

Jesus is _____.

A handful of studies are being produced to coincide with the “Jesus is...” mission. The real aim of these studies is to help us *listen* to the point of view of other people and learn how to share the good news and truth about Jesus into other people’s lives. Each study will have the following four components.

- 1) **A Story.** We’ll introduce the theme of the study with a short story to explore one true or false perspective of Jesus.
- 2) **Listen.** Proverbs 18:13 says, *“To answer before listening - that is folly and shame.”* We want to step into the shoes of the other person before launching back with an answer. We will take a moment to consider how real their perspective is and why it sounds good to them.
- 3) **Test It.** Proverbs 18:17 says, *“In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines.”* How true is that! It may only take one or two questions to highlight pitfalls in a person’s worldview.
- 4) **Gospel Solution.** Psalm 119:105 says, *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”* We want to land on what the bible says about this topic. Jesus is at the centre of everything and so we need to know what difference a right and true understanding of Jesus and his work makes to every and any worldview.
- 5) **Pray.** Some points will be offered to assist us in bringing our concerns to God about his mission.

These studies will be published separately as they are finalised. The topics will cover Jesus is: ‘one way among many’; ‘irrelevant’; ‘trustworthy’; and ‘alive and risen’.

Study 2 - Jesus is... irrelevant

A Story

Josh, was a university student who thought Jesus was a great leader in the past, but was not relevant for our lives today. To him, Jesus came to take the fun out of life by giving his followers impossible rules to live by.

One day Josh sat down at a student union lunch table. Next to him was sitting Jenny, a vibrant young student with a radiant smile. Intrigued, he asked her why she was so happy.

Her immediate reply was, "Jesus Christ!"

"Jesus Christ?" Josh said, firing back.

I'm fed up with religion; I'm fed up with the church; I'm fed up with the Bible.

Don't give me that garbage about religion."

Unfazed, Jenny calmly leaned forward and opened her mouth to politely speak...

LISTEN

- 1) In the story above, Josh declared religion to be garbage and he thought that Jesus was irrelevant. Stepping into Josh's shoes for a minute, what do you think is his perception of Jesus and religion?

2) In Australia, the *Christian tradition* has weakened as the *progressive morality* movement has risen. A prominent worldview of our nation now is humanism: a perspective that affirms some notion of human freedom and *progress* without religious or superstitious beliefs. Does this observation fit with Josh's perspective?

3) What do you think Josh is reacting to?

TEST IT

4) Progress sounds good doesn't it? But the issue, really is about what we are trying to progress away from? If it is religious dogma (being told what to think and how to live) or superstition (beliefs not grounded in evidence or reality), that is good right?

5) But does Jesus fit this description? Is Jesus someone our world ought to progress away from? Is he really irrelevant? How do you know? I wonder what Josh knows about Jesus?

THE GOSPEL SOLUTION

John 8:48-59

⁴⁸ *The Jews answered [Jesus], "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"*

⁴⁹ *"I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."*

⁵² *At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"*

⁵⁴ *Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."*

⁵⁷ *"You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"*

⁵⁸ *"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.*

- 5) What type of people are speaking to Jesus and challenging him?
What do they think of Jesus?

6) In verses 49-51, how does Jesus describe his relationship with God?

7) Perhaps Jesus is coming across as progressive (greater than Abraham) to the Jewish religious folk - the children of Abraham. But what is Jesus' really saying about himself? See especially Verse 58.

8) Does Jesus portray himself as a passing trend, a guru of his time, or a new visionary? According to this passage, Jesus is_____?

Matthew 10:32-33

³² *"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*

9) What is at stake when someone wishes to regard Jesus as irrelevant?

Revisit the Story

Let's go back to our scenario with Josh and Jenny.

Jenny's reply to why she was so happy was, "Jesus Christ!"

Josh as we saw said: Don't give me that garbage about religion."

Unfazed, Jenny calmly leaned forward and informed him,

"Mister, I didn't say religion, I said Jesus Christ!"

Josh McDowell was stunned. He had never considered Jesus more than a religious figure, yet here was this joyful Christian woman talking about Jesus as someone who brought meaning to her life. Josh McDowell would later try to disprove the resurrection of Jesus only to become convinced of it and write the classic Christian book "More than a Carpenter".

Pray

- Thank God for sending his eternal Son to save us.
- Pray for our church to communicate who Jesus is clearly.
- Ask God to help people see the urgency of knowing Jesus Christ and for us to have the same sense of urgency to speak about Jesus to others.
- Come to God in repentance, if you need to, for living as though Jesus is irrelevant even if you know that he is not!
- Pray for people you know who do not see Jesus as Lord and Saviour yet.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think Jesus is.