

JESUS REVEALED

STUDENT

Cover image by Lynda Baker Miller

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To the Student:

From the time he was in middle school, the scouts were watching a lanky young basketball player from Akron, Ohio. There was great promise, certainly, but there were questions as well. Was it the rest of his teammates who helped him stand out? Would he gain the muscle strength he'd need to make it big? Was his mind tough enough to understand the strategic elements of the game? Could he adapt when a play fell apart? Would he be a team player or a ball hog? Could he withstand the temptations that would surely come his way? What kind of player, what kind of man, would he reveal himself to be?

Over time, LeBron James answered all those questions. As a young player he attracted the attention of fans worldwide who watched to see how he and his game would develop. Some rooted for his success; others undoubtedly waited for a fault or a failure to take him down.

As Jesus begins his public ministry, his words and actions reveal who he is. John the Baptizer announces his coming. Crowds begin to gather. Questions arise about this new teacher and healer. Is he the Messiah? Will he save us? Jesus is revealing himself as the God's Chosen One, but his mission is not what is expected. Look for the signs that God has once again stepped into history to rescue his people. Jesus' touch is healing, his words are power, and his weapon is love.

Stay tuned!



Memory Verses

Lesson 1

³A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness prepare
the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.

⁵And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:3-5) (71)

Lesson 2

²⁶So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28) (51)

Lesson 3

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV) (63)

Lesson 4

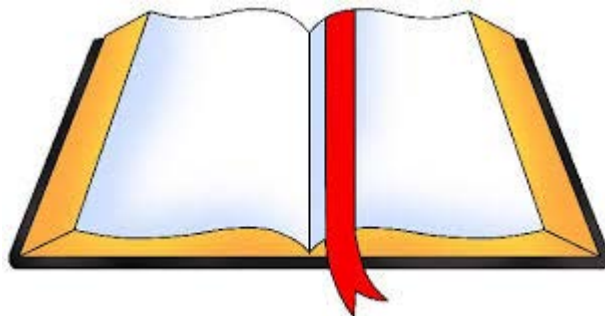
¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19) (50)

Lesson 4

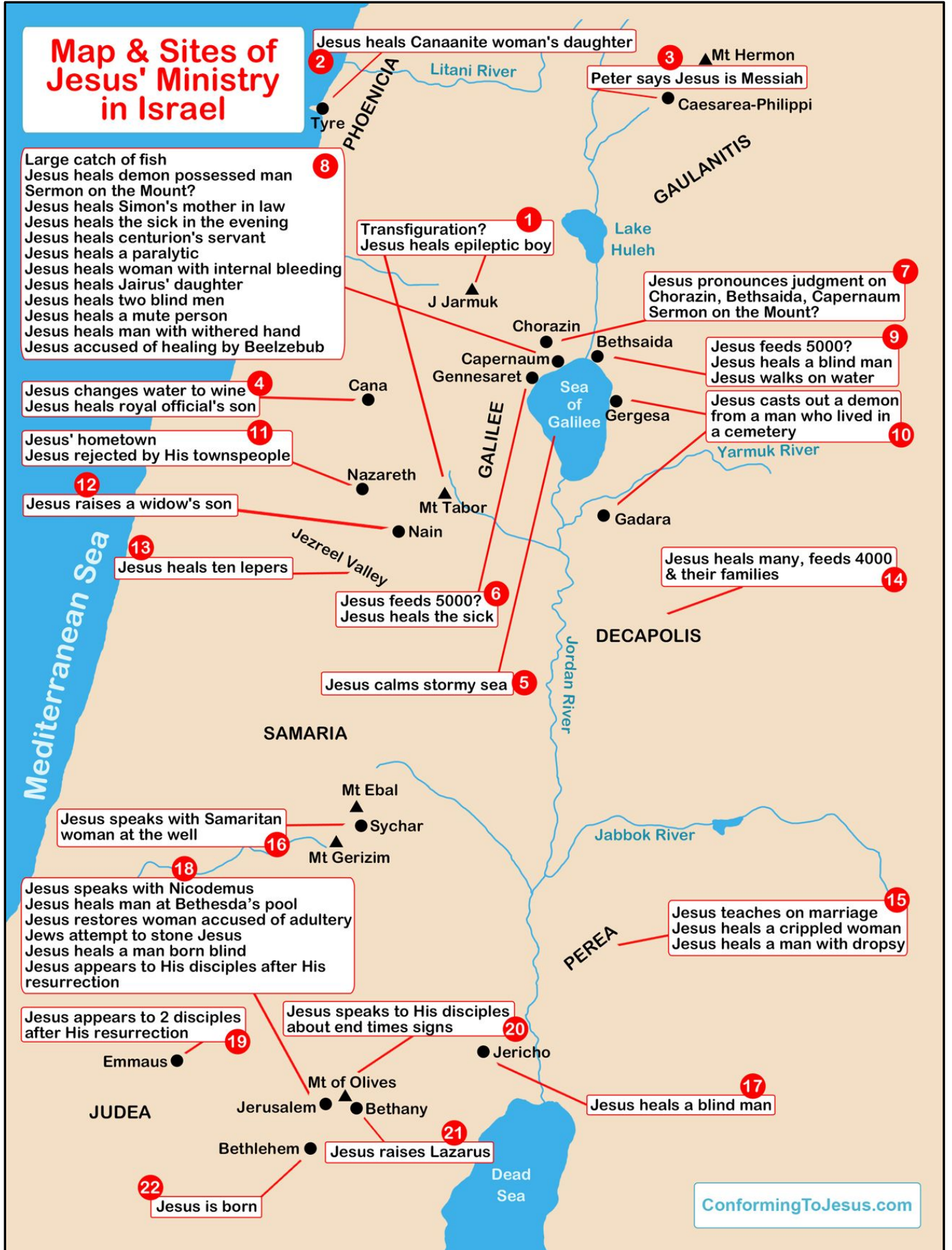
⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11) (52)

Lesson 5

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you
might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask
in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each
other. (John 15:16-17) (45)



Map & Sites of Jesus' Ministry in Israel



HOLY LAND: NEW TESTAMENT THEN & NOW® RELIEF MAP



Lesson One John the Baptizer



The Time Has Come

It's time. It's past time. The Jewish people living under the brutal oppression of the Roman Empire yearn for a messiah who will free them to rule their own kingdom. God promised, after all. How much longer must they wait? They have waited a lifetime, it seems, many lifetimes in fact.

And then a voice. A man named John has come out of the wilderness and is drawing crowds to the Jordan River. He cries:

Repent!

Justice!

Prepare!

His name is John

John was the son of Zechariah, a temple priest in Jerusalem. Zechariah interacted daily with visitors to the temple who came to worship, make sacrifices, give offerings, and pay their temple tax. Zechariah would be well acquainted with the power held by Jewish authorities who ruled from the Temple. John likely received the education of one entering the priesthood and at age thirty would be expected to join his father in the Temple.



But John separated from the priestly path laid out for him by his father and followed the path of the prophet instead. He lived rough, in the desert. Dressed in animal skins and eating what could be scavenged or donated, he now drew crowds from the cities and towns along the southern portion of the Jordan River who came to hear his call.

A Voice in the Wilderness

Many of God's prophets, including Elijah, went to the desert for safety, seeking refuge from kings who were angered by the prophets' warnings that God was not pleased with their rule. The Israelite people had even chased prophets out of the region threatening to kill them. Unwilling to hear God's message of judgement or to change their ways, they rejected the prophets who escaped to find safety in the wilderness. Now John proclaims from the wilderness, away from the Roman and Jewish authorities whose power he challenges.

The Call of the Prophet

Prophets were God's spokespeople, proclaiming God's word directly to the people and their rulers. They were not popular. After all, their mission was to restore God's people to faithfulness and proclaim God's plan. When the Israelites strayed from God's plan and purpose, God sent prophets to admonish and redirect them, saying, in effect, "This is not God's plan for you."

While we often think of prophets as people who predicted the future, the prophets of Scripture did not think of themselves that way. They proclaimed God's plan, past, present, and sometimes future, to God's people.

So was John a prophet? Certainly, the people who went to see John believed he was; more than that, they believed he was Elijah returned. How could the people believe that John was actually Elijah? Elijah's ministry in Israel took place around 875-850 BCE, *centuries* before John's appearance on the scene!



*San Juan Bautista by
Alejandro de Loarte
~1600*

Look up the passages about Elijah from the Hebrew scripture and link them to the accounts of John the Baptizer in the New Testament. Write a summary of the connection you find.

Scripture	Connection
I Kings 19:4 ~ Matthew 3:1	
Malachi 3:1 ~ Matthew 3:3b	
Malachi 4:5 ~ Luke 1:16-17	
II Kings 1:8 ~ Matthew 3:4	
II Kings 2:11 ~ Matthew 11:14	
II Kings 2:11 ~ Matthew 17:10	

John denies that he is Elijah of old, but to the Jews of Jesus' time he looks like Elijah, he sounds like Elijah, surely God must be at work in this man. As you read in the last two verses above, Jesus describes John as an Elijah, the one who comes before, and proclaims the work of the Lord. It was John, calling God's people to faithful living in preparation for the Savior. John's proclamation was exciting, but what did he mean? Was the Messiah coming? Was it the end of days? *How* should they prepare? "Repent!" John says, "that's how."

Repent!

John's preaching is neither gentle nor comforting. After all, what kind of preacher calls their listeners 'snakes'?! The people believe that being children of Abraham, God's chosen people will save them. *Not so!* says John, you are not living in accordance with God's law. God can save or condemn who God pleases and God is ready to cut you down at the root. In other words, clean up your act!

John does not tell his listeners that they must give up everything they own and live like him in the desert. He doesn't tell the hated tax collectors to stop collecting money or tell soldiers to stop being soldiers. What he does tell them is to do their job fairly, without bringing harm to others. As participants in a system that had the power to harm people, he demands that they do justice in their position. He challenged everyone to remember the poor and those who are victimized by systems of oppression. He calls us all, whatever our position, to be mindful of those in our society who are hurt by our actions or indifference in our pursuit of wealth or power.

What Is True Repentance?

John teaches all of us that repentance is more than saying “I’m sorry.” It’s more than feeling ashamed about our sin, although that is an important step. John teaches that true repentance means a change of heart: sorrow for our sin *and* a change of behavior. For John’s listeners this is a wake-up call. It’s time to make a U-Turn in their life. A change of heart must be followed by a change in actions.



The apostle Paul reinforces this in Acts 26:20: *“First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea., and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.”*

Who Is the One to Come?

John’s prophetic message is clear: God is about to act. We repent now to meet the One who is coming with a “clean slate. Who is the One to Come? All four gospels record John’s ministry and preaching. Look up each verse and summarize how John describes the coming Messiah.

	Who is the One to come?
Matthew 3:1-3	
Mark 1:7	
Luke 3:17	
John 1:15	
John 1:16	
John 1:29	
John 1:34	

Reflect on Your Learning

1. Would you like to be one of God's prophets? Explain.

2. Who do you consider a prophet in today's world? Why?

3. What do you think prophets today should be proclaiming? To whom?

4. What part of your life feels like the wilderness to you?

5. Read the story of the Lord's appearance to Elijah in I Kings 19:10-13. Is your life quiet enough to hear God's "whisper"? How can you find this quietness?

Summing Up Jesus Revealed

What does John's preaching ministry reveal about Jesus? Write your ideas on the scroll below. Add more ideas as you listen to and participate in the class discussion.



WHO IS JESUS?

Lesson Two Jesus' Baptism



Cleansing Waters

Many religions use water as a symbol of cleansing, purification, or rebirth. Muslims wash their hands, face, and feet before entering a mosque to worship, using the time of washing as a preparation of heart and mind for worship and a reminder that the space and time they are entering is sacred and set apart. Hindus revere the waters of the river Ganges, for them a symbol of life. For Christians, of course, the waters of baptism are a central tenet of faith, washing away the sinful self and bringing new life and forgiveness of sins.

For the Jews of Jesus' time, a **rite**, or ceremony, of immersing themselves completely was not a new idea. The ***mikveh***, or ritual bath, allowed them to regain ritual purity. Mindful of being pure before God, immersing in the mikveh's waters was a way of connecting to God by following the requirements and traditions of their community.

Some Jewish women and men still use the ***mikveh***. Women may use it following their monthly cycle, or after childbirth. Men may use the mikveh before Friday Sabbath or before a major holiday like Yom Kippur. Both men and women will use the mikveh to mark major life transitions like marriage, following a surgery, or the loss of a loved one.



John's Baptism

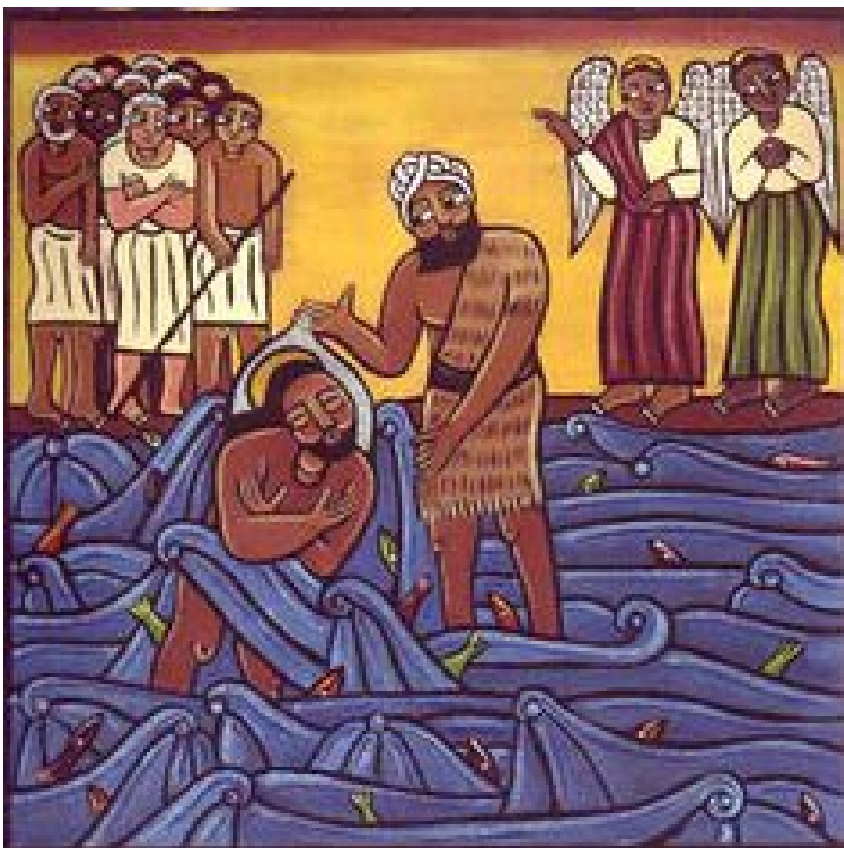
Archaeologists have found hundreds of *mikveh* sites throughout the holy land, so we know that the ritual of immersion was familiar to those who went to see and hear John preaching. But John was doing something different: something new.

John called his rite a “baptism of repentance.” John demanded that his listeners think beyond the ritual practice of a *mikveh*. He demands an inner change of heart and life. He challenged his listeners to make their lives acceptable to God, not just to the religious authorities. John's baptism would not have to be repeated. For the baptized, this marked the point of the U-turn in their life.

Another way that John's baptism was different was that it was public. Unlike the private ritual of the *mikveh*, when a person stepped into the Jordan River to be baptized by John, they were making a public declaration of repentance and faith. Those who witnessed this act could support the baptized person in their steps to repentance and hold them accountable.

Finally, John's baptism introduced a new understanding of community. Wealth, status, popularity - none of that mattered. All who recognized their need for God were welcome. This stands in contrast to the Temple authorities who required rites and offerings for inclusion. Even soldiers and tax collectors were welcome!

John gathered disciples and his following grew. And many of those followers were present to see John's surprise and perplexity on the day Jesus came with a request to be baptized himself.



Jesus' Baptism

Jesus' baptism is recorded in all four gospels, but each author records the event differently. Read the accounts and record the information in the chart below and then answer the questions that follow. Not every box will be filled.

	Matthew 3:13-17	Mark 1:9-11	Luke 3:21-22	John 1:29-34
Where did Jesus come from?				
What did John say?				
What did John say?				
Describe the Spirit's appearance.				
Describe the voice from heaven.				

Answer each of the following questions. Be sure to correct any misunderstandings or add new information as you listen and participate in the class discussion.

1. What questions do you have after reviewing all four gospel accounts?

2. What do all four accounts have in common?

3. Which gospel gives the most detail about Jesus' baptism?

4. Which gospel is the most different from the other three? How is it different?

5. Why do you think the four accounts of the same event are so different?

Synoptic Gospels

Why was Jesus Baptized?

Write a heading for each section describing why Jesus was baptized.

As you read previously in Matthew 3:15, Jesus tells John that it is necessary for Jesus to be baptized in order to “fulfill all righteousness.” What does that mean? Jesus will act in accordance with God’s will, he will meet all the requirements set by God for the Messiah.

In John 1:29, John identifies Jesus as the “Lamb of God.” In so doing, the prophet John is foretelling Jesus’ part of God’s plan for salvation. Even at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry saving purpose of Jesus’ work is being made known.

In all four gospels God breaks into human existence when Jesus emerges from the baptismal waters. Heaven opens; those present see and hear for themselves that Jesus is consecrated to God and has God’s ‘stamp of approval.’ Jesus is not another prophet like John; He is connected to the divine.

As the *mikveh* immersion provided a way to mark entrance into a new phase of human life, so John’s baptism marked the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. John declared it! The Messiah had arrived!

Throughout his ministry, Jesus will set an example of the life he wants his followers to lead. Without sin himself, nonetheless Jesus identifies with our sinful condition and our need for the forgiveness God offers in baptism. He begins his ministry by teaching through his own example, what he wants us to do.

Reflect on Your Learning



Beginning here we glimpse the Three-in-one;
The river runs, the clouds are torn apart,
The Father speaks, the Spirit and the Son
Reveal to us the single loving heart
That beats behind the being of all things
And calls and keeps and kindles us to light.
The dove descends, the spirit soars and sings
'You are beloved, you are my delight!'

In that quick light and life, as water spills
And streams around the Man like quickening rain,
The voice that made the universe reveals
The God in Man who makes it new again.
He calls us too, to step into that river
To die and rise and live and love forever.

By Malcolm Guite

Summing Up Jesus Revealed

What does Jesus' baptism reveal about who he is? Write your ideas on the scroll below. Add more ideas as you listen to the class discussion.



WHO IS JESUS?

Lesson Three Jesus Is Tempted



"The Baptism of Jesus" by Mike Moyers

Jesus in the Wilderness

After the ecstasy of his baptism, Jesus turns away from the villages and towns of Judea and walks into the wilderness. The wilderness will be a place of testing for Jesus. For forty days, he is alone, preparing for the task ahead. He fasts; he prays. His body weakens.

Matthew 4:1-11

- A: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.
- B: **The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”**
- C: **Jesus answered, It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”**
- A: Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.
- B: **“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:**
“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’
- C: **Jesus answered him, It is also written: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”**
- A: Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.
- B: **“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”**
- C: **Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”**
- A: Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Jesus in the Wilderness



Both of these photographs are of the Judean desert where Jesus may have spent his 40 days fasting before facing the temptation from the devil.



Geography matters in studying scripture. For some in ancient times, the wilderness represented a place where God was not. There would be no divine rescue in the wilderness. For others the wilderness was a place of refuge. Remember how God's prophets found safety from their enemies in the wilderness. There they found a close connection to God.

What place or time is the wilderness for you?

The Three Temptations

Complete the chart below. Write or draw a picture of each of Satan's temptations. Then, using the footnotes in your Bible, copy the source AND verse of Jesus' response.

The Temptation	Jesus' Response

The Adversary

The word Satan means adversary in the language of the Bible and indeed that is what Satan was to Jesus and is to us. Satan clearly knows who Jesus is and the role he will play in God's plan of salvation. Satan wants to stop that plan in its tracks before Jesus has even begun his mission. Jesus is weakened by weeks of fasting; and he's lonely. He has left his family and community in Nazareth. In his baptism, he felt the exultation of God's love and approval; now he feels human hunger, exhaustion, loneliness, and perhaps even fear.

What did Satan look like? We don't know. For centuries, artists have portrayed Satan as they imagined him. There is no description of Satan's appearance in the Bible, however, only his actions.

Jesus in the Wilderness by John Cook



God Our Strength

Temptation comes from Satan, our adversary. In the wilderness, Satan wanted to defeat God's plan of salvation by getting Jesus to sin. Satan used lies and trickery; he even quoted Scripture! Satan's purpose in temptation is to tear us away from God by destroying our faith.

God tests us. God's purpose, however, is to draw us closer and to strengthen our faith. Experiences of testing reveal to us our need for God. The Israelites were tested by God for forty years of wandering in the wilderness. God was correcting them and demonstrating to them their total dependence on God. How often do we try to control events or relationships all on our own? God is asking us to draw closer and remember that God is the source of healing and strength.

Everyone will go through times when they question God or feel abandoned by God. People of faith are not immune to times of trial and doubt. But Scripture is clear that God walks with us through times of trial and strengthens us for the journey.



By Michael O'Brien, Canada

What Does It Mean?

The First Temptation: Turn Stones into Bread

Why shouldn't Jesus turn stones into bread? He has the divine ability to do so; why not? What would Satan win, what would we lose, if Jesus yielded to his very human hunger in this way?

Satan is tempting Jesus to use his supernatural powers to do what Jesus wants rather than what God wants. Jesus will not put his own needs before God's plan. Jesus has come to be one of us. To give in, even in the face of such extreme hunger, Jesus would not be able to identify with the humans he came to save.



Jesus will be a Messiah who teaches through his words and actions that God desires provision for all. The needs of the poor and the vulnerable must also be met. Jesus will not be a king who lives lavishly while others go without. Jesus has come to be a different Messiah than the people expected. True hunger, Jesus reminds us, is our hunger for God, for justice, for mercy. Jesus' response teaches us that our spiritual hunger can be satisfied only by God.

The Second Temptation: Jump from this tower; God will save you

How spectacular would it be for Jesus to make this leap?! Jesus would be famous, an influencer, he'd gain an instant following. Surely God would want Jesus to reach the greatest number of people as quickly as possible.

But *why* would the crowds follow Jesus? To see the next magic trick? How easy it would be to avoid the suffering, rejection, even death on the cross and take the shortcut fame would provide. No, Jesus will not lose focus on his mission. Popularity fades; a "win" by means of a shortcut isn't a genuine victory. Jesus will stay focused on the purposes of God. He chooses the hard way, the way of suffering. No one expects a suffering Messiah. Who will follow him on such a path?

There is a second reason for Jesus to refuse Satan's second temptation. "Do not put the Lord your God to the test," he replies. Understand the power dynamic at play, Jesus teaches. God can test us; we cannot test God. Jesus will not test whether God's promise of protection is true. He will trust, not test, God.

The Third Temptation: All these kingdoms will be yours

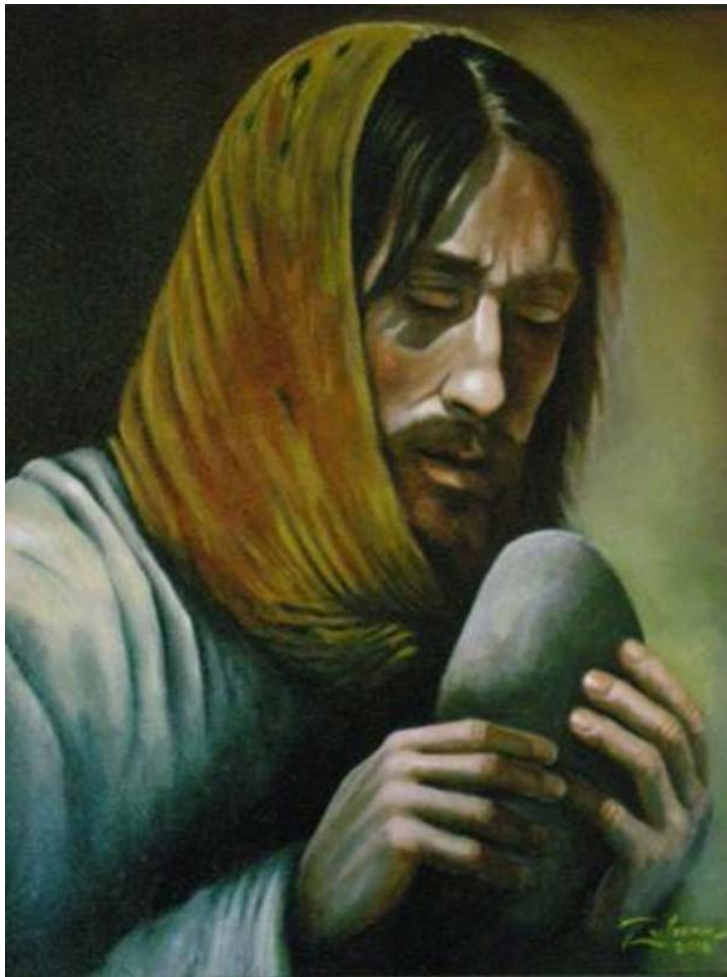
Again, this temptation seems almost logical. Why not? If you're the Messiah, you'll rule the world, that's what Messiahs do, isn't it? You'll be king of the world and ensure that justice will prevail. Everyone will have to do what you say, and since you're Jesus, you know best anyway, right? Who doesn't want to be in charge? Here is another shortcut, this time to power.

The cost is unacceptable. There is one God, and Jesus demonstrates that tempted though he may have been, he will not divide his worship between God and Satan. Jesus will not have Satan give him the world; instead, he will take the world away from Satan. Jesus will not be diverted from his mission as Messiah.

He is not on earth to gather political or military power; he is not here to overthrow Rome as his people hope and expect. The kingdom Jesus desires is a spiritual one, to rule your heart.

What If...?

What would have happened if Jesus had not resisted Satan's temptations? Then he would need a savior himself! To "qualify" to be the Savior of the world, Jesus must pass the test that we cannot. Jesus calls on Heaven's power-truth and goodness- to fight Satan's power-lies and evil.



What does it mean - now?

Everyone faces temptations like the ones Jesus faced. Brainstorm ways people today experience temptations like Jesus did in the wilderness.

Satisfying Our Own Desires Over the Needs of Others

Taking a Shortcut or the Easy Way Out

The Desire for Power Over Others

Resisting Temptation



*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted,
he is able to help those who are being tempted.
(Hebrews 2:18)*

God has not left us to fight the battle against temptation alone. Jesus has won the victory over Satan. The battles may not be over, but the victory is won. Through Jesus, we are equipped to resist temptation. Jesus taught us in words and actions how to resist temptation.

Grounded in God's Word

Think about the dialogue between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness. Each time Satan approached Jesus with a new temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture to counter Satan's lies. Having knowledge of God's word helps us discern God's will and know the truth against Satan's lies.

Look up Matthew 4:6-7. Now Satan quotes Scripture to Jesus! But Satan quotes Psalm 91 incorrectly. Psalm 91 promises God's protection against outside forces, not protection from putting oneself in danger to test God. Jesus quickly tosses Satan's argument aside.

Too often, even today, Christians use the Bible as a weapon, quoting scripture to condemn those with whom they disagree. God gave us the word to bring salvation, to bring healing to the damage caused by sin. We see that best in the WORD that is Jesus. Jesus uses God's word to battle Satan, not to sow division or hatred. Jesus is God's Word in action: welcoming the outcast, eating with sinners, showing mercy not condemnation.

Jesus speaks directly of “false prophets” who mislead and deceive God’s people. Read Matthew 7:15-16a. How will we know when someone who claims to know God’s will is false?

Read each passage. How can God’s Word help you resist temptation?

Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. (Proverbs 30:5)

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)

God’s word is “alive and active” (Hebrews 4:12) Being grounded in God’s Word builds a strong foundation of faith. A life built on a strong foundation will not topple to Satan’s lies.

How are you building your foundation in God’s Word?

The Power of Prayer

Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness before encountering Satan. Certainly, he spent time in prayer. Prayer strengthens and feeds our faith. Like plugging a light into an outlet, a life connected to God in prayer is empowered. Prayer connects us to the strength of the One who did not succumb to temptation and can help us now.

In each of these cases, Jesus instructs his disciples about the role of prayer in resisting temptation. What does he say?

Matthew 6:13 _____

Luke 22:40 _____

Read each passage. How can prayer help you resist temptation?

Let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found... You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. (Ps. 32:6-7)

[God said to the people of Israel] Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

How will you connect with God in prayer?

The Strength of Community

Jesus built community. During his ministry his followers included men and women Jew and Gentile, peasant and priest, all connected by their desire to follow Jesus. After his ascension, the community of Jesus-followers continued to grow. This tiny sect, viewed with suspicion and hostility by others, supported each other in their faith.

A network of friends and family that support a person in their life of faith can help them stand strong when temptation comes their way. This community can also hold them accountable for their decisions. Staying connected to a community of faith us stay on God's 'narrow way.'

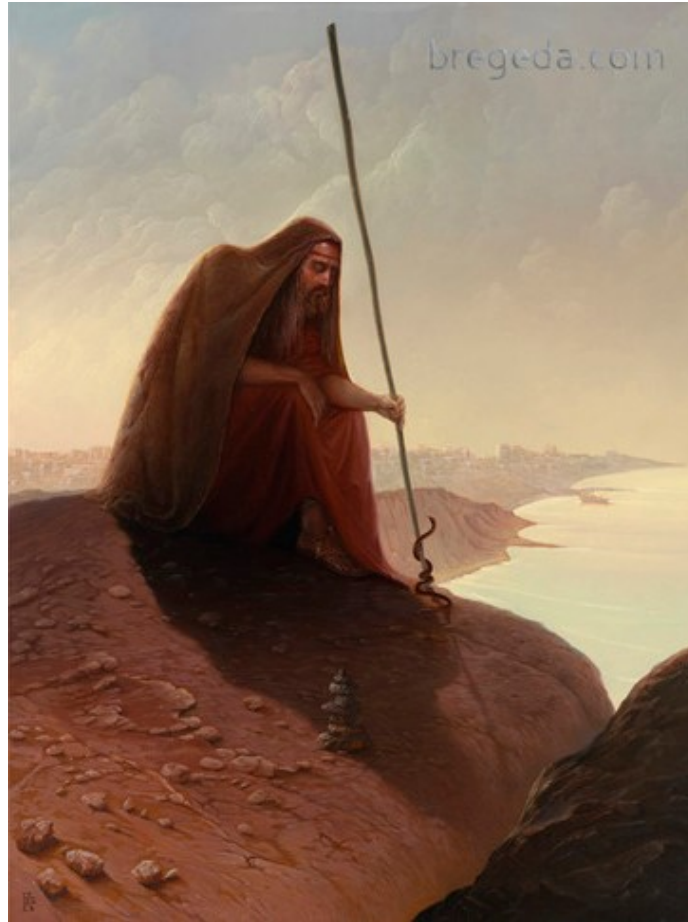
Read each passage. How can a faith community help you resist temptation?

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers, All the believers were united and shared everything. (Acts 2:42, 44)

*My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death....
(James 5:19)*

Are you part of a community that builds your faith?

Reflect on Your Learning



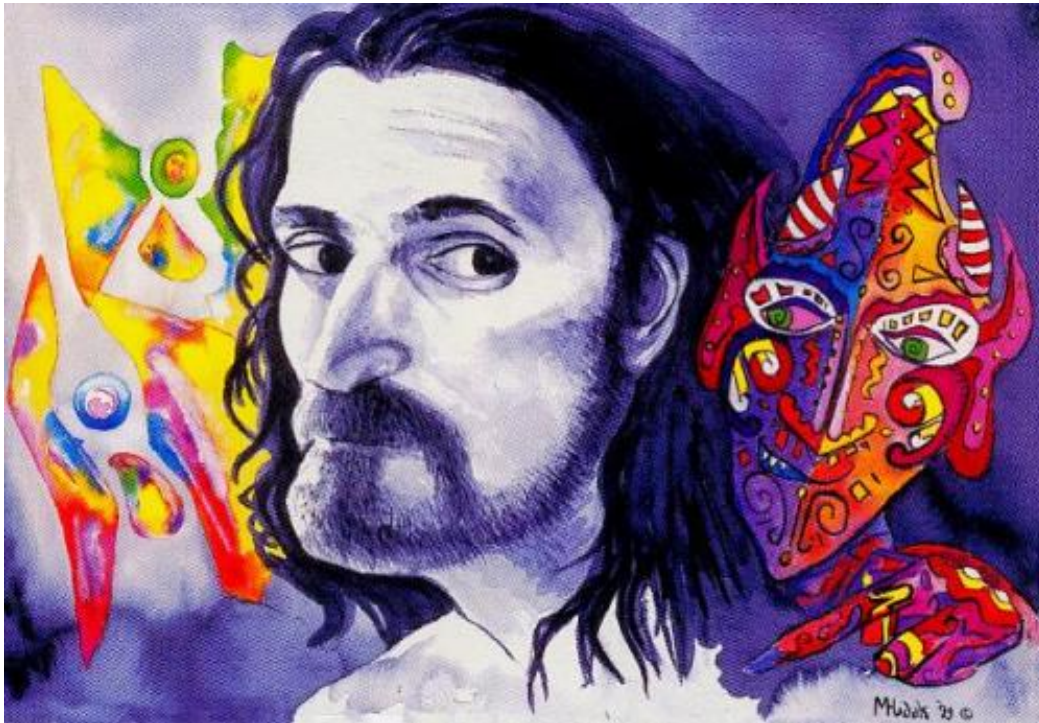
By Victor Bregeda, Russia

1. What is your first impressions of the painting?

2. What do you learn from the painting?

3. What does it make you feel?

4. What questions does it raise for you?



1. The painting above is a picture of Jesus' temptation by Michael Hudak, a Colombian artist. What do you think he saying about Jesus? What is he saying about temptation?

2. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV)*

What comfort or encouragement do these verses give you?

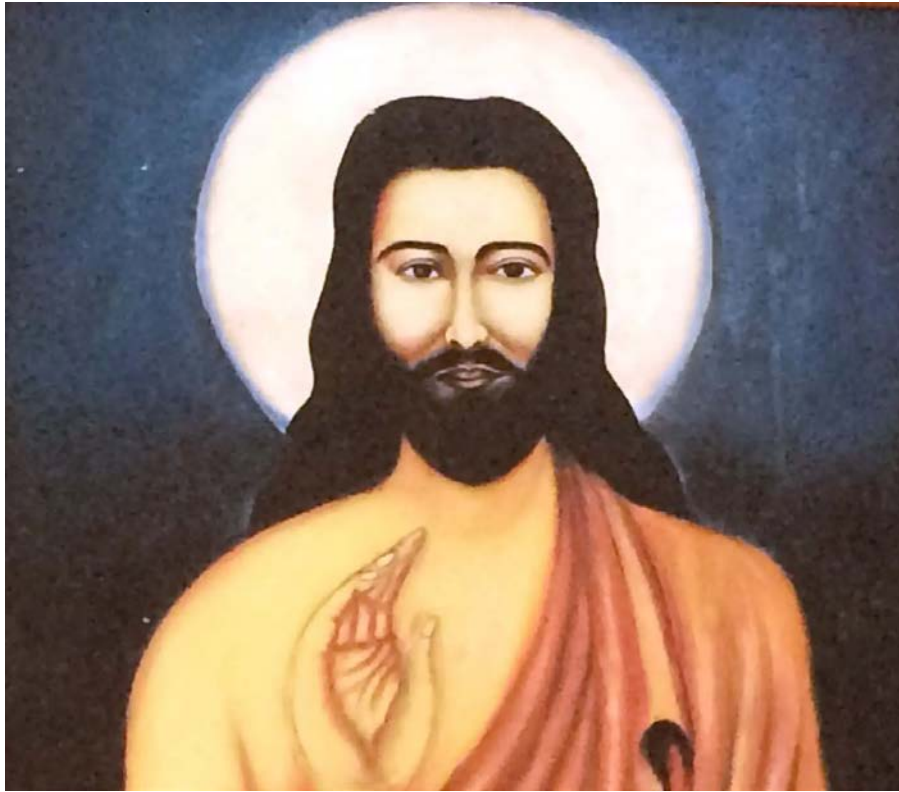
Summing Up Jesus Revealed

How is Jesus revealed in the story of his temptation? Write your ideas below.
Add more as you listen and participate in the class discussion.



WHO IS JESUS?

Lesson Five Jesus' Tells and Shows



(Jesus the Guru, artist unknown, India)

Jesus Teaches in the Synagogue

After his temptation in the desert, Jesus moves north to Galilee. This is home for Jesus. Although he was born in Bethlehem near Jerusalem, his family returned to Nazareth when it was safe, and it was there that Jesus grew up. Like so many Jews far from the Temple, Jesus and his family would worship regularly at a synagogue nearby.

A typical Sabbath day service included readings from the Hebrew Scripture: first a reading from the law, then the prophets. A rabbi taught the congregation, explaining the meaning of the Scripture by quoting well-known rabbis from the past. As Jesus traveled through Galilee he would be invited to read from the Scripture and to teach. The author of Mark's gospel says Jesus taught differently, not as the teachers of the law. Jesus' teaching is his own, not the rabbis of old.

Jesus Visits Nazareth

Jesus visits Nazareth, his hometown. This is Joseph's son. How nice to see him again! Where have you been? My, your mother has missed you! We've been hearing news of you! Are you a rabbi now? He is invited to read and is handed a scroll from the prophet Isaiah, and he reads:

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom
for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Jesus closes the scroll and hands it back to the attendant. He sits down, the posture and position of a teacher, and he says, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* Those listening respond favorably; they are "amazed at his gracious words."

What has Jesus said that resonates so deeply with this congregation? Why is this reading from Isaiah so "amazing" to the people listening? Jesus has quoted the prophet Isaiah who paints a word picture of the Messiah to come. In these verses, Isaiah has summarized Jesus the Messiah's mission on earth. Can it be that these promises made so long ago, will be fulfilled in this man from Nazareth—one of their own? Yes, Jesus says, God is causing it to happen here and now.

The expectations of the people must have been sky high. Surely, they thought, Jesus would free them, and God's kingdom was at hand. This was a teaching like no other.



Like the Isaiah passage Jesus quoted, Old Testament writers painted a picture of the coming of God's kingdom and the 'servant Messiah' to come. In the box next to each passage, summarize the description of God's kingdom God's "Servant Messiah" will bring.

	The Promise of the Messiah
Isaiah 42:1	
Exodus 30:22-31	
Psalms 68:9-10	
Isaiah 42:7	
Psalms 102:19-20 Isaiah 49:8-9	
Psalms 103:6 Isaiah 58:6	
Leviticus 25:10	

Is Jesus the One?

Excitement builds. This man, son of Joseph from Nazareth, has declared a Messianic prophecy is fulfilled. And here, in lowly Nazareth! Expectations rise. For the Jews in the synagogue in Nazareth and beyond, the hoped-for Messiah will bring freedom from the oppression of Rome's economic and military oppression. The Messiah will rule from his earthly throne, they believe, bringing justice and plenty for all - especially God's chosen people, the Jews.

A Second Look

How had Jesus already fulfilled the prophecy he read in the synagogue? Read Luke 3:21, Luke 3:1-14, and Luke 1:46-55.

A Warm Reception Turns Cold

The moment of excitement quickly takes a turn. Jesus tells the people that his ministry will not be all they expect. They want a show of power. They want miracles. Jesus reminds them that God's miracles are not to be used to gain fame and followers, nor simply as demonstrations of power. Miracles follow faithful hearts.

Jesus directs his listeners to the stories of miracles performed by two great prophets in Hebrew Scripture, trusting that his Jewish audience would know those stories well. Why should this anger the people? He tells the story of Elijah who, during a time of severe famine, is sent to a widow in Zarephath, a Gentile outside the circle of God's own people, and there he performs a miracle providing bread for her and her son. (I Kings 17:7-24)

Elisha, similarly, performs a miracle of healing. He instructs Naaman to wash in the Jordan River seven times and God will heal his leprosy. Who is Naaman? A Gentile and an important aide to the king of Aram, Israel's enemy. (II Kings 5:1-19a)

This will not do. The Messiah is to be *our* Messiah, not *theirs*! Jesus is not living up to the people's desires and expectations for the Messiah. The *others*, The Gentiles, the oppressors, the lepers, the tax collectors, they don't belong! Jesus is following God's plan, but for the Jews of his time it seems Jesus has his priorities backwards. The people reject his authority. He is sent on his way.



Jesus in Capernaum

Luke's gospel next records Jesus in Capernaum. Much larger than Nazareth, Capernaum was a bustling fishing village. It was a prosperous village located on the Via Maris highway linking Damascus in the north to Egypt in the south. Jews and Gentiles lived, worked, and traded in Capernaum. Archaeologists in the area have uncovered Roman bath houses and storage facilities as well as two synagogues. People of all economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds will have the opportunity to see and hear Jesus.

Nearly all of Jesus' disciples will come from Capernaum and the surrounding area. Look again at the map on page X. Note how much of Jesus' ministry takes place in this region. In fact, many scholars believe that Peter's home may have been "home base" for Jesus' ministry. Far from the watchful eye of the religious authorities in the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus begins his ministry of teaching and healing in the north.

Read Luke 4:31-37 and answer the questions.

1. Why were the people amazed at Jesus' teaching?

2. Why did Jesus' teaching have such authority:

3. What did Jesus do that further amazed the people in the synagogue?

4. Who recognized Jesus' identity?





Luke 4:38-39

5. How did Jesus respond when he was asked about Peter's mother-in-law?

6. What does this show about Jesus?

7. What is her response?

Luke 4:40-41

8. How does Jesus heal the people who come to him?

9. Why won't Jesus let the demons speak?

10. What word does Jesus use in verses 35, 39, and 41 towards sickness and evil? What does this tell us about Jesus?

Luke 4:42-44

11. Why do you think Jesus went to a solitary or deserted place the next morning?
(See Mark 1:35 where this story is also told.)

12. How is the response to Jesus different in Capernaum than in Nazareth?

Jesus' Awesome Authority

Jesus has amazed the people he meets with his authority as a teacher and a healer. He teaches like no other rabbi. His words are powerful, with such authority that the demons obey. The demons recognize Jesus' immediately. He is the "Holy One of God." The people recognize Jesus' authority, but do they recognize him as God's son? To the people of Nazareth, he's a pretender. To the people of Capernaum, he's a healer. Perhaps Peter's mother-in-law comes closest, recognizing Jesus as deserving of her gratitude and support.

Jesus' authority of course, is divine. God is at work, acting directly in human history through the person of Jesus Christ. God's plan for salvation is unfolding.

His fame is growing. It's time for Jesus to move on.



Reflect on your Learning



Is this a picture of Jesus? Why do you think so?

What is the blue object in the palm of his hand?

What do you think this artist is saying about Jesus?

Reflect on Your Learning

What would it look like to give God authority over your life? Your money? Your time? Your relationships? Your decisions? What changes can you make to give God this authority?

What does it mean to have authority over yourself?

In these lessons, Jesus used his authority to silence demons and heal the sick. How can you use the authority you have over yourself and others to follow Jesus' example by seeking justice, showing mercy, and helping the vulnerable and the outcast?

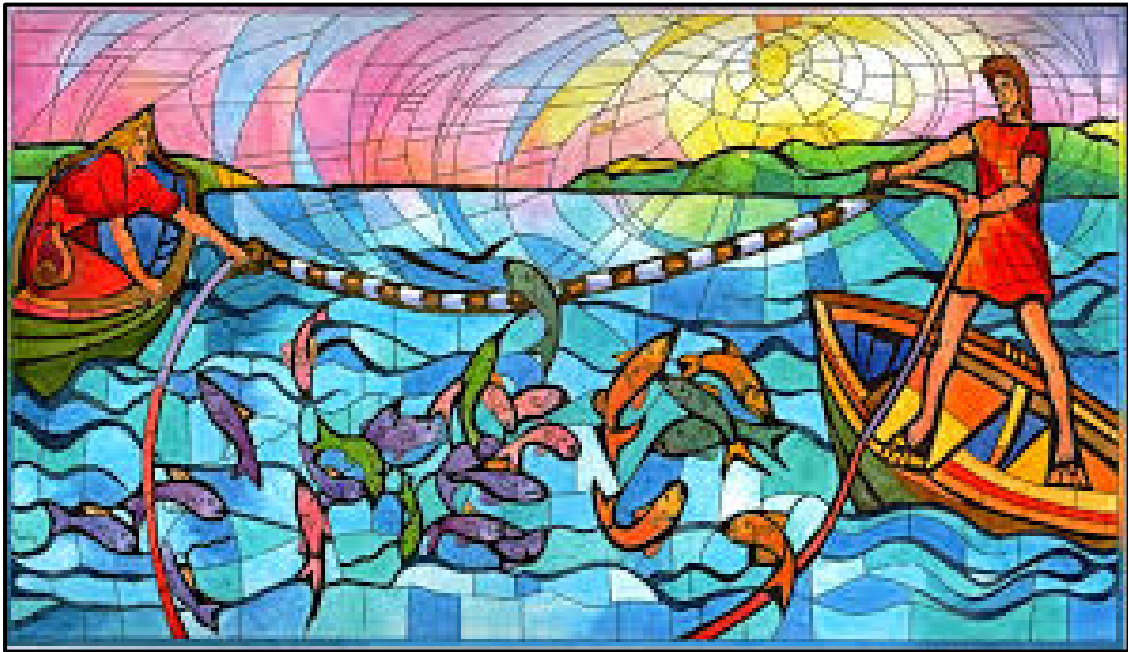
Summing Up Jesus Revealed

How is Jesus revealed in his teaching and healing? Write your ideas below. Add more as you participate in and listen to the class discussion.



WHO IS JESUS?

Lesson Five
Jesus Calls Disciples



Write the names of the twelve disciples of Jesus in the box below.

A large, empty rectangular box with a wavy, hand-drawn border, intended for writing the names of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

The First Disciples

The Gospel of John tells us that soon after Jesus' baptism, he walked by John and his disciples. "Look, the Lamb of God," John says again to his disciples. John has made it clear, even to his disciples, that Jesus is the Messiah to come. John's disciple Andrew and another of John's disciples approach Jesus. "Teacher, where are you staying?" Is this their way of politely asking, "Can we come and visit with you?" Andrew and the other disciple spend a day with Jesus.

What must that day have been like for Andrew? To meet the One that their leader John had been speaking of and preparing for all this time? What questions they must have had for him! The first thing Andrew does is go and find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah!" Andrew goes first to his brother Peter. "We have found the Messiah!" he exclaims and brings Peter to Jesus.



The author of the gospel of John recounts Jesus' meeting with two other disciples: Philip and Nathanael. "Follow me," Jesus calls Philip another disciple of John the Baptizer. And just as Andrew ran to tell his brother Peter the news of Jesus, so Philip runs to Nathanael (also called Bartholomew). "We've found him," Philip declares. "The One Moses wrote about in the Law and the prophets as well! It's Jesus of Nazareth!" Like Andrew and Peter, Nathanael was from Bethsaida. "Nazareth?! How could anything good come from that place?" Nathanael demonstrates the scorn so many from that place held towards Nazareth, looking down on it as an insignificant backwater. But perhaps Nathanael also held the typical understanding of Jews of that time - that the Messiah would come from Judea, never a place like Nazareth!

Jesus turns Nathanael's insult around. "You are a true Israelite," he tells Nathanael, "There's no deceit in you!" Nathanael is drawn to this man who seems to know him so well already. He responds in faith, "You are God's son!"

Fishing for People

As the imprisoned John recedes from view, Jesus steps forward. He is teaching and healing, and people are listening. Here is a teacher, a rabbi, who teaches like no other.

Andrew has joined Peter and they are fishing in the Sea of Galilee. They have only a net, and they're fishing from the shore. Are they too poor to own a boat? Had they lost their boat to a storm or sold it to pay taxes or a debt? "Come," Jesus says, "Follow me. "I will teach you how to fish for people," Jesus says There is a mission ahead, a message to

spread. We know Andrew has met Jesus before, but this time Andrew will not leave Jesus' side. He and Peter leave their net and follow.

Two other young men are fishing nearby. They're in a boat with their father, Zebedee. This seems to be a family business. Luke's gospel tells says that Zebedee even had a second boat and hired hands. Jesus calls James and John to follow. They abandon their father and the business and follow Jesus. They stand to inherit their father's boat and fishing business, but here, they walk away.



For all four of these fishermen, the response to Jesus is immediate and complete. They leave their family and their way of life, making a rare and serious commitment. The Bible does not record further discussions that Jesus had with these new disciples or how their families reacted. Scripture does make clear that Jesus' extraordinary authority.

Jesus Calls Matthew

Jesus finds Matthew at a tax collector's booth. Matthew was likely a customs officer, sitting at a booth on the road that led from Capernaum to Damascus, collecting tariffs on goods passing through. He had the authority to stop people and search their possessions which certainly caused resentment.



Few people were more unpopular than tax collectors. Considered sinners, cheaters, and traitors, they collected money from peasants and fishermen which supported their oppressors, the Roman Empire and its collaborators. Backed by the Empire, they had the power to collect more than was required and keep the extra for themselves. As a tax collector, Matthew had disgraced not only himself, but his family as well.

Like the others, Matthew follows immediately. He leaves the wealth and the power of the collection booth, and he joins Jesus' other disciples and follows. Will his perceived disgrace follow him? How will the other disciples receive him? Jesus seems not to care. When questioned by Pharisees about keeping company breaking the laws of table fellowship by eating with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus replies simply that just as doctors go where there are sick people who need healing, he will go where there are those who need mercy and acceptance. *Why aren't you doing the same?* he implies.

The Call, the Response, the Cost, the Claim

Review the stories of Jesus calling the disciples. Fill in each box to summarize your learning.

The Call

How did Jesus call the disciples?

The Response

How did the disciples respond to Jesus' call?

The Cost

What did it cost each disciple to follow Jesus?

The Claim

What did the disciples say about Jesus?

Not a Typical Rabbi

At this time of Jesus, the sight of a rabbi with a group of students following along was not unusual. Young scholars sought out the best rabbis, competing for a seat in his presence. What an honor it would be to say you had studied at the feet of an esteemed rabbi!

And who will follow the exciting new rabbi Jesus? If Jesus really wants to impress, he should attract the best and brightest young men to follow. But fishermen?! Do they even know how to read? A tax collector?! No one will listen to you now, Jesus. A revolutionary?! You're just asking for trouble from Rome.

Jesus was clearly not going to be a traditional rabbi. Compare his way to the traditions of the time.

“Respectable teachers usually waited for disciples to choose them; only the most radical sages were reputed to choose their own disciples.”

(NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible)

Tradition		Jesus' Way
Students sought their teacher	Mark 3:13	
Students follow the law to set an example and honor their rabbi	Mark 2:15-16 Matthew 9:14	
The best teachers accepted the best students.	Matthew 4:18-22 Mark 2:13-14	

Jesus continues to surprise those who encounter him. He has chosen his disciples, but the students should be seeking out the master! Jesus chooses people of no status or importance. This motley crew will never impress the religious authorities. If Jesus is to be the Messiah as some already believe, then he would be expected to recruit people with military or political expertise who could help achieve Israel's freedom from Rome.

Why?

What can we learn about Jesus in the choices he makes? Jesus' disciples haven't been raised to be scholars; they will mess up. They won't always understand what Jesus is saying or doing. They'll have questions. They'll frustrate their master. Jesus' disciples, in other words, are just like us. They represent everyday people who have fears and joys and need of a Savior. The disciples have no special abilities or talents, but Jesus will use them to build the kingdom.

Look up Acts 4:1-22

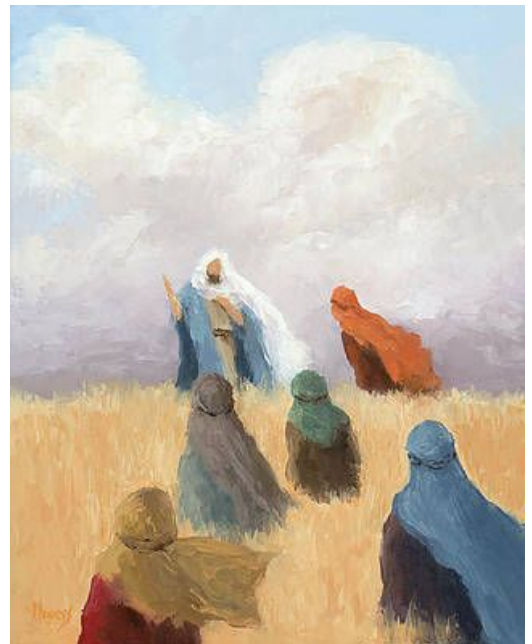
Why were Peter and John in prison?

What astonished the religious leaders about Peter and John?

What did the authorities decide to do with the disciples?

In the choice of his disciples, Jesus demonstrates the kind of Messiah he will be. He did not come build military power to defeat Rome, nor has he come to reinforce the power of the religious authorities in Jerusalem's temple. Jesus has come to reach out to all, risking rejection, suffering, and even death.

With Jesus, things are upside down. He draws the lowly close to him. He thumbs his nose at the powerful. God's plan is different from human plans.



Reflect on Your Learning

1. Where do you think Jesus' would find his disciples today?

2. How would Jesus call his disciples today?

3. What would Jesus' disciples look like if he chose them today?

4. What is Jesus calling you to do?

5. The disciples answered Jesus' call immediately. What might cause you to hesitate a call requiring such a commitment?

Summing Up Jesus Revealed

What is revealed about Jesus in the selection of his disciples? Write your ideas below. Add to your list as you participate in and listen to the class discussion.

