



## Getting Started

This guide is designed to facilitate conversations about how we view Jesus. Hopefully, it will encourage a greater understanding of how we think about Jesus.

Jesus had great teachings and said he was the son of God. People throughout the world have bet their lives on the claims of someone who lived over 2000 years ago.

Is this whole Jesus and Christianity a good or bad thing for the world?

Jesus himself said he would be divisive: *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn [quoting Micah, a Jewish prophet] 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'* Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."  
(Matthew 10:34-39 NIV)

And today, the question remains just as divisive: **Who is Jesus?**

*"[God] wants all or nothing. The thought of a person calling himself a 'Christian' without being a devoted follower of Christ is absurd."*

**-Francis Chan, Crazy Love**

*"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."*

**-Mahatma Gandhi**

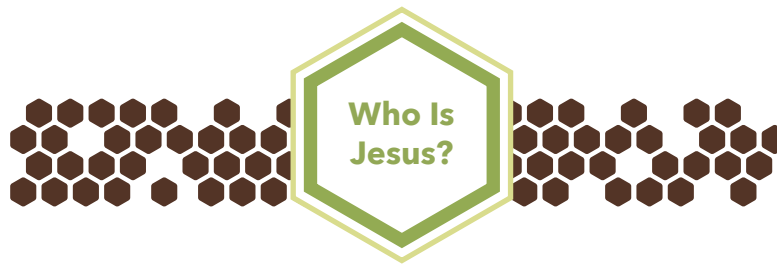
### Choose one

What do you think of when you hear the name Jesus?

Instead of being made in God's image, how have we made God in our own image in our culture today?

What is a belief you hold that others would call irrational, unpopular, or extreme?

How do you think Jesus has been divisive in our culture: for good? for bad?



## “Who do you say I am?”

Even in Jesus’ day, people made him into what they wanted him to be. One day when Jesus was with his disciples, he asked them point-blank who they thought he was. This was one of the occasions when Peter, in all his impulsive brashness, seemed to get it right, but then gets it wrong...

**13** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

**14** They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

**15** “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

**16** Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

**17** Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

**21** From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

**22** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

**23** Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

**24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

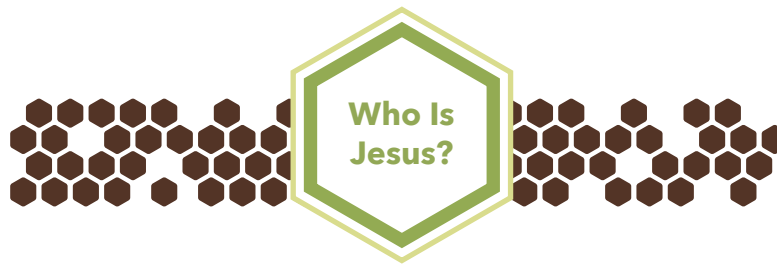
(Matthew 16: 13-20, NIV)

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” **C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity***

### Choose one

When have you put your foot in your mouth?

Why do you think Jesus took this approach with Peter?



## Going Deeper

When people bumped into Jesus, they got what they brought. People who came with humility and anything else – doubt, anger, needs – found a loving response. People who came with arrogance and a world where they were in the in-group and others were not found a Jesus who confronted and fought in humility and love.

It's so easy to read these words and put ourselves in the "good" group. The writer Anne Lamott had a pretty good test for us all: "You can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do."

### Choose one

"If Jesus were born to Mary today, where in our society do you think he would show up?"

If Jesus asked you like Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" what would be your answer?

Where have you created God in your own image?

## The Journey Ahead

Read the book of Mathew in a modern Bible translation like *The Message* and imagine what Jesus would be like if the story was set in today's world.

Imagine Jesus sitting next to you in your car ride to work. Have a conversation about your upcoming day. Journal the conversation.

With a group of friends, try living the day like Jesus in radical love of others: notice people left out, listen, make people more important than tasks. What happened?

## To Learn More



Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – the first four books of the Christian New Testament that tell about the life and teaching of Jesus. [For fun, read them in a modern translation like *The Message*.]

*Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis

*The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey



<https://thebibleproject.com/podcasts/the-bible-project-podcast/>

*Names of God* - <https://subsplash.com/livingproofwithbethmoore/messages/ms/+cef1016>



*Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?*  
<https://www.josh.org/jesus-liar-lunatic-lord/>



*Who is Jesus*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Feb6aXIsGes>