

LESSON 1: Jesus in the Gospels

AIM

To share with the learners different insights into the person of Jesus (8.3.6, 9.1)

OUTCOME

Learners have a portrait of Jesus based on the gospel accounts.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Telling your story:** Arrange the class in groups of five. Hand each learner four strips of paper large enough to write a few sentences on. The group members will write on these strips a short paragraph describing their experience of each of the other members of the group. When all in the group are finished writing their four descriptions, the strips are given to the person who has been written about. Each one reads the four descriptions of him- or herself.
- 2 Invite the learners to **reflect** on the above experience. Each of the four descriptions of myself are likely to be quite different.
- 3 **The Four Gospels:** Briefly brainstorm with the class the different types of literature one finds - novel, short story, biography, history, science fiction, poetry, drama, sayings, and so on. Explain that the gospels are not biographies of Jesus' life, nor are they accurate and complete historical accounts. The word 'gospel' means 'good news'. The gospels are different accounts of the experience and understanding that the early Christians had of Jesus and the Good News he preached. They are written by the four evangelists - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Evangelist means 'bringer of good news'.
- 4 **Gospel readings:** Let the children do the following readings in groups, allocating one reading per group, or, if there is time, all four readings to each group. When reading the groups should focus on the question: What is it about Jesus that the evangelist wants to portray? The readings are:

MATTHEW 5:1-16

MARK 8:27-38

LUKE 7:36-50

JOHN 9:1-7 (or longer version, 9:1-41)
- 5 **What kind of Jesus** did each evangelist want to portray? Ask the groups to give some feedback on this question. You might summarise as follows, making the point that the person of Jesus is a mystery which can be seen in many different ways.

MATTHEW: Jesus is a teacher with authority

MARK: Jesus is the suffering Messiah or Anointed One

LUKE: Jesus is the friend of the friendless

JOHN: Jesus is the light of the world



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Paper strips (four per learner) (1)
- * Bibles (4)(8)
- * Background music, book, crucifix, jar of ointment, candle and matches (6)
- * Copies of the prayer (6)⇒
- * Poster materials (7)

- 6 **Prayer:** Set the mood in the class for reflection and prayer. Play some quiet music and place a book, a crucifix, a jar of ointment, and a lighted candle in a place visible to all. These four symbols represent the insights arrived at in the four gospel readings. Pray together the litany given below. The response to each of the short invocations or prayers is 'Have mercy on us'. ⇒

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 In the same groups let the children work out **presentations** of what they read. This they can do orally or by making posters with the titles JESUS THE TEACHER; JESUS THE MESSIAH; JESUS, FRIEND OF THE FRIENDLESS; or JESUS, LIGHT OF THE WORLD.
- 8 Encourage the learners to explore **other images** of Jesus - Jesus the wonder worker [Matthew 14:13-21], Jesus the forgiver of sins [Mark 2:1-12], Jesus the healer [Luke 8:40-56], Jesus the compassionate listener [John 8:1-11].

MATERIALS

LITANY

Jesus, son of God, (R) *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, son of Mary, (R)

Jesus, our brother, (R)

Jesus, our teacher, (R)

Jesus, friend of the friendless, (R)

Jesus, compassionate listener, (R)

Jesus, healer of our ills, (R)

Jesus, light of the world, (R)

Jesus, the Anointed One, (R)

ALL

May God, who showed himself to us in Jesus Christ, enlighten our minds, strengthen our wills, and fill our hearts with love. May God, the Indweller in our hearts, animate us with his life. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

(Adapted from Pennington, *Pocket Book of Prayers*, Image Books, Doulbeday, 1986)

LESSON 2: Life, Death and Resurrection

AIM

To help the learners discover significance in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (2.2.11)

OUTCOME

Learners understand what the person of Jesus means for Christians.

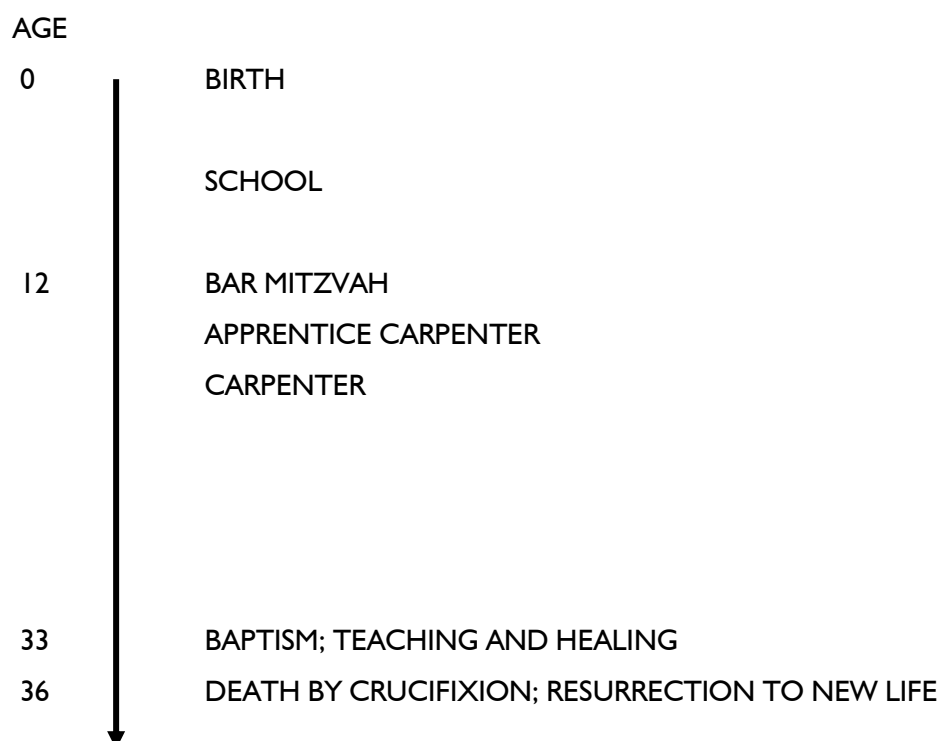


WHAT YOU NEED

- * Timeline (2)
- * Worksheet (6) ⇨
- * *Follow Me, Follow Me; Were You There; Shine Jesus Shine* (8)
- * Paper and paints (9)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Begin the lesson by asking the children to use their imagination to draw a **timeline** of their life from beginning to end, assuming that they will live till the age of eighty. Once they have done that give them an opportunity of comparing their timelines with one for Jesus.
- 2 Draw up the timeline of **Jesus' life** on the board or on a poster by questioning the learners, challenging them to name the main events in the correct order.



- 3 **The life of Jesus** was for the most part an ordinary one like ours. The gospels record only one event between his childhood and his public ministry [see Luke 2:41 -52]. He lived a quiet, simple life, probably as a carpenter, until at the age of thirty-three he realised his mission to preach the Kingdom of God. He fulfilled his mission by preaching and healing, and through all that he did he showed others what God was like.

- 4 **The death of Jesus:** The details of Jesus' suffering and death are well known, but its meaning, just like our own death, can only be seen in the light of his resurrection. Jesus was put to death because he challenged the way of life of the leaders of his day. Jesus called for a new life of justice and mercy but his message of light annoyed those who preferred to live in the comfort of darkness. They said, "No" to Jesus. His death, therefore, was a consequence of the way he lived.
 - 5 **The Resurrection of Jesus:** His resurrection was also the consequence of his life. The raising of Jesus from the dead was the Father's way of saying "Yes" to the life that Jesus had lived. Even though Jesus had experienced abandonment, taking on himself the consequences of our sinfulness, God had remained faithful. Jesus' resurrection was not the same as bringing a dead man to life, like Lazarus. It was the entry into a new kind of life with God.
 - 6 What do the life, death and resurrection of Jesus **mean for us**? Present the worksheet which contains a selection of scripture passages. The learners are asked to draw out some conclusions to the question above. 📖 ⇨ We might summarise by saying:
 - Jesus showed us who God is.
 - Jesus showed us the way to God.
 - Jesus went before us on the way.
 - Jesus made the way possible for us by sending us the Spirit.
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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 Prepare a presentation for a **school assembly** to illustrate the four points listed in ACTIVITY 6.
- 8 Sing a **trio of songs** depicting the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus - for example:
 - LIFE: *Follow Me, Follow Me*
 - DEATH: *Were You There*
 - RESURRECTION: *Shine Jesus Shine*
- 9 Assign each learner with an event in the life of Jesus to draw and colour or paint. Put all the learners' art works together in a **mural or collage**.

Life, Death and Resurrection

What do the life, death and resurrection of Jesus mean for us?

Read the following passages and record your thoughts to share with the class.

<p>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” [Matthew 6:25]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>“All who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life.” [John 5:29]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” [Matthew 10:39]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>“The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” [John 6:51]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>“If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” [Matthew 19:17]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.” [John 8:51]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>“Blessed indeed will you be... for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” [Luke 14:14]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” [John 10:10]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.” [John 3:36]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” [John 11:25-26]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

LESSON 3: Son of God

AIM


To help the children to understand that Jesus is, at the same time, the Son of God and our brother: that he is truly human and truly divine (2.2.10)

OUTCOME

Learners have an understanding of the life and mission of Jesus.



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 In LESSON 1, we gained some insights into the person of Jesus through the gospel narratives. In this lesson we will look a little more deeply. Let the children read the words of the **hymn** *Lord Jesus Christ*. If they already know the song let them sing it. Draw attention to what the hymn is saying about Jesus. The first two verses are given below.

⇒
- 2 The hymn which uses the phrases ‘Mary’s son’ and ‘Son of God’ expresses the belief that **Jesus is fully human and fully divine**. Jesus, the historical person from Nazareth, is truly a human being like us, but he is also the being of God.
- 3 **Council of Nicaea (325AD)** Christians have always found it difficult to understand the mystery of Jesus, and this difficulty led to many wrong teachings in the early Church. The Council of Nicaea tried to give Christians clear guidance in the matter when it stated that the human person of Jesus, raised from the dead, has the same nature as God. He is divine, the Son of God, and equal to the Father.
- 4 Let the children read in their Bibles one of the following references to **Jesus as the Son of God**: [Matthew 3:16-17; 4:1-6; 17:1-8]
- 5 **Jesus, the human being**: How is Jesus like us? How is he different? Discuss these questions with the class after giving the learners time to complete the worksheet which contains a number of **statements about Jesus**. The learners mark each statement TRUE or FALSE.  ⇒



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Words of Lord Jesus Christ (1) ⇒
- *  Lord Jesus Christ (1)
- * Bibles (4)(7)
- *  Worksheet (5) ⇒
- * Pictures, painting, icons, or sculptures of Jesus (6)
- * Painting and drawing materials (6)
- * Cardboard for bookmarks (7)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **Painting or drawing**: Invite the learners to make a portrait of Jesus. You could have a few samples of pictures, painting, icons, or sculptures of Jesus to illustrate how he has been portrayed through the ages.
- 7 Learners reflect on one of the following passages from the Gospel of John [1:1-18 or 14:1-11]. They choose a short verse to write onto a card they will use as a **bookmark**.

- 8 **Relationship and resemblance:** People say of someone: Peter is the son of Joseph, or Mary is Christine's daughter. What do they mean? What do we mean to say that Jesus is the Son of God? There are two aspects:
- Jesus reminds us of God: to see Jesus is to see God.
 - Jesus is related to God: that is why he reminds us of God.

MATERIALS

LORD JESUS CHRIST

Lord, Jesus Christ,
you have come to us
you are one with us, *Mary's son*.
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,
pouring your love and goodness in,
Jesus our love for you we sing,
living Lord.

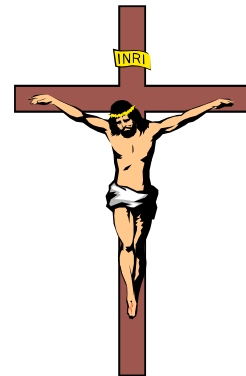
Lord Jesus Christ,
now and ev'ry day
teach us how to pray, *Son of God*.
You have commanded us to do
this in remembrance, Lord, of you
Into our lives your pow'r breaks through,
living Lord.

(Patrick Appleford)

Who Is Jesus Christ?

Mark each statement TRUE or FALSE

Jesus was as much a person as you or I.	
Jesus is alive today.	
Jesus had sexuality.	
Jesus liked some people more than others.	
Jesus was actually God: he only looked and acted like a human being.	
Jesus knew all things since the time he was a child.	
Jesus never got angry or sad.	
Jesus is the same today as when he walked the roads in Palestine.	
Jesus grew as a person through the affection of his parents and friends.	
The New Testament is a historical biography of Jesus Christ.	



LESSON 4: The Trinity

AIM

To help the children develop their understanding of God as Trinity (2.1.5)

OUTCOME

Learners have a basic understanding of God as Trinity and of the development of the idea in Christian history.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 To begin the lesson, ask the learners to write a few lines to describe **what they understand** by Trinity when referring to God. Invite some sharing, and record significant ideas on the board.
- 2 Refer to ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY 8 of LESSON 3. Jesus is the **Word of God** who reveals to us what God is like.
- 3 Jesus reveals God to us in his **words**. The learners read [John 14:15-17, 25-26], and offer further ideas to be written on the board.
- 4 There are also key **events** in the life of Jesus that reveal God in action. Prepare two readers for the following passages: Jesus' baptism [Matthew 3:13-17], and Jesus' transfiguration [Luke 9:28-36]. Ask, 'Do you recognise the Trinity in action in these events?' Discuss.
- 5 Our understanding of the Trinity is always growing. Jesus promised that he would send the Spirit to enlighten us and to lead us to the fullness of truth [John 16:13]. The Church, filled with the Spirit [Acts 2:4], formulated **the Creed** in the early centuries at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. Draw the learners' attention to the structure of the Nicene Creed which is said during Mass on Sundays in Catholic churches. ⇒ What do you notice? The Creed is in three parts reflecting the fundamental importance of the Trinity in Christian faith. What further insights does the Creed give regarding the Persons of the Trinity?
- 6 Let the children reflect for a while on what the concept of the Trinity means to them. Allow them time to try and **draw a representation** of the Trinity for themselves. If this is done on circular or triangular bits of cardboard, the learners' work can be assembled in a mobile to illustrate the multi-faceted mystery of the Trinity.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (3)(4)
- * Copies of the Nicene Creed (5) ⇒
- * Cardboard triangles or circles (6)
- * *♫ Father, in My Life I See or Sing for Life – Bless the Lord* (p.107) or *Eer Aan die Vader* (p.223) (7)
- * Worksheet (8) ⇒

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 **Sing:** *Father, in My Life I See* or *Sing for Life – Bless the Lord* (p.107) or *Eer Aan die Vader* (p.223)
- 8 Artists continue to explore the depths of the mystery of the Trinity. Andreij Rublev's famous **icon**, *The Hospitality of Abraham* [Genesis 18:1-15], is given on the worksheet. You could invite the learners to reflect on it or make it the centre of a prayer experience. ⇒ An explanation of the icon is offered on the page following it.

MATERIALS

THE 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 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:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
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.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
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.

Trinity



(Andrei Rublev: *The Hospitality of Abraham*)

Explanation of Andrei Rublev's Icon of the Trinity

Andrei Rublev was born circa 1360. Little is known of his early life however, his name is associated with the history of the Moscow artistic school. Many of his works, just as those of his disciples and followers, originated in Moscow or in towns and monasteries around it. His works can be viewed in both the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. He died on January 29, 1430 and is buried at the Andronikov Monastery in Moscow.

About Icons.

An icon is not a painting in the sense we normally regard pieces of art, although it is an image that is painted. An icon is a window out of the obvious realities of everyday life into the realm of God. Every paint-stroke has a meaning hallowed by centuries of prayer. Icons are religious images that hover between two worlds, putting into colors and shapes what cannot be grasped by the intellect. Rendering the invisible visible. Icons are the visual equivalents of the Divine Scriptures. Not every religious painting can be considered an icon. Icons are religious pictures that convey inner spiritual meaning of their subject matter. The Son of God came to restore the divine image in human form. Iconography is the graphic witness to this restoration.

Explanation of the meaning on the Trinity Icon.

This icon takes as its subject the mysterious story where Abraham receives three visitors as he camps by the oak of Mamre. He serves them a meal. As the conversation progresses he seems to be talking straight to God, as if these 'angels' were in some way a metaphor for the three persons of the Trinity. In Rublev's representation of the scene, the three gold-winged figures are seated around a white table on which a golden, chalice-like bowl contains a roasted lamb. In the background of the picture, a house can be seen at the top left and a tree in the center. Less distinctly, a rocky hill lies in the upper right corner. The composition is a great circle around the table, focusing the attention on the chalice bowl at the center, which reminds the viewer inescapably of an altar at Communion. On one level this picture shows three angels seated under Abraham's tree, but on another it is a visual expression of what the Trinity means, what is the nature of God, and how we approach him. Reading the picture from left to right, we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Colors

Rublev gives each person of the Trinity different clothing. On the right, the Holy Spirit has a garment of the clear blue of the sky, wrapped over with a robe of a fragile green. So the Spirit of creation moves in sky and water, breathes in heaven and earth. All living things owe their freshness to his touch. The Son has the deepest colors; a thick heavy garment of the reddish-brown of earth and a cloak of the blue of heaven. In his person he unites heaven and earth, the two natures are present in him, and over his right shoulder (the Government shall be upon his shoulder) there is a band of gold shot through the earthly garment, as his divinity suffuses and transfigures his earthly being. The Father seems to wear all the colors in a kind of fabric that changes with the light, that seems transparent, that cannot be described or confined in words. And this is how it should be. No one has seen the Father, but the vision of him fills the universe. The wings of the angels or persons are gold. Their seats are gold. The chalice in the center is gold, and the roof of the house. Whether they sit, whether they fly, all is perfect, precious, and worthy. In stasis, when there is no activity apparent on the part of God, his way is golden. When he flies, blazes with power and unstoppable strength, his way is golden. And in the Sacrifice at the center of all things, his way is golden. The light that shines around their heads is white, pure light. Gold is not enough to express the glory of God. Only light will do, and that same white becomes the holy table, the place of offering. God is revealed and disclosed here, at the heart, in the whiteness of untouchable light. The Father looks forward, raising his hand in blessing to the Son. It is impossible to tell whether he looks up at the Son or down to the chalice on the table, but his gesture expresses a movement towards the Son. This is my Son, listen to him... The hand of the Son points on, around the circle, to the Spirit. In

GRADE 6

this simple array we see the movement of life towards us, The Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit. The life flows clockwise around the circle. And we complete the circle. As the Father sends the Son, as the Son sends the Holy Spirit, so we are invited and sent to complete the circle of the Godhead with our response. And we respond to the movement of the Spirit who points us to Jesus. And he shows us the Father in whom all things come to fruition. This is the counter-clockwise movement of our lives, in response to the movement of God. And along the way are the three signs at the top of the picture, the hill, the tree, and the house. The Spirit touches us, even though we do not know who it is that is touching us. He leads us by ways we may not be aware of, up the hill of prayer. It may be steep and rocky, but the journeying God goes before us along the path. It leads to Jesus, the Son of God, and it leads to a tree. A great tree in the heat of the day spreads its shade. It is a place of security, a place of peace, a place where we begin to find out the possibilities of who we can be. It is no ordinary tree. It stands above the Son in the picture, and stands above the altar-table where the lamb lies within the chalice. Because of the sacrifice this tree grows. The tree of death has been transformed into a tree of life for us. The tree is on the way to the house. Over the head of the Father is the house of the Father. It is the goal of our journey. It is the beginning and end of our lives. Its roof is golden. Its door is always open for the traveler. It has a tower, and its window is always open so that the Father can incessantly scan the roads for a glimpse of a returning prodigal.

Staffs for the journey

Each person holds a staff, which is so long it, cuts the picture into sections. Why should beings with wings, that can fly like the light, have need of a staff for their journey? Because we are on a journey and these three persons enter into our journey, our slow movement across the face of the earth. Their feet are tired from traveling. God is with us in the weariness of our human road. The traveler God sits down at our ordinary tables and spreads them with a hint of heaven.

The Table

The table or altar lies at the center of the picture. It is at once the place of Abraham's hospitality to the angels, and God's place of hospitality to us. That ambiguity lies at the heart of communion, at the heart of worship. As soon as we open a sacred place for God to enter, for God to be welcomed and adored, it becomes his place. It is we who are welcomed, it is we who must 'take off our shoes' because of the holiness of the ground. Contained in the center of the circle, a sign of death. The lamb, killed. The holy meal brought to the table. All points to this space, this mystery: within it, everything about God is summed up and expressed, his power, his glory, and above all his love. And it is expressed in such a way that we can reach it. For the space at this table is on our side. We are invited to join the group at the table and receive the heart of their being for ourselves. We are invited to complete the circle, to join the dance, to complete the movements of God in the world by our own response. Below the altar a rectangle marks the holy place where the relics of the martyrs were kept in a church. It lies before us. It invites us to come into the depth and intimacy of all that is represented here. Come follow the Spirit up the hill of prayer. Come, live in the shadow of the Son of God, rest yourself beneath his tree of life. Come, journey to the home, prepared for you in the house of your Father. The table is spread, the door is open. Come.

<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/17509/documents/2017/8/Trinityicon.pdf>

(2 December 2020)