



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

Who do you think Jesus thought He was? Why?



Understanding the information (25 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

Many people have a general sense of God's reality - through creation or human experience. But it is through Jesus that God has revealed the specific nature of the truth of God. Jesus said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Christ is the one through whom we love God in the fullest way possible. Christ is the one we follow, because in doing so we follow God in the closest way possible. Martin Luther King looked for Christians to have, "zeal for Christ" and "zest for His kingdom".



As the first Christians pieced together who Jesus was, they came to the amazing conclusion that Jesus was God made human. God in His love had emptied Himself to become one of us, so that we could see and know Him in a way we could understand. Jesus answered: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9) In other words, if we want to know God's character, God's heart, or God's purposes, the fullest possible way of seeing that is by looking at Jesus, by "coming to Christ". Irenaeus put it like this: "In Jesus Christ, God allows himself to be seen, and in seeing God we come alive."

What is the background to Jesus' life? Jesus didn't think that He was starting something completely new, but instead that He was fulfilling God's story for the world and His people. We can only fully appreciate His significance by looking at what came before His arrival. The Jews were looking forward to a time when God will fully rule over His people as King.

This hope emerges under the time when they are most blessed – King David’s reign – when God promises: “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.” (2 Samuel 7:16) Israel’s prophets started to look for a particular anointed individual (Messiah) who would bring in this restoration, a king/priest who would finally bring God’s “kingdom” to His people again. It was into this atmosphere of longing that Jesus came, while His people were under Roman occupation.

Knowing this background makes sense of the first words Jesus used to describe His purpose. Jesus began His ministry by saying, “The time has come...The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the gospel (good news)!” (Mark 1:15) The word ‘gospel’ means ‘good news’, but originally in quite a specific way. It is normally good news connected to how rulers and their kingdoms are now victorious. You might spread a ‘good news’ announcement when someone had won a battle, or a new king was in charge. But by saying that this was a ‘gospel’ about the coming of God’s kingdom, Jesus was not only saying that He was bringing “God’s rule” to His people at last, but that He was Israel’s true King, the fulfilment of the entire story of the Old Testament.

Therefore, to be a disciple was (and still is) someone who will respond to this announcement by letting Him be King and live under His rule (kingdom). The kingdom is where God is reigning – wherever what God wants done is done.

It also makes sense of what it means to call Jesus “Christ” (the Greek word for Messiah). In three of the gospels we read the same story. “Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say I am?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘God’s Messiah.’” (Luke 9:18-20)

There are a number of titles for Jesus throughout the Bible (and as we have seen He didn’t use all of them) but the one He most consistently uses for himself is the ‘Son of Man’ (14 times in Mark alone) Throughout the Bible God promises that one day a human being will come who will fully represent His glory and break the power of evil. The prophet Daniel focusses in on this hope by describing a vision in which a human figure “like a son of man” is raised up by God over all the brutal kingdoms of the world, ruling with God and being worshipped with Him. (Daniel 7: 13-14)

This figure is a human yet divine character, opening the way for human beings to be restored to our original destiny. At His trial, while refusing the title of Messiah, Jesus says, “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God” (Luke 22: 67-69), clearly understanding His mission to be fulfilling this promise. By adopting this title, Jesus reveals that He is both the representative human being, showing us how to live fully in God’s kingdom, and the one through whom we can receive God’s life and love.

Discuss: In what ways can we live under His rule today?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Matthew 16: 13-20 in which Jesus asks the disciples who they think He is.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:
What does this passage teach me about God?
What does this passage teach me about people?
How does this passage call me to obey God?
What might I do in response to this this week?

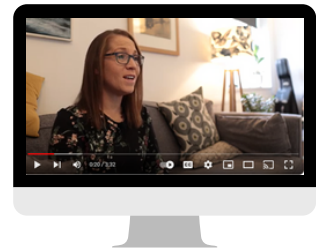


Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

https://youtu.be/5yhAM0ge_Mc

What struck you as important in the video?



Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

What did Jesus show about the Kingdom of God and what does that reveal about becoming like Him?

Disciples who are seeking to ‘become like Him’ will desire the Kingdom of God above everything else (it is named over 100 times in the gospels). God’s kingdom operates in an entirely different way from many human understandings of power. For this reason, He resisted His disciples using the title “Messiah”, and did not use it for Himself, to avoid being interpreted as a political/military leader. Yet in His three years of public ministry, Jesus reveals to us the heart of God’s reign in several ways:

He clearly establishes that He is the true King and that God’s Kingdom is only worth complete loyalty and commitment. Disciples who are becoming like Him will be growing in giving Him their ultimate allegiance.

He teaches and shows in His life the nature of God’s kingdom and the character of those who seek it. Jesus reveals God’s kingdom as upsetting the way the world operates and the ways people expect God to act. As God rules the last become first, the poor and sinners are included (“For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” Matthew 9:13) and, shockingly for His disciples, those who were previously not part of God’s people of Israel are now included. Disciples who are becoming more like Christ will be seeking to express their covenant love for God in lives marked by the values of the kingdom.

He demonstrates the rule of God as bringing restoration in body, mind and spirit, and driving out evil. In announcing that in Him God’s kingdom was near, Jesus is claiming that God’s reign was entering reality, on earth as in heaven. His healings and miracles are more than proof of His identity – they are demonstrations of God’s saving and restoration of His people and creation.

Disciples who are becoming like Christ will want to be growing in seeing God's healing reign in their own lives, the lives of others, and of creation.

He sees Himself as decisively establishing the fulness of God's kingdom, but also looking to a future completion. While in Him "the kingdom has come near" (Mark 1:15) and the power of evil broken in a decisive way, Jesus also looked to a future moment (which He expected to come soon) when it would come fully. Creation and people will be restored and evil, sin and death ultimately defeated.

Discuss: What is most challenging for you about God's Kingdom?

Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

Jesus, may all that is in you flow into me.
May your body and blood be my food and drink.
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer.
But hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes.
When with our saints, I may praise you forever.
Amen.





Who did Jesus think He was?

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Additional notes:

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