or a madman. But the fact that he did say that he was God, the I AM of the Old Testament, means that each of us is challenged to make a decision about what we believe. The question Jesus asked the Apostles, “But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29) is the same question he asks each of us throughout the centuries. How we answer his question makes all the difference for our lives. It is the fundamental decision each one of us must make—a decision that will last throughout eternity.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How, in the fullness of time, God has spoken to us through his Son, Jesus**
- **How Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, took on human nature without losing his divine nature**
- **That Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and man**
- **That Jesus is one divine person who possesses two natures**
- **Why Jesus became man so that we can be reconciled to God and to know God’s love**

STEP # 1

OPENING PRAYER



SAY: Welcome to our session on “Who is Jesus?” This week we are going to talk about Jesus. No one who has ever lived has had a greater impact on the world than Jesus of Nazareth, and the question of Jesus’s identity is central to our faith. Before we look more deeply into that question, let us begin by saying together the prayer of St. John Gabriel Perboyre, a French priest who died as a martyr in China on September 11, 1840.

Have participants turn to page 37 of their Guide to find the Opening Prayer and discussion questions.



O my Divine Savior,
Transform me into yourself.
May my hands be the hands of Jesus.
Grant that every faculty of my body
May serve only to glorify you.
Above all,
Transform my soul and all its powers
So that my memory, will, and affection
May be the memory, will, and affections
Of Jesus.
I pray you To destroy in me
All that is not of you.
Grant that I may live
But in you, by you, and for you,
So that I may truly say, with St. Paul,
'I live—now not I—
But Christ lives in me.'
Amen.

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Optional)

**Suggested Scripture readings for a
Celebration of the Word of God**

(see Introduction to the Leader's Guide)

John 14:10

John 17:5

Philippians 2:6

Luke 5:22–24

STEP #2

INTRODUCTION



SAY: Many people today view Jesus as just one of the many great moral and religious teachers the world has offered. But Jesus himself claimed to be much more than that. He claimed to be God. As Christians, we profess that each time we say the Creed. But what does it really mean to say that Jesus is true God and true man?

In this session we are going to explore that question, as well as:

- How, in the fullness of time, God has spoken to us through his Son, Jesus
- How Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, took on human nature without losing his divine nature
- That Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and man
- That Jesus is one divine person who possesses two natures
- Why Jesus became man so that we can be reconciled to God and to know God's love

We will start by watching a short video.

STEP #3

VIDEO PART I: WHO IS JESUS?



Play video Part I, which will play for approximately 12 minutes.



DIGGING DEEPER

Jesus Christ

We use the word “Christ” after the name of Jesus so often some people may think that was his last name, like Smith or Jones. But “Christ” isn’t a name; it’s a title, meaning “anointed one.” It comes from the Greek word *Christos*, which is a translation of the Hebrew word for Messiah. So, when we say Jesus Christ, we are really saying “Jesus, the Messiah”—the one anointed by God to accomplish his plan of salvation. It is a mini-statement of faith, an acknowledgement that Jesus is truly the Son of God.

STEP #4

PROCLAMATION

After the video has stopped,



SAY: We just heard how viewing Jesus merely as a good man or a great moral teacher isn't a logical option. As the presenter pointed out, Jesus claimed to be God. And that means we have to make a decision about him. Either Jesus is who he said he was—God, or he was knowingly trying to deceive people about his identity, in which case he is a liar. Or he was crazy and confused about his identity, and hence a lunatic. But simply saying Jesus was merely a good man or just a good teacher does not make much sense.

Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, the divine Son of God, became incarnate, meaning he took on human flesh. In doing so, he assumed human nature without losing his divine nature. This means that Jesus is truly God and truly man. Because of this, he is the only mediator between God and humanity. The Son of God became man in Jesus Christ so that through his life, Death, and Resurrection we might be reconciled with God, know God's love, have the perfect model for holiness, and share in God's life. This mystery of Christ, the God-man, lies at the very heart of our Christian faith.



DIGGING DEEPER

The God Who Is One of Us

Although today more people might deny Christ's divinity rather than his humanity, the opposite was true in the early years of the Church. Several early heresies (false teachings) claimed that Jesus only seemed to be human. Because belief in Jesus being both God and man is the cornerstone of our faith, the first Church fathers knew they had to clearly state the incredible mystery that Jesus is truly, fully human; that he is the God who is one of us in all things but sin.

STEP # 5

VIDEO PART II: JESUS—BOTH GOD AND MAN



SAY: In our second video segment, we will hear what it means when we say that Jesus is both God and man and what that means in our lives today.



Play video Part II, which will play for approximately 19 minutes.

STEP # 6

BREAK

After stopping the video,



SAY: Now let's take a short break. When we come back, we will discuss some of the things we learned in this last video segment.

Break should be about 10 minutes.

STEP # 7

DISCUSSION

Have participants refer to their Guides to find these questions.



SAY: Welcome back to our session on Jesus. Let's talk a bit about what we learned in the last video segment.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

According to the video, what are the three things Jesus did during his public ministry that point to his being truly God?

(We can know that Jesus is truly God because: he does what only God can do, such as rebuke and calm the storm [Mark 4:39]. Most importantly, Jesus was raised from the dead. He knows what only God can know. He reads people's hearts and minds and recounts their life stories [John 4:17-19]. He tells us he is God by using the phrase "I AM" [John 8:58; see also: John 6:51, John 11:25, and John 14:6], which, in the original biblical language, is God's own name [Exodus 3:14].)

DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

What do you think it means for Jesus, the divine Son of God, to be truly and fully human? Can you imagine Jesus being tired, hungry, or angry? How does seeing Jesus as having all the same feelings and experiences you have (except for sin) change the way you tell him your needs and desires in prayer?

(It is sometimes easier to think of Jesus in his divine nature, and not his human. It can be hard to imagine the divine Son of God being tired (even though he took a nap—Matthew 8:24), or hungry (even though he looked for ripe figs—Mark 11:12), or angry (even though he tossed the money changers out of the Temple—Matthew 21:12–13). Realizing that Jesus had similar feelings and experiences as the rest of us should give us the courage and confidence to approach him in prayer, knowing that he really will understand what we are going through. You may want to share Philippians 2:5–11, which describes how Jesus, though he was equal with God the Father, “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” and “humbled himself” to experience “even death on a cross.”)

DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

Dr. Sri explained to us the meaning of the painting of Jesus in the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome. How does that painting confront us with a decision we all have to make?

(The toga Jesus is wearing, and his raised arm, signify that he is a teacher. However, the light emanating from Jesus’s robe signifies that he is not just any teacher but a divine teacher. Secondly, Jesus standing on the fiery clouds signifies his second coming to judge the living and the dead. The painting asserts who Jesus claimed to be—the Lord God who will judge us all. He has not given us the option of believing that he was anyone else, like a good moral teacher, for example. So we are confronted with the decision to accept him as Savior, Lord and God or to reject him.)

STEP # 8 (OPTIONAL) SUMMARY & EXHORTATION

At this point, the facilitator, small group leader, or catechist has the option to give a summary of the main points that have been presented in the video segments. Here are some key points you may want to cover.

- God spoke to his people through the prophets during the Old Testament times, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1–2; CCC 65).
- In the fullness of time, the divine Son of God became incarnate, meaning that he took on human flesh. In doing so, he assumed human nature without losing his divine nature (CCC 479).
- Jesus Christ is not part God, part man. He is truly God and truly man, in the unity of his divine person (CCC 464).
- Because Jesus is both God and man, he is the one and only mediator between God and man (CCC 480).
- The Son of God became man in order to save us by reconciling us with God, so that we might know God's love, to be our model of holiness, and to make us partakers of the divine nature (CCC 457–460).
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is one divine person who possesses two natures. He has a divine nature and a human nature, which are united in the one divine person. This mystery of Christ is the profound union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Son (CCC 483).
- “After the Council of Chalcedon [451 AD], some made of Christ's human nature a kind of personal subject. Against them, the fifth ecumenical council, at Constantinople in 553 confessed that ‘there is but one hypostasis [or person], which is our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity.’ Thus everything in Christ's human nature is to be attributed to his divine person as its proper subject, not only his miracles but also his sufferings and even his death: ‘He who was crucified in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity’” (CCC 468).

STEP #9

CALL TO CONVERSION



SAY: Jesus asks each of us, “Who do you say that I am?” Let’s take a few minutes to consider how we can more fully welcome Jesus and his Lordship in our lives. Use your Guide to write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Prayerfully read the following quote from C.S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*, which was mentioned in the video and is found in your Guide.

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (C.S. Lewis was an Oxford professor and a famous 20th century defender of the Christian faith. He is also the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.)

Now, prayerfully imagine Jesus standing before you and asking you the question he asked his Apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” How would you answer him?

2. Jesus tells us to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). What do you seek first in your life? Do you truly put Jesus first in your life? Or do you seek other things to fulfill you, and have God as just a part of your life?
3. Allowing Jesus to reign over our lives as Lord requires submitting our will to his. It means following his teachings, living the way he wants us to live, and trusting that he knows and desires what is best for us. Write down one or two areas in your life where the way you are living now could be more in line with Jesus’s teachings. What can you do this week to begin living more with Jesus as Lord of your life?

STEP # 10

CLOSING PRAYER



SAY: I hope you take time this week to reflect on who Jesus is and what he means in your life.



Let's close our time together today by praying a prayer of self-dedication written by St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits.

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty,
my memory, my understanding and my whole will.
All that I am and all that I possess you have given me:
I surrender it all to you to be disposed of according to your will.
Give me only your love and your grace;
with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.
Amen.



FOR FURTHER READING

For more in-depth reading about Jesus, see the following *Catechism* passages:

Jesus Christ: "Mediator and fullness of all revelation": CCC 65–67

True God and true man: CCC 464–469, 479–483

Jesus reconciles us with God: CCC 457–460

The two natures of Jesus: CCC 470–478

OTHER RESOURCES:

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 7

Jesus of Nazareth (three volumes) by Pope Benedict XVI

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

The Life of Christ by Venerable Fulton Sheen

To Know Jesus Christ by Frank Sheed

Made for More by Curtis Martin