

# Lenten Study 2019

## Exploring Faith



### Workshop #3

### Who is Jesus?

**Open with short prayer** (*you may use this prayer or your own*)

*You may also ask each person to contribute to the prayer by saying out loud in a word or simple phrase whatever they are thankful for, have concerns about or have hopes for.*

Loving God, in this time together, we ask that you help us to explore what it means to express our faith and to see our journeys with fresh eyes. Where there are easy answers, grant us questions. Where there are tired stories, grant us imagination. Where there is sinful certainty, grant us holy doubt. Help us listen for you and listen to one another, that we may expand our souls and deepen our understanding, and that we might find rest in you. Amen.

**Review**

*Gather again. Ask people to reintroduce themselves around the room and perhaps a question: why they have come or what they hope for in this study.*

*Review the small-group practices -- first phrases only.*

What have been your take-away thoughts from last week's session or work in the workbook on "Who is God?"

*This can be paired, in small groups or as a large group. Be aware if some people are new to the study.*

**Who is Jesus?**

How did you first learn about Jesus/Christ?

What was your understanding?

How would you describe your relationship to Jesus/Christ? *Feel free to draw or write.*

Where is there comfort or discomfort when you think about Jesus/Christ?

How has your understanding of Jesus/Christ changed or evolved over time?

## Scripture and Discussion -- 20 minutes

### **Luke 24:13-32**

That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?" They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"

He said, "What has happened?" They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

### **John 20:11-16**

But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid. They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?" "They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him. Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?" She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "*Rabboni!*" meaning "Teacher!"

## Discussion

1. Where in your life have you had trouble recognizing Jesus? Are there stories in the Bible where it's hard to recognize Jesus as Christ?
2. In this story, Jesus's friends recognize him once they break bread, Mary recognizes him only when he calls her by name. Are there rituals, or stories, or prayers that help you feel close to Jesus, or recognize Jesus' presence?

### Many titles and images for Jesus

There are many names and titles for Jesus in the Bible- among them are:

Messiah	Bread of Life
Christ	Alpha and Omega
Son of God	Morning Star
Prophet	the Resurrection and the Life
Teacher	the Living Water
Shepherd	Advocate
Lamb of God	Perfector of our Faith
Rabbi	Bridegroom
Emmanuel	Great High Priest
Logos (Wisdom/Word)	Servant
Second Adam	True Vine
Rock	Wonderful Counselor
Redeemer	Prince of Peace
Savior	King of the Jews
the Light of the World	Master
the Way	Lord
the Truth	King
a mother hen gathering her chicks	Chosen One

Is there a title or role that resonates with you in particular?

Are there any that rub you the wrong way?

Are there other images or titles that you'd add to this list?

## Jesus Moments

When do you encounter Jesus in your daily life?

Take a moment to imagine: Jesus is going to be passing through your area tomorrow. What might Jesus look like in the 21st century? How might Jesus dress and talk? Where might Jesus spend time with followers and friends? Who might feel threatened by Jesus in the 21st century? Who might be drawn to Jesus? Who might be Jesus' disciples?

Try imagining Jesus as a different gender, race, age, and class from your own- what feelings or thoughts does that bring up?

## Further Reflections on Jesus

*Maybe*, by Mary Oliver:

*Sweet Jesus, talking  
his melancholy madness,  
stood up in the boat  
and the sea lay down,  
silky and sorry.  
So everybody was saved  
that night.  
But you know how it is*

*when something  
different crosses  
the threshold -- the uncles  
mutter together,*

*the women walk away,  
the young brother begins  
to sharpen his knife.  
Nobody knows what the soul is.*

*It comes and goes  
like the wind over the water --  
sometimes, for days,  
you don't think of it.*

*Maybe, after the sermon,  
after the multitude was fed,*

*one or two of them felt  
the soul slip forth  
like a tremor of pure sunlight  
before exhaustion,  
that wants to swallow everything,  
gripped their bones and left them*

*miserable and sleepy,  
as they are now, forgetting  
how the wind tore at the sails  
before he rose and talked to it --*

*tender and luminous and demanding  
as he always was --  
a thousand times more frightening  
than the killer storm.*

### **Selections from *To Begin at the Beginning*, by Martin Copenhaver**

“We might explain the mystery of how Jesus reveals God to us by saying that Jesus is God-like. But the reverse is even more profoundly true: God is Jesus-like. It is through Jesus that we can know what God is like. Through Jesus, we are given a means to understand the ways of God that would be unavailable to us without Jesus”

“A Jesus who experienced the full range of human circumstances and human emotions must surely have experienced bodily agony and the sense of being forsaken. After all, in Jesus, God came to live among us - not as God in a human costume that could be shed whenever things got rough, but human to the bone, human enough to experience need, deep despair, and even the perceived absence of God...John Westerhoff tells of a mother whose child was late in leaving his nursery school room. The child explained to his mother that, as class ended, one of the other children had broken a pottery dish she had made. The mother asked, “So you had to stay and help her pick it up?” “No,” the child replied, “I had to stay to help her cry.” In Jesus, God came to us (in part, at least) to help us cry. Jesus is uniquely able to bear such burdens because, as a human, he has traveled the same uneven roads we have, and as God he has the endless empathy of the divine, which is not easily worn out, as human empathy is.”

“The Apostles Creed contains this affirmation about Jesus: “Jesus Christ was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell.” The last part of that statement always used to trouble me, until one day someone told me that, for her, it was the most treasured part of the creed. When I asked why, she explained, “Because hell is where I spend most of my life.” The affirmation that Jesus is God incarnate means that there is no experience so dark that God does not share it.”

[Fly From Heaven, by Toad the Wet Sprocket](#)

Paul is making me nervous  
Paul is making me scared  
Walk into this room and swaggers  
Like he's God's own messenger  
Changed the name of my brother  
Changed the things that he said  
Says he speaks to him  
But he never even knew the man  
But I'd give my life for him  
Like water through my hands  
You'd give him any ending  
But if he's all you say  
Would he fly from heaven  
To this world again  
To this world again  
Take whatever you're needing  
Take whatever you can  
We are broken from within  
Run to another land  
Like water through my hands  
Or is it just beginning  
But if he's all you say  
Would he fly from heaven  
To this world again  
To this world again  
They took my brother  
They ripped him from me  
To twist his words as they did his  
body  
Denied his family  
Denied his beauty  
To lie him down at the feet  
Of those he couldn't save  
Couldn't save, couldn't save  
Will it be the end  
Or is he still ascending  
But if he's all you say  
Would he fly from heaven  
To this world again  
To this world again

[Personal Jesus, by Depeche Mode](#)

Reach out and touch faith  
Your own personal Jesus  
Someone to hear your prayers  
Someone who cares  
Your own personal Jesus  
Someone to hear your prayers  
Someone who's there  
Feeling unknown  
And you're all alone  
Flesh and bone  
By the telephone  
Lift up the receiver  
I'll make you a believer  
Take second best  
Put me to the test  
Things on your chest  
You need to confess  
I will deliver  
You know I'm a forgiver  
Reach out and touch faith  
Reach out and touch faith  
Your own personal Jesus  
Someone to hear your prayers  
Someone who cares  
Your own personal Jesus  
Someone to hear your prayers  
Someone who's there  
Feeling unknown  
And you're all alone  
Flesh and bone  
By the telephone  
Lift up the receiver  
I'll make you a believer  
I will deliver  
You know I'm a forgiver  
Reach out and touch faith  
Your own personal Jesus  
Reach out and touch faith

[What if God Was One of Us by Joan Osborne](#)

If God had a name what would it be?  
And would you call it to his face?  
If you were faced with Him in all His glory  
What would you ask if you had just one question?  
And yeah, yeah, God is great  
Yeah, yeah, God is good  
And yeah, yeah, yeah-yeah-yeah  
What if God was one of us?  
Just a slob like one of us  
Just a stranger on the bus  
Tryin' to make his way home?  
If God had a face what would it look like?  
And would you want to see if, seeing meant  
That you would have to believe in things like heaven  
And in Jesus and the saints, and all the prophets?  
And yeah, yeah, God is great  
Yeah, yeah, God is good  
And yeah, yeah, yeah-yeah-yeah  
What if God was one of us?  
Just a slob like one of us  
Just a stranger on the bus  
Tryin' to make his way home?  
Just tryin' to make his way home  
Like a holy rolling stone  
Back up to heaven all alone  
Just tryin' to make his way home  
Nobody callin' on the phone  
'Cept for the Pope maybe in Rome

### **Further questions for Discussion (time permitting)**

Traditional Christianity has long upheld the tense paradox of Jesus as “fully human and fully divine”. Do you have a harder time conceptualizing Jesus’ divinity or Jesus’ humanity? Do you ever wish Jesus were a little more solidly in one camp over the other?

Do you have a favorite Gospel story or “version” of Jesus from among the four Gospels? Why does this story or portrait resonate with you?

### **Concluding Time**

Write a paragraph, doodle, sing or write a melody, or draw an image based on your concluding thoughts from today’s session.

### **Take-home question**

How does your expression of Jesus compare with your expression of God?

### **Close in Prayer** *(you may use this prayer or your own)*

Loving God, we have come together to explore our faith and to draw closer to you. Bless us in our Lenten journeys, and help us find time for soulful moments in our week. Remind us of your presence, we pray, that we may sense your constant place in our lives. Turn our eyes and hearts toward the kind of world you imagine. In gratitude, we say, Amen.