

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY FOR STUDENTS

*RECLAIMING THE TRUTH, REJECTING THE IDOLS*

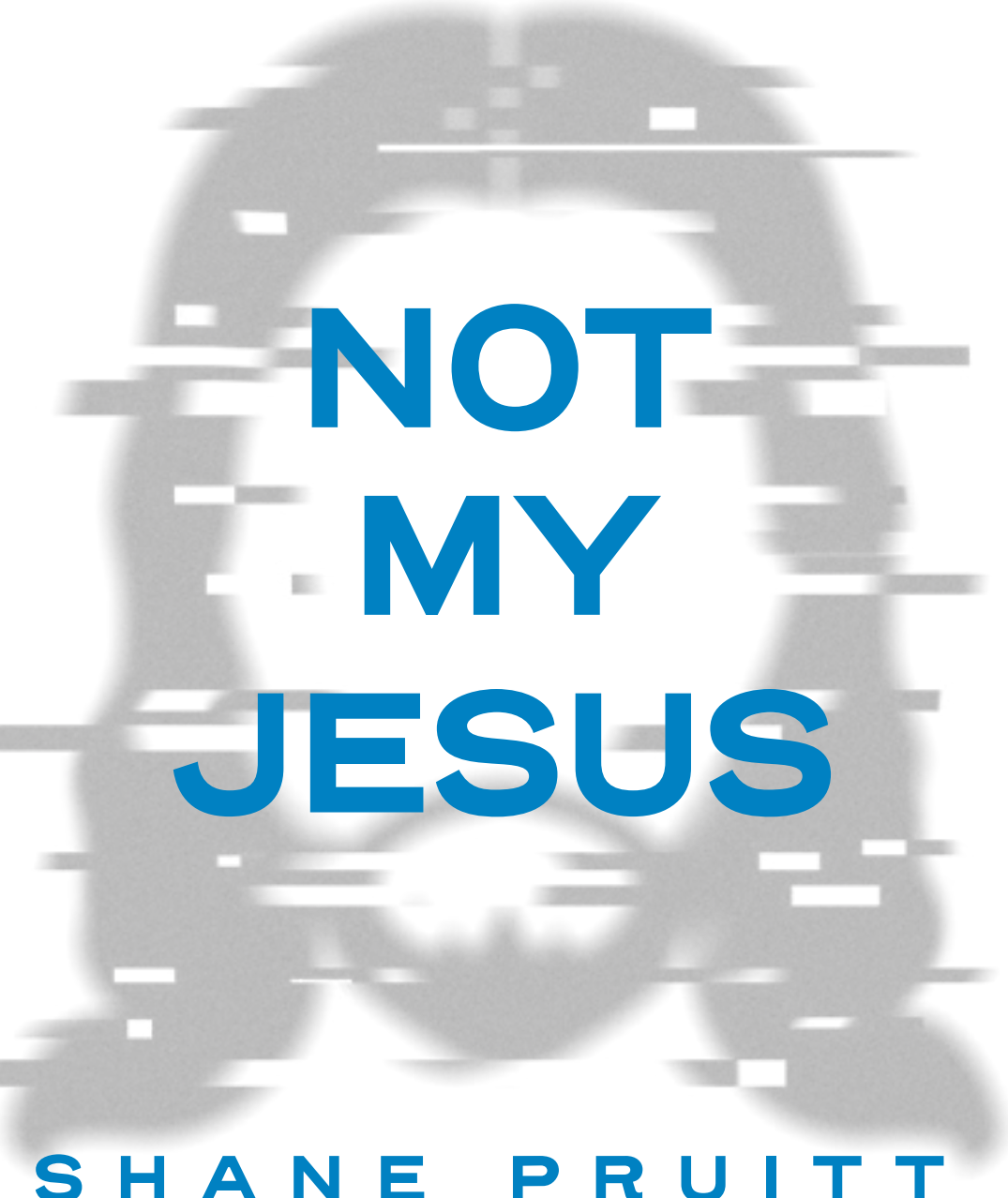
VIDEO  
ACCESS  
INCLUDED

# NOT MY JESUS

SHANE PRUITT



*RECLAIMING THE TRUTH, REJECTING THE IDOLS*



# NOT MY JESUS

S H A N E   P R U I T T

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***FOR EVERYONE FOLLOWING,  
WORSHIPING, AND PROCLAIMING  
THE **REAL JESUS** OF THE BIBLE.***

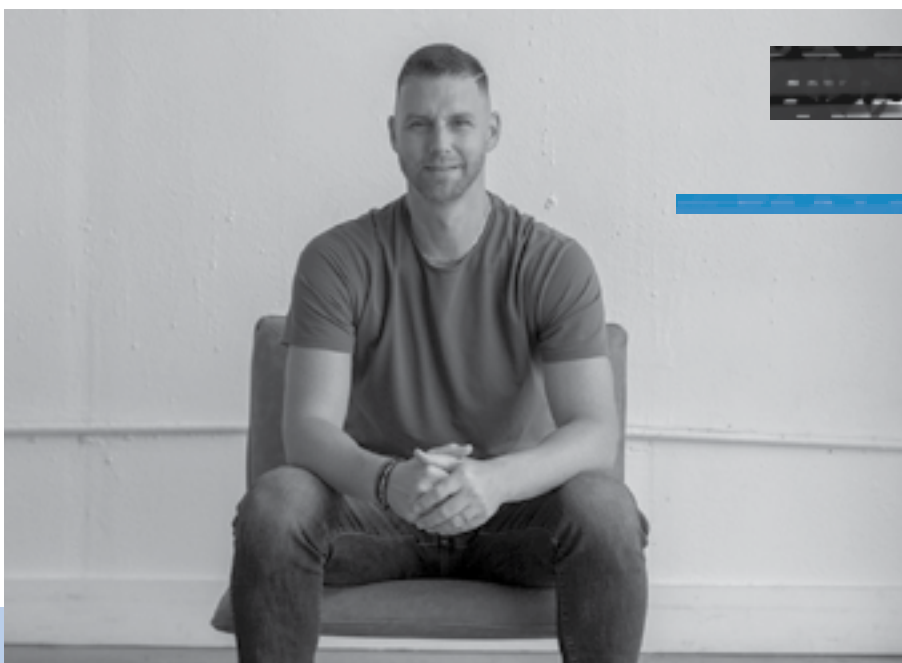


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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**SHANE PRUITT** serves as the National Next Gen Director for the North American Mission Board (NAMB). He and his wife, Kasi, reside in Texas with their five children. He has been in ministry for more than twenty years as a church planter, lead pastor, and student pastor. Shane is also a traveling communicator, evangelist, and Bible teacher. Every year he speaks to over one hundred thousand people about the good news of Jesus Christ. He is the author of *9 Common Lies Christians Believe: And Why God's Truth Is Infinitely Better*, *Calling Out the Called: Discipling Those Called to Ministry Leadership*, and *Revival Generation: Awakening to a Movement of God*. Shane is also one of the hosts of the GenSend Podcast. Follow him on Instagram and X: @shane\_pruitt78.



# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study book includes eight sessions of content. Each session includes video teaching, followed by content designed to be used by groups and individuals to help students know the real Jesus.



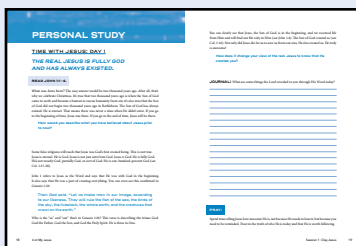
## WATCH

This page provides fill in the blanks and space to take notes on the video teaching. A code to access the videos is included with the purchase of this book and can be found on page 128.



## GROUP TIME

These pages include questions and activities that guide students to respond to the video teaching and relevant Bible passages. It's important to consider the age, maturity level, and needs of students as you tailor this content to fit your group.



## TIME WITH JESUS

Three days of personal study are provided for each session to take students deeper into Scripture and to further the biblical truths introduced in the group discussion and teaching time. These pages challenge students to grow in their understanding of God's Word and apply what they are learning to their everyday lives.



# TEACHING TIPS

## ***PRAYERFULLY PREPARE***

**PREPARE.** Complete Group Time and Time with Jesus days before the group meets.

**PRAY.** Be intentional about praying for each person in the group. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

## ***MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS***

As best as you can, create a non-distracting environment. Teens can be easily distracted, and if they are, they won't engage in the group experience. Do everything you can to help students focus on what's most important: connecting with God, the Bible, and one another.

## ***INCLUDE EVERYONE***

Your goal is to create a community where everyone is welcome and encouraged to grow spiritually. If possible, have extra copies of this Bible study book for any guests or new students.

## ***ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION***

Cultivate a healthy small group experience by doing the following:

- **Encourage everyone to participate.**
- **Don't let anyone dominate the discussion—even the leader.**
- **Don't rush students through their answers.**
- **Affirm students' responses and follow up.**
- **Keep God and His Word as the central truth over opinions.**

## ***KEEP CONNECTING***

Think of ways to connect with students during the week. When possible, build deeper relationships by planning opportunities for students to gather outside your regularly scheduled group time for activities, meals, hangouts, or projects around the home, church, or community.



# INTRODUCTION

This Bible study is built around the belief that the true, real Jesus is the Jesus we find in Scripture. However, if we're going to believe in the Jesus of the Bible, we first must believe that the Bible is the Word of God and can be trusted. Why can we believe this?

## **THE BIBLE WAS INSPIRED BY GOD.**

One of the most fundamental reasons we can trust the Bible is because of its divine inspiration. This means that while human authors wrote the individual books of the Bible, they were guided by the Holy Spirit to record God's Word without error, or as Paul put it in 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV), the Bible was "God-breathed." Theologian R. C. Sproul defines biblical inspiration as the process by which "God superintended the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, styles, and cultural contexts, they composed and recorded without error His message to humanity."<sup>1</sup> This divine inspiration ensures that the Bible contains God's perfect and complete revelation.

## **THE BIBLE IS INERRANT.**

The Bible's inerrancy is crucial to understanding its authority. Inerrancy means that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, is without error in all that it affirms, whether in matters of faith, history, or morality. If the Bible is truly God's Word, then it must be free from error because God Himself is perfect and incapable of lying (see Titus 1:2). Theologian Norman Geisler explains that "since God is the ultimate author of Scripture and God cannot err, it follows that Scripture cannot err."<sup>2</sup> This reasoning is foundational to our trust in the Bible.

## **THE BIBLE IS HISTORICALLY RELIABLE.**

The Bible is rooted in real historical events and people, many of which have been confirmed by archaeological discoveries and external historical sources. For example, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 provided substantial evidence for the accuracy of the Old Testament text. Additionally, numerous historical figures and events recorded in the Bible, such as King David, Pontius Pilate, and the destruction of Jerusalem, have been corroborated by external sources. Archaeologist Nelson Glueck famously stated, "No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."<sup>3</sup> While archaeology cannot prove the divine inspiration of the Bible, it does confirm the Bible's reliability as a historical document, which strengthens our confidence in its truth claims.



The New Testament, particularly the Gospels, also stands up to historical scrutiny. The Gospels were written within a few decades of Jesus's life, which is an extremely short time frame for ancient documents. The authors of the New Testament, many of whom were eyewitnesses to the events they recorded, had firsthand knowledge of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

### **THE BIBLE TRANSFORMS US.**

Finally, the Bible's authority is confirmed by its transformative power. The Bible is not just a collection of ancient writings; it changes lives. The writer of Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Through the Bible, God speaks directly to His people, convicting them of sin, comforting them in suffering, and guiding them in truth.

Scripture has also played a central role in shaping cultures and societies. The principles of justice, human dignity, and morality found in the Bible have influenced legal systems and civil rights movements, and the Bible's teachings have inspired transformative social change, testifying to its authority as a guide for living.

### **THE BIBLE CAN BE TRUSTED.**

The Bible stands apart from all other books because it is not merely the product of human effort but the very Word of God, breathed out by Him and preserved for us over time. Its teachings are true, its historical claims are reliable, and its impact on individual lives and society is undeniable.

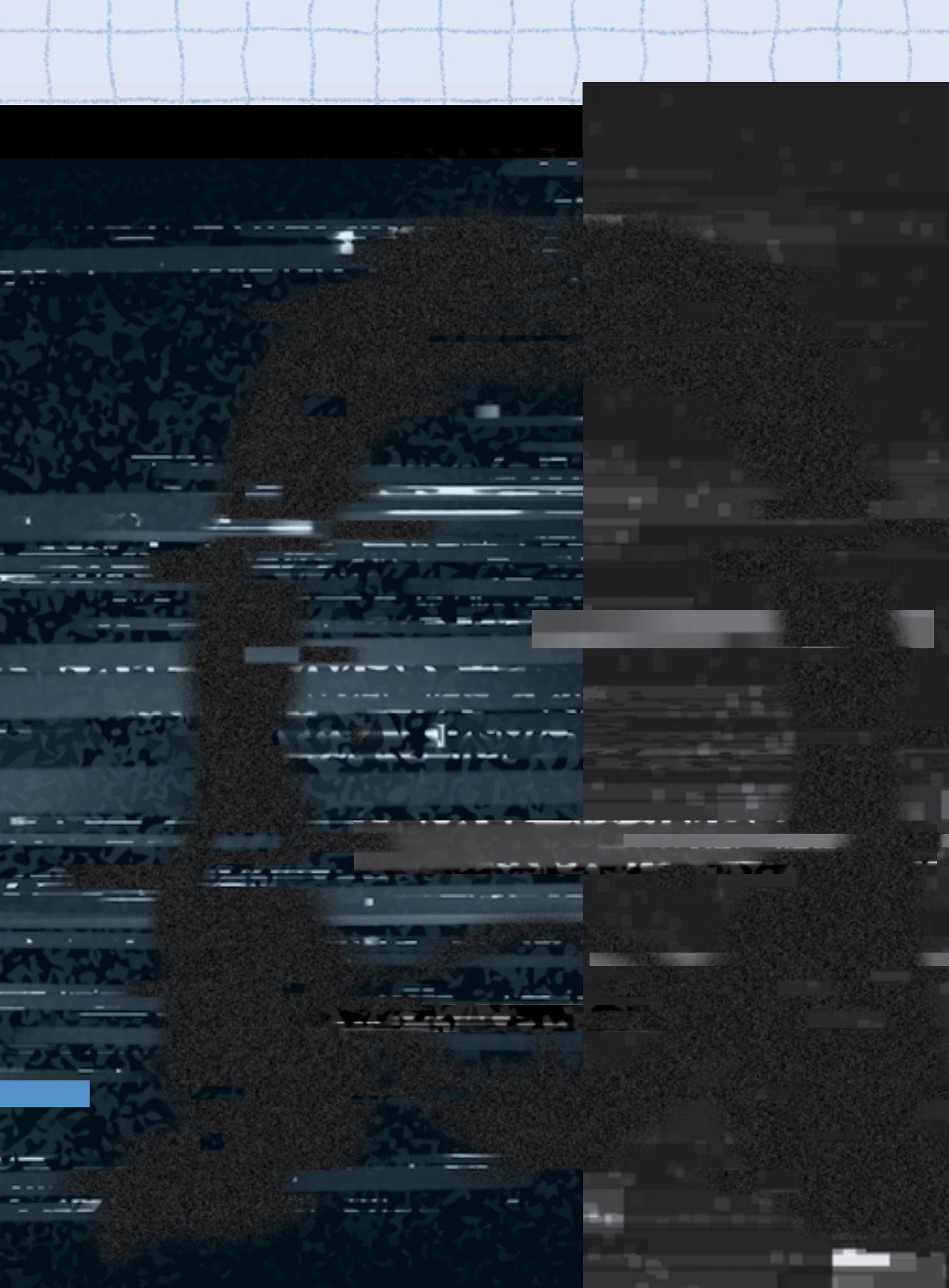
As Christians, our faith is built on the solid foundation of God's Word. In a world of shifting opinions and unreliable sources of truth, the Bible remains the unchanging, authoritative guide for our lives. As we study Scripture, we can be confident that we are hearing the voice of God who has revealed Himself to us through His Word. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. It is through this Word that we come to know the real Jesus and understand who He calls us to be and what He calls us to do!



***SESSION 1***

# CLAY JESUS







OUR OPINION ABOUT  
JESUS ***DOES NOT  
CHANGE WHO HE IS;***  
HOWEVER, OUR  
FAITH IN THE JESUS  
OF THE BIBLE WILL  
ABSOLUTELY ***CHANGE  
WHO WE ARE.***







*Fill in the blanks and use this page to take notes as you watch video session 1.*

A \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus can never offer you true peace, freedom, or joy.

What people don't want to hear about today is the \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ doesn't need to change. \_\_\_\_\_ need to change. Who we need is the Jesus of the Word of God.

Our \_\_\_\_\_ about Jesus don't change who He is, but our \_\_\_\_\_ in the real Jesus will absolutely change who we are.

Real faith in the real Jesus will really \_\_\_\_\_ who we are and it will really change how we \_\_\_\_\_.

**If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

—ROMANS 10:9



# GROUP TIME

**ICEBREAKER:** Provide everyone a small can of play-dough or modeling clay. Ask students to create a statue of Jesus with their play-dough. As they are molding their creations, ask them to describe Jesus in their own words by saying, “My Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.” For example, “My Jesus is kind. My Jesus has an awesome beard,” etc.

One of the reasons we all liked play-dough as children (some of us still do) was because we believed we could create anything we wanted. We’d mold, shape, and bend it to become something that matched our imagination. However, if we didn’t like how it was turning out, we could roll it up and start over.

Sadly, that is how many people today approach Jesus. They shape and create Him to be what they want Him to be. But a made-up Jesus will never bring real freedom, power, or joy because He is not the real Jesus. Only the real Jesus whom the Bible describes can save and transform. He is the real Savior and Lord.

**How would you know if you are worshipping a play-dough or clay Jesus?**

## RECLAIMING THE TRUTH

**READ MATTHEW 16:13–20.**

During the time that Jesus was on earth, Caesarea Philippi was known as a place that had many temples where people worshiped various gods. In this region, there was a great hill with a deep cavern at the base of it which was said to be the birthplace of Pan, the god of nature. Pan was portrayed as a half man and half goat who caused fright and fear. Interestingly, this is where we get the word *panic* from.<sup>1</sup> There was a temple that sat in front of this massive cave that people referred to as the gateway to the underworld (or the gates of Hades). This is where Pan supposedly lived. Jesus deliberately had this conversation about His identity with His disciples against this backdrop.



## **What do people tend to worship today?**

It's in the midst of this buffet of false worship and chaos that Jesus asks His disciples what people are saying and believing about who He is.

**List the three things the disciples said people believed about Jesus from verse 14:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Some thought Jesus was a herald of national repentance, like John the Baptist. Some thought Jesus was a famous worker of miracles, like Elijah. Some thought Jesus was someone who spoke the words of God, like Jeremiah and the prophets. These are good things and elements of who Jesus is but not the whole reality. Nothing has changed about this today. There are still a lot of partial beliefs and opinions about who Jesus is.

**What are some of the partial and false views about Jesus that you hear floating around today?**

**What is the craziest thing you've ever heard someone say about Jesus?**

Jesus then turns the question directly to His disciples. He asks them the most important question in life: "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). There are currently approximately



8.2 billion people alive in the world today,<sup>2</sup> and every single person must answer this question for themselves: What do I believe about Jesus (see Phil. 2:9-11)?

It's the question you have to be able to answer for yourself. What you believe about Jesus is the most important thing in your life. In fact, your answer to this question is revealed every day by what you believe and how you live.

## **TRUTH IS GREATER THAN OPINIONS**

Peter responds by making a proclamation of faith that is spot on.

**Read Matthew 16:16 again and in your own words, summarize how Peter answered Jesus's question.**

### **PETER SAID THAT JESUS IS THE:**

- **Messiah** – The One promised from the Old Testament.
- **Son of the living God** – He was more than a national reformer, more than a miracle worker, more than a prophet—He is the Son of God! This makes Him equivalent in stature and power to God. Jesus is not just sent from God; He *is* God.

### **THE REAL JESUS THEN RESPONDS TO PETER'S CONFESSION OF FAITH BY MAKING SOME PROCLAMATIONS OF HIS OWN:**

- **“On this rock I will build my church”** (v. 18) – Jesus was not talking about building His church on Peter himself, but on confessions of faith like what Peter made. Others had opinions, but Peter had saving faith in the real Jesus.
- **“The gates of Hades will not overpower it”** (v. 18) – Remember, the gates of Hades is what they called the cave at the side of the mountain in Caesarea Philippi. Jesus inferred this to reiterate His point: The forces of death and darkness can't prevail against or conquer the church. Real power is tied to real faith in the real Jesus.
- **“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven”** (v. 19) – Real faith in the real Jesus opens access to a relationship with God. A lack of faith will keep that access locked up. The “keys” are handed to us, the church. Our purpose is to know Jesus and



make Him known. The church is God's "Plan A" to tell the world about the real Jesus. And there is no "Plan B"!

You can't share Someone who you don't know yourself. How do you answer the question that Jesus asked His disciples?

### **Let's make it personal: Who do you say Jesus is?**

If there has never been a time in your life when you have truly believed the gospel message, repented of your sin, and placed your faith in the real Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life, right now is the time to do that.

#### **THE BIBLE SAYS IN ROMANS 10:9,**

**If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

Our opinion about Jesus does not change who He is; however, our faith in the Jesus of the Bible will absolutely change who we are. The real Jesus is greater than a play-dough or clay Jesus!

#### **CLOSE IN PRAYER.**

Check out these two great new-beginners resources for students who recently started following Jesus:

1. *Life Essentials: A Digital New Beginners Guide for Students* (Get FREE access to next steps videos by texting LIFE to 888123.)
2. *Follower: Beginning Your Walk with Jesus* by Lifeway Students



# PERSONAL STUDY

## TIME WITH JESUS: DAY 1

### ***THE REAL JESUS IS FULLY GOD AND HAS ALWAYS EXISTED.***

#### **READ JOHN 1:1-4.**

When was Jesus born? The easy answer would be two thousand years ago. After all, that's why we celebrate Christmas. It's true that two thousand years ago is when the Son of God came to earth and became a human to rescue humanity from sin; it's also true that the Son of God did not begin two thousand years ago in Bethlehem. The Son of God has always existed. He is eternal. That means there was never a time when He didn't exist. If you go to the beginning of time, Jesus was there. If you go to the end of time, Jesus will be there.

**How would you describe what you have believed about Jesus prior to now?**

Some false religions will teach that Jesus was God's first created being. This is not true. Jesus is eternal. He is God. Jesus is not just sent from God. Jesus *is* God. He is fully God. He's not mostly God, partially God, or sort of God. He is one-hundred-percent God (see Col. 1:15-20).

John 1 refers to Jesus as the Word and says that He was with God in the beginning. It also says that He was a part of creating everything. You can even see this confirmed in Genesis 1:26:

**Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."**

Who is the "us" and "our" that's in Genesis 1:26? This verse is describing the triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is three in One.



You can clearly see that Jesus, the Son of God, is in the beginning, and we received life from Him and will find our life only in Him (see John 1:4). The Son of God created us (see Col. 1:16). Not only did Jesus die for us to save us from our sins, He also created us. He truly is awesome!

**How does it change your view of the real Jesus to know that He created you?**

**JOURNAL:** What are some things the Lord revealed to you through His Word today?

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**PRAY:**

Spend time telling Jesus how awesome He is, not because He needs to hear it, but because you need to be reminded. Trust in the truth of who He is today and that He is worth following.



## TIME WITH JESUS: DAY 2

### ***THE REAL JESUS HAS A HEAVENLY FATHER AND HAD EARTHLY PARENTS.***

#### **READ MATTHEW 1:18–25.**

There are a couple of things that I have come to learn and experience from living in small towns. First of all, it can be really nice because everyone knows everyone else. Secondly, it can be really bad because everyone knows everyone else! If something happens today, then you can be sure that the whole town will know about it by tomorrow. This can be unfair when the rumors are not true and even worse when they're about you.

**Have you ever wondered what Mary and Joseph told Jesus about how He was born? What do you think they said to Him?**

God sent an angel to speak to Mary about carrying a Son who would be the Messiah. Later, He sent an angel to speak to Joseph about taking Mary as his wife, because the Child had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. They knew they had received a word from the Lord and they obeyed. The obedience of Joseph and Mary is a vital part of the story of Jesus. They just had the unique perspective of parenting their eventual Savior. That's wild to think about, isn't it?

Most people probably didn't believe that Mary had become pregnant through a supernatural act of God. It had to be an odd thing for Jesus to navigate early on in His earthly life, knowing that everyone knew the rumors about His earthly parents, but very few people believed the story of who His heavenly Father was. Have you ever thought about how difficult it would have been for Jesus to explain to His friends and neighbors the unique and supernatural truths of His birth?

**Have you ever had to navigate someone sharing untrue things about you? How did that make you feel? How did you handle it?**



Here is a great reminder: Today, you don't need to focus on rumors and ridiculous talk when God has given you a purpose. He has a mission for us all, so don't allow others to take your eyes from this truth.

**JOURNAL:** What are some things the Lord revealed to you through His Word today?

[illegible]

**PRAY:**

Spend time asking the Lord to give you the strength, boldness, and obedience to follow Him today, even if others may say hurtful things about you or say discouraging things to you.



## **TIME WITH JESUS: DAY 3**

### ***THE REAL JESUS WAS ALSO FULLY HUMAN.***

**READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5–11.**

**Describe your relationship with math. If you enjoy it, why do you think you enjoy it? If not, what do you not like about it?**

I have to be honest: I'm not good at all when it comes to math. Now, I can do the simple math like adding, subtracting, multiplication, and even division. But when you start adding letters to the equation, I'm out!

There is a math equation that is absolutely true about who Jesus is. He is one-hundred-percent God, and at the same time one-hundred-percent human. You may be saying that doesn't make sense. And you're right! It's difficult to understand, but it's true. Jesus is fully God and fully human.

Let me teach you a fancy theological term called the “hypostatic union” of Christ. It simply means that Jesus was totally God and at the same time totally human. He is completely human as though He wasn't divine, but also completely divine as though He wasn't human. In one Person, you have God and humanity coming together perfectly.

**What about this is difficult, or easy, for you to believe?**

Jesus, the Son of God who has always existed, took a mission trip to earth over two thousand years ago to become a human and to die as a human for all people, but He also never stopped being God. He was fully God and fully human. Although Jesus was perfect, He also had to learn how to walk, talk, and write, and He would even have to grow and mature like the rest of us. He truly humbled Himself.

**And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.**

—LUKE 2:52



Isn't it humbling to know that the Son of God decided to humble Himself to become like us, so that He could rescue us from our sin? Isn't it comforting to know that you follow a God who also knows what it's like to be human?

**JOURNAL:** What are some things the Lord revealed to you through His Word today?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**PRAY:**

Read Philippians 2:5-11 again. Spend time today thanking the Lord for what He did by humbling Himself on your behalf. Ask Him to give you the same attitude of humility toward others.