



TEACH IT MIDDLE SCHOOL SESSION 2

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the Session 2 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 2
- his or her own Bible, a pen, and a notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- a pack of colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- various images of Jesus to print and/or project; collect these prior to your session by searching Google Images. Variety is the key; make sure you include as many different art media as you possibly can (e.g., stained glass, wood carving, cartoon, oil on canvas, etc.). Include both flattering and unflattering images.

2. Session Intro

GOALS OF SESSION 2

As students experience this session, they will—

- be strengthened in their belief in Jesus, based on truths in John 1.
- learn how to break away the “spiritual crust” that can form when we have an underused, out-of-date picture of Jesus.
- be challenged to personalize the historic, worldwide impact of Jesus’ existence.

PRAYER

After your students have gathered, open the session in prayer. Pray that your group members will be open to the truth about Jesus, as John lays it out in John 1. God has a lot to say to us about his Son, but it’s meaningless if we don’t let it change our lives.

Open

Every Picture Tells a Story

Begin your session by showing the different images of Jesus you collected beforehand. Print several copies of each image (the larger, the better), so students can handle or hold the images after viewing the complete set. For better group commentary and focus, also project the images. Show them one at a time, prompting a discussion about each image with these questions:

What does this image say about Jesus?

What does the way it shows Jesus say about the one who created the image? How did this person view Jesus?

After showing all the images, hand out the prints of the images, allowing students to hold the one they like best (having several prints of each will allow more than one student to choose the same image). Ask:

What do these images tell us about how people in general view Jesus?

Which of these pictures is closest to the image of Jesus in your mind?

Transition into the study time by saying something like:


Everybody has a picture of Jesus in his or her mind; some pictures are good, some bad. Even believers tend to carry around a picture of Jesus that's sometimes old or even completely wrong. We tend to lock in a picture of Jesus at some point in our lives and never change it. Today's session will give us a chance to update our mental picture of Jesus.

3. Digging In

The Word on the Word

Explain that though the four Gospels cover the same subject (the life of Jesus), each begins a little differently from the others. Matthew starts off with a long family tree showing Jesus' Jewish "family history." Mark starts with a prophecy from Isaiah and jumps right into Jesus' adult ministry. Luke begins with Jesus' birth. And John does something totally creative by "waxing eloquent" with poetry and theology.

Tell the group—

1. Read John 1:1-18 using your Scripture sheets.
2. As you read, in colored pencil, put a cross  over every mention of Jesus.
3. Look for words such as *he, him, light, Word, and life*.

When most have finished, ask them to look at what they marked and tell you everything they see about Jesus when John refers to him as "the Word." Record their responses on the whiteboard. After you've discussed the passage, the board will look something like this (though it's fine if it's not as detailed):

Jesus as Word

- He was in the beginning (v. 1).
- He was with God (v. 1).
- He was God (v. 1).
- All things were made through him (v. 3).
- He became flesh and made his dwelling among us (v. 14).
- His glory was of the Father, full of grace and truth (v. 14).

Explain that when John wrote his Gospel, religious philosophies of the day were threatening to shape theories—not many of them completely right—about who Jesus was. One theory put forth that Jesus was only spirit in nature and didn't set a physical foot on this earth (Docetism). Another theory proposed that Jesus was the last in a series of sons of God, each son being less God and more human, finally ending in Jesus, who was mostly human (a form of Gnosticism). In light of this background, discuss the following questions:

What does John emphasize about Jesus?

If you were to choose something on the whiteboard to share about Jesus with friends at school, what would you choose? Why?

4. Digging Deeper



Sharper Image

Share with the group that they'll do the next exercise alone with God. They'll need to find places by themselves—like a quiet corner of the room. But before they go, give these instructions:

- 1. Find places of solitude (quiet focus) where you can have a mini-retreat with God. You'll be thinking about Jesus as “the Word” and “the light,” so make sure you can see the whiteboard from wherever you are.**
- 2. You'll be doing the exercises under Digging Deeper on your own. The instructions are printed on your journal pages. Please be candid as you do the exercise. I won't force you to share what you write down.**
- 3. Be sure to have your Bibles, journal pages, Scripture sheets, and pens. You can take your pictures of Jesus or leave them at your seat.**

For your reference, we've reproduced the Scripture references and possible observations below. While students are “retreating,” you may want to review the passages and have a retreat of your own.

What I Learn About Me

Before Jesus	Since Jesus
<p>Colossians 1:13-18 <i>-I was in the dominion of darkness (v. 13).</i></p> <p>1 Peter 1:17-25 <i>-I had an empty way of life (v. 18). -I was born of perishable seed (destined to perish!) (v. 23).</i></p> <p>1 John 1:1-7 <i>-I walked in darkness (v. 6).</i></p>	<p>Colossians 1:13-18 <i>-I have been rescued from the power of darkness (v. 13). -I have been brought into the kingdom of the Son (v. 13). -I have redemption, forgiveness of sins (v. 13).</i></p> <p>1 Peter 1:17-25 <i>-I have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus (v. 18-19). -I have been purified by obeying the truth (v. 22). -I have been born again of imperishable seed (v. 23).</i></p> <p>1 John 1:1-7 <i>-I have fellowship with the Father and Son (v. 3). -I have fellowship with other Christians (v. 7). -I'm purified from all sin (v. 7).</i></p>

After most students have finished (it's okay if some haven't), call the group together and help them process the Digging Deeper exercise. Here are some thought-starters for discussion:

Based on what you wrote on your chart, how would you compare your life before and since Jesus became part of it?

Pick one of the life situations, and share which truths about Jesus you see as a source of encouragement or help in that situation.

As you look at what John and the other Bible writers said about Jesus, how would you answer the question, "So what?"? In other words, this is great info about Jesus, but how does it apply to the stuff you have going on this week?

5. Wrapping It Up

Truth in Action

Give the group some time to reflect on how the truth of John 1 can affect their daily lives. Invite them to grab the picture of Jesus they chose in the beginning of the lesson and then ask:

Would you pick a different picture now? Why or why not?

If you were creating an image of Jesus and you wanted it to be really accurate, would you use stained glass, wood, clay, watercolor paints, oil on canvas, cartoon/graphic art, or some other form of art? Why?

Ask students to—

Write two things on your journal pages that help you change your picture of Jesus based on the things you learned from the Word about him.

Before closing with prayer, ask them to look over what they've written on their journal pages, and have them write two truths that can help them change their behavior or attitude this week. Ask volunteers to share what they've written. You may want to challenge the students to be accountable to one another this week concerning the changes they need to make. Offer some practical suggestions for accountability, such as setting a date and time for students to send you an e-mail or IM on their progress in implementing the change; creating a text-message phrase that you can send at a set date and time to serve as a reminder; or having students write on a sheet of paper how they implemented any changes this week and bring the paper to your next session. Allow them to take their chosen image of Jesus home as a physical reminder of what they've learned about him.