

Breathe

Module: The Person of Jesus

Lesson 1: “Who Do You Say I Am”

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- express who some other people claim Jesus is, both biblically and historically
- clarify who they believe Jesus is

Materials Needed:

- Bibles
- Papers with different celebrities names written on them
- Large sheets of paper
- 4 or 5 different colours of marker, in equal numbers, one for each student

Pre-lesson preparation:

- Before the session begins, write down the names of celebrities and/or people familiar to your youth on different pieces of paper. These will be taped to the backs of the students when you begin your warm up game.
- Have the paper and markers ready for the brainstorming activity.

Minds On: (20 minutes)

Game: Who Do People Say I am?

Tape the names of celebrities and/or people known to your group to the backs of students as they enter (or at a time that fits your outline for the session, for example after your worship time). Tell students you are playing a game called “Who do people say I am?” Students have to figure out the name on their back by asking the other students to give an answer to the question “Who do people say I am?” Students are obviously not allowed to say the celebrity’s name as part of an answer. (For example, if the name was Einstein, others could answer “People say you are a very smart person”.) Students can ask “yes” or “no” questions to find out more about their identity e.g. “Do people say I am a man?” or “Do people say I am dead?” Once a student has guessed their name you can give them a new name. Allow the game to continue until every student has guessed at least one name.

While the students are engaged in this activity, you could place a piece of chart paper and 4-5 markers at each of the appropriate locations in the room for the next activity, if they are not already placed. Ask the students to pause where they are, and give the following instructions:

Prompt:

If you ask five people to describe someone you are likely to get five different descriptions. Tonight we are going to spend time considering who Jesus is.

In Groups: Brainstorming

Tell the students that in a moment they will be brainstorming different ways that people see Jesus. Once in their groups, one group member will write the words “Who is Jesus?” in the middle of a piece of chart paper, and the other group members should write as many possible ideas about how people see Jesus. Encourage the students to speak their ideas out loud as they work, since hearing the ideas can inspire other thinking on the same topic. Tell the students you want groups of 4 (or 5, if that is better for your group)

at each piece of chart paper, then give the signal to “Go”. Help straggler students to get into a group.

Note: Adding Detail to an Instruction

Once they have begun working, ask them to listen briefly, and to consider how some of the following people might describe Jesus (You could also write these ideas on chart paper, a whiteboard, or PowerPoint).

- Who would the people you eat lunch with at school say Jesus is?
- Who would a child say Jesus is?
- Who would a preacher say Jesus is?
- Who would an atheist say Jesus is?
- Who would people of other faiths say Jesus is?

Give the students 5 minutes to write out as many things as come to mind. At the end of the 5 minutes have the students visit the other papers to scout comments made by the other students. Follow this up with a brief group summary of all the ways that they have heard people describe Jesus.

Action: (45 minutes)

Prompt:

As Jesus began his ministry, he continually taught his disciples about who he was. In this passage, we’ll explore a story where Jesus directly asks the disciples who people say he is.

Ask a volunteer to read (or have students take turns reading) Matthew 16:13-14. When they have finished reading ask, ‘Who is the first person the disciples mention?’ (John the Baptist). Who is the second?’ (Elijah.) And the last person they mention? (Jeremiah).

Ask students for their opinions on the significance of each person mentioned. It is possible that your students may not know who these three people are. Regardless, give them space to try and piece together what they collectively know about them. After they toss the ideas around for a couple of minutes share the following brief bios with them:

- John the Baptist – It was a commonly held view that Jesus was John the Baptist. John had been killed a few months before Jesus asked this question and King Herod himself had thought that Jesus was John who had come back to life (Matthew 14:1)
- Elijah – The Jews held to the promise of Malachi 4:5 and believed that Jesus was Elijah, whom God had promised would come back to Israel before the Messiah.
- Jeremiah – Based on the prophecy of Malachi 4:5, the Jews believed that any of the other prophets could also return. They thought that Jesus' miracles were merely a sign that he was a prophet and not the Messiah.

Prompt:

Many faiths also have differing views of who Jesus was.

- Islam believes that Jesus was a Messenger of God. It is a requirement of Islam that you believe that Jesus was a prophet.
- Among some Hindus Jesus is seen as nothing more than a man who was given special powers.
- In Buddhist thought many have drawn parallels between Jesus and Buddha. Their teachings are similar enough that some have speculated that they may be the same person.
- Ancient Egyptians believed in a God named Isis. She had a son Horus and their story is very similar to the story of Mary and Jesus.

Regardless of what others may say about Jesus, there is a more important question that we must answer.

Have a student read Matthew 16:15. Take some time to allow the students to personally consider this question. Use the following as a guide:

Think/Pair/Share: Who do you think Jesus is?

Give them time to think about their answers on their own. You may want to provide some blank paper for students to write down their thoughts. Then have students pair up and share their answers with a friend. It would be best to have them pair up with someone they know. Due to the personal nature of this question, familiar people to talk to will help foster conversation. After a few minutes, bring the pairs back into the larger group and ask for volunteers who are willing to share their thoughts on who they believe Jesus is.

Leader's Note:

Your youth leaders can pair up with new students who may not have a friend present.

Note on Teaching Practice: Wait Time and Questions

Students need time to consider answers to questions. The amount of time is dependent on two things: The amount of academic engaged time (did they read for thirty seconds or thirty minutes?); the complexity of thinking (is this a knowledge level question, or one that requires analysis?); and the movement from cover to overt (did you have them write their answer down first, share it with a friend first, or will they share it with the group right away?). The more the academic engaged time, the higher the level of thinking, and the more overt the answer, the longer the amount of wait time required. In part, this has to do with grappling with bigger ideas, and in part it has to do with risk. Sharing with a partner before sharing in the whole group can be an effective way to overcome this. After asking a question teachers typically feel like an eternity has gone by, when only a few seconds have passed, while students often need more time to think of an answer. As a leader, try counting to thirty before panicking.

Have a student read Matthew 16:16.

Prompt:

Peter acknowledged that Jesus was the son of the living God. We see in Jesus' response to Peter's declaration that it does not matter what the rest of the world says about Jesus. What is most important is who you say he is. Peter's faith in Jesus being the Son of God

led Jesus to entrust him with the future of the Church. How you respond to Jesus' question of who you think he is will determine the rest of your life.

Consolidate/Debrief: Approximately 5 minutes

Breathe In

Offer a prayer for the students that the true person and nature of Jesus would be revealed to them, and that they would grow in their understanding of who Christ is.

Breathe Out

Encourage your students to ask 3 people this week (they can be from different backgrounds) who they believe Jesus is. Have the students record the answers and then bring them to your next meeting. Since you might present these lessons in a different order than they were written, you will need to give yourself a reminder to make space for students to share their findings during your next meeting.