

THIS IS JESUS

UNIT ONE: THE MESSIAH NAMED JESUS PART 1: JESUS THE MESSIAH

Lesson 1: The Messiah & Main Character

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That Jesus is the Messiah and was with God from the beginning.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Understand that Jesus is more than just a religious figure and seek to understand more about Him.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: John 1:1-5,14; 5:31-47, 8:12

KEY TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, or Christ, which means that He is the anointed one- promised Deliverer.

OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will come to know Jesus as the Messiah (or Savior) and as the main character of all Scripture. Students will be introduced to this truth in John 1:1-5. John taught that Jesus existed from the beginning of time. He made all things. He was the One who became the light of the world. The Word (Jesus) brought light to humanity. He is the revelation of who God is and how God wants people to relate to Him. The whole biblical witness points to the fact that Jesus came to earth as the Son of God to provide light about God's plan for salvation. Through Jesus, God offers eternal life to those who will believe in Him.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

John

- *Author:* The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation, as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 A.D. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- *Purpose:* John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

THE SETTING

In this lesson and the three that follow, students will be introduced to Jesus as not only the prophesied Messiah (or Anointed One), but as the main character of all Scripture. In chapter 1, John told us that in the beginning, the world was created through Jesus. John connected the ideas of life and light in verse 4. The reality of sin in the world keeps humanity in darkness. As God enlightens us about salvation, we experience the eternal, abundant life He originally planned for us. In John 5, Jesus claimed that the Scriptures testify about Him. Even the Law of Moses pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus is the central unifying figure of the Bible. Yet throughout history, many people have failed to understand this for a variety of reasons and missed out on knowing who Jesus is and how knowing Him changes our lives.

THE MAIN POINT

When we study Scripture with this in mind, we begin to understand that Jesus' work is present in the entire Bible (and not just the Gospels). John taught that Jesus existed from the beginning of time. He made all things. He was the life that became the light of the world. Students hear the name of Jesus used in many ways in church, and most of them probably have a positive regard for Him. Many students, however, fail to understand that Jesus is the central figure of history and Scripture. Today's lesson will help introduce students to Jesus as the Main Character and the Messiah.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To help students think about how long it takes to craft and execute a perfect narrative/story.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure that there is enough space in your meeting location where students can present. Download and print the “Film Festival” activity sheet for each group. Also, provide a ball, a toothpick, an old shoe, paper, and pens for each group.

FIRST, welcome students. If you haven’t already taken the time to share the title and purpose of this study, do so now. Explain that today’s lesson is all about what came before the arrival of Jesus. For many years, God’s people only had prophecies and promises to hold on to.

THEN, explain to students that this Lead In Activity is going to put their storytelling skills to the test. Divide students into two or three groups. Distribute copies of the “Film Festival” PDF to each group, then read the instructions. Encourage each group to be creative in the genre they select from the following choices: comedy, adventure, or drama. Give them five minutes to prepare a skit. When students have finished, give each group three minutes to perform.

AFTER THAT, ask students:

- **Think of the best movie you’ve ever seen. How long do you think it took for the script to be written and finalized?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, say something like:

- **Many regard the Bible as containing one of the greatest stories ever told. And it took thousands of years to compile into the copy you are reading today. Even people who do not profess Jesus as their Savior still acknowledge the beauty in the details that led to His arrival. Clearly, the passages we read in the Old Testament were not thrown together out of convenience. From the very beginning, God began revealing His plan for our redemption in Jesus.**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To introduce students to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to John 1 in their Bibles. Depending on your group, you may want to give a quick summary from the Bible Background section. Once they are there, read or have a student read John 1:1-5, as well as 1:14.

THEN, say something like:

- **Let’s take a moment to define some of these words we just read. And where better to start than the “beginning”? In this passage, John refers to the beginning. He is referencing Creation. He might as well be saying, “From the very first verse in your Bible.” Simple enough, right? But then, he mentions something a little confusing. He writes, “In the beginning, the Word was with God.” Not only that, but he says that the Word was, or IS, God!**

Ask students:

- **So, who is the Word?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus

Say something like:

- **The Word is one of the many names you will come to know Jesus by. What John really doesn't want you to miss here is that he is making more than a statement about Jesus being around before what we think of as the beginning. He wants to make it clear that Jesus is, in fact, God.**

NEXT, ask students:

- **Why is this a bold statement?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Help students understand that anyone claiming to be God is a big deal, not only at the time John is writing, but now as well.

THEN, explain to students that John didn't just profess Jesus as God and leave it at that. He did something that we should all do when professing Jesus as our Savior. He gave examples of His mighty purpose. He didn't simply say who Jesus was in title or identity, but introduced Him. If you want to reference the Lead In Activity, you could say he did a little character building. **Ask Students:**

- **What can we learn about Jesus based on verses 4 and 5?**
 - *Answer:* That He is life and the Light.

Say something like:

- **John tells us a lot in a short amount of time about who Jesus is. Light is something we think of as pure. It reveals what darkness tries to hide. Darkness, on the other hand, represents evil in a lot of movies and literature. In the Bible, we often see darkness as sin. Sin is directly going against God and His ways. Just as darkness is the opposite of light, and one overcomes the other, sin is overcome by the Light of Jesus.**

Explain to students that John focused on the fact that Jesus has always been and always will be. All of Scripture is focused on Him. Through Jesus, everything was created, and in Him is the secret to salvation. He is the light in a world of spiritual darkness. He dwelt among us as a human being and then died to take away all of humanity's sin.

THEN, say something like:

- **The more you dive into Scripture, the more you see this same point being made: Jesus is the anointed One, the promised Deliver. You could make the case that Jesus' time on earth was spent proving who He was. Through His teachings, healings, and miracles, He provided evidence that He was the Messiah.**

Explain to students that when we are trying to understand who Jesus is, there is an important word we must define (because it comes up a lot in Scripture). That word is Messiah. **Say something like:**

- **You may have heard the term Messiah tossed around a few times in Church, but never really knew what that meant. So here is a little context. Messiah is actually a Hebrew word, but since the New Testament uses Greek, you want to take a look at the Greek version of this Hebrew word. That word is *Kristos*, also translated as Christ. So think of Messiah and Christ as the same word or title, but in different languages. Sort of like cheese and queso are two words that mean the same thing, or how the Queen and Her Majesty are two titles that can refer to the same person. Messiah, taking most of its meaning from the Hebrew context, means "anointed one," or a more perfect king than David. Jesus is the Deliverer who is promised to us**

so that we can be saved from our sin and be restored in a right relationship with God.

NEXT, read or have a student read John 5:31-47. **Ask,**

- **What was Jesus doing as He spoke in this passage?**
 - *Answer:* He was giving evidence to the fact that He was God's sent one.
- **Why do you think John included this passage as he wrote?**
 - *Answer:* He was inspired by God to present evidence that Jesus was the Messiah; He wanted people to see that God's Word had always testified about Jesus.

Point students to verse 33. **Say something like:**

- **In verse 33, Jesus said John the Baptist testified on His behalf. But then Jesus said He did not “accept human testimony.” You may be wondering what this means. Put simply, the truth of Jesus’ message does not depend on human testimony because His Father’s testimony is enough. So even though people like John were out proclaiming the truth, it wasn’t true simply because they believed it. Nor is the truth about Jesus false because someone does not believe. Jesus tells us that the truth is in God’s testimony of who He is.**

THEN, instruct students to look back at verses 36-40. Explain that a greater testimony about Jesus was offered by His work. God the Father had given Jesus works to do that would identify Him as the Messiah. Because of that, the Father had testified concerning Jesus. **Say something like:**

- **Understanding that Jesus is the Messiah who had been promised to be a more perfect king than David helps us figure out a little bit more about Him. Remember in our Lead In Activity when we talked about how long it takes to write a good story? Jesus isn’t just a great teacher, or a super sacrificial guy, or even just a few chapters in the great scheme of human history. Jesus is the Son of God, sent to be our Savior and our King. He is the Light that drives out the darkness. He’s both the Author of the story and the Hero. He doesn’t just have “main-character” energy, He embodies the whole story of our salvation. He has been writing this story since the beginning of time, and is still writing it in you and me today!**

Explain to students that as we get to know more about who Jesus is, His ministry, miracles, and message, it should change things about them and the way they approach life. **Ask:**

- **How does knowing Jesus as the anointed One, or the promised Deliverer, affect the way you live?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, encourage students to think about how much more there is to learn about Jesus. Explain that even after all of the lessons in this study, there will still be new and amazing things for them to discover about Jesus the Messiah.

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students visualize the idea of light driving out darkness.
- *Set-Up:* Try to create as much darkness as you can in the room. You may need to cover the windows prior to the lesson. Bring a candle and a way to light it.

FIRST, darken the room. **Say something like:**

- **John said that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness. I want you to focus on this flame for a few seconds.**

THEN, light the candle. Give students a moment to adjust their eyes. **Ask:**

- **What are some things that we can see now thanks to this light?**
 - *Answers will vary.* But some may include: Each other, the tables and chairs, possibly things written on the board, etc.

Say something like:

- **In a world of sin and darkness, Jesus came to bring light and life. Jesus, the Messiah, came to save us from our sins, show us how to live in God's kingdom, and give us eternal life. Our candle is only a small glimpse of how light can dispel darkness. The light of Jesus is far more powerful, so much so that there would be no shadows or places for darkness to hide from Him.**

FINALLY, read or have a student read John 8:12. You can use the candlelight to read, or you can turn the light back on. Challenge students to reflect on what it means for Jesus to be the Light of the World.

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.