



**Thesis:** Jesus is God, calls us to transformation, and loves us deeply.

**Objective:** To help students grasp the foundational importance of understanding who Jesus is and to encourage students to consider what they believe about Jesus.

**Scripture:** John 8:58-59, Matthew 16:24-26, Mark 10:45, John 13:14-17, Romans 5:7-8.

### **Series Introduction:** *Essentials*

Today we start a three-week series called *Essentials*. This series is meant to lay the foundation for the things most important for what it means to be a Christ-follower. We are going to cover some truths about Jesus, about Scripture, and about the Church. And it may be tempting to think, “Oh—I already know about those things—this series isn’t for me.” Let me just suggest a few helpful approaches to a series like this one:

- 1) No matter how long you have been following Jesus, these truths should be fresh, exciting, and life changing. You may be tempted to roll your eyes and say, “*Who is Jesus? Come on, that is a bit beneath me. I have been going to church my whole life. I know who Jesus is.*” Yup—I believe you! I am not trying to patronize you with this series. Rather, I am trying to give you a fresh opportunity to think about the person and work of Jesus, the beauty of the gospel, the role of Scripture, and the importance of the local church. These things should never be “old news” for us! Look, it is never a bad idea to spend 20-25 minutes focusing on the son of God, regardless of how many times you have heard the stories. **[Teacher’s note: Do you have a story of how the gospel, even after years of studying it and teaching it, hit you fresh one day?]**
- 2) Secondly, these truths are **foundational**. I have intentionally used the word “foundational” because we all understand the importance of a foundation. These truths are our theology and practice are built on, so

they need to be solid. We don't want to build our lives, our theology, or our practices on a cracked foundation! It is a tragic example, but in 2021 there was a large condo in Miami that collapsed because it had a bad foundation. And part of what was so devastating about that story is how reports came out that showed that the building owners *knew* the building had a shaky foundation but did nothing to fix it. And ultimately, the building could no longer be supported on the weak foundation, and it fell. ***Whether you are building a house or a belief system, a foundation is of absolute importance.*** And part of what we are doing with this series is helping lay a solid foundation for our faith.

### **Transition to Message:**

With that being said, we first start with the question, "Who is Jesus?" It is a basic question, but it is an incredibly important question.

### **Jesus is God.**

We must start here. Why? Because if Jesus isn't God, then we get to pick and choose what parts of His life and His teachings we follow. If Jesus isn't God, then He is/was just an interesting religious teacher that has no more authority than any other interesting theologian. But if Jesus is God, then we must approach Him differently and we must take His teachings seriously.

This is also worth establishing because it has become popular for people to say something like this: "I love Jesus (or like Jesus), but I just don't like the Church (or Christians or religion)." Have you ever heard someone say that? Maybe even you have said that. And for some people, that may be genuinely true. They have had a bad experience with the Church or with family members that claim to follow Christ and so they have a hard time engaging with "organized religion." But they really do love Jesus and have a relationship with Him. The problem is, however, I think sometimes people say this as a bit of an excuse to not engage with church or faith or a faith community. Because when people say they are "cool with Jesus, just not religion" the question must be asked, "***Are you cool with Jesus being***

**God?”** And if so, then are you cool with Him having ultimate authority over your life? Over history? Over creation? Over the future? This is a big claim. Jesus being God is not something you can casually accept; it is something that changes your entire life and your entire approach to faith, religion, church, and even Scripture.

Right from the beginning of Jesus’ life, we see that He is God. First, the fact that the Gospels say Jesus was born of a virgin is miraculous. This is not like any other person who has ever been born. Then, throughout His life, He constantly performed miracles. This is something only God could do. Calming storms, healing people of leprosy, raising people from the dead were not just cool tricks or illusions, they were miracles. They showed Jesus’ authority over every realm of life.

Additionally, Jesus claimed that He was God through His teachings. The Gospel of John contains the most explicit teachings, but all the Gospels contain teachings and statements where Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the son of God! In fact, there are seven famous “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. Each “I AM” statement was a reference to the fact that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament. Each statement pointed to the fact that He was indeed God. When He said the words, “I AM” He was telling His listeners that He was the same God that appeared to Moses in the Old Testament. When God appeared to Moses in Exodus 3, Moses asked God what His name was. And God answered, “I AM.” Consider this when we read John 8:58

***John 8:58 (NIV): “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”***

And you may read that and go, “Was that really Jesus saying He was God?” And to us, you are right, it doesn’t seem super explicit. Even if you know the story of Moses and the burning bush, you still may think it was just a coincidence that Jesus used similar language as God did in the burning bush. But look at how Jesus’ original listeners responded in the next verse when He said that statement:

***John 8:59: (NIV): At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.***

His audience knew exactly who He was claiming to be, and they wanted to put Him to death because of it! To Jesus' audience, His claim was extremely explicit: He claimed to be God!

In addition to His birth, His miracles, and His teaching, the ultimate sign that Jesus was God was shown in the resurrection! Jesus was physically dead. And then, Jesus was alive. This screams, "I am God! Who else can do that?"

So, we start here because if someone says, "I really like Jesus but Christians, the church, and organized religion are just not for me," we have to ask, "Are you cool with the Jesus described in the Bible? Are you cool with the virgin birth, the miracles, the teachings, and the resurrection?" You see, sometimes we pick and choose which parts of Jesus we like and want to follow. We might say, "I really like the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, and the parts where Jesus eats with sinners. That is the Jesus I am cool with!" But the problem is, Jesus was more than just a great teacher who preached love and ate with sinners. Jesus is God who calls us to follow Him, deny ourselves, and live a life of sacrifice. Look, if Jesus isn't God, there is really no need to learn from Him. We have plenty of Instagram influencers and self-helpers out there trying to help us live our best lives. The only reason to learn from Jesus is if He was truly God.

**Jesus calls us to transformation.**

Secondly, Jesus calls us to transformation. Sometimes when we think about Jesus, we focus on the stories and passages which are a bit softer, a bit more gentle. Perhaps interactions like this one:

***Mark 9:36-37 (NIV): 36 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one***



**Thesis:** Scripture is a lens through which we can understand God.

**Objective:** To help students approach Scripture with a posture of humility and expectation of conviction and application.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22-25, 1 Peter 2:21.

1. What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word “Bible”?
2. What has your experience been like with the Bible? Would you say you read it frequently? Infrequently? Never?
3. Do you find Scripture intimidating? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever changed your behavior based on what Scripture said? What was that experience like?
5. Why is it so important not just to read Scripture but to ask the Holy Spirit to meet us as we read Scripture?
6. Why is it so important to approach Scripture with humility?
7. Have you ever had one of your beliefs challenged by what Scripture says (or doesn't say)?
8. What is one way you want to apply Scripture this week?

**This preview includes a select number of pages from this resource.**

**If you like what you see, download the entire resource today!**

**[downloadyouthministry.com](http://downloadyouthministry.com)**