



LIFE & MINISTRY OF JESUS

Unit 2 • Historical & Geographical Overview

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Unit #2 is the historical and geographical overview of Jesus' ministry, from about AD 29 to His crucifixion in AD 33.

Historically, the political, social and religious events of the day had an impact on Jesus' ministry. The Jews were waiting for their reigning king Messiah to come and deliver them from their Roman oppressors. Life was hard for the Jews and they were seeking the Savior. They had become "people of the book", studying scripture and practicing their Jewish faith.

Geographically, Israel is varied, including fertile coastal plains, highlands, valleys, deserts and bodies of water such as the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. Judea, Galilee, Samaria and Perea are the major regions of Israel where Jesus traveled. He visited many cities during His ministry, such as Nazareth, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Cana, Sychar, etc.

To better understand the events in Christ's ministry, students will learn historical and cultural facts of Christ's time. They will compare how their lives are similar to and different from life in Israel 2000 years ago. The maps will show them where Christ traveled and where events occurred. This unit will help tie the specific events of Jesus' life and ministry together as the study continues throughout the year.

The lessons in this unit will provide a broad overview of the four periods of the 3½ years of Christ's public ministry. Each lesson will highlight an event from that specific period.

CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY¹

Popularity peaks

A.D. 29	30	31	32	A.D. 33
Year of curious acceptance		Year of growing hostility		Period of intense struggle leading to the cross
↑ Baptized by John Matt. 3		↑ Woman at well John 4		↑ 70 sent out Luke 10
↑ First miracle John 2		↑ Rejected at Nazareth Luke 4		↑ Lazarus raised Jn. 11
↑ Nicodemus learns of new birth John 3		↑ Apostles selected Mark 3		↑ Transfiguration Luke 9
		↑ Sermon on the Mount Matt. 5-7		
		↑ Begin Parables Matt. 13		
		↑ 5000 fed Mk. 6		
		↑ 4000 fed Mk. 8		
		↑ Rejected by leaders Matt. 12		

¹ Adapted from *Children's Ministry Resource Bible*, 1993, Thomas Nelson Publishers, pp. 1132, 1133.



JESUS' MINISTRY - PART 1

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U2#1 1st-3rd Grade • July 16, 2023

Concept

God is personal and knowable.

Goal

Students will learn the context of Jesus' early ministry. Through the example of Nicodemus, they will be motivated to ask questions and seek answers about God.

Passage

John 3:1-8

Key Verse: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Learning Activity #1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Large laminated "Jesus In His Land" map</i>• <i>It's A Big Big World Atlas</i>• "Jesus In His Land of Israel" map, 1/student• Pencils/crayons• Star stickers, 2/student <p>Lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>9" x 12" envelope covered outside with question marks, key verse inside</i>	<p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross printed on white copy paper, 1/child• Watercolor paint crayon, several sets/room• White crayons, 1/student• Shallow plastic dishes, 5/room• <i>6 laminated historical pictures</i>

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U2#1 1st-3rd Grade • July 16, 2023

Christ began His ministry in the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho in Judea, the southwestern region of Israel directly west of the Dead Sea. Jesus' public ministry began when He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. After being tempted in the desert, Jesus taught, preached and performed miracles. It was during this time that many people were curious about Jesus' identity and message. Many sought Him out, including a religious leader named Nicodemus (John 3). Nicodemus asked questions and searched for the truth (Jeremiah 29:13) about Christ and how he could have a relationship with God (John 3:16).

"Nicodemus is mentioned only in the Fourth Gospel, where he is described as a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews who visited Jesus by night (John 3:1-21). He seems to have been an earnest man attracted by the character and teaching of Jesus but afraid to allow this interest to be known by his fellow Pharisees. He could not understand the spiritual metaphors used by Christ. Nicodemus fades from the scene and we are left with Christ's word to a Judaism wrapped in darkness.

Nicodemus is mentioned again in Jn. 7:50-52, where he showed more courage in protesting against the condemnation of Christ without giving him a hearing. The final reference is in John 19:40, where he is said to have brought a lavish gift of spices to anoint the body of Christ. Nothing more is known of him despite a large number of legends."²

As you prepare for class this week, consider the questions you had about Christ prior to your salvation and those you have now. Are you seeking to know Him more deeply or do you allow your questions to go unanswered? Do you believe that you should have all the answers to your questions by now or does your faith continue to be stretched by the questions that continue to come up as you seek to walk with the Lord? Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you insight into your view of Christ. Is it biblical or based on human understanding? Biblical understanding is the unshakable foundation of faith.

Additional Reading: John 1:38-51; 2; 4; Luke 4:14-21, 40-44

² New Bible Dictionary, 1962, Inter-Varsity Press, Tyndale House Publishers, p. 834.

Set Up

Incorporation

Lg. Group

Introduction

Lg. Group

Transition

Learning Activity #1

Lg. Group

Place the ??? envelope in a conspicuous place in the room for lesson.

Activity Stations:

- **Craft – “Hidden” Cross**
 - **Instructions:** Color the cross with white crayon. Paint over the whole page with watercolor paint crayons. The hidden cross will be revealed by painting over it with watercolor paint crayons, thus illustrating that when we seek for Christ we will find Him.
- **Before/After Activity**
 - **Before:** Jesus lived about 2000 years ago. Let’s see how much you know about the time in history before and after Jesus lived.
 - **Instructions:** Draw a large cross on the white board. Write "Before" to the left and "After" to the right of the cross. Show each picture to the students. Have them stand by the BEFORE sign if they think the event pictured on the card was before Christ lived. If they think the event was after Christ lived, they are to stand by the AFTER sign. After each guess, place the pictures on the white board in historical chronological order. When you are finished, there will be a timeline of events with the cross in the middle.
 - **Rationale:** To help the students understand where Christ's life fits into history.

Introduce the new unit: Learning about where Jesus was and what he did while he was alive. Help students understand how old Jesus was by comparing it to their parents (Jesus was 30).

Tell students: People ask who Jesus was and why was he important.

Ask students if they have any questions about Jesus - let them share!

Tell students that asking questions about God is GOOD! Our key verse is about how God wants us to ask him questions: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13)

God wants us to search for Him and to find Him. We search by asking questions. Questions are good because asking questions and getting answers is how we learn.

Have a seat at the tables and take a map handout. We’re going to find some of the places where important events happened during Jesus’ life.

Instructions: Refer to the map for locations of the following places. For most of His life Jesus lived in the country of Israel like we live in the United States. Israel is on the other side of the world from us. (Point to United States and Israel on the first page of It's A Big Big World atlas.) This map (large laminated “Jesus In His Land” map) shows just the nation of Israel. Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem. (Point to Bethlehem and the region of Judea.) Here is the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized (point to Jordan River on map).

Learning Activity #1 Continued

The regions of Galilee (show on map) and Perea (show on map) were where Jesus spent most of His time teaching and ministering. Can you say the names of those regions with me? I'll point to them as you say them. (Point to and say: Judea, Galilee, Perea). The regions of Israel are like the states in America. Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in the region of Galilee in the country of Israel. We live in the city of Columbus in the state of Ohio in the country of America.

Now look at the map you have. (point to Bethlehem and Nazareth on the map). Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in Judea. Put a star next to Judea and underline Bethlehem on your map. He grew up in the city of Nazareth in Galilee. Underline Nazareth and put a star next to Galilee. After Jesus grew up he went back to the region of Judea where He was baptized in the Jordan River. Underline Jordan River. The drops of water represent Jesus' baptism. Circle the water drops to help you remember that Jesus began His work right here after He was baptized. He taught about God's Kingdom in Judea and then He went back up to Galilee to teach about God's Kingdom. People started to ask Him questions. He taught them and performed miracles. Draw a circle around the drawing of the people in the regions of Judea and Galilee to help you remember that this is where his early followers lived. And draw a circle around the book in both regions to help you remember that this is where He taught God's word at the beginning of His ministry.

The last location is Jerusalem in the region of Judea. In Jerusalem lived many of the Jewish teachers and leaders because the temple was located there. Underline Jerusalem. We're going to learn about a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Draw a circle around Nicodemus.

Transition

Sit on the floor to learn about someone who was curious about Jesus during His ministry in Judea!

Lesson Lg. Group

(Ask if anyone has noticed the envelope and if they are curious about what is in it. Ask how they could find out what is in the envelope—they could ask questions!). It's good to ask questions, especially about Jesus. We learn more about Jesus by asking questions. We can find answers to our questions about God in the Bible. Let's see what's in this envelope. (Open envelope.) It's our key verse for today. "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

Explain information about Nicodemus — he was a Pharisee (Jewish Religious leader) and most Pharisees thought they didn't need to learn anything from anyone.

Lesson Continued

But Nicodemus was curious about Jesus, had questions about God. Jesus was very glad to talk to Nicodemus and answer his questions. Jesus told Nicodemus that if he wanted to be friends with God, he had to be born again. It didn't matter how important he was or how much he knew. The only thing that mattered was if he was born again.

All of you have already been born one time, you are alive because you came from your mom's belly. But Jesus says we need to be born again. Have any of you ever heard about being born again? What do you think it means? Does that mean you have to be a baby again? No, we can only be born once physically as a baby into our human families. He's talking about when we grow and learn about God, we can choose to be born spiritually into God's family. We aren't already in God's family when we are born physically because we are born into our human families apart from God. Jesus came to earth to die on the cross to pay for our bad choices. When we accept God's forgiveness through Jesus' death, we are born spiritually into God's family. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that anyone who asks Jesus' death to pay for his or her sin is a new creation—he has been born again spiritually!

Transition

Let's get into small groups to talk about how we can get to know God.

Learning Activity #3 Sm. Groups

1. Why is it sometimes hard to trust that we can be His friend when we can't see Him?
2. Do you ever wonder how He can help you if He isn't a person you can see and touch? How do you think God does this?
3. Do you think Jesus will give you answers to your questions? How? (We can get answers from the Bible, people who know God better, talking to Him in prayer.)
4. Nicodemus was a very smart man and he had questions to ask Jesus. What are some questions you would like to ask Jesus?

Missions Prayer: Talk about and pray for the Oasis giving campaign.

Let's pray. Let one of the teachers know if you have questions about the lesson! You can also ask Jesus the questions you have about Him. Pray that He will help you get to know Him more.

Extension

20 Questions

Instructions: Have someone choose any person, place, or thing. Try to make the selected item something that can be reasonably guessed. It's no fun to play a guessing game that is impossible to solve! The other players take turns and ask "yes" or "no" questions to figure out what it is. As we ask more questions, we get closer to the answer!