



1

Jesus's Mission

Key Theme

- Jesus came to save sinners.

Key Passages

- John 3:16–18, 12:27–28, 17:1–5

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Jesus glorified the Father.
- Explain why Jesus came to earth.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Write on the board, "Why did Jesus come to earth?"
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Studying God's Word

Jesus came to earth with a purpose—a mission. That purpose was to glorify the Father. He was obedient to His Father even unto death. And His death provided eternal life with God for people who believe in Him.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Glory to God

The students will examine several passages to understand what it means to glorify God and then apply that to an apologetic question.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above with this background.

When we think of Jesus Christ and His short ministry on earth, we often think of the miracles—feeding multitudes (Matthew 14:13–21); healing the crippled, blind, and sick (Mark 2:1–12; John 9:1–7; Mark 5); and befriending sinners (Luke 19:1–8; John 4:1–26). Jesus was a man on a mission. But His mission was not merely to rid the world of hunger, pain, sickness, or sadness.

Jesus's primary reason for coming to earth was to glorify His Father. Even as a boy, Jesus spoke of this to Mary and Joseph in the Temple when He said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). And when the hour for His death had come, He prayed that the Father would glorify Him so that He could glorify the Father (John 17:1). Another prayer demonstrated that same purpose. When He considered His approaching death, Jesus prayed, "Now My soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (John 12:27–28).

Though Jesus was God from the beginning and never ceased to be God, He willingly set aside His own glory to make Himself a humble servant: ". . . taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7–8). Jesus glorified the Father by finishing the work that the Father had given Him to do—even unto death (John 17:4).

The Father's will for Jesus included more than His death on the Cross. God's plan for Jesus's life, death, and Resurrection was about saving the lost. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). We read that Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13). The Apostle Paul understood this and stated it plainly in his letter to Timothy: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). He came to save sinners, and the salvation He offered would bring eternal life (John 5:24, 3:15, 10:28).

How does one receive the salvation and eternal life Jesus purchased by His death on the Cross? Being born again is a work of the Spirit, not the flesh (John 3), so we must be careful about trivializing salvation as a

raised hand, a walk down the church aisle, or a repeated prayer. But receiving the gift of salvation does involve the following things: You must come to Him. Believe that He is. Acknowledge your sinfulness before God. Humbly repent of your sins, which means to turn from them and forsake them. Accept the truth that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16–18).

Jesus continues to call, seek, and save those who humbly place their faith in Him (Matthew 11:28–29).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

What do we mean when we speak about Jesus glorifying God? To glorify God means to extol Him, agree with what He says about Himself, worship Him in the splendor of holiness, and submit to Him in humble obedience (1 Chronicles 16; John 17:4). God Himself described His glory: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). God's glory is manifested through His marvelous attributes. And God, in His grace, chose to display these attributes to mankind through the amazing work of His Son in salvation. Everything Jesus is, everything He did on earth, was God's glory on display.

We see God's compassion in Jesus, who healed those who were sick; we see God's omnipotence in Jesus, who rebuked the wind and calmed the sea; we see God's mercy and grace in Jesus, who forgave repentant sinners; we see God's omniscience in Jesus, who knew the thoughts of those around Him; we see God's holiness in Jesus, who lived a perfect life without sin; and, finally, we see God's justice and love in Jesus, who died on the Cross, taking the wrath of God against sin and providing forgiveness and eternal life for all who trust in Him.

God created us for His own glory (Isaiah 43:6–7), our good works are so others will give God glory (Matthew 5:16), everything we do is to be done for God's

glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), and God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory (Habakkuk 2:14). So God is all about His own glory!

If we were to seek our own glory, we would be called proud or arrogant. So what does it mean that God seeks His own glory? Doesn't that make Him a narcissist? This is a frequently misunderstood subject, chiefly because we forget the difference between the infinite, eternal, holy God, and ourselves, who are finite and fallen.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer given is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Indeed, our failure or refusal to worship and honor God would be idolatry. So if mankind's highest good and greatest aim in life is the glory of God, how can God have any other aim? If idolatry is worshipping anyone or anything as god, instead of the true God, then for God to seek any other end than His own glory would amount to idolatry on God's part. Since He is the eternal, infinite Creator, He deserves all glory, so for Him to seek His own glory is not selfishness, but entirely proper.

As J.I. Packer wrote:

If it is right for man to have the glory of God as his goal, can it be wrong for God to have the same goal? If man can have no higher purpose than God's glory, how can God? If it is wrong for man to seek a lesser end than this, it would be wrong for God, too. The reason it cannot be right for man to live for himself, as if He were God, is because He is not God. However, it cannot be wrong for God to seek His own glory, simply because He is God. Those who insist that God should not seek His glory in all things are really asking that He cease to be God. And there is no greater blasphemy than to will that. (J.I. Packer, *God's Plans for You*, Crossway, 2001, p. 29.)

God is glorious, and He wants His fame—His glory—to be seen and enjoyed by His creatures. Jesus's goal was to glorify His Father, and that must be our goal too. But what does it mean to glorify God, and how do we do that in our normal, day-to-day lives?

One way we glorify God is to extol His attri-

butes—such as His holiness, faithfulness, omniscience, omnipotence, mercy, grace, sovereignty, and love—proclaiming them to others as we tell them about the amazing salvation He alone offers. David wrote in Psalm 22:

I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You. You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! (Psalm 22:22–23)

Jesus said that He came to do the will of the Father. He glorified God by His obedience to His Father. So another way we glorify God is by living a life that pleases Him. That means we don't lie, we don't steal, we obey and respect governing authorities, we love others like Jesus did, etc. To obey God is to glorify Him. But it is not just external acts; rather, obedience should come from our hearts. Without a vibrant relationship with Jesus, we cannot glorify God. The key to glorifying God is to be living in fellowship with Him—to be abiding in Christ (John 15). Is His life in you? Are you living in fellowship with Him who loved you and gave Himself up for you (Galatians 2:20)? Are you being conformed to the image of the one who created you (Colossians 3:10)? Are you abiding in Him and bearing fruit to the glory of God—and thereby proving to be His disciple (John 15:8)?



BEFORE THE THRONE

Savior, my Redeemer, I bless your name. Your complete and total submission to the Father is amazing to me. Knowing that you loved your broken and fallen creation enough to suffer and die so that we would have a way to live eternally with you is incredibly humbling. In response to such love, I want to live a life that is pleasing to you. Help me to spend more time with you in your Word—studying it, memorizing it, talking about it—and praying. I want to be more like you. Help me to encourage my students to do the same.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.



Review

We are beginning a new quarter of lessons, our second quarter of New Testament study. Through the next 12 lessons we will be looking at the life of Jesus during the approximately three years of His earthly ministry. However, we will not necessarily be following a strict chronological order, but use some themes to talk about His life.

If you will recall, we made a timeline (in Lesson 5 of Quarter 1) that had the events of the life of Jesus on it. As we continue with these lessons, you can be marking the

events we discuss on the timeline to help keep things organized. Today we will be discussing an event at the very beginning and a couple near the end. So, all of these events will be in the period from AD 30–33.

Today we are going to begin by looking at a passage that contains what is arguably the most familiar verse in the Bible. Our goal today is to think about the mission of Jesus here on earth and how He fulfilled that mission.



► Write on the board, “Why did Jesus come to earth?”



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

Let’s read John 3:1–21 together and see if we can define Jesus’s mission.
Have someone read the passage aloud.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What type of literature are we reading?** *A historical narrative with dialog.*
- ? **How is Nicodemus described in this passage?** *He was a member of the Pharisees and one of the rulers of the Jews. This refers to the Sanhedrin, the group of 71 elders who ruled over Jewish affairs. Nicodemus is also seen in John 7:45–52 addressing the council.*
- ? **When does Nicodemus come to speak to Jesus?** *He comes to Jesus at night. This is shortly after the first Passover described in John 2:13 and the first cleansing of the Temple.*
- ? **What does Nicodemus affirm about Jesus, even at this early stage in His ministry?** *Nicodemus acknowledges that Jesus is from God and that His teachings are true.*
- ? **What does Nicodemus point to as an affirmation of Jesus’s teaching?** *He points to the signs Jesus has done as the affirmation that His teachings are from God.*
- ? **What does Jesus tell Nicodemus must happen before he can see the kingdom of God?** *He must be born again, or born from above.*
- ? **What does Nicodemus’s response indicate about his understanding of this claim?** *He seems to be confused and relates it to being physically born again.*

- ? **How does Jesus correct his misunderstanding?** *He changes the focus to a spiritual rebirth, not a physical rebirth. The new birth comes from the Spirit of God.*
- ? **Why does Jesus use a plural pronoun in verse 11?** *He is reflecting the plural form Nicodemus used in verse 2 and referring to Himself and God, as Nicodemus had already acknowledged the connection of the two.*
- ? **What does Jesus contrast in verse 12?** *He contrasts understanding of earthly things with the understanding of heavenly things.*
- ? **What title does Jesus identify with in verse 13?** *The Son of Man.*
- ? **What does He say must happen to the Son of Man?** *The Son of Man must be lifted up, as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness.*
- ? **What event is Jesus referring to with Moses and the serpent?** *He is referring to the account in Numbers 21 where God had sent venomous serpents to bite the Israelites, and those who looked up to the bronze serpent on the pole were healed. Those who did not look up died.*
- ? **What is this “lifted up” foreshadowing?** *This is the first foreshadowing of the Crucifixion where Christ would be lifted up on the Cross.*
- ? **What will happen to those who believe in the Son of Man?** *They will have eternal life.*
- ? **What will happen to those who do not believe in the Son of Man?** *They will perish.*
- ? **For what purpose did God send His Son into the world?** *Not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him.*
- ? **Why is it not necessary for Jesus to condemn anyone?** *Those who are not looking to Jesus in belief are already condemned because they have already sinned. They avoid the light which would expose their sinfulness.*
- ? **What is the contrast of light and dark used to illustrate?** *The light represents Jesus and those who come to Him believing He is the Son of God and doing good works. The darkness represents sin and those who do not look to Christ but run from the light so that their sin is not exposed.*
- ? **What word was repeated seven times in this passage?** *Believe (vv. 12, 15, 16, 18).*
- ? **Who will receive eternal life?** *Those who believe in Christ.*
- ? **What prompted God the Father to send the Son?** *His love for the people of the world.*

Numbers 21:8–9

Discover the Truth

From the early interactions in His ministry, it is clear that Jesus knew what His mission was. Based on this passage, we can define the mission of Jesus this way: Jesus came into the world so that the world might be saved through Him.

Remember that a very important principle of interpreting Scripture is to allow it to interpret itself—the analogy of Scripture. There are other passages that tell us about His mission.

? Can anyone think of any other passages that tell us why Jesus came into the world? *Matthew 1:21—He will save His people from their sins; 1 Timothy 1:15—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; 1 John 4:9—that we might have life through the only begotten Son; John 18:37—to bear witness to the truth; Luke 19:10—to seek and save the lost; Mark 2:17—to call sinners to repentance; Matthew 18:11—to save that which was lost.*

LOVE

HOLY

JUST

MERCIFUL

GRACIOUS

All of these passages, and others, help us to gain a full understanding of the mission of Jesus, but all of them point to the same basic truth—Jesus came to save sinners, giving eternal life to all those who repent of their sins and believe in Him.

? As we think about the mission of Jesus, what attributes of God are displayed for us? *Love, Holy, Just, Merciful, Gracious, etc. God has displayed so much of His character in what Jesus came to do while on the earth. Refer to Attributes of God Poster.*

Understanding what Jesus has done for us should fill us with gratitude for God's love toward us that even when we were sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus knew that He had come to live a life of obedience to the Father and call people to repent and trust in Him. He did all this knowing that there were those who would still be condemned because they love their sin more than the Savior. They run from the Light who came into the world so that their evil deeds are not exposed. The Light described in John 1:9–11 connects to the light that exposes sin in John 3. The perfect obedient life of Jesus gives a standard of perfect obedience that shines a bright light on our sinfulness. We try to stay in the dark so that we are not exposed to the light and compared to Jesus.

But that was each of us before we were saved through believing in Christ by faith. So we need to be careful to not write off those who are still in darkness but to shine a light on their sin and point them to the Light—the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.





Glory to God

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

The passage we just examined talks about the condemnation that people face because they do not believe in Jesus as Savior. They run from the Light so that their evil deeds are not exposed. Some do this in a quiet manner, but others do it in a way that is quite dramatic and public. But make no mistake, both are rebelling against King Jesus and refusing to glorify God.

You will find the Glory to God activity in your Student Manual. Work in small groups to examine the verses and then try to apply them to answering the apologetic question given there. We will discuss the answers in a few minutes.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's think about how these verses help us understand what it means to glorify God.

- ? **Genesis 1:26–27**—*God was pleased to create man in His image. As image bearers of God, we were created to reflect the glory of God here on the earth.*
- ? **Isaiah 43:6–7**—*All of those who are sons and daughters of God were created for God's glory.*
- ? **Matthew 5:16**—*Our good works should be seen by others so that God may be glorified.*
- ? **Romans 11:33–36**—*Since God has created everything, all of it is intended to glorify Him, and He deserves that glory forever.*
- ? **1 Corinthians 10:31**—*Everything we do should be done to glorify God.*

? **2 Corinthians 4:5–6**—*The knowledge of the glory of God has been given to us, especially in the face of Jesus Christ.*

It is important for us to understand what it means to glorify God. These passages are just a small sampling of all the places in Scripture where this topic is discussed. All that we do, say, and think should reflect the perfect character of God as image bearers created in His image. He gets to claim all the glory because He is the one of infinite worth—we are simply His creatures who have been given everything we have by Him.

That idea rubs many the wrong way. Famous antagonistic atheists have railed against a God who would seek glory for Himself as an arrogant tyrant. You may encounter this attitude in people you interact with, so let's think about how to respond to them.

? **What errors about God's character are evident in Dan Barker's statement?** *He fails to recognize that God is the Creator and has the right to ask of His creatures whatever He pleases. God has given us everything we have, and we should give Him praise and show Him gratitude for all He does for us. Mr. Barker believes God is just a vindictive tyrant rather than a loving, holy, wise, and gracious God. Further, God does all of this when those people are rebelling against Him.*

? **Based on the passages above, how would you seek to correct this misunderstanding about God, especially about the glory due to God?** *We could walk through these verses in God's Word to point to truth. It may not be received well, but speaking the truth in love is our calling. We know that Mr. Barker knows God exists (Romans 1), so we can only call him to look to Christ and repent of his rebellion. We have no power to change his heart or mind and must rely on the work of the Holy Spirit to accomplish such change. We can proclaim truth confidently knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.*



READ THE WORD

John 17:1–5

Now let's look at an event near the very end of Jesus's ministry in John 17:1–5. During the evening just before His arrest, Jesus was offering some final teaching to the 11 disciples. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What type of literature are we reading in this section?** *This is a historical narrative recording one of the prayers of Jesus.*
- ? **What is Jesus doing in this passage?** *He is praying.*
- ? **To whom is Jesus praying?** *He is praying to the Father.*
- ? **What does Jesus ask of the Father?** *He asks that the Father would glorify Him.*
- ? **Why does Jesus want the Father to glorify Him?** *So that He might glorify the Father.*
- ? **What does Jesus have authority over?** *He has authority over all flesh.*
- ? **What does the Son desire to give to people?** *He desires to give them eternal life.*
- ? **Who will be given this eternal life?** *All those that the Father has given the Son.*
- ? **How is eternal life defined in this passage?** *Eternal life is to know the Father and the Son.*
- ? **What two descriptors does Jesus give for the work He has done on earth?** *He has glorified the Father and completed the work He was given to do.*
- ? **What is the “work” that Jesus is referring to?** *Since the work is already finished, it is definitely referring to His obedience to the Law and the will of the Father, as discussed previously and identified in John 4:34, but it is likely referring to the Cross as well since His arrest will take place in a matter of hours.*
- ? **Is this “work” also referring to the Cross?** *Yes, it is surely in view as Christ has been repeatedly telling the disciples that His Crucifixion was imminent. It was as good as done, though it had not been actually done.*
- ? **What later event is foreshadowed in talking about the work being finished?** *Jesus used the words, “It is finished” on the Cross (John 19:30).*
- ? **What request does Jesus repeat in verse 5?** *He asks again for the Father to glorify Him with Himself.*
- ? **What does the closing phrase in verse 5 tell us about how long Jesus has existed?** *He had the same glory as the Father before the world began, so He must also be eternal as the Father is.*
- ? **How does John 12:27–28 relate to this prayer?** *Jesus prayed in a similar manner, asking God to glorify His name through what was about to happen on the Cross. This was spoken one day before the prayer in John 17.*
- ? **What is the “hour” that Jesus is referring to?** *His impending trial and Crucifixion.*

John 12:27–28

? **How did the Father respond to this prayer?** *He spoke from heaven affirming that He had and would glorify His name. This is one of three times an audible voice from the Father affirms the ministry of Jesus (Jesus's baptism and the Transfiguration are the other two).*

Discover the Truth

As we think about the two passages we have looked at today, we can see a clear connection between the reason Jesus came to earth and bringing glory to God in the process. Jesus came to offer eternal life to sinners and to glorify the Father while He was on the earth. He finished the work that the Father had sent Him to do. This work was accomplished in the active obedience in keeping the Law and perfectly obeying the Father, as well as His passive obedience of enduring the Father's wrath on the Cross. He was obedient to the point of death on the Cross (Philippians 2:8). The Father was glorified and was pleased to glorify the Son as a result of completing His work.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As followers of Jesus, our chief aim should be to bring glory to God just as He did. God has created us for His glory, not our own. We often get caught up in trying to promote our own glory rather than God's glory. That is not behaving as Christ did. Jesus walked in perfect obedience to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. He taught His disciples to do the same, and He calls us to follow in that pattern.

The Father did not send the Son into the world to eliminate poverty or cure every disease in every person on the planet. He sent the Son to seek and save the lost. Jesus completed His work, and we are the blessed beneficiaries of His work—both His active obedience in keeping the Law and His bearing of the wrath of the Father on the Cross. Knowing that we gain all of His righteousness as He bears all of our sin should cause us to rise up and glorify Him in every way that we can.

That is a high calling and one that we will not perfectly fulfill. But when we fail to glorify God in all we do, we know that we have an advocate with the Father—the one who has glorified the Father in all things. We can turn to Him in repentance from those failures knowing that He has forgiven us in Christ and that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can grow to be more and more like Jesus that the glory of God may shine from our faces as it does from Christ's. We are broken image bearers, but redeemed image bearers.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What have you learned (or gained a deeper appreciation for) with respect to the mission of Jesus on the earth?** *Discuss various answers, focusing on salvation of sinners as the main mission.*
- ? **What have you learned about Jesus today that you can share with someone else pointing them to forgiveness in Christ?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging the students to proclaim the truths of the gospel for the edification of believers and the salvation of unbelievers.*
- ? **In what ways can our lives bring glory to God?** *Others can see good works and glorify the Father. As we walk in obedience to the Father, others can see Jesus in us. Just as Jesus obeyed the Father by proclaiming the good news of the gospel, we can do the same and call people to repent and believe. As we love others, we are showing the love of Christ. As we tell others of forgiveness in Christ, there will be more to worship Him around the throne.*
- ? **What are some of the false views of Jesus's mission on the earth (social wellbeing, healing of all diseases, prosperity, etc.)?** *Many people shift the focus from salvation to being a good example or a good teacher. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus's purpose was to glorify the Father in calling sinners to repentance and dying as a substitute for them. While He came to heal and offer an abundant life to His followers, many people distort these ideas and make them the main focus rather than a facet of His ministry.*
- ? **Where do you see yourself falling short in glorifying God, and how can others in this room help you to change so that God may be glorified more fully in your life?** *Discuss various ideas, encourage the students to pray for one another and encourage one another. Within the body of Christ, we are called to walk alongside one another to bear one another's burdens in fulfilling the law of Christ (Galatians 6:1–5). Failing to glorify God is a sin of omission that we can repent of and find forgiveness in Christ.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for sending Jesus to accomplish the work He had for Him.
- Praise God for His mercy and grace shown in the face of Jesus.
- Ask God for a greater understanding of what it means to glorify Him.