Session 1: Who Is Jesus?

NOTE TO LEADER

We intentionally created this study guide with more than enough material so that you can pick the questions that work best for your group. Before your meeting, watch the video, read the study guide's corresponding session, and decide which questions you'd like to discuss. For more information on using this guide in your group, click the three lines in the menu bar and select How to Use This Guide. Thank you for choosing this study and for faithfully leading your group.

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: In the person of Jesus, God the Son became a man and entered the world to restore us to God.

Head Change: To know that Jesus is the God-Man: fully and completely God and fully and completely human.

Heart Change: To feel awe toward Jesus, the eternal Son of God who assumed a human nature and dwelt among us.

Life Change: To recognize Jesus as God and Lord and to confess our need for him.		
SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER		
Who is Jesus? Jesus is the God-Man, the second Person of the Trinity who is fully God and fully human, and the only one who		
can redeem us and reconcile us to God.		
OPEN		
Who is the most fascinating person you know? What makes him or her so compelling?		
In life, we often meet interesting people. Some have inspiring backstories. Others have dynamic, magnetic personalities. While others are peculiar, charming, and endearing all at once. The world is filled with fascinating people.		
One of the most fascinating people in history is Jesus of Nazareth. The things he said and did left an undeniable imprint on the world. But why?		
What makes Jesus such a consequential (and fascinating) person? In other words, why does Jesus matter? In this session, pastor and author		
J.D. Greear will address who Jesus is and help us make sense of this most fascinating person.		
WATCH		
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in J.D. Greear's		

teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he

What "audacious claim" did Jesus make	
about himself?	
According to JD, what is the central claim of Christianity?	
Chilistianity:	
What are the two analogies the Bible uses to describe Jesus's deity?	
Show Session 1: Who Is Jesus? (11 minutes).	
DIGGLIGG	
DISCUSS	
The central question of this session is, "Who is	
Jesus?" People answer this question in many ways: He's an inspiring teacher, a moral	
revolutionary, or a prophet. Some even have a	
negative perception of Jesus, that he was a liar	
or a lunatic, for instance. How would you	
answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" How did you arrive at your answer? In what ways	
has your answer changed throughout your	
life?	
Early in the session, J.D. pointed to a claim that	
Jesus made about himself which J.D. said "will	
go down in history as the most audacious claim	
ever made by anyone." Jesus declared that he was fully and completely God and fully and	
completely human. Have you ever encountered	
this assertion before, that Jesus is fully God	
and fully human? If so, how have you reacted to and grappled with it? If not, what's your	
initial reaction? How does Jesus's claim that	
he's both God and human jive with your	
general thoughts about him?	
To help you learn the significance and	

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depth of Jesus being fully God and fully

human, see Practice 3 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

To help communicate the significance of God the Son becoming a man, J.D. used an ant illustration. In the illustration, the ants had no hope of being saved from their plight apart from a person becoming an ant to rescue them. Though he admitted the metaphor is imperfect, J.D.'s point was that God had to do something similar to save humans from our plight—he had to become a human without shedding his "Godness." In your own words, how would you communicate the significance of God the Son becoming a man in the person of Jesus? What problem would you say it solved? For what reasons is the claim that Jesus is fully God and fully human both revolutionary and controversial?

Part of what makes Jesus's claim that he is both God and human so controversial is the questions it leads us to ask, like: Are there multiple gods? Who was Jesus talking to when he prayed? As J.D. pointed out, questions like these lead us to the Christian concept of the Trinity—that God eternally exists as three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What level of exposure do you have to the idea that God is Trinity? In what ways do you find the doctrine of the Trinity difficult to grasp? How do you respond to that difficulty?

J.D. encouraged us to remember that when we're attempting to understand God, we're trying to "get our finite minds around the infinite nature of God." While there is much we can come to understand, grasping God's infinitude is

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ultimately beyond our capacity. In what ways do you find J.D.'s reminder helpful? To what degree does his encouragement relieve the pressure to completely figure God out?

For an exercise to help you comprehend and articulate God as Trinity and Jesus as fully God and fully human, see Practice 4 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

J.D. mentioned that the Bible often speaks through analogies to help us understand some of its big concepts. For Jesus, as J.D. pointed out, "the Bible uses two analogies to describe [his] deity or his 'God-ness:'" "radiance" and "Word."

To explain "radiance," J.D. took us to the book of Hebrews. Read Hebrews 1:3. In this passage, we learn that Jesus "is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature." In J.D.'s words, "Jesus is the emanation of God's nature. To see Jesus is to see God—he is the shining light of God's glorious nature." In what ways does Hebrews 1:3 argue for the deity or "God-ness" of Jesus? How does the word "radiance" help you comprehend who Jesus is?

Another analogy the Bible uses is "Word." J.D. pointed us to the first chapter of John's Gospel. Read John 1:1–5, 14. John says in verse 1 that Jesus is the Word of God—he is the content of the Father's speech, "the Word [made] flesh," as we see in verse 14. What thoughts and images come to mind when you read in John 1 that

Jesus is the Word of God? In what ways does
this analogy help you to develop a better
sense of who Jesus is?

J.D. summarized these two ideas—radiance and Word—by saying, "The Son makes the Father known to us. He is all that the Father is. He is the radiance of his presence, the perfect expression of his character." In other words, when we think about God, we should think about Jesus. Do you ever struggle to conceive what God is really like? If so, what are some of your assumptions about him (he's angry, prudish, or disappointed in you, for instance—you can be honest)? In what ways does observing the way Jesus acts in the Gospels help you form healthier thoughts about what God is like?

We see Jesus's deity and humanity from the beginning of the Gospels. Read Matthew 1:18-25. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, making him, as J.D. described, "one hundred percent man." Jesus was also conceived by the Holy Spirit, meaning he is also "one hundred percent God"—the "God-Man." This dual nature, J.D. said, "means he is uniquely able to rescue us." It means he has the power to rescue us and, by becoming human, made himself proximate to us, putting himself "in the position [not only] to save us," as J.D. phrased it, but also to sympathize with us. In what ways does Jesus's divinity amaze you? When you consider that Jesus is both fully God and fully human—in one person—is your heart stirred to worship him? How so?

For an exercise to stir your heart to worship Jesus, see Practice 2 in the

Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

J.D. homed in on Jesus's humanity. Since Jesus is fully human, he understands us. He's shared in our pain, weakness, and limitations and "sympathize[s] with [us]." Read Hebrews 4:15. Expounding on the idea in this passage, J.D. said Jesus "took on flesh and entered into your experiences. That means any emotion you feel, he's felt it. He knows what it's like to be lonely or sad or overlooked or betrayed or confused." In what ways does it encourage you that Jesus sympathizes with your pain and weaknesses? How could you use the pain or weaknesses you experience to draw closer to Jesus?

On the other hand, because Jesus is God the Son, he can—and has—overcome the weaknesses that he willingly took upon himself by becoming a human. Jesus has redeemed us, and he has the power to lead us out of the temptations that assail us. What are the temptations that are a regular struggle for you? What do you think it would feel like to have those burdens lifted by Jesus? What does it look like for you to ask him for help overcoming those weaknesses?

To ask Jesus for help in your daily life, see Practice 1 in the Deeper Walk Section at the end of this session.

J.D. mentioned how Jesus, during his time on earth, took "the loftiest name of God in the Old

Testament"—I AM—"and claimed it for himself, attach[ing] that name to our greatest places of brokenness and need."

- Read John 6:35: To those who hunger, he says: "I am the bread of life."
- Read John 8:12: To those in darkness, he says: "I am the light of the world."
- Read John 10:9: To those in need of protection or shelter or refuge, he says: "I am the door" (ESV).
- Read John 10:11: To those who feel lost or abandoned, he says: "I am the good shepherd."
- Read John 14:6: To those who are confused, he says: "I am the way."
- Read John 14:6 again: To those who fear death, he says: "I am the life."

Which of these struggles do you most relate to right now? In what ways could you ask Jesus to meet those places of need for you?

As J.D. noted, "everything that we're missing, everything that we need, everything that we've ever felt like we lacked, everything we've always looked for is in Jesus." Nothing else will fill those holes. Only by being restored to God through Jesus, the incarnate Son, can we experience life as it was meant to be experienced—in communion with God. Where have you looked for purpose and meaning other than Jesus? In what ways have they failed to deliver the purpose and meaning you were seeking? What practical steps can you take to seek purpose and meaning in Jesus and not in other places?

LAST WORD

"Who is Jesus?" is a simple question. But
answering the question—if we answer it
correctly—leads us to one of the most profound,
mind-bending realities in all the world: Jesus is
the God-Man.

The way we answer, "Who is Jesus?" is, you might say, one of the most important things about us. It determines what we think about God and what he's like, what we think about the world and what it all means, and what we think about ourselves and how we can find the thing we're all subconsciously looking for: true life. That life is found in one place—in Jesus himself. So, who do you say that Jesus is?

SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the God-Man, the second person of the Trinity who is fully God and fully human, and the only one who can redeem us and reconcile us to God.

DEEPER WALK

This section is designed to help you practice different ways to interact with God and reflect on what you've learned in this session. Pick at least one activity to try before the next session.

Practice 1: Prayer

As we learned in this session, Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. He is fully God and fully human. While the doctrine of Christ is a lofty doctrine, it's also profoundly practical.

One of the ways we can put the doctrine of	
Christ into practice and apply it to our hearts is	
through prayer; specifically, by praying historic	
prayers from church history. Consider	
implementing the following condensed version	
of the "Prayer of St. Patrick" into your morning	
prayer routine.	
Prayer of St. Patrick	
Christ shield me today.	
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind	
me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above	
me,	
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,	
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,	
Christ in the heart of every [person] who thinks of me,	
Christ in the mouth of every [person] who	
speaks of me,	
Christ in the eye that sees me,	
Christ in the ear that hears me.	
Amen	
Practice 2: Memorization	
God's people have a long history of memorizing	
his Word, from the oral cultures of the first	
century and before to the modern day. Scripture memory hides God's Word in our hearts and	
situates it on the tip of our tongues, equipping	
us, encouraging us, and readying us to deliver	
good news to those who need it.	
Make it your ambition over the next several	
weeks to memorize Hebrews 1:3, which we	
covered in the Discuss section: "The Son is the	
radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his	
powerful word."	

And if you're up for a bigger challenge, consider	
memorizing "the Christ hymn," a passage found	
in Colossians 1:15–20.	
He is the image of the invisible God,	
The firstborn over all creation.	
For everything was created by him,	
In heaven and on earth,	
The visible and the invisible,	
Whether thrones or dominions	
Or rulers or authorities—	
All things have been created	
Through him and for him.	
He is before all things,	
And by him all things hold together.	
He is also the head of the body,	
The church;	
He is the beginning,	
The firstborn from the dead,	
So that he might come to have	
First place in everything.	
For God was pleased to have	
All his fullness dwell in him,	
And through him to reconcile	
Everything to himself,	
Whether things on earth or things	
In heaven,	
By making peace	
Through his blood, shed on the cross.	
Practice 3: Community	
Music is a powerful teaching tool. Think about it,	
as kids we learn the alphabet, our system of	
government, and the reality that "Jesus loves	
[us]" by setting it to music. It's an incredibly	
effective way to embed information and truth	
deep into our minds and hearts.	

	,
One genre of music that's particularly effective at conveying information and ideas to its listeners is hip-hop. Its lyrics are often so poetic, clever, and catchy that they stick with us. Now, you may be wondering why we're discussing	
hip-hop in a series about Jesus. It's because we're going to use a hip-hop song—a masterful articulation of Jesus's divine and human natures—in this exercise as a teaching tool to examine and discuss the doctrine of Christ.	
and discuss the doctrine of Christ.	
The next time you gather with your family, friend group, or church group, play the song "The	
Hypostatic Union" by Christian hip-hop artist Shai Linne. Be sure to pay close attention to the	
lyrics—he goes fast. After listening to the song	
(feel free to listen multiple times if necessary),	
spend some time discussing the lyrics as a group (you can find song lyrics online).	
What phrases or lines stood out to you from the song? Did any of Shai Linne's lyrics help you grasp Jesus's identity better? If so, which ones?	
Did any of his lyrics surprise you? Which	
ones, and in what way?	
When you consider the song as a whole and	
the way Shai Linne articulated the wonder of Jesus's identity, do you find yourself more in	
awe of Jesus? Are you more captivated and	
drawn to worship him? For what specific reasons?	
reasons:	
In what ways can knowing these truths about Jesus and his identity encourage you on a	
day-to-day basis?	
Practice 4: Creeds	

Grappling with the dual natures of Jesus of Nazareth is not an exercise unfamiliar to the church. In fact, the early church engaged in a series of church councils (gatherings of church leaders) to define and articulate faithfully what God's Word teaches about who God is, who Jesus is, and who the Spirit is, especially considering the many misunderstandings that were emerging in the first few centuries of the church. Out of those councils came what we refer to as creeds, or statements about God that aim to speak faithfully and precisely about each person of the Trinity.

One creed, composed in 325 AD (then amended in 381) after a major misunderstanding about Jesus's identity began circulating widely, is the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed is a robust statement of faith that articulates the historic Christian belief about each member of the Trinity—and especially God the Son—with clarity and precision. For that reason, take some time to read and review the Nicene Creed. Do it prayerfully and thoughtfully, asking God to embed these truths deep in your heart and respond with worship.

Note: You'll notice two words below in the creed that might give you pause: "catholic" and "apostolic." The use of the word "catholic" (from the Greek *katholikos*, meaning "universal") is meant to communicate the universal nature of the church; it is not an allusion to the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, "apostolic" (from the Greek *apostolos*, meaning "messenger") is meant to articulate that the church is founded on the apostles; it is not an allusion to the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolic succession.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,	
,	
The Father, the Almighty,	
Maker of heaven and earth,	
Of all that is, seen and unseen.	
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,	
The selleve in one Lord, desdes emist,	
The only Son of God,	
Eternally begotten of the Father,	
God from God, Light from Light,	
True God from true God,	
Begotten, not made,	
Of one being with the Father;	
Through him all things were made.	
For us and for our salvation	
He came down from heaven:	
Was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the	
Virgin Mary,	
And became truly human.	
For our sake he was crucified under	
Pontius Pilate;	
He suffered death and was buried.	
On the third day he rose again	
In accordance with the Scriptures;	
He ascended into heaven	
And is seated at the right hand of the	
Father.	
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,	
And his kingdom will have no end.	
, and the langue in the lite of the	
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver	
of life,	
Who proceeds from the Father [and the	
Son], Who with the Father and the Son is	
worshiped and glorified,	
Who has spoken through the prophets.	
Title has specification and propriets.	

We believe in one, holy, catholic, and	
apostolic Church.	
We acknowledge one baptism for the	
forgiveness of sins.	
We look for the resurrection of the dead,	
And the life of the world to come. Amen.	

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Why Does Jesus Matter? STUDY GUIDE

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