

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 4: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled *Who is Jesus?* This series of seven lessons introduces the person and work of Jesus from a Christian perspective, considering His identity, work, teachings and death. Because Jesus is central to the Christian faith and religion, it is vital for the disciple to know Jesus, and for those exploring Christianity to know what makes Jesus Christ unique, and worthy of our discipleship and devotion. You may have participants from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds who have differing ideas about who Jesus is and what He taught. This series will be an excellent foundation for their future studies in discipleship.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.



WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 4: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

PURPOSE

This lesson explores the things that Jesus taught during His time on earth, and His identity as a teacher.

LEADER'S NOTES

Jesus taught radical things – things that were not taught in His day and age. Unlike religious leaders who desired power, money and an army to do their bidding, Jesus taught about peace, love and a kingdom that was not of this world. If you have participants who have yet to believe in Jesus, this lesson will help them know who He was and what He taught. We need to know about Jesus before we can believe in Him! Help them to see the uniqueness of Jesus' teaching, and how following His instruction will change their lives. If you have participants who have followed Jesus for some time, help them to communicate His teaching clearly to others, showing that it's more than just nice thoughts, but also radical and revolutionary ideas that can change the world.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Have you ever studied under a really excellent teacher (perhaps in school, at church, learning a trade, or elsewhere)? What made them a great teacher?
- ❖ Different religions and world views remember Jesus as a teacher or prophet. What was so special about what Jesus taught that other religions and people around the world would remember what He said?
- ❖ What are the biggest problems people in the world face today? If Jesus held a solution to their problem in His teaching, what would stop them from heeding it? What barriers exist that hinder people from knowing and following the teaching of Jesus?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **Jesus the Teacher:** Even more than for the miracles He performed, Jesus is known as a teacher. Jesus demonstrated what He taught through His life. Jesus was not satisfied to teach only educated people in the temple, but anyone who would listen. It is clear from the Biblical accounts that a large number of students followed Him.



- **Teaching from Boyhood:** After the birth of Christ, we are only given a small glimpse of what His childhood was like. Here, we see Jesus staying in the Temple in Jerusalem after his parents had left in order to ask questions of the teachers, as well as to answer some of theirs. Jesus claimed that He was a teacher from when He was very young (Luke 2:41-52).
- **Jesus' friends and followers referred to Him as teacher:** In addition to the other titles people gave to Jesus, they frequently referred to Him as 'teacher'.
 - John 11:28, John 20:16
- **Jesus called Himself a teacher:** Jesus referred to Himself as "the Teacher". He didn't teach by any name greater than Himself, but spoke with authority and personal knowledge.
 - Matthew 26:18, Mathew 23:8-10, John 13:13
- ❖ **How Jesus Taught:** The message Jesus came to bring had several parts, and was revealed over time throughout His ministry on earth.
 - **Jesus Taught Large Crowds:** Jesus taught on fields, beaches, hilltops, city squares, in the synagogues and temples, in people's homes and wherever people could gather. Sometimes these sessions were accompanied by miracles, but they drew large crowds who listened intently to His words. In some cases, people followed Jesus and listened to Him speak for days, even running out of food.
 - Matthew 8:1, Matthew 14:13, Matthew 7:28
 - **Jesus Taught His Disciples:** Some messages Jesus reserved for His closest disciples only, and He taught them privately. Knowing that He would leave this world, Jesus gave His message to His most faithful followers in order that they would continue to spread the Gospel.
 - Matthew 11:1, Matthew 20:17-18, Luke 11:1
 - **Jesus Taught in Parables:** Parables are used to illustrate a particular teaching of Jesus, and they appear in the form of a story with a hidden meaning. In Luke 8:10, Jesus explained that the purpose of parables was to help His followers understand spiritual truth, and to hide it from those determined not to follow Him.
 - Matthew 13:1-52
 - The meaning of the parables was revealed to those who had faith, but was concealed from those who did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.
 - Parables caused people to think, question and examine Jesus' teaching.
 - Believers today are given the Holy Spirit to teach us and help us understand the words of Jesus (John 16:13).
 - To those who understood, the parables were perfect illustrations not easily forgotten.



- o Jesus kept His identity partially concealed until it was time for Him to die so that He could complete His time of ministry.
- **Jesus Taught with Plain Teaching:** There were occasions when Jesus did not use parables, but plain teaching and instruction. These include portions of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2-11), which instruct us not to worry, to love our enemies, and how to pray.
 - o Sometimes Jesus taught without the use of parables, specifically to His followers (disciples) rather than large crowds of curious people.
 - o Even his plain teaching amazed people.
 - o John 16:25-33
- ❖ **What Jesus Taught:** Jesus is unique in what He taught His disciples and what He teaches us today. Over and over, Jesus says “you have heard... but instead I tell you”. The things He taught were meant to correct errors in His listeners’ minds, and reveal to them the truth. Those who were waiting for the Messiah to come were looking for a political or military leader, or a king. Instead, Jesus taught them about peace, and accepting the authorities over them. If you want to explore the teachings of Jesus, it is best to read it for yourself; however, the following is a summary of three major categories.
- ❖ **True Citizenship - The Kingdom of God:** One of the topics Jesus emphasized was the Kingdom of God (in the book of Matthew it is referred to as ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’). This Kingdom was not an earthly system of government, but rather a spiritual reality. Within His Kingdom, the things that God values are celebrated – not the things the world thinks are important. Some of the things that Jesus taught about this Kingdom are:
 - **The Kingdom is about our Relationship with God:** God is Sovereign over everything, and is the true King of everything He created (angels, people) when they submit to Him as Lord (Jeremiah 10:10, Mark 1:15, Matthew 7:21).
 - **Those who believe are true citizens of the Kingdom of God.** This includes everyone who is ‘born again’ by the Spirit (Mark 10:14, John 3:5).
 - **The Kingdom is not of this world** (John 18:36). Jesus never intended to set up an earthly throne. His reign is eternal, and will outlast this earth (Romans 5:21).
 - **This Kingdom has different values than the world.** Where this world values power, wealth, status and vengeance, Jesus said the Kingdom of God was different. Citizens of the Kingdom of God would need to learn to change the way they think.
 - o The first shall be last (Matthew 20:1-16).
 - o The small kingdom will become great (Mark 4:30-32).
 - o One cannot buy their way into the Kingdom. Wealth is an obstacle (Mark 10:23).
 - o One must accept God’s Kingdom like a little child: it is not for the powerful or wise only, but rather those who will accept the gift of God by faith (Mark 10:14-15).



- o When believers die, they are ushered from God's Kingdom on earth into God's eternal Kingdom in heaven (Luke 23:39-43, Matthew 6:10).
 - o The Kingdom of God can't be observed or analysed by earthly standards. It is not a physical kingdom established by war or power. Jesus told the Pharisees that it was already in the midst of them (Luke 17:20-21).
- ❖ **True Religion— Repent and Believe:** Jesus made many statements that began “you have heard”, and then continued with “but I say to you” (Matthew 5:21-44). In several other places in the Gospels Jesus corrected their understanding of religion. The word ‘religion’ means the system of behaviours and beliefs we use to relate to God and fellow believers. Jesus came to correct our understanding of this system and to show us the true way.
- **Repent and believe in the Gospel:** Jesus called people to a new way of relating to God – through faith in Him. This is the Gospel, – that God provides salvation for sinners when they turn from their sin and their own way of trying to please Him (Mark 1:15). Jesus described this as being born again, and taught that we must be born again to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life (John 3:1-15).
 - **Jesus, the last Sacrifice:** Jesus came to change the system that required multiple sacrifices to atone for our sins. He was the final sacrifice that would end all sacrifices. One generation after Jesus' death, the Jewish temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system ended forever. We no longer have to go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God, because Jesus came to be our new Temple, and to be our sacrifice. We can now worship in spirit wherever we are (John 1:29, Mark 13:1-2, John 4:20-24, Matthew 12:6).
 - **Fulfilling the Law:** Jesus did not come to abolish the old Law of Moses, but rather to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17).
 - **Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life:** Jesus taught that He was the way to God, and He alone. He taught that He truly fulfilled all that the prophets wrote about Him, and that belief in Him was necessary for eternal life (John 14:6, John 5:18-24).
 - **True Religion** is not simply following the Law, but rather loving God and loving others. These examples of Jesus' interaction with people illustrate the true worship that God desires:
 - o **The Rich Young Man** – True religion is more than obedience. It is being willing to set aside anything that is more important to us than following Jesus (Matthew 19:16-30).
 - o **God First** – Jesus calls us to ‘take up our cross’ and follow Him. Everything in our life, even our family, must be secondary to our devotion to Jesus. There is a cost to following Him (Matthew 10:37-39).
 - o **The Greatest Commandment** – Jesus taught that no commandment is greater than to love God and to love our neighbour (Matthew 22:34-39, Luke 11:42), and that all of the law is summarized in this.



- ❖ **True Love- Lay Down Your Life:** Jesus taught that the greatest commandment was that we must love God, and love our neighbour. He also taught that God's love made salvation possible. This love is so great it should change the way we live!
 - **Love your Neighbour-** Jesus defined our neighbour as *anyone*, and we must love equally those who are like us and those who are our enemies. We must avoid harming others and actively pursue loving them (Luke 10:25-37, Matthew 5:43-48).
 - **The Golden Rule** – Jesus taught in Luke 6: 31 that we must treat others as we would want to be treated. We must give what we have to those in need and not ask for anything in return. We must demonstrate love to our enemies – even those who hurt us. This is a radical and high standard of love that is unique to Christianity (Luke 6:27-36)!
 - **Do Not Lust, Do Not Hate** – Jesus clarified the laws by saying that if we hate, lust or are angry, we have sinned just as if we had murdered or committed adultery. (Matthew 5: 17-41).
 - **Forgive** – Jesus taught that the evidence of true love is forgiving – and not judging others. Judgement is left to God alone. If we desire to be forgiven, we must forgive others (Luke 6:37-42).
 - **God Loves Us-** Jesus taught that God has great love for His people, especially the weak, the poor, the broken-hearted and those who mourn (Deuteronomy 7:9, Romans 5:8, John 16:27).

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Some people, after hearing Jesus' teachings, went away sad because they knew they could not enter the Kingdom of God. Why were Jesus' teachings so difficult for people to accept?
- ❖ What is revolutionary and life-changing about Jesus' teachings? What would our society be like if everyone followed Jesus' teaching on love?
- ❖ Jesus talked about the least being the greatest in the Kingdom of God. Who are the least? Why are the 'least' and lowest of the world better able to accept God's offer of forgiveness and eternal life?
- ❖ Why did Jesus so often use questions when teaching people? Why did Jesus use parables?
- ❖ What makes God's Kingdom different from the kingdoms and governments of this world?



PRAYER

End with a time of prayer. Pray that your participants will understand the teachings of Jesus, and that they would repent and believe for the forgiveness of their sins. Pray that participants would understand in a new way God's love for them, and heed His call to love even their enemies.