

PARTICIPANT

Jesus of Nazareth

REVISED EDITION



**To Know, To Live,
To Grow**

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Contents

Session 1: Mary and Joseph	2
Session 2: Jesus' Birth and Boyhood	6
Session 3: Jesus' Ministry	11
Session 4: The Parables	15
Session 5: Cost of Discipleship	18
Session 6: The Miracles of Jesus	21
Session 7: The Last Days of Jesus' Life	25
Session 8: Jesus' Death	29
Session 9: Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension	33

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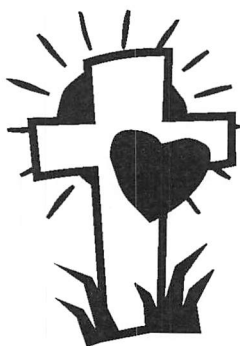
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**To Know, To Live,
To Grow**

Augsburg Fortress
MINNEAPOLIS

Session 1

Mary and Joseph

Session Goal

To learn about Mary and Joseph's faithful response to God, in order that we might more faithfully respond to God as well.

Open with prayer.

Introduce yourself to the rest of the group and share your answer to one of the following:

- Share a time when you were very excited.
- Share a time you were nervous.

As a group, talk about the following situation.

Imagine that a 14-year-old girl at your school became pregnant.

- How would she be treated?
- What would people say about her?
- Would people believe her if she said she was a virgin? Why or why not?
- Do you know someone in your school who's been pregnant? How was she treated?
- What would you do if you were this girl? Her boyfriend?

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was about 14 when she became pregnant. At the time, she was betrothed to a man named Joseph. Getting married was different in Jesus' time. There were several formal stages to marriage.

1. First was the engagement, often made by parents when the couple were still children.
2. Perhaps years later, the couple would become betrothed. This included a celebration feast in the village, and an exchange of vows and rings. Betrothal was the time that the couple would call themselves husband and wife, for legally they were considered married. Breaking off a betrothal was as serious as breaking off a marriage.
3. After this celebration, the couple would return to their separate homes and live apart for about a year.
4. Following this period of separation, the two would consummate their marriage (have sexual intercourse), and the bride would move into the groom's home.

Read Luke 1:26-37.

Where did Mary live? Locate this city on a map.

Who came to visit her? _____

What was her fiancé's name? From which family line was he descended?

What did the angel tell Mary? _____

In verses 31-33, what seven promises did the angel make to Mary?

What was Mary's first response? _____

Circle the words that describe how you might have felt:

Excited	Scared	Puzzled	Angry	Lonely
Anxious	Happy	Sad	Nervous	Accepting
Confused	Worried	Joyful	Self-Conscious	

- What do you think your response would have been?
- What pressures do you think Mary experienced?

What was the angel's response to Mary?

Read Luke 1:38-45, 56.

Mary had a very unique response. What did she say? (See verse 38.)

What did Mary do next? _____

What was Elizabeth's response? _____

How long did Mary stay with Elizabeth? _____

Why might Mary have stayed so long with Elizabeth? _____

Who would you tell first if you had exciting news? _____

How Did Joseph Respond?

Joseph was a good man. He respected Mary and her reputation. However, he had thoughts of quietly breaking off the betrothal when he found out that Mary was pregnant. But one night an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him not to leave Mary alone. The angel advised him to take Mary as his wife and explained that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit. The angel told Joseph that the child's name would be Jesus and that he was coming to save people from their sin.

Read Matthew 1:18-25.

What was Joseph's first response to Mary's pregnancy? _____

What did he finally do? _____

Why did he change his mind? _____

What would the child be called, and what would be his role?

What pressures do you think Joseph experienced? _____

What possible consequences did Mary and Joseph face by following God's plan?

What about You?

Do you think Joseph believed Mary's child was conceived by the Holy Spirit?
Why or why not?

Would you still want to get married under these circumstances? _____

If you heard a similar story on the news today, would it be believable?

What are some pressures you feel when trusting God's plans for your life?

What can we learn from this story about being faithful to God's plan?

Close with prayer.

Session 2

Jesus' Birth and Boyhood

Session Goal

To discover Jesus' human side and his holy side—and learn about the traditions Jesus participated in while growing up.

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- Describe a family tradition you enjoy.
- Describe a time when you felt welcomed into a group.
- Describe a time when you saw a newborn child.

Jesus' Birth

Jesus was born like all of us, but he was not conceived by two humans as we were. Instead, Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born through Mary. Mary and Joseph were his parents here on earth, but God was his parent in heaven. Jesus had two sides: his human side and his holy side. This is important to remember, because Jesus is a bridge between God and us.

Read Luke 2:1-20.

In what city was Jesus born? Why were Mary and Joseph there?

Where did Mary and Joseph stay? Why didn't they stay at an inn?

Who visited Jesus immediately following his birth? _____

How did they hear about the birth? _____

Read Matthew 2:1-12.

Later, some visitors traveled a great distance to see Jesus. Who were they?

Who did they talk to on their way to visit Jesus? _____

How did these visitors know about Jesus' birth? _____

How were these visitors welcomed? _____

God often uses the "ordinary" to become "extraordinary." Jesus did not live like most kings or other leaders of his time. His visitors were longing for the Messiah, someone to save them from their troubles.

When the Magi arrived to visit Jesus they also talked with King Herod. Herod was jealous when he heard from the Magi that a king had been born in his region. He feared the child would become a threat to his leadership.

Read Matthew 2:13-23.

How did Herod try to avoid the threat to his leadership? _____

How did Mary and Joseph react to this threat? _____

How would you feel if one night you had to suddenly move away? _____

Read Luke 2:21-40.

What traditions did Mary and Joseph practice after Jesus was born? _____

Where did they go? Why? _____

Why is it important for us to know that Mary and Joseph participated in Jewish traditions?

What similar tradition do Christians often celebrate after the birth of a child?

Who welcomed them to the temple? _____

What prediction did Simeon make? _____

The law said that every adult male within 15 miles of Jerusalem had to attend Passover in Jerusalem. When boys reached the age of 12, they were considered adults in the community. It was the goal of all Jews to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover at least once in their lifetime.

Jesus had a family just like many of us and participated in family traditions, such as traveling to Jerusalem each year. But Jesus was also drawn to the religious tradition from an early age. He was participating in human life while discovering the holy side of himself.

Read Luke 2:41-52.

What traditions were Mary and Joseph practicing? _____

How old was Jesus? _____

What did Mary and Joseph do when they couldn't find Jesus? _____

What was Jesus doing in the temple? _____

How was Jesus received in the temple? _____

What reason did Jesus give for staying behind in the temple? _____

Who did Jesus mean when he said, “Father”? _____

What can we interpret from Jesus’ actions and response? _____

How does the story end? _____

- How are we to respond to our parents?
- What parts of Jesus’ life are similar to parts of our lives?

At this time, Jesus was just starting to understand that he had a special connection with God. Although he knew God was his parent, he was obedient to his earthly parents and continued to be a part of his earthly family. Jesus learned a trade and worked as a carpenter before he began his ministry around age 30.

Read Mark 6:3.

What was Jesus’ job before he began his ministry? _____

What does this verse say about Jesus’ family? _____

What's the Same?

Participating in traditions helps us learn what is important to our family or friends. Traditions give us common ground with other people. For example, the Lutheran tradition of confirmation welcomes participants into the body of Christ in a new way. As a group, describe other traditions in which you participate.

- How do these traditions help create common ground?
- As a group, discuss times when you felt unwelcome.
- Think of two things you can do as a group to help make your church a more welcoming place.

Close with prayer.

Session 3

Jesus' Ministry

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- Who is one person you admire and why do you respect him or her?
- What would you like to do when you are an adult?
- Who would you choose to assist you with an important project? Why?

Make a list of careers you might consider pursuing as an adult. As a group, discuss your options and what type of training you'll need to enter these fields. Discuss similarities in training needs. What steps will you need to take in order to accomplish your goals?

Jesus' Baptism and Temptation

Read Matthew 3:1-17.

Where does this story take place? Locate this area on a map.

Who does Jesus meet there? _____

What was John doing there? _____

How did John respond to Jesus' request for baptism? _____

Why was Jesus baptized? _____

What happened at Jesus' baptism? _____

Why are we baptized? _____

Session Goal

To learn about Jesus' ministry, and understand his dedication to God's purposes. Jesus' behavior is the example by which we live our own life.

John the Baptist was preparing the way for Jesus to come to save the world. Part of his role was to help people recognize their sin and need for forgiveness. His baptism was a symbol of forgiveness for those who repented of their sins. Jesus, although he had no sin, wanted to set an example for all people, including Jews and Gentiles.

In addition, Jesus' identity was revealed by God through his baptism. From this time on, Jesus would no longer live in Nazareth as a carpenter; he would begin his preaching ministry. After Jesus was baptized, he went into the wilderness to be alone with God. While he was in the desert, he was tempted by Satan several times.

Read Luke 4:1-13.

Why did Jesus go into the wilderness? _____

How long was Jesus tempted? _____

How was he tempted? _____

Why would Jesus be tempted by these things? _____

How did Jesus respond to Satan? _____

Why did Jesus choose not to use his power? _____

How does this story end? _____

How does this story suggest we are to live as Christians? _____

How are we tempted today? How can we respond to temptation?

Were these people considered religious? Why did Jesus choose these people?

Read Matthew 10:5-16 and Luke 9:1-6.

What instructions did Jesus give his disciples? _____

How did Jesus prepare the disciples for this task? _____

Would You?

- If there were disciples today, who or what do you think they would follow?
- If Jesus came today and asked you to be his disciple, how would you respond?
- What kind of people do you think would respond to Jesus' call today?
- How would these followers be trained?
- What would happen if there were no people to share God's word today?

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

What are we asked to do today as followers of Jesus?

Close with prayer.

Session 4

The Parables

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- What is your favorite book or movie? Why?
- Who is or was your favorite teacher? Why?

Session Goal

**To learn how and what
Jesus taught his followers.**

Group Story

Write a group story, with each person contributing part of the story.

Give one person a sheet of paper to write the introduction. (For example: "Once upon a time, in a land far away ...") If there are fewer than 10 participants, continue to pass around the paper until the story is complete.

- Person 1 folds over the introduction so it's not visible, then passes the paper to Person 2.
- Person 2 adds a line introducing a character, giving a name and occupation.
- *Continue to fold and pass the paper with each new person.*
- Person 3 adds a line about what the character likes to do.
- Person 4 adds a line introducing the main character to a new character.
- Person 5 adds a line telling about the weather.
- Person 6 adds another action or activity.
- Person 7 adds how the main character feels.
- Person 8 adds a place that the two characters go to visit.
- Person 9 adds what happened at the place they went to visit.
- Person 10 writes the conclusion of the story, then reads the story aloud.

Jesus Teaches Using Parables

This session looks at some of the parables—or stories with lessons—that Jesus used when teaching his followers. Telling parables was a common way to teach lessons in Jesus' time, because they were filled with examples from everyday life that people could understand. Because the world has changed in many ways over the past 2,000 years, some of Jesus' parables are hard for us to understand today.

Read Matthew 13:1-9.

What was the purpose of the parable of the sower?

Read Matthew 13:10-23.

How do these verses relate to the story of the sower?

Write one sentence explaining each of the parables listed below. Include what this parable means to you in your everyday life.

Matthew 9:16-17 _____

Matthew 13:3-8 _____

Matthew 13:47-50 _____

Matthew 20:1-16 _____

Matthew 25:14-30 _____

Mark 4:30-34 _____

Luke 5:8-10 _____

Luke 14:15-24 _____

Luke 15:11-31 _____

Luke 18:10-14 _____

Parables Today

How do we use parables today? _____

If Jesus were teaching with parables today, what topics might he cover?

Group Activities

- Make a “Top 10” list of parables based on which lessons are most meaningful to you.
- The leader will ask one participant to pick a Description Card and describe the person, place, feeling, or event mentioned on the card for the rest of the group. Once someone guesses the correct answer, that person picks a card. Continue playing until the cards are gone or time is up.

Break into groups of three.

Choose one of the following activities. Each group should share with the others upon completion of their project.

- Write your own parable using a topic of your choice. Some examples include stealing, homelessness, swearing, respect for friends, family, or following God.
- Act out a parable, or modernize one of the parables. Record it on video.
- Draw your parable as a poster or comic strip.

Close with prayer.

Session 5

The Cost of Discipleship

Session Goal

To understand that being a Christian was not easy for the disciples, just as it is not always easy for us.

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- If you had to leave your house and take only one thing, what would it be?
- Who is the person most important to you and why?

Jesus warned his followers of the cost of discipleship. Jesus wanted these people to understand that a life of discipleship would not be glamorous or easy, just as his time on earth was not glamorous or easy. Jesus told his followers to love God above everything else, including their families. Jesus did not mean they shouldn't love their families, he just reminded them that God should be their number one priority. There is a cost to discipleship.

Read Luke 14:25-30, 33.

What does Jesus say to his followers? What are they to give up? Why?

What do these verses say about the cost of discipleship? _____

Is hearing Jesus' words the same as acting out Jesus' words? Compare the two.

- For you personally, what is the most important part of following Jesus?
- What would you be willing to give up to follow Jesus? What would be the hardest thing to give up?
- What is the biggest obstacle that keeps you from following Jesus?
- Why would Jesus tell us these things about being a disciple?

Read Matthew 21:33-46.

What did the vineyard owner do? _____

When harvest time came, what happened? _____

What was the owner's final attempt? Why? _____

How did the renters treat the owner's land, servants, and son? _____

What was the end result of this behavior, according to the crowd? _____

What message was Jesus trying to convey? _____

What Happened to the Disciples?

Though we do not know the exact details of the lives of the disciples, legend provides some hints. The disciple John was exiled on the island of Patmos. He later returned to the region of Galilee and continued to preach and proclaim the Gospel. He died at an old age.

Simon Peter was put to death because of what he believed. It is said he was crucified with his head in a downward position. He requested to be upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus. Peter's wife also suffered martyrdom.

Andrew was crucified on a cross that was shaped like an X. He, too, felt unworthy to be crucified on a cross like Jesus. James, the brother of John, was put to death by Herod Agrippa. He was beheaded. Philip suffered martyrdom as well. He was whipped brutally, thrown into prison, and afterward, crucified.

Bartholomew was cruelly beaten and crucified upside-down. Thomas excited the rage of a pagan priest while he was preaching and was martyred. He was speared to death. Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia, being beaten to death with a weapon called a halberd, a long handled iron club. James, the son of Alphaeus, was beaten, stoned, and his head was dashed against a rock. Judas, son of James, was crucified at Edessa. Simon the Zealot was crucified at Judea. Judas Iscariot repented of what he had done and took back the thirty pieces of silver to the temple. He hanged himself.

What about You?

Being a disciple or follower of Jesus not only means giving something up, but also trusting Jesus enough to follow where he leads. Think through the following questions.

- Would you be willing to sacrifice as much as the disciples did?
- How does being a Christian influence your behavior and decisions?
- What difference does it make to believe in God?
- What does confirmation have to do with being a Christian?
- Does having a personal relationship with God make a difference?

Close with prayer.

Session 6

The Miracles of Jesus

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- Tell of a time when you “couldn’t believe your eyes.”
- How do you know when something is real?

Jesus not only taught with parables, but he also performed many miracles. These miracles ranged from feeding 5,000 people with a few loaves and fishes to healing the sick. All of these miracles involved Jesus caring for people, most of whom were considered outcasts in society.

Read John 14:11; 20:30-31.

According to these verses, why did Jesus perform these miracles?

Who witnessed these events?

Look up the following verses and read about some of the miracles Jesus performed. After each verse, describe the miracle performed and people’s reactions, if any.

Matthew 8:5-13 _____

Matthew 9:1-8 _____

Matthew 17:14-23 _____

Matthew 20:29-34 _____

Luke 13:10-17 _____

Luke 17:1-19 _____

Session Goal

To understand the holiness of Jesus through his miracles, and to witness his interactions with people.

John 2:1-11 _____

John 6:1-15, 35 _____

What is common in each of these miracles? _____

How did the people helped by Jesus most commonly respond?

Jesus performed many of his miracles for people who were considered outsiders in society or were strangers to him. Many of these people approached Jesus while he was teaching and traveling. The following story is a little different. Jesus, just like you and me, had many friends. Several references are made in the Bible to Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus. It seems that their house was one of rest for Jesus, a place to stop and visit between his travels.

Read John 11:1-44.

What was Jesus' response to this crisis?

How did Mary and Martha respond to Jesus?

How would you feel if you were Mary or Martha, and Jesus had not come in time to help your brother?

Verse 35 says that Jesus wept. What does this response tell you about Jesus?

What was Jesus hoping to teach people by raising Lazarus from death?

Read John 6:14-15.

How did the people respond to Jesus in these verses? _____

How did Jesus take this? _____

Read John 11:45-53, 57.

Not everyone was convinced that Jesus was a prophet or the Messiah.

What did several of the people do after witnessing the raising of Lazarus?

Although the Romans were the governing body of the entire region, the Jewish people had their own governing body called the Sanhedrin. This council was given the authority to oversee the Jewish people and carry out the Jewish laws. To keep political peace, the Romans wanted to be friendly with the Jewish leaders so as to maintain the support of the Jewish people. Giving the Sanhedrin such power helped accomplish this.

Why were the religious leaders concerned with Jesus? _____

What was the outcome of the meeting of the Sanhedrin? _____

If you were a ruler during Jesus' time, what would you think about Jesus?

Read John 12:23-36.

Why was Jesus saying these things? _____

How do you think the disciples felt about Jesus being killed? _____

What about You?

- How would you feel if one of your friends died?
- Have you ever felt like an outcast? How does it feel when you don't fit in?
- Jesus performed many wonderful miracles. What can we learn from these miracles today?

Close with prayer.

Session 7

The Last Days of Jesus' Life

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- What is your favorite family celebration? Why?
- If you had only seven days to live, what would you do?

Jesus did an amazing thing for all of us. He chose to die for us so that we might be reconciled with God. This session covers the last seven days of Jesus' life. Look for both the joyful and painful sides of these times.

Read John 12:12-19.

How did the people respond to Jesus being in Jerusalem? _____

Read Luke 22:1-6.

Why were the people gathering in Jerusalem? _____

What did Judas agree to do? _____

How do we betray Jesus today? _____

Why might Judas have betrayed Jesus? _____

Read Luke 22:7-13.

Why were the disciples gathered together? _____

Jesus' final Passover meal led to which new sacrament for Christians?

Session Goal

To understand Jesus' final words to his disciples as they celebrated the Passover, and what these words mean to us as we celebrate Holy Communion.

The original Passover took place when God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. To remember that event, the Jewish people eat a Passover meal every year. Jesus gathered with his disciples to celebrate this traditional Passover meal, but this time he added new meaning to the tradition, which became the sacrament Christians celebrate as Holy Communion.

Imagining the Past

Let's travel back through time and put ourselves in the place where Jesus and his disciples gathered for their last meal together. We gather in a large room to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, part of the Jewish tradition passed down since the days of Pharaoh.

Today we remember when the angel of death passed over our houses; the day we sacrificed the Passover lamb. This meal is both a time for joy and sorrow: joy because at this meal we celebrate our freedom; joy because at this meal we remember God's faithfulness to our people and hope someday to be free from Roman rule; sorrow because we are still not free. Today we wait, remember, and wonder if our freedom might not come on a night like this. Tonight we hope for a Savior to come.

Read aloud Psalm 113; Psalm 116; Psalm 117; and Psalm 118.

The Meal

- These bitter herbs remind us of the sorrow we experienced in Egypt. We dip them in salt water to represent our tears.
- The unleavened bread is a reminder of the haste with which we ate. There was not time for the bread to rise before we had to leave.
- This fruit is a reminder of the many hours of back-breaking labor we performed.
- The lamb is a reminder of the sacrifice made on our behalf. It is because the lamb was killed that our firstborn sons were spared.

We are thankful for the lamb in securing our salvation. We drink this wine to be reminded of the fruit of the earth—the celebration of life in God. Let these be symbols of our life together.

Let us pray.

God, we ask your presence here today as we gather to participate in this Feast of Unleavened Bread. Help us to understand the significance of this time for Jesus and for us as we begin this special meal. Open our hearts and our minds. Amen

Foot Washing

Characters

Jesus
Peter
other disciples

Props

table with bread and cups
bowl of water with hand towels

Jesus: Tonight, as we share our last meal, I remind you that my time on earth will soon to come to an end. We have shared much over these past years and you have been my dear friends. But more than that, you have been prepared for a great task after I am gone. Let this be my example to you. *(Jesus begins washing Peter's feet.)*

Peter: Wait. Stop. You shouldn't be washing my feet. You are my teacher. I should be the one washing your feet. Please ... no! This isn't right.

Jesus: *(Stops washing)* Let me do this. It is important for me. It is written by the prophet Isaiah that the Messiah will come as a servant. This is true. I have come for all people. Today these words are fulfilled. Today one of you here will indeed betray me. The day has come when no one will know who will be their friend or who will be their enemy.

Peter: What do you mean? Who are you talking about? Is it me? Surely none of us would ever betray you. We are your friends.

Jesus: *(Continues washing)* The times ahead will be hard. If the people in the world do not accept you, know that they first hated me. But you are now of something greater; you are God's. I have told you these things so you will know and will not go astray. But in the days ahead, it will be hard to follow God. In fact, many of you will find it hard to admit you are my disciples. I tell you these things because I will no longer be with you. It is now time for me to leave. And I can do so, because you are here to

carry on the work that I have started. You will be confused and grieve, all while the people of this world rejoice. But I will not leave you alone. I will send my Spirit to guide you. Listen to the Spirit, trusting and knowing that this is God's voice.

Peter: Surely you are not talking about us? I can say for myself, I would never fall away.

Jesus: I tell you the truth: tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny knowing me three times.

Peter: No! Jesus, I would die before doing something like that. *(Looking away)* I don't understand this. Where are you going? What's happening?

Jesus: Where I am going you cannot follow. I am returning to my Father. The time has come for me to leave you. Now eat this last meal with me. *(Lifting the bread)* See this bread? This bread is my body, which I have given for you. Eat this bread and remember me. *(Lifting the cup)* See this cup? This is my blood. Drink of it, all of you. Share it with your friends, for this is the new promise I give to you. I poured out my blood for you so that your sins may be forgiven. Do this to remember. Whenever you eat this meal, remember me. And in sharing this meal, we will all become one, joined together with other believers. Let's pray.

(Jesus and all of the disciples bow their heads.)

All: Dear God, thank you for this meal. Thank you for showing us how to be servants. Please help us to remember your love for us. Amen

Read Luke 22:17-34 and John 13:1-17.

List the key events that took place at the Last Supper.

What did Jesus serve the disciples at the meal? What do these things symbolize?

Why is it important to remember the body and blood of Christ?

Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet? _____

When Jesus taught his disciples and performed miracles, he emphasized the importance of helping others. Focusing on the role of a servant was a new concept at the time—opposite of what other leaders practiced. People had expected Jesus to come with mighty armies, overtaking those in power. Instead, he came as a baby, born into a poor family, and learned the trade of a carpenter. Throughout his life, Jesus looked out for those in need, including social outcasts and people rejected by society. He invites us to do the same.

- How can we serve others today? Think of some ideas on your own.
- Tell the group of a time when someone you know acted as a servant.

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave new meaning to the traditional Passover meal. He also told the disciples what was going to happen to him. Think about how Jesus and the disciples must have felt at this meal. Think about how you feel while taking communion. Write down four sentences about what the Last Supper means to you as a Christian.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Close with prayer.

Session 8

Jesus' Death

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- What do you do when you need time alone?
- Whom do you trust with private information?
- Describe a tough time in your life and who or what helped you through it.

Jesus Prepares

After Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples, he took three of them with him to pray in Gethsemane, a place they had visited many times before. Gethsemane is where Jesus and his friends spent their final hours together before Jesus was arrested.

Read Luke 22:39-46 and John 17.

Describe Jesus' prayer: _____

How do you think Jesus was feeling as he prayed? _____

What did his best friends do as Jesus prayed? Were they supportive?

- Describe a time when you've been worried or scared for yourself or your friends.
- Have your friends ever failed to support you at a time when you needed them? How did this make you feel?

At this point, Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Judas, one of the disciples, went to the location where Jesus was praying and kissed him on the cheek, giving the soldiers a sign that this was the person they sought to arrest. Once arrested, Jesus was taken to the High Priest's home. Religious leaders accused Jesus of going against the Jewish law and decided to put him to death.

Session Goal

To understand what happened during Jesus' final hours and see what impact these events have on our lives today.

Under law, the Roman official named Pontius Pilate was the only person who legally could have Jesus killed, so the religious leaders took Jesus to him. After questioning Jesus, Pilate found Jesus innocent of all charges. Because Pilate didn't want to make the public angry by pardoning Jesus, he turned Jesus over to King Herod, whose guards beat Jesus but still returned him to Pilate.

To resolve the situation, Pilate made a deal with the public. They had a choice between two prisoners: Jesus and a hardened criminal named Barabbas. One of these men could be killed if the other one went free. The people decided to let Barabbas go and to execute Jesus.

In his final days on earth, Jesus predicted his suffering during the Last Supper. Then Jesus was arrested, and the disciples watched as he was beaten. Finally, the disciples watched a crowd mock and humiliate their friend. This was the crowd that chose Barabbas over Jesus.

Read Luke 22:14-16, 47-48, 54a, 63-65; and Luke 23:13-25.

What risks did a follower of Jesus face? _____

- In situations like these, how would you react? Would you admit your belief in Jesus? Discuss your responses as a group.

Peter's Denial

On this evening, people felt uncertain about what they believed and what decisions they should make. With all this uncertainty, it was dangerous to express one's opinion.

Read Luke 22:54b-62.

What did Peter do after Jesus was arrested? _____

How did Peter respond to his questioners? _____

How many times was Peter confronted? _____

Did he respond the same each time? _____

How might you have responded? _____

Why do you think Peter responded as he did? _____

What did Peter do after the final confrontation? _____

- How do you act after doing something you know you shouldn't have done?
Discuss this topic as a group.

Group Activity

All of us face situations when it is hard to stand up for what we believe.

- As a group, make a list of situations that test your beliefs.
- Describe ways you could respond in a situation that tests your beliefs.
- Describe some things we can do in order to more closely follow Jesus' example rather than Peter's.

The Crucifixion

Our last glimpse of Jesus before his crucifixion is of a man who had not slept for two days. He had been beaten and was alone. Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, denied him three times. Jesus' own people, who had praised him only days earlier, became scared and silent. Even the Roman officials were not sure of their decision to kill Jesus. This was the scene as Jesus carried his own cross to Golgotha to be crucified.

In these final hours of Jesus' life, we are reminded that Jesus was both human and divine. Crucifixion was the form of death that criminals experienced, for it was long and painful. Victims actually died of suffocation. As their bodies became weaker from their wounds, gravity pulled them toward the ground and their lungs collapsed. Yet Jesus was also divine. In this time of pain and suffering, he looked to God for his strength.

Read Matthew 27:45-51; Luke 23:38-46; and John 19:25-30.

Record the last words of Christ on the cross. _____

What kind of example did Jesus set even as he suffered? _____

Who came to the cross? _____

Mary Magdalene's Perspective

I was there that terrible morning. I followed the crowds out to that awful place of death outside the city walls. It was dawn when they began to put him to death, yet it wasn't like any other daybreak. It was so painful to see them put his beaten body onto that ugly piece of wood to die. He looked so frail. Some of the blood had dried, but I saw many fresh wounds. If only I could have done something. But what? What could I do? He uttered fragmented statements. I could only hear them faintly.

Even up on that cross, dying, he still wanted to provide for his mother! She must have felt much of his pain. I wondered how she could watch her son die. I was glad to see one of Jesus' disciples taking her home. I wished the guards would stop telling him to save himself. Didn't they know who they were talking to? How could they laugh at him? I wished I could leave, but I couldn't. He was in so much pain—I couldn't walk away—he seemed so alone. My stomach seemed to sense it would soon be over.

My body ached, my hands trembled, tears rolled down my face. He had been hanging there for hours. Clouds seem to take over the sky, but the air was dry. Then suddenly, it was over. And then came the time I had to say good-bye to my Lord.

- How does this story make you feel about Jesus' death?
- What would it be like to watch the death of someone you loved?

Group Activity

Break into groups of three or four and do one of the activities below. When you are finished, share your project with the entire group.

- Prepare a news report on the death of Christ.
- Create an overhead presentation, using images of the last days of Christ's life on earth.
- Make a poster or collage focusing on these four parts of the story:
 1. The Last Supper
 2. Christ's suffering
 3. Christ's last words
 4. The hope of Easter

Close with prayer.

Session 9

Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension

Open with prayer.

Share your answer to one of the following:

- What is your favorite part of spring?
- Describe a symbol of new life.
- Describe a way we celebrate life.

New Life . . . Again and Again

Read Luke 24:1-12.

Who came to the tomb? _____

What did they see? _____

Why is it important that Jesus rose from the dead? _____

What would your response have been if you saw Jesus at the tomb?

Easter is a time of new life and resurrection—a time that moves us from death, grief, and despair into new life with a fresh outlook.

- Describe a time in your life when you have felt a “resurrection,” as if you had a second chance.
- Describe some ways you can offer others a second chance.

Session Goal

To understand what the resurrection of Jesus means for us personally and to review the previous studies.

Jesus appeared several times following his death. Break into groups of two or three and read about these appearances. Then share your findings with the larger group.

Mark 16:9-20 _____

Luke 24:13-35 _____

Luke 24:36-49 _____

John 20:19-29 _____

John 21:1-14 _____

Read Acts 1:1-3.

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ended his time here on earth. He promised his disciples they would be taken care of and guided, even after he was no longer with them. It was at this time that God gifted the disciples with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit remains active in the world, guiding us as well and empowering us to be followers of Jesus.

Read Luke 24:50-53; John 16:12-13; and Acts 1:4-11.

- What new things did you learn about the time after the resurrection?
- What would it have been like to see Jesus ascend into heaven?

Human and God

Jesus lived and died as a human on earth, but Jesus was also God. List some ways Jesus showed he was human and some ways Jesus showed he was God.

Human

God

List some traditions in which Jesus participated, then list some comparable traditions we practice today.

Traditions in Jesus' Time

Traditions Today

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Describe how each of the following people responded to Jesus.

Mary (Jesus' mother): _____

Joseph: _____

Simeon: _____

Anna: _____

Herod: _____

Peter: _____

Pontius Pilate: _____

The disciples: _____

Others: _____

List three important things about being a follower of Jesus.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What are some important things you will remember from this study on *Jesus of Nazareth*?

Close with prayer.



To Know, To Live,
To Grow

Apostles' Creed
Building the Christian Church
Jesus of Nazareth
Lord's Prayer
Meaning of Service: Living in Love
My Faith
New Testament
Old Testament
Ten Commandments
What Is a Lutheran?

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