

Life of Jesus

Session 9: Envisioning the Savior

Here in the West, Jesus is a familiar figure to Christians, dominating Sunday School lessons and sermons since our earliest memories. Yet, removed as we are by 2,000 years since he walked the earth, He remains somewhat mysterious. Why did He come? What did He teach? What was He really like? We will be exploring the Life of Jesus in 21 sessions; the first 14 will focus on Jesus' life and ministry in the 1st Century and will end around Easter. The last 7 will focus on Jesus' life and ministry in our own century and will take us through the month of May. Let's experience the Life of Jesus together!

Deep Hope: May we, together, (re-) fall in Love with the Messiah as we understand, imitate, and experience the Life of Jesus.

PART I: Review

1. 1st Century Jews were living in the Promised Land, but under Roman Rule.
2. Many believed that Messiah would free Israel and reinstate God's kingdom on earth.
3. Jesus announced (and proved with miracles!) that the Kingdom was at hand—not an after-death reality, but rather God's rule breaking into our reality.
4. Jesus' miracles **show** what God's kingdom looks like, and the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' parables **tell** what it is like!
5. Jesus loved those at the margins of His society—spending time with the sick and the sinners.
6. Jesus' disciples imitated Jesus' ministry in both preaching and miracles.
7. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus was revealed as the climax of God's story—three disciples caught a glimpse of kingdom past, present, and future.

PART II: Envisioning the Savior

1. Movies are a powerful medium and can help us reimagine ourselves and our world.
2. Lots of Jesus movies. But it's difficult to capture the essence of Jesus in a film. Should we try?
3. Here are four more traditional representations of Jesus. What do you think?
 - a. Feeding the 5000 from *Jesus of Nazareth*
 - b. Healing the paralytic from *Miracle Maker*
 - c. Jesus and Mary from *The Passion*
 - d. Jesus rescues a slave from *Ben Hur*
4. Sometimes, movies have characters that either directly (or accidentally!) symbolize or embody Jesus (these are often the best ways to see Jesus).
5. Here are 3 characters who are intentionally or accidentally Christ-types:
 - a. Lifting the Island from *Superman Returns*
 - b. Trying on the glass slipper from *Cinderella*
 - c. Fight with Jose from *Bella*
6. Movies (and stories in general) can help us re-fall in love with the Real Jesus.

Part III: How to Identify a Christ-Type

- Miraculous (or just humble) origins—perhaps royal father.
- Different than others—a “stranger”
- Misunderstood by many/considered crazy—sympathetic to “least of these”
- Sees truth that nobody else can and has gentle/humble heart
- Performs “miracles” such as curing the sick, feeding the hungry, defies laws of Nature
- Persecuted/punished for ideals of love/truth.
- Betrayed by close friend
- Offers life sacrificially—often to defeat evil, break a spell, unite warring groups.
- Comes close to death but is miraculously rescued OR is resurrected physically/emotionally.
- The character attains an exalted status or is somehow rewarded or vindicated.

Part IV: Small Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever seen a Jesus movie you liked? What did you like about it?
2. Have you ever seen a “bad” Jesus movie that didn’t do Him justice? Why do you think it didn’t?
3. Do you see any problems with making movies about Jesus? Can we? Should we?
4. Do you have a favorite movie (or story!) character that reminds you of Jesus?
5. Why do you think accidental portrayals of Jesus often work better for capturing His essence?
6. We’ve been talking about “(re-)falling in love with Jesus.” Do you think movies could help you do that, or not? Explain.
7. Consider how the following well-know characters contain echoes of Jesus or are Christ-types (see list above):
 - a. Simba from *The Lion King*
 - b. Harry Potter from *Harry Potter* series
 - c. E.T. from *E.T. the Extraterrestrial*
 - d. Neo from *The Matrix*
 - e. Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*
 - f. Gandalf from *Lord of the Rings*
 - g. Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars*
 - h. John Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves*
 - i. Can you think of another good candidate?

Part V: Gospel Reading: Matthew 1-2; Mark 14:1-11; Luke 13; John 18

The 1st Century world had strict hierarchical rules and an established power structure. Knowing who was in charge, who had authority, and who had status was a big deal. Jesus steps into this world and consistently subverts expectations and pushes against the status quo. His works and words invert our top-down way of thinking and empower a whole new way of seeing the world. We’ll look at Jesus’ relationship to power next week.

Prayer: “Father, please, help us see Jesus anew. We long to love you the way you love us. Capture our hearts with a true vision of our Lord Jesus. Amen.”