

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 4: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled *Who is Jesus?* This series of seven lessons introduces the person and work of Jesus from a Christian perspective, considering His identity, work, teachings and death. Because Jesus is central to the Christian faith and religion, it is vital for the disciple to know Jesus, and for those exploring Christianity to know what makes Jesus Christ unique, and worthy of our discipleship and devotion.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 4: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson explores the things that Jesus taught during His time on earth, and His identity as a teacher.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Jesus taught radical things – things that were not taught in His day and age. Unlike religious leaders who desired power, money and an army to do their bidding, Jesus taught peace, love and a kingdom that was not of this world. He taught that His role was to serve and model obedience to God. Jesus taught us about relationships, family, work, worry, money, fear, honour and worship. He had answers to our questions about life! Following His teachings will change our lives and the way we live. They are more than just nice thoughts – following Jesus' teachings will put us at odds with every world power, and even at odds with our own selfish desires – but they will guide us and give us purpose and contentment.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever studied under a really excellent teacher (perhaps in school, at church, learning a trade or elsewhere)? What made them a great teacher?

2. What are the biggest problems people in the world face today? If Jesus held a solution to their problem in His teaching, what would stop them from heeding it? What barriers exist that hinder people from knowing and following the teaching of Jesus?



STUDY

❖ **JESUS THE TEACHER:** Even more than for the miracles He performed, Jesus is known as a teacher. Jesus demonstrated what He taught through His life. Jesus was not satisfied to teach only educated people in the temple, but anyone who would listen. It is clear from the Biblical accounts that a large number of students followed Him.

- **Teaching from Boyhood:** After the birth of Christ, we are only given a small glimpse of what His childhood was like. Here, we see Jesus staying in the Temple in Jerusalem after His parents had left in order to ask questions of the teachers, as well as to answer some of theirs. Read Luke 2:41-52. How did Jesus demonstrate His authority and understanding as a child?

- In order to be a teacher, one must have students willing to learn! Did Jesus have students? How did they refer to Him? Read John 11:28 and John 20:16.

- When most teachers of His day taught, they spoke with the authority of one greater than themselves. They spoke with the authority of the state, government, priests or God Himself. How did Jesus refer to Himself? Did He reference where His knowledge came from, or did He speak with personal authority and knowledge? Read Matthew 26:18, Matthew 23:8-10 and John 13:13.

❖ **HOW JESUS TAUGHT:** The message Jesus came to bring had several parts, and was revealed over time throughout His ministry on earth.

- **Jesus Taught Large Crowds:** Jesus taught on fields, beaches, hilltops, city squares, in the synagogues and temples, in people's homes and wherever people could gather. Sometimes these sessions were accompanied by miracles, but they drew large crowds



who listened intently to His words. In some cases, people followed Jesus and listened to Him speak for days, even running out of food.

- **Jesus Taught His Disciples:** Some messages Jesus reserved for His closest disciples only, and He taught them privately. Knowing that He would leave this world, Jesus gave His message to His most faithful followers in order that they would continue to spread the Gospel.
- **Jesus Taught in Parables:** Parables are used to illustrate a particular teaching of Jesus, and they appear in the form of a story with a hidden meaning. Read [Luke 8:10](#). What does Jesus say is the purpose of the parables?

- The meaning of the parables was revealed to those who had faith, but was concealed from those who did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.
 - Parables caused people to think, question and examine Jesus' teaching.
 - Believers today are given the Holy Spirit to teach us and help us understand the words of Jesus ([John 16:13](#)).
 - To those who understood, the parables were perfect illustrations not easily forgotten.
 - Jesus kept His identity partially concealed until it was time for Him to die so that He could complete His time of ministry.
- **Jesus Taught with Plain Teaching:** There were occasions when Jesus did not use parables, but plain teaching and instruction. Read [Matthew 5:2-11](#). What were some of the things Jesus taught everyone plainly?

- Even his plain teaching amazed people.
- John 16:25-33

❖ **WHAT JESUS TAUGHT:** Jesus is unique in what He taught His disciples and what He teaches us today. Over and over, Jesus says “you have heard... but instead I tell you”. The things He taught were meant to correct errors in His listeners’ minds, and reveal to them the truth. Those who were waiting for the Messiah to come were looking for a political or military leader, or a king. Instead, Jesus taught them about peace, and accepting the authorities over them. If you want to explore the teachings of Jesus, it is best to read it for yourself; however, the following is a summary of three major categories.

True Citizenship - The Kingdom of God: One of the topics Jesus emphasized was the Kingdom of God (in the book of Matthew it is referred to as ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’). This Kingdom was not an earthly system of government, but rather a spiritual reality. Within His Kingdom, the



things that God values are celebrated – not the things the world thinks are important. Some of the things that Jesus taught about this Kingdom are:

- **The Kingdom is about our Relationship with God:** God is Sovereign over everything, and is the true King of everything He created (angels, people) when they submit to Him as Lord (Matthew 7:21).
- **Those who believe are true citizens of the Kingdom of God.** This includes everyone who is ‘born again’ by the Spirit (John 3:5).
- **The Kingdom is not of this world.** Jesus never intended to set up an earthly throne. His reign is eternal, and will outlast this earth (Romans 5:21).
- **This Kingdom has different values than the world.** Where this world values power, wealth, status and vengeance, Jesus said the Kingdom of God was different. Citizens of the Kingdom of God would need to learn to change the way they think. Read the following verses and write down some of the Kingdom values:

Matthew 20:1-16	
Mark 4:30-32	
Mark 10:23	
Mark 10:14-15	

Within the Kingdom of God, it is not the rich and politically important who rule over everyone else. In sharp contrast, it teaches that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. His Kingdom, though small when it began, will become greater than all kingdoms. Wealth is an obstacle to citizenship in the Kingdom – one cannot buy one’s entrance. We must accept the Kingdom of God like a little child. It is not for the powerful, wealthy and wise – it is for all who have faith.

True Religion– Repent and Believe: Jesus made many statements that began “you have heard”, and then continued with “but I say to you”. In several other places in the Gospels Jesus corrected their understanding of religion. The word ‘religion’ means the system of behaviours and beliefs we use to relate to God and fellow believers. Jesus came to correct our understanding of this system and to show us the true way.

- **Repent and believe in the Gospel:** Jesus called people to a new way of relating to God – through faith in Him. This is the Gospel – that God provides salvation for sinners when they turn from their sin and their own way of trying to please Him (Mark 1:15). How



does Jesus describe this process? What must happen to us to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life? Read [John 3:1-15](#).

- **Jesus, the last Sacrifice:** Jesus came to change the system that required multiple sacrifices to atone for our sins. He was the final sacrifice that would end all sacrifices ([John 1:29](#)).
 - **Fulfilling the Law:** Jesus did not come to abolish the old Law of Moses, but rather to fulfil it ([Matthew 5:17](#)).
 - **Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life:** Jesus taught that He was the way to God, and He alone ([John 14:6](#)).
 - **God First:** Jesus calls us to 'take up our cross' and follow Him. Everything in our life, even our family, must be secondary to our devotion to Jesus. There is a cost to following Him ([Matthew 10:37-39](#)).
- **True Religion** is not simply following the Law, but rather loving God and loving others. Read [Matthew 19:16-30](#). What did Jesus say the man should do to inherit eternal life? How did Jesus tell the man to love God and love others? Why was the man hesitant to do so?

True Love- Lay Down Your Life: Jesus taught that the greatest commandment was that we must love God, and love our neighbour. He also taught that God's love made salvation possible. This love is so great it should change the way we live!

- Read each set of verses below and write down what Jesus taught us about love.

Luke 10:25-37	
Luke 6: 27-36	
Matthew 5: 17-41	
Luke 6:37-42	



Jesus told us we must love our neighbour – but defined neighbour as *anyone*, and we must love equally those who are like us and those who are our enemies. We must not just avoid harming others, but seek ways to love and give more than is asked of us. Jesus also clearly taught that we must not hate or even feel anger in our heart. Above all, we must forgive and not judge! This is an incredibly high standard to live up to! But this is what Jesus came to teach.

- **God Loves Us** - Jesus taught that God has great love for His people, especially the weak, the poor, the broken-hearted and those who mourn (Deuteronomy 7:9, Romans 5:8, John 16:27).

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Jesus was a teacher from the time He was young, but did not start His formal ministry until about the age of 30.
- ❖ Jesus' friends and followers referred to Him as 'teacher', and He identified Himself as 'teacher'.
- ❖ Jesus taught large crowds and small groups – He spoke in riddles and stories called parables, but He also taught plainly.
- ❖ Jesus' teachings are unique – He came to correct the thinking of His followers and teach them about their true citizenship, true worship, and true love.
- ❖ Jesus taught that His Kingdom is not of this world, and has different values than this world. One must come into the Kingdom of God through faith like a little child.
- ❖ True Religion consists of repenting and believing in Jesus who taught how He came to fulfill the law, provide the last sacrifice, and be the way, the truth and the life.
- ❖ True Love is laying down your life for another, and loving and forgiving others including your enemies. Jesus modeled this radical new way to live.
- ❖ God loves us – God's love for us is the reason we should have selfless love for others, especially the weak, the poor, the broken-hearted and those who mourn.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Some people, after hearing Jesus' teachings, went away sad because they knew they could not enter the Kingdom of God. Why were Jesus' teachings so difficult for people to accept?

2. What is revolutionary and life-changing about Jesus' teachings? What would our society be like if everyone followed Jesus' teaching on love?

3. Jesus talked about the least being the greatest in the Kingdom of God. Who are the least? Why are the 'least' and lowest of the world better able to accept God's offer of forgiveness and eternal life?