Who is Jesus?
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SESSION OVERVIEW

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’ own time. It’s much easier to put Jesus into the same category as Buddha, 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 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 is 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. 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 know God’s love

SESSION SNAPSHOT

Review the entire lesson plan in advance so you are prepared to lead and discuss comfortably. Gather necessary supplies and review video segments prior to your gathering. Use the time allotments in the session outline below as a guideline, as the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group.
## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Media device to show video segments
- Participant Sheets
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

## PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Have snacks ready.
- Create a welcoming environment.

## LEADER TIPS

- We often include possible responses and material from the *Catechism* after the discussion questions to help you facilitate the conversation. It is best to let group members respond first and share the concepts in parentheses only as needed.

- If you are limited on time pause the second video segment when you see the CALL TO CONVERSION title—then have your group watch the final segment online as a personal reflection during the upcoming week.

- *Disciple* comes from the word *discipline*. So to be a disciple is to develop the disciplines of your rabbi. An easy way to remember these disciplines is to call them H.A.B.I.T.S.—the habits of the saints.

  - **H** – Holy hour: Start with 10 minutes of daily prayer and watch it grow over time to an hour.
  - **A** – Accountability: Be transparent with at least one friend who will hold you accountable to being a disciple.
B – Bible prayer and study: Let God’s Word transform your mind and connect you to Jesus in prayer.

I – Invest in your parish: Tithe and serve in the mission of the parish.

T – Tell: Boldly tell others about your faith and invite them to faith in Jesus.

S – Sacraments: Participate as frequently as you can.

During the Commit section of each session, you’ll ask participants: “How are your spiritual H.A.B.I.T.S. coming along?” This is a great opportunity to talk about any joys or struggles that individuals in the group may be experiencing as they grow in the habits of the saints.

**THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS**

We are going consider three thought provoking questions before diving into our study on Jesus. I’ll ask a question and then we will sit quietly for 20 seconds or so thinking about our response to the question. Then, if you are inspired, please share your thoughts with the group.

1. What story are you telling yourself about your life?
2. What messages have you internalized?
3. Who are you becoming?

**INTRODUCTION**

Thank you for sharing. We are going to revisit these questions at the end of our session and think about them in light of our identity in Christ as our identity is rooted in His identity. Many people today view Jesus as just one of the many great moral and religious teachers the world has known. But Jesus Himself claimed to be much more than that. He claimed to be God. Further, He made it clear that if you embrace who He says He is and His teachings, you are like a wise man who builds his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24–27). The divinity of Jesus is the sure and strong foundation upon which to build our lives. As Christians, we profess that truth each time we say the Creed. In this session, we will discuss what it really means to say that Jesus is true God and true man.
**OPENING PRAYER**

Have your group begin in prayer. Ask someone to read the Bible verse and then ask everyone to read the prayer together.

"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'"

—John 6:68–69

Ask everyone to join you in reading the following prayer, found on the Participant Guide.

"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—not now I—but Christ lives in me.’"

—St. John Perboyre

**DISCUSS**

Watch the first video segment. The video will last about 13 minutes. At the end of the segment, go through the following questions.

In John 8:58–59 we read: “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.”

» Why did the Jews want to stone Jesus?

(This is answered later in John 10:31–33: “The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?’ The Jews answered him, ‘It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.’” Jesus claimed to be “I Am” or in Hebrew “Yahweh.” This is the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses, from the burning bush, in Exodus chapter 3. For the Jews, it is a
name so sacred that they do not even write or speak it. In addition, Jesus claimed to be the only way to the Father [John 14:6] and that He could forgive sins [Matthew 9:2]. The Jews felt the need to eliminate Him before He led people astray.)

» 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’ 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 and Lord, or to reject Him.)

Famous Christian writer C.S. Lewis pointed out that a man who claims to be God can only be one of three things: a liar, a lunatic, or Lord.

» Are there any compelling arguments that you have heard that would suggest Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic?

(It would be difficult for Jesus, who inspired many, who healed the sick and performed miracles, and whose legacy has lasted thousands of years, to have been a liar or a lunatic. This leaves one conclusion: He is who He says that He is. This means that Jesus must be Lord.)

The reason Jesus was put to death by the Pharisees and Sadducees is that He put Himself on the same level as God. This was considered blasphemy.

» If Jesus was in fact God, what kinds of things would you expect Him to do?

(You would expect that God would do both supernatural things as well as reveal to humanity more about Himself. Jesus did both of these things; He performed all kinds of miracles culminating in the resurrection of His body from the dead. He also taught about humanity and set up a plan for His teachings to spread across the entire world after He ascended back to heaven. No one has made a greater impact on the course of human history than Jesus Christ.)

Watch the second video segment. The video will last about 12 minutes. At the end of the segment, discuss. If you are short on time, pause the video at the CALL TO CONVERSION title and have your group watch it online during the week as personal reflection time. If your group does have time, continue with the CALL TO CONVERSION video segment and then discuss the last questions and final activity.

There was a significant amount of questioning in the time of Jesus over who He was. Many thought that He was simply a great rabbi or a prophet. The Gospels tell us there were only a few who truly understood that Jesus was God among them.

» Name three people in the Gospels who made statements about knowing that Jesus was God.
(It was revealed to Mary, by the Angel Gabriel, that she would be mother to the Son of the Most High. Mary would have known by this statement that Jesus was God. St. John the Baptist knew of Christ’s divinity. When Jesus was walking by, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Also, the Holy Spirit revealed to St. Peter that He was the Son of God. When Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responded that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.)

In the first centuries of the early Church there were many different heresies and debates over the humanity and divinity of Christ. Let’s take a look at some of the most prominent heresies together. Let’s pick up our Catechism and turn to CCC 464–469.

Read CCC 464–469.

» Which of these heresies do we still see in our world today?

(Every misconception in our world about the person of Jesus is simply a rehash of early Christian heresies. From the curiosity of some with the gnostic gospels, to the Da Vinci Code, to those who love Jesus but hate religion and those that simply want to be spiritual—all of these are simply rehashing early Christian heresies.)

Dr. Michael Therrien states that one of the most important images to understand in the Scriptures is the relationship between Christ as a Bridegroom and the Church as a Bride. He states that God became flesh to consummate the union of the Bridegroom and Bride and that we see this union in the humanity and divinity in Christ Himself.

» In light of this understanding of Bridegroom and Bride, why is it that the Church is so protective of the definition of marriage as a union of one man and one woman?

(The Church understands that marriage is about more than the love between two people. In Ephesians 5, St. Paul refers to marriage as a “great mystery,” as it relates to Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride. Every marriage doesn’t just reflect the love between two people; it reflects the way in which God loves us. To change the definition of marriage would be to lose something of our understanding of God and His love. This is one of the big reasons that the Church protects the definition of marriage.)

**IF YOU HAVE TIME**

If your group has time, continue with the CALL TO CONVERSION segment and then discuss the last questions and final Activity. If you are limited on time, continue with the questions but have your group watch the CALL TO CONVERSION segment online as a personal reflection during the upcoming week.

Watch the CALL TO CONVERSION video segment. At the end of the segment, discuss the following questions and activity.

We began our session with three thought provoking questions. Let’s look at them again and answer them in light of our identity in Christ.
What story are you telling yourself about your life?

(Our story is part of a larger story of salvation. From the beginning of time God has loved and cherished us. When we sinned He inaugurated a plan to restore our relationship with Him. That plan was fulfilled in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through His life, death, and resurrection we have been given the grace to share in divine life and become saints.)

What messages have you internalized?

(Sacred Scripture says that in Christ we are: a new creation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation; a people for His own possession, created for good works that He has prepared beforehand, His child, the righteousness of God, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a branch that bears much fruit, a friend of God, a member of the body of Christ, a citizen of heaven, known, loved, protected from the evil one, children of the light, partakers of the divine nature, crucified with Christ, chosen, aroma of Christ, light of the world, delivered.)

Who are you becoming?

(2 Corinthians 3:18 says who we are becoming: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” We are becoming more and more like Jesus!)

Commit

Activity

Take-away

I’d like each of us to share one take-away from tonight. In other words, share something that resonates in your heart as a truth to live by.

Give everyone time to share, and then continue.

How are your spiritual H.A.B.I.T.S. coming along?

Encourage your group to share how they have grown spiritually since your last meeting by practicing spiritual H.A.B.I.T.S. Ask them if there is any way you can help them in their commitment to developing spiritual H.A.B.I.T.S. After everyone has shared, follow up on last week’s commitments before discussing the new commitment.
This week’s commitment is to take 15 minutes to read the quote below and reflect on the question, “Who do you say I am?”

“"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

Then, 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?

CLOSING PRAYER

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."