



12

Responding to Jesus

Key Theme

- Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Key Passages

- Luke 4:16–30; John 4:1–42, 8:58–59, 10:25–33

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the two ways people reacted to Jesus’s message.
- Explain the importance of believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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

- Write on the board, “Is Jesus really the only way to eternal life?”
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Studying God’s Word

People reacted in one of two ways toward Jesus, His teachings, and His miracles. Some hated Jesus and wanted to kill Him. Others were astonished and believed His teachings. People have those same two reactions to Jesus today. God’s Word says that those who do not believe will be condemned. But those who do believe will not be condemned. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. It is only through Him that we are saved.

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



Activity: Do You Believe?

Students will spend some time in personal reflection about their own salvation and whether they are truly trusting in Christ fully for their salvation.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

As we have studied Jesus Christ in the Gospels, we have seen that His life, His character, and His ministry were as diverse as they were controversial. Perhaps that is why God chose four distinct writers to tell of His life. Each one was called to present an individual portrait of Jesus. And yet, when you read them together, they display a fuller, richer picture of the God-Man, the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ!

The very sad truth of the matter is that He was not widely accepted when He lived on earth—and is still not widely accepted today. This perhaps brings to light a better understanding of Jesus's teaching: that we must enter by the narrow, difficult gate to gain eternal life. For the broad gate leads to destruction and death, and many enter through it (Matthew 7:13–14).

Often, the reactions to His teachings were far from positive. You would think that the God-Man would be welcome in the synagogue, and His teachings would be anticipated and sought after. But that was not the case. The religious rulers repeatedly heard what He said and were filled with wrath. They were frequently stirred to intense anger by His claims, and in their anger they would threaten His very life (Luke 4:28–29).

It wasn't just His teaching that angered them but His miracles as well. The Bible tells us that after He healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years, the Pharisees and Jews persecuted Him and sought to kill Him (John 5:15–16). Another time the Jews were so angry they picked up stones to stone Him (John 10:31). At this point they admitted why they were moved to murder: "You, being a man, make Yourself God" (John 10:33).

These reactions from the religious rulers were not fueled by truth, but by jealousy and hatred that someone would claim to be God—and that this Man would demand their respect, submission, and attention.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance (Matthew 9:13). Those who saw their need listened and learned from the Messiah. The Bible tells us that they were astonished at His teaching, for Jesus taught as one who had authority, unlike the scribes in the synagogues (Matthew 7:28–29; Luke 4:21–22). His teaching and His miracles led believers to proclaim, "He [Jesus] has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (Mark 7:37). So even while many wanted to destroy Him, those who witnessed His life, and had eyes to see the truth, were convinced that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16).

This division of belief continues today. Some people are astonished and transformed by His Word as they ponder His grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. Others mock the Word and refuse to humble themselves before the Son of God, who came to bring eternal life to those who would know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3).

Jesus spoke clearly and directly about the truth He had come to reveal. His words were, and are still today, convicting to eternal life or condemnation.

He who believes 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 3:18)

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Our prayer for the unsaved, especially those we are privileged to teach, ought to be, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (Hebrews 3:15).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

It has become popular in our Western culture to use Jesus to promote personal or political agendas. *What*

Would Jesus Eat? is the title of an eating program and cookbook, touting the health benefits of a 2,000-year-old Middle Eastern diet. “What Would Jesus Drive?” is a website of the Evangelical Environmental Network, encouraging Christians to drive eco-responsible vehicles.

Others quote Jesus to promote their views on being tolerant, such as “Do not judge, lest you be judged!” or “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,” ripping these words out of their context to make a point. In these and many other circumstances, Jesus is redefined—sometimes as a good moral teacher, an ethicist, or an environmentalist. But for those who read the Gospels in context and seek to understand who Jesus was and what He said, this trivializing of Jesus’s person and work in order to use Him to support one’s own agenda is nothing short of blasphemy.

Jesus clearly taught that He was much more than a great moral teacher. He claimed over and over to be God. He said that He and the Father are one, a claim His audience understood to be a claim to deity (John 10:30–33). He used the Old Testament name of God I AM to refer to Himself (John 8:58). Jesus authenticated His claim of deity by miracles demonstrating power over nature, over disease, and even over death. He claimed to forgive sin and then validated His claim with physical healings (Luke 5:17–26).

In addition to His claim to be God, Jesus claimed to be the only way of salvation—the only way that sinners can be reconciled to God. He stated, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). He also said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). And consider this: “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8–9).

As Christians, we must be careful not to water down the gospel or Jesus’s claims in order to promote a feel-good Jesus or a Jesus who is here merely to fix our

unhealthy eating habits or to promote environmentalism. And we must not ever change the gospel in order to be seen as culturally tolerant or inclusive. It is actually more loving to tell people of sin, judgment, and salvation through Christ than it is to leave them believing a false gospel, only to have them perish outside of Christ and His great salvation.

Jesus was not just a good moral teacher or example for us to follow. No, He was the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, who claimed to be the exclusive Savior of men and women. Jesus brings division. The gospel is a stumbling block to many. A misguided response to a false presentation of Jesus will not save anyone. But when people understand their need for a Savior because of their sin and then recognize Jesus as the sinless Son of God, crucified and raised, then by God’s grace they can repent and trust that Jesus, the God-Man, is mighty to save.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, you astonish me. Your life and your Word reveal your love and compassion for people—for me! You healed; you taught; you raised the dead! Your Words and power showed people your divine nature. I praise you for that. Yet, I am saddened that so many reacted to you with hatred, jealousy, and hard hearts. I pray for my students, my unsaved loved ones, and my unsaved friends and neighbors. May they respond to the gospel with belief and astonishment one day. Give me the boldness and sensitivity to share your Word with them. Help me to love people enough to tell them of sin, judgment, and salvation through Christ. Thank you for saving me. I am forever grateful.

➤ **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

Our lesson today brings us to our final lesson on the public teaching ministry of Jesus and is a sort of follow-up to our lesson on true discipleship from last week. Our lesson today is intended to help us think about the two basic responses people had to Jesus—and still continue to have today. While there are surely a range of responses within each category we will look at, people have either embraced the things Jesus taught or they have rejected them.



In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offered a parable about these two types of people. **How did Jesus characterize the two responses to His message?** *Read Matthew 7:24–27 where Jesus says that those who hear His teachings and obey them are like wise builders whose houses would stand in the final judgment. Those who hear and reject the message are like foolish builders whose houses will collapse in the final judgment.*

There are really only two options—reject Jesus and His teachings or embrace them—and the consequences are eternal.



► Write on the board, “Is Jesus really the only way to eternal life?”



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

Let’s read Luke 4:16–30 together and look at an example of the negative response. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What event immediately precedes this account?** *The temptation of Jesus comes before this in the text.*
- ? **When did this event take place?** *It would have been early in Jesus’s ministry. Point out the event just after the first Passover on the New Testament History Poster, “Rejection at Nazareth.” Jesus had already done miracles in Capernaum (4:23), so some time has passed between the temptation and this event, but not long.*
- ? **Where was Jesus teaching?** *He was in a synagogue in Nazareth.*
- ? **What did Jesus read from Isaiah?** *He read a section that prophesied the Messiah’s coming to Israel. We find this in Isaiah 61:1–2.*
- ? **After reading and sitting down, what did Jesus say about the passage He had read?** *He claimed that it had been fulfilled in the hearing of those present.*
- ? **What was Jesus claiming?** *He was claiming to be the Messiah.*

- ? **Who did the crowd acknowledge He was?** *They knew Him as the son of Joseph who had grown up in their town.*
- ? **What did Jesus acknowledge about a prophet in his hometown?** *In general, prophets are not accepted in their own country. This seems to be the case as they know Him as the son of Joseph who had been raised in their town and taught in the very synagogue He was now teaching in.*
- ? **Who did Jesus point to as examples of God’s grace through a prophet?** *He referred to the widow in Zarephath who was blessed by Elijah and Naaman who was blessed by Elisha.*
- ? **Were these two examples Jews or Gentiles?** *Both of them were Gentiles who received mercy and grace from God as they received the message of the prophets as true.*
- ? **What was Jesus implying about their acceptance of Him as the Messiah?** *He was clearly implying that they were just like the unbelieving Jews of Elijah and Elisha’s time who did not receive them as true prophets.*
- ? **How did the Nazarenes respond to His message?** *They were filled with wrath and tried to kill Him.*
- ? **How did they intend to kill Him?** *They were taking Him to a cliff to throw Him over to His death.*
- ? **How did Jesus evade their plans?** *He simply passed through the midst of them in what can only be described as a miraculous event. This is similar to John 7:30, 8:59, and 10:39 where He escaped the crowds because His time to die had not yet come.*
- ? **How does their response compare to the response we see in John 8:58–59?** *Similarly, when Jesus claimed to be God, the Jews took up stones to stone Him to death for blasphemy.*
- ? **Again, what response did the Jews have at Jesus’s claim to be the Son of God in John 10:25–33, 10:39?** *The Jews desired to stone Jesus for blasphemy and then sought to seize Him after He defused the situation, but He escaped out of their hand.*

John 8:58–59

John 10:25–33, 10:39

Discover the Truth

In this account and the other two we looked at briefly, we see a very negative response to Jesus’s claim to be the Messiah. Likewise, His claims to be equal to the Father brought the same reaction—the people wanted to kill Him for making such a claim. But Jesus didn’t just make claims; He demonstrated His authority through His teaching and His miracles.

- ? **What attributes of God was Jesus demonstrating in these accounts?** *Sovereignty in controlling the situations and escaping their plans; Omniscience in knowing the thoughts of the people; Wisdom in knowing how to respond in each situation to bring His plans to completion. Other fitting suggestions may be offered. Refer to Attributes of God Poster.*

So, one clear reaction to Jesus’s message, as we have seen many times in our study, was total rejection. Now, some of the other reactions in Scripture seem a little less severe; the people don’t always want to kill Him, but they are examples of rejection nonetheless. Jesus came as the

SOVEREIGN

OMNISCIENT

WISE

Messiah and King, and people rejected Him. They were unwilling to submit to Him as Savior and as Lord. They wanted to continue to walk on the wide path they were on rather than follow the Savior on the narrow path that leads to eternal life.



READ THE WORD

John 4:1-42

But not everyone rejected Jesus. There are many passages where we read of many believing in His message and seeking to follow after Him. We are going to turn next to John 4 and read most of the chapter. While we could spend an entire lesson digging into this chapter, our goal is to focus on the response of the people. This encounter took place at approximately the same time as the events in Luke 4, during the first year of Christ's ministry.

Have two people read the passage aloud, breaking it into verses 1-26 and 27-42.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **Why did Jesus sit by the well?** *The immediate answer is that He was tired, but it was also that He intended to interact with this Samaritan woman.*
- ? **Where were the disciples during His discussion with the woman?** *Verse 8 says they had gone into the town to buy food.*
- ? **Why was the woman surprised that Jesus would ask her for a drink?** *She was a Samaritan, and she must have recognized Him as a Jew. There was great animosity between the two groups dating back to the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah.*
- ? **According to verse 27, what other cultural taboo was violated as He spoke to her?** *It was not normal that a man would carry on a conversation with a woman who was a stranger.*
- ? **What did Jesus offer to the woman?** *He offered her living water rather than the water from the well.*
- ? **What did Jesus claim about the living water?** *He said that those who drank it would never thirst, and it would become a fountain that provides eternal life.*
- ? **How did she misunderstand His offer?** *She wanted to receive the water, but she was thinking in physical terms since she said she would not have to come to the well to draw water any longer.*
- ? **When Jesus changed the conversation to talking about the woman's husband, how did she conclude that Jesus was a prophet?** *Jesus correctly identified the fact that she had been with five husbands prior to the man she was with now. He could not have known this on His own, so she discerned that He was a prophet.*

- ? **For whom was the woman waiting to come and reveal truth?** *She was waiting for the Messiah (the Christ).*
- ? **Who did Jesus claim to be?** *He told her that He was the Messiah.*
- ? **Did she believe His claim?** *She must have since she went to the city and told the men about Him.*
- ? **What did she claim about Jesus as she spoke to the men of her city?** *She claimed that He had told her all things about herself (an exaggeration) and that she thought He might be the Christ.*
- ? **Why did many of the Samaritans believe in Jesus?** *They believed the testimony of the woman.*
- ? **How did the Samaritans respond to hearing the message from the woman?** *They asked Jesus to stay, and they listened to Jesus directly.*
- ? **How did they respond once they heard the teaching directly from Jesus?** *Many more believed in Jesus as a result of hearing Him teach.*
- ? **Who did they acknowledge Jesus was?** *They acknowledged He really was the Christ.*
- ? **What did they acknowledge about His role as the Christ?** *He was the Savior of the world.*
- ? **Turn to John 11:45–46. How did the Jews respond after seeing Lazarus raised from the dead?** *Many of them believed in Jesus, but some still doubted.*
- ? **How did the crowd who heard the Sermon on the Mount respond as Jesus concluded His teaching?** *Matthew 7:28–29 says they were astonished and recognized that He taught with authority unlike the men they had heard teach.*

John 11:45–46

Matthew 7:28–29

Discover the Truth

Just as many had rejected Jesus’s message of hope and salvation, there were many who received the message gladly. Jesus had come to seek and save the lost, and those who were His sheep recognized His voice and followed Him. In turning from their sin and to the Messiah, they received eternal life and were held securely in the hand of Jesus and the hand of the Father (John 10:25–30). These people heard the teaching and saw the miracles, and they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. In this belief they were willing to submit to Him as Lord, taking up their crosses and following Him through the narrow gate and along the narrow path to eternal life. I truly hope that reflects your view of who Jesus is and what you believe about Him.





Do You Believe?

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

You will be asking the students to take some time to personally consider their own response to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

With that in mind, I would like each of you to take some time to reflect on your own response to Jesus's message. Jesus called those to whom He preached to repent of their sins and obey all that He commanded them to do. Those are two high callings, and they are callings that we can only submit to by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

In his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul called the professing believers there to "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified." In your Student Guide you will find the Do You Believe? activity. Take a few minutes on your own to look at the passages listed there and to consider where you stand **with Christ**. *Encourage the students to examine these passages quietly and prayerfully.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As you looked at Matthew 7:21–27, I trust you saw the clear warning of simple outward obedience to the teachings of Jesus. Pointing to your own works as the reason you should be accepted into His kingdom is actually lawlessness and will only result in your own eternal condemnation. We must know Christ, and He must know us, founding our works and our faith only in Christ so that we will be received into His kingdom.

In the passage from John, I trust those very words of Jesus helped you to see that a true belief in Jesus results in real transformation of your life—coming into the light where your evil deeds are exposed, and the deeds that you now do are done in God to be seen by all. In believing, you have eternal life in Christ. Apart from believing in Christ, you have only condemnation.

If this exercise has brought some concerns to light, please talk to me or someone you trust. There is nothing wrong with doubt as long as you are willing to wrestle with those doubts and seek to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

In the grand scheme of things, there are really only two responses to Jesus—you either submit to Him as Savior and Lord, or you would rather He be dead so that you can rule your own little kingdom. You are either for Christ, or you are against Him. You are either wheat or a tare/weed (Matthew 13:24–30, 13:36–43). You are either a sheep who will be given eternal life or a goat who will be cast into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:31–46). We see these examples played out in Scripture, and we see them played out as we interact with other people.

The wide path that leads to destruction is actually so wide that the people on opposite sides of the path might think they are on totally different paths. The outwardly religious and moral person who claims to be a Christian and thinks he is following Jesus as a good teacher looks across the path at the Hindu worshipping an idol and doing yoga, or at the Voodoo priest sacrificing animals and casting spells, and he thinks they are on different paths. But they are not. That path is broad and leads only to destruction.

Jesus is Lord and Savior. We must cling to those truths and submit our wills to the will of the Savior who purchased people with His blood. There is a narrow path that we find laid out in the pages of Scripture, in Christ's commands for us—a path trodden by those faithful saints who have come before us.

When we recognize that God the Father has called us to be His children, has accepted us as His sons and daughters through the perfect obedience and substitutionary death of God the Son, and has given us God the Holy Spirit to dwell within us as a seal of our adoption and to empower us to submit to Jesus as Lord, we can't help but lift our voices and worship Him for His perfection and His mercy and grace toward us. If we can't acknowledge those truths, it should lead us to despair, knowing that there is no hope for us in ourselves. I pray that we can all look to Christ, astonished at His teachings, mercy, and grace, and believe in Him for everlasting life.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

? In our current cultural setting, why is it so important to think through ideas like we have covered in the lesson today? *Many people are deceived into thinking that they are Christians because they have grown up with Christian parents, or they go to church. Further, many people have adopted a pluralistic view of religion that says you can mix and match various ideas or that all religions have some part of the truth. Knowing how to think through these ideas and look at them through biblical glasses is important as we seek to share the*

hope of Christ with people. Jesus demands much more than assent to some "higher power." He calls all sinners to trust in Him alone for salvation.

- ? **Many people who may not seem hostile to Jesus call Him a good teacher or a good example to follow. In calling Jesus a good teacher or a good example, what are these people claiming about the moral character of Jesus since Jesus claimed to be God and the only Savior?** *If Jesus claimed to be God and was not, He was either willingly lying, or He was crazy. This is often framed as the trilemma—Jesus is a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. If He was not really God, then He can't be considered a good moral example or a good teacher since He was lying or crazy. People who think this way are not being consistent.*
- ? **When people claim that all religions lead to the same path, like a mountain with many paths leading to the top where we will all find God, how can we respond to them and expose their wrong thinking?** *One simple approach is to ask them how they know that all religions are true and lead to the same destination. They will have to appeal to some experience or authority or admit that they just blindly believe it to be true even without any evidence. Another approach would be to point them to the radical differences between Christianity and other religious systems. For example, Islam demands that God has no son and Christians demand that we must believe that God's Son died as our substitute—both cannot be true. In whatever approach we use, we must point them back to the authority of the Bible and call them to submit to the truths it contains about salvation found in Christ alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). A similar analogy involving blind men describing an elephant is often used by pluralists, but in order to know the analogy is true, the narrator would have to be able to see and know everything about God, represented by the elephant. In either analogy, you would have to know God fully or be God to know for certain that was the case.*
- ? **If you know someone who claims to be a Christian, yet his life does not seem to indicate that he is walking on the narrow path to eternal life, how could you use today's lesson to help him consider how he is responding to Jesus?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging the students to engage others in a discussion filled with grace and truth. Asking questions rather than making accusations can be a very helpful technique when dealing with suggestions like this.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

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

- Thank God for revealing Himself in the Bible and challenging us to examine our faith.
- Praise God for His wisdom, grace, and mercy in saving sinners.
- Ask God for confidence in the finished work of Jesus for salvation.