### Prayer Service

##### Gather

As we gather to pray and learn together,

let us remember that Christ is in our midst.

We ask Christ Jesus to open our hearts and minds

so we can learn more about him,

grow in our relationship with him,

and discover new ways to live as his followers. Amen.

##### Listen

Matthew 16:13-16

##### Respond

Jesus, you are the Messiah who brings God’s love and justice to all.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are the Savior sent to free people from their sins and bring them back to God.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are a Prophet, a messenger of the Good News of God.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are the Risen Lord who offers us eternal life.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are a Servant to all those in need.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are the Son of God who shows us what God is really like.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are the Teacher of the Good News, a new way of living.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are a Healer restoring people to health in body and spirit.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd, caring for all those who follow you.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

Jesus, you are the Bread of Life, nourishing our lives and our faith with your love.

Response: Help us grow in knowing you.

##### Go Forth

Pray the Lord’s Prayer together

### Handout #1

### Gospel Titles of Jesus

##### Messiah

I am the **Messiah**, which means the “anointed one.” I came to proclaim the arrival of God’s Kingdom or Reign, to fulfill the hopes of the Jewish people just as Isaiah and the prophets in the Old Testament predicted. Many people of my day believed the Messiah would be a powerful ruler, like a King.

I was a different kind of Messiah. I came to bring God’s kingdom of love and justice to everyone. When the messengers of John the Baptism came to ask me if I was the Messiah, the one everyone was waiting for, I told them to go back to John and tell him what they had seen: the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers and people with physical ailments are cured, the poor hear the good news of God’s love for them. (See Luke 7:18-23.) (See also Luke 4:16-21.)

##### Savior

I am the **Savior**. Jesus in Hebrew means, “God saves.” I was sent by God to offer people a new relationship with God. I came to forgive people their sins and free them from all the things that separate them from God’s love. As I forgave sins, people came to see me as the Savior God on earth.

I spent lots of time with sinners, tax collectors, and all those who felt they were outside of God’s love. Once while I was eating dinner with my disciples and many sinners, people asked me why I was eating with sinners, something that offended them. I told them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:12-13).

In the end the religious leaders of my day rejected me as the Savior God. My death on the cross overcame sin and evil and reconciled all people to God’s friendship and love.

##### Prophet

I am a **Prophet**, a messenger or spokesperson for God, like the great prophets before me—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. At the very beginning of my ministry I came to Galilee, “proclaiming the good news of God and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news’” (Mark 1:14-15). I challenged people to hear the Good News and called them to change their lives and follow me. Once I met a man who came to me and asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life with God. He knew all the commandments, but I challenged him to do one more thing: “. . . go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). Following me is hard; it demands a change in your life. I told the disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 17:24-25).

##### Lord

I am the **Lord**. My resurrection from the dead helped people see that I was truly God, that I was the Risen Lord. Before my death and resurrection, I raised Lazarus from the dead. I told Martha, Lazarus’ sister, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Martha recognized me as Lord and God, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (John 11:27). When I appeared to the disciples after my resurrection, Thomas, after seeing my hands and side, finally believed that I was Lord and God. Because of my victory over death, I am the Lord of life and death.

##### Servant

I am a **Servant**. I came to serve and not be served. I cared for the poor, the weak, the ill, the mistreated—those who lived without the basic necessities of life. I taught people to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, welcome to the stranger, clothing to the naked, care to the sick, and companionship to those in prison. And when you serve people in need, you are living as my disciples. I told people “. . . just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

I taught the disciples the value of being a servant, “The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:11-12). At the Last Supper I washed the feet of my disciples to demonstrate the importance of being a servant. I told the disciples: “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15).

##### Son of God

I am the **Son of God**. Throughout my life it was slowly revealed to my disciples that I was the Son of God. At my baptism by John the Baptist, God revealed, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). My ministry helped my followers understand that the power I had to forgive sins, heal people of their illnesses, and proclaim the Good News was God’s power. When I asked Peter, “Who do you say I am?”, he replied “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 15:15-16). It was clear to me that my Father in heaven had revealed this to Peter and the other disciples. People still did not understand and believe that I was the Son of God, but after my resurrection from the dead many came to believe.

##### Teacher

I am a **Teacher**. I used sayings, stories, parables, and instructions to teach people the Good News of salvation and how to live as disciples. At the heart of my teaching was the commandment of love: “The first is ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment great than these” (Mark 12:28-31).

##### Healer

I am a **Healer**. I restored people to health in body and spirit, helping people experience God’s unconditional love and forgiveness and demonstrating God’s power over sin and evil. I healed people who were lepers, paralytics, deaf, mute, and blind. I healed people with serious illnesses, and even brought several people back from the dead. One of my favorite stories was of a man I met in Jericho, Bartimaeus, who was a blind beggar. When he heard that I was passing by he called out to me to have mercy on him. I asked what he wanted me to do for him. He asked me to let him see again. I told him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed me.”

##### Good Shepherd

I am the **Good Shepherd**. Shepherds were very common in my country, so I used the image of the Good Shepherd to describe how I cared for all those who followed me, even to the point of giving my life for them. Good shepherds were kind, loving, patient, strong, and self-sacrificing. I told the people of my day, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . . I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:11, 14-15)

##### Bread of Life

I am the **Bread of Life**. Bread was the basic food in my country, so I used bread as a way for my followers to understand me. To demonstrate how I was bread or nourishment for others I performed several miracles feeding thousands of people. I explained to the disciples that the bread of God comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I told them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35). If people believe in me and follow me they will never be hungry or thirsty. Yet some did not believe in me and I had to try to convince them, “. . . whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:47-51)

At the Last Supper the night before I died, I took bread into my hands, gave thanks to God, broke the bread, and give it to my disciples. I told them, “This is my body, which is given up for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

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### Handout #2

### Jesus Alive Today (Family Learning Plan)

How can the Gospel portraits of Jesus come alive today in your family? Through the following activity your family will have the opportunity to explore the ten Gospel portraits and select the ones that speak to your family’s experience of Jesus Christ. As a family you will explore what it would be like if Jesus were here today living out your Gospel portraits. Finally, your family will explore how the different images of Jesus can nourish your faith life and draw you closer to Jesus in your daily lives.

##### Step 1.

Review the ten Gospel titles or portraits of Jesus on Handout #1: Messiah, Savior, Prophet, Lord, Servant, Son of God, Teacher, Healer, Good Shepherd, and Bread of Life. Parents should highlight key points or a Gospel passage that illustrates the Gospel title.

##### Step 2.

Have each family member select one Gospel portrait on Handout #1 that best reflects his or her understanding of Jesus today. Then, have each family member select one Gospel portrait that he or she needs to understand better. (Parents help your children make their selections.)

##### Step 3.

Take each Gospel title that you have selected and describe what Jesus would be doing today if he lived in our world. How would Jesus be a servant, savior, prophet, teacher, good shepherd, and so on? Give specific examples today from your family, community, and world. Write each portrait on a sheet of paper. Invite the children to illustrate each Gospel portrait with a picture of Jesus in action.

##### Step 4.

Create a family prayer for each Gospel title you have selected. Write your family prayer for each title on the table tent or placemat. Put this on your table at home and pray to Jesus each day. Here are several examples to help you get started:

* Jesus, Bread of Life, nourish our family by. . .
* Jesus, Healer, forgive us for. . .
* Jesus, Teacher, remind us that to follow you we must. . .
* Jesus, Servant, help us see those in need and serve them by. . .

### Handout #3

### So Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

No one’s life can be reduced to their titles—brother, sister, son, daughter, student, athlete, musician, artist, doctor, nurse, lawyer, teacher. Yet we use titles for Jesus to help us develop our understanding of who Jesus is and to develop a better relationship with him.

Take a few minutes to review the ten Gospel portraits of Jesus on Handout #1.

Listed below are the ten Gospel titles from Handout #1. Each title provides us with an understanding of the identity of Jesus. For each title identify the following:

* This is an important understanding of Jesus for me and my faith life.
* I have never thought of Jesus in this way before.
* I have a hard time understanding Jesus in this way.
* I need to learn more about this Gospel portrait of Jesus.

Check as many boxes as apply for each title. See Handout #1 for descriptions of each title.

Gospel Titles for Jesus Important Never Hard Need to Learn

1. Messiah 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
2. Savior 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
3. Prophet 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
4. Lord 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
5. Servant 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
6. Son of God 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
7. Teacher 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
8. Healer 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
9. Good Shepherd 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
10. Bread of Life 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏

Other titles:

Share with your group your most important titles, the ones you have a hard time understanding, and the ones you need to learn more about.

Then discuss as a group the following question:

* What do the ten Gospel titles teach you about the identity of Jesus?
* How does your knowledge of Jesus influence your relationship with him and the way you live your Christian faith?

### Handout #4

### Creating a Portrait of Jesus Christ Today

Today you are going to be contemporary Gospel authors. The four Gospel authors—Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John— faced a daunting task: how to present Jesus to their community in a way that people would understand who Jesus is and then choose to follow him. Their Gospels had to address the needs and concerns of the communities they lived in.

* **Mark** portrays Jesus as an authoritative teacher, a healer and miracle worker, and the suffering Messiah. Mark’s community of Christians were being persecuted for following Jesus. Mark stresses Jesus’ suffering: Jesus is the prophesied Messiah who comes not as a king, but as a *servant*. Mark is a storyteller who focuses more on what Jesus *did* than on what he *said*; he thus reveals Jesus as a man of power and decisive action. Through his many miracles, Jesus manifests his divine status as God’s only Son. Why is Jesus important? Because by his wisdom and example Jesus shows us a way to respond to God with courage and hope even in the midst of suffering and persecution.
* **Matthew** portrays Jesus as a lawgiver and Messiah, the great teacher of Israel. Matthew’s community needed to understand how Jesus was connected to the Jewish tradition and the expectation for a Messiah. Matthew traces Jesus’ origins back to the history of Israel. He shows Jesus as the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of all that the Jewish people had been waiting for, the one who would bring their liberation and salvation. Matthew’s Jesus is a teacher, teaching the law and preaching the Kingdom of God.
* **Luke** portrays Jesus as a man of mercy, forgiveness, and compassion with a particular concern for the poor and outcast. His Jesus prays often, especially before important events. Though he is the son of God, Luke’s Jesus is also fully human and his concern for all people makes him the universal Messiah. Luke’s community was made up of people who had not heard about Jesus. Luke aims at a clear, orderly and faith-affirming presentation of the words and deeds of Jesus. Wanting his readers to know the truth and reliability of the Gospel, he pays attention to historical detail. Luke’s Jesus is the glory of Israel and a light to the Gentiles, a prophet, and a martyr. Jesus provides a good example in every facet of his life. His is a teacher who is completely faithful to his own teachings.
* **John** portrays Jesus as a noble and divine figure who is the Son of God and the Word of God. Even in the passion, John’s Jesus is not a beaten, tormented victim. Instead, he has stately bearing. He is peaceful, yet powerful, and fully in charge of his destiny. John is writing for a community who already heard about Jesus and needed to understand more fully who Jesus is. Jesus is the unique son of God who is himself fully God. In John, Jesus’ glory and power are revealed long before the resurrection. The miracles Jesus performs serve to inspire faith in him, for they reveal Jesus as a man of authority and love. For John, the proper response to Jesus is to believe (faith) and to love (God and neighbor).

##### Create the Portrait

As contemporary Gospel authors you will have to address several key questions: How will you present Jesus Christ to teenagers today? If you had to create a portrait of Jesus that would address the needs and concerns of teenagers today, what would you write? What titles would you use for Jesus? How would you convince other teenagers that believing in Jesus and following him make a difference in today’s world? As you write your portrait of Jesus, you can also include art and symbols.

Here is how your group will proceed. Discuss the needs, concerns, and hungers of teenagers today. Then make a list of the top ten needs, concerns, and hungers of young people today. Write these on newsprint.

Identify the titles you would use with teenagers today so they will get to know Jesus in a way that addresses their needs, concerns, and hungers. Develop several titles that you believe will speak to young people today and address their needs, concerns, and hungers. Refer to the ten Gospel titles on Handout #1 for assistance. Write your titles on newsprint. Then select the ones you think best respond to needs, concerns, and hungers of teenagers today.

Describe each of the titles for Jesus that you have selected. Use one or more Gospel stories to illustrate the title—include examples of Jesus’ teachings and actions. Write each title and description on a sheet of newsprint. Include artwork or symbols with your description.

How will your titles and descriptions convince other teenagers that believing in Jesus and following him makes a difference in today’s world? Review your description to be sure it is appealing to teenagers today. Connect your Jesus title and description with the real world of teenagers. Add a story, example, artwork, or symbol to make your description appealing. Write your addition on the newsprint sheet.

Review your description to see if it includes information that will help teenagers see how following Jesus will make a difference in today’s world. Connect your Jesus title and description with living as a teenage disciple today. Add a story or example of how to follow Jesus today. Write your addition on the newsprint sheet.

##### Reflect and Discuss

Take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions and then share your reflections with your group.

* Do your portraits present Jesus as human and divine—true God and true man? Did you use any of the Gospel titles for Jesus in your portraits?
* How well did your portraits of Jesus address the needs, concerns, and hungers of teenagers today?
* How well would your portraits convince other teenagers that believing in Jesus and following him make a difference in today’s world?
* What new insights about Jesus did you gain from your creative project?

## Handout #5

## Is Jesus Our God?

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’*

(Matthew 16:13-16)

##### 1. Gospel Titles of Jesus

Take a few minutes to review the ten Gospel portraits of Jesus on Handout #1.

Listed below are the ten Gospel titles from Handout #1. Each title provides us with an understanding of the identity of Jesus. For each title identify the following:

* This is an important understanding of Jesus for me and my faith life.
* I have never thought of Jesus in this way before.
* I have a hard time understanding Jesus in this way.
* I need to learn more about this Gospel portrait of Jesus.

Check as many boxes as apply for each title. See Handout #1 for descriptions of each title.

Gospel Titles for Jesus Important Never Hard Need to Learn

1. Messiah 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
2. Savior 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
3. Prophet 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
4. Lord 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
5. Servant 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
6. Son of God 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
7. Teacher 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
8. Healer 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
9. Good Shepherd 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏
10. Bread of Life 🞏 🞏 🞏 🞏

*Are there other important titles that you use to describe your understanding of Jesus and your relationship with him?*

Take a moment now to reflect on your knowledge of Jesus using the following questions. Then share your reflections with your group.

* How do all ten Gospel titles teach you about the identity of Jesus?
* How does your knowledge of Jesus influence your relationship with him and the way you live your Christian faith?

**Group Sharing**

Share with your group your most important titles, the ones you have a hard time understanding, and the ones you need to learn more about. Give each person in the group time to share his or her titles without interruptions or discussion.

As a group discuss the concluding two questions. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her insights.

##### 2. Is Jesus Your God?

Is Jesus really our God? Each of the Gospel titles points to Jesus—true God and true man, the God who has entered our world and lived among us. Each of us is challenged by the same question that Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you say that I am?”

Does it really make a difference in our everyday life that Jesus is the Son of the living God? Using the following excerpts from Albert Nolan’s book, *Jesus Before Christianity*, take time to answer these questions for yourself. This is an interactive essay which has built-in questions to help you reflect on the meaning of Nolan’s text. Take turns reading the text aloud in the group. Then take time to reflect alone on the questions before continuing the reading,

*Jesus was experienced as the breakthrough in the history of man. He transcended everything that had ever been said and done before. He was in every way the ultimate, the last word. He was on a par with God. His word was God’s word. His Spirit was God’s Spirit. His feelings were God’s feelings. What he stood for was exactly the same as what God stood for. No higher estimation was conceivable.*

*To believe in Jesus today is to agree with this assessment of him. We do not need to use the same words, the same concepts or the same titles. We do not need to use titles at all. But if we relegate Jesus and what he stands for to second place in our scale of values, then we have already denied him and what he stands for. What Jesus was concerned with was a matter of life and death, a matter of ultimate importance. Either you accept the kingdom as Jesus understood it or you don’t. You cannot serve two masters. It is all or nothing. Second place or half measures are tantamount to nothing. To believe in Jesus is to believe that he is divine.*

* What does Jesus mean when he says, “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matthew 6:24). Do you think you are serving two masters?

*Everyone has a god—in the sense that everyone puts something first in his or her life: money, power, prestige, self, career, love and so forth. There must be something in your life which operates as your source of meaning and strength, something which you regard, at least implicitly, as the supreme power in your life. If you think of your priority in life as a transcendent person you will have a God with a capital letter. If you think of your* *highest value as a cause, an ideal or an ideology, you will have a god with a small letter. Either way you will have something that is divine for you.*

*To believe that Jesus is divine is to choose to make him and what he stands for your God. To deny this is to make someone else your god or God, and to relegate Jesus and what he stands for to second place in your scale of values.*

* Who or what are the gods in your life? Is Jesus really the God of your life—#1 in everything—or is there something or someone else with higher priority?

*I have chosen this approach because it enables us to begin with an open concept of divinity and to avoid the perennial mistake of superimposing upon the life and personality of Jesus our preconceived ideas about what God is supposed to be like…*

*By his words and praxis, Jesus himself changed the content of the word ‘God.’ If we do not allow him to change our image of God, we will not be able to say that he is our Lord and our God. To choose him as our God is to make him the source of our information about divinity and to refuse to superimpose upon him our own ideas of divinity.*

*This is the meaning of the traditional assertion that Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus reveals God to us, God does not reveal Jesus to us. God is not the Word of Jesus, that is to say, our ideas about God cannot throw any light upon the life of Jesus. To argue from God to Jesus instead of arguing from Jesus to God is to put the cart before the horse. This, of course, is what many Christians have tried to do. It has generally led them into a series of meaningless speculations which only cloud the issue and which prevent Jesus from revealing God to us.*

*We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; we must now deduce everything about God from what we do know about Jesus. Thus, when we say that Jesus is divine, we do not wish to add anything to what we have been able to discover about him so far, nor do we wish to change anything that we have said about him. To say now suddenly that Jesus is divine does not change our understanding of Jesus; it changes our understanding of divinity. We are not only turning away from the gods of money, power, prestige or self; we are turning away from all the old images of God in order to find our God in Jesus and what he stood for.*

* How does making Jesus the source of all our information about divinity affect your image of God?
* Who is the God that Jesus reveals to us? What does the Gospel “picture” of the life and ministry of Jesus reveal to us about divinity?

*To accept Jesus as our God is to accept the one whom Jesus called Father as our God. This supreme power, this power of goodness, truth and love which is stronger than any other power in the world, can now be seen and recognized in Jesus—both in what he had to say about the Father and in what he himself was, the very structure of his personal life and the almighty power of his convictions. Our God is both Jesus and the Father. Because of their essential unity or ‘exact sameness’, when we worship the one we worship the other. And yet they are distinguishable in that Jesus alone is visible to us, Jesus alone is our source of information about divinity, Jesus alone is the Word of God.*

*…If we now wish to treat him (Jesus) as our God, we would have to conclude that our God does not want to be served by us, he wants to serve us; he does not want to be given the highest possible rank and status in our society, he wants to take the lowest place and to be without any rank and status; he does not want to be feared and obeyed, he wants to be recognized in the sufferings of the poor and the weak; he is not supremely indifferent and detached, he is irrevocably committed to the liberation of mankind, for he has chosen to identify himself with all people in a spirit of solidarity and compassion. If this is not a true picture of God, then Jesus is not divine. If this is a true picture of God, then God is more truly human, more thoroughly humane, than any human being.*

**Group Sharing**

Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of the essay for you. Review your responses to the questions contained in the essay. Then use the following questions to share your reflections with your group.

Begin your sharing by discussing your reactions to the essay:

* What feelings surfaced in you as you read the essay and reflected on the questions?
* What are your thoughts about the essay?

Now share your reflections from the essay with your group. There is no need to share everything you thought or wrote in response to the questions. Share highlights with the group. Move from one set of questions to the next, giving each person time to share his or her highlights without interruptions or discussion.

Conclude by reflecting on the following questions and then sharing your responses with the group.

* How have the essay and your reflections affected your understanding of Jesus? What might you need to change?
* What impact might your learning have on your relationship with Jesus Christ? What might you need to change?
* What impact might your learning have on how you live as a follower of Jesus? What might you need to change?

##### 3. Believing in Jesus

Take a moment to read this closing reflection and answer the two questions.

“I want to close by talking about a very familiar Christian phrase—*believing in Jesus*…. For those of us who grew up in the church, believing in Jesus was important. For me, what that phrase used to mean, in my childhood and into my early adulthood, was “believing things about Jesus.” To believe in Jesus meant to believe what the Gospels and the church said about Jesus. That was easy when I was a child, and became more and more difficult as I grew older.

But now I see that believing in Jesus can (and does) mean something very different from that. The change is pointed to by the root meaning of the word *believe*. *Believe* did not originally mean believing a set of doctrines or teachings; in both Greek and Latin its roots mean “to give one’s heart to.” The “heart” is the self at its deepest level. *Believing*, therefore, does not consist of giving one’s mental assent to something, but involves a much deeper level of one’s self. Believing in Jesus does not mean believing doctrines about him. Rather, it means to give one’s heart, one’s self at its deepest level, to the post-Easter Jesus who is the living Lord, the side of God turned toward us, the face of God, the Lord who is also the Spirit.

Believing in Jesus in the sense of giving one’s heart to Jesus is the movement from secondhand religion to firsthand religion, from having heard about Jesus with the hearing of the ear to being in relationship with the Spirit of Christ. For ultimately, Jesus is not simply a figure of the past, but a figure of the present. Meeting that Jesus—the living Jesus who comes to us even now—will be like meeting Jesus again for the first time.

(*Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time.* Marcus Borg)

* How has this session helped you to “meet Jesus again for the first time”?
* How can you believe more deeply—giving your heart to Jesus, the living Lord?

Share highlights of your reflections on the two questions with your group.

**4 Going Deeper**

Discover images of Jesus through the Sunday Gospel Readings of the Easter Season and Ordinary Time:

Fourth Sunday of Easter-A: I am the Gate for the Sheep: John 10:1-10

Fourth Sunday of Easter-B: I am the Good Shepherd: John 10:11-18

Fifth Sunday of Easter-A: I am the Way and the Truth and the Life: John 14:1-12

Fifth Sunday of Easter-B: I am the True Vine: John 15:1-8

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing the Leper: Mark 1:40-45

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing the Paralytic: Mark 2:1-12

Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Healing the Centurion’s Slave: Luke 7:1-10

Tenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Healing the Son of the Widow of Nain: Luke 7:11-17

Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Calming the Storm: Mark 4:35-41

Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Who Do the Crowds Say that I Am?: Luke 9:18-24

Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Take Up Your Cross: Matthew 10:37-42

Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing the Daughter of Jairus and the Woman with Hemorrhages: Mark 5:21-43

Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Who is My Neighbor?: Luke 10:25-37

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: I am the Bread of Life: John 6:24-35

Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: I am Living Bread: John 6:41-51

Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Who Do You Say I Am: Matthew 16:13-20

Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Humble Yourself: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing a Deaf-Mute Person: Mark 7:31-37

Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Who Do You Say I Am: Mark 8:27-35

Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Son of Man to Be Handed Over; Be Servants of All: Mark 9:30-37

Twenty Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Deny Yourself: Matthew 16:21-27

Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19-31

Twenty-Eight Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Sell What You Have and Follow Me: Mark 10:17-30

Twenty-Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Son of Man Came to Give His Life as a Ransom for Many: Mark 10:35-45

Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing Bartimaeus: Mark 10:46-52

Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Great Commandment: Matthew 22:34-40

Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Be a Servant: Matthew 23:1-12

Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Great Commandment: Mark 12:28-34

### Handout #6

### Learning about the Identity of Jesus through the Sunday Lectionary Readings

Here is a simple process you can use, individually or with your whole family, to learn more about the identity of Jesus by reading the Sunday Gospels of the Easter Season and Ordinary Time during the Summer and Fall.

Light a candle recalling its symbolism of the presence of Jesus, Light of the World, in our midst and then pray:

As we light this candle, let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, you came among us to show us how to live. Your words and deeds are recorded in the Scriptures and have been passed on to us through the ages by people of faith who have gone before us and by the traditions that we practice. We believe that you are with us now. Help us to be open to your Word today so that we may hear the message that you intend for us. May we be both affirmed and challenged by your Word. Amen.

Read the Sunday Gospel reading. Ask each person to repeat words or phrases that struck them as they listened. Think about what Jesus is telling us about who he is through this Gospel reading. After a few minutes, share your reflections.

Take time to reflect upon and discuss these questions:

* What are we learning about Jesus in this Gospel reading?
* How will this understanding of Jesus help us to follow him more closely?
* What is Jesus challenging us to do?

Pray the Our Father and then conclude with the following prayer of thanksgiving.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit to lead and guide us according to your Word. Be with us as we strive to put into practice the example you gave us by your life.

**Gospel Readings Focusing on the Identity of Jesus**

Fourth Sunday of Easter-A: I am the Gate for the Sheep: John 10:1-10

Fourth Sunday of Easter-B: I am the Good Shepherd: John 10:11-18

Fifth Sunday of Easter-A: I am the Way and the Truth and the Life: John 14:1-12

Fifth Sunday of Easter-B: I am the True Vine: John 15:1-8

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing the Leper: Mark 1:40-45

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing the Paralytic: Mark 2:1-12

Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Healing the Centurion’s Slave: Luke 7:1-10

Tenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Healing the Son of the Widow of Nain: Luke 7:11-17

Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Calming the Storm: Mark 4:35-41

Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Who Do the Crowds Say that I Am?: Luke 9:18-24

Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Take Up Your Cross: Matthew 10:37-42

Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing the Daughter of Jairus and the Woman with Hemorrhages: Mark 5:21-43

Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Who is My Neighbor?: Luke 10:25-37

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: I am the Bread of Life: John 6:24-35

Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: I am Living Bread: John 6:41-51

Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Who Do You Say I Am: Matthew 16:13-20

Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Humble Yourself: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing a Deaf-Mute Person: Mark 7:31-37

Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Who Do You Say I Am: Mark 8:27-35

Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Son of Man to Be Handed Over; Be Servants of All: Mark 9:30-37

Twenty Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Deny Yourself: Matthew 16:21-27

Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C: Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19-31

Twenty-Eight Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Sell What You Have and Follow Me: Mark 10:17-30

Twenty-Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Son of Man Came to Give His Life as a Ransom for Many: Mark 10:35-45

Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B: Healing Bartimaeus: Mark 10:46-52

Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Great Commandment: Matthew 22:34-40

Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time-A: Be a Servant: Matthew 23:1-12

### Prayer Service

##### Pray

Jesus,

Messiah,

Savior,

Prophet,

Lord,

Servant,

Son of God,

Teacher,

Healer,

Good Shepherd,

Bread of Life.

We recognize that all of your titles are meant to draw us closer to you.

May we know you more clearly,

Love you more dearly,

And follow your more nearly

All of the days of our lives. Amen.

##### Listen

John 15:1-10, 12-14

##### Respond

Jesus, you are the true vine, and your Father is the vine-grower.

Response: Remove from us any branch that does not bear fruit.

Jesus, you invite us to live in you.

Response: Help us remember that we live in you.

Jesus, you promise that in you we will bear much fruit.

Response: Help us perform the good deeds that prove we are your disciples.

Jesus, you told us that if we obey your commands, we will remain in your love.

Response: Give us the strength and courage to love one another as you love us.

##### Go Forth

Lord Jesus, help us to remember that

you have no body now on earth but ours;

we are the only hands with which you can do your work,

we are the only feet with which you can go about the world,

we are the only eyes through which your compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world.

Give us the grace to be your body on earth now. Amen.   
(Inspired by St. Teresa of Avila)