

**SEEING  
THROUGH  
THE EYES OF  
JESUS**

**ADULT  
CURRICULUM  
SESSION 1**

***[www.cbf.net/eyesofjesus](http://www.cbf.net/eyesofjesus)***

# SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

## INTRODUCTION:

I will admit that when I first heard about the new curriculum CBF was developing, I rolled my eyes a bit. “Seeing through the Eyes of Jesus?” Isn’t that what church is all about? It seemed silly to devote time and energy to talking about that.

And then, as vaccinations became widely available and we began to find our way back to something resembling normal in the wake of COVID-19, I found myself wondering if maybe I’d been wrong. The pandemic had forced most of us out of our normal routines. Even if we had continued to go to work as usual, our churchgoing habits shifted. Our social patterns were transformed. Many of us missed celebrating birthdays and holidays with family and friends and put off meeting new babies or gathering for funerals. And we grieved it all from behind our computer screens instead of in our shared sacred spaces. The pandemic reordered our lives. For some, perhaps, it was liberating. For others it was painful.

And now, as we work to regather and to find our way back into the communities of faith, things are different. We’re different. It’s easy to assume we should pick up everything we had put down in March 2020 and get back to it. But what if that isn’t the best way? What if this strange and difficult season we experienced has more to teach us? What if there’s space here to reimagine how life could be? How church could be?

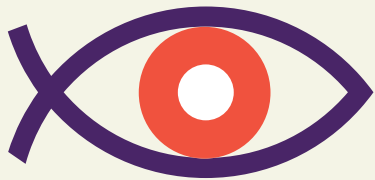
This curriculum is an invitation to that work. It is an opportunity to look at ourselves and our churches and to really evaluate who we are and what we are called to do. It’s a chance to reorient ourselves and our work and to consider what’s really most important. It’s a call to pause for just a moment longer and to really look for Jesus instead of just scrambling back to normal with a bit less energy and a little more wariness. It’s a summons to see where Jesus leads us.

This curriculum is designed for groups in an array of sizes, from just a few folks interested in a challenging discussion to a team of deacons to a whole cross-section of the church. Each of the eight sessions is intended to be about an hour long, though I hope the discussions you have will be fruitful and overflow that time. Each session includes a video, an opening activity, an invitation for personal reflection, and prompts for group discussion.

As you prepare to begin this study, be mindful of the group you’re leading. Consider the backgrounds of the people who will be in the room and the varying levels of grief and anxiety they may be carrying about their own and the church’s future. Urge everyone involved to be gentle with one another and to recognize that your group is a safe space to wonder and even to disagree.

As you lead this group, may the Holy Spirit guide your preparation, your discussions and whatever comes next in the life of your church.

Rev. Amanda Standiford



# SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

Calling us back to  
the central focus of  
our Christian faith:  
The Risen and  
Living Jesus!

SESSION AUTHOR:

*Amanda  
Standiford*

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## SESSION 1: MISSING JESUS

In this initial session, participants will be invited to consider what it's like to encounter Jesus and to reflect on how we experience him in Scripture as well as in our own lives.

### *Prepare:*

Read through the session and familiarize yourself with both Scripture stories. Preview the video and set up the equipment needed to show it in your space.

### *Gather:*

Locate a whiteboard or large piece of butcher paper and markers that can be utilized throughout the series. If you use a whiteboard, be sure that it won't need to be erased for other uses between sessions as you will add to it each time you gather. Write "What is it like when Jesus is here?" across the top of the board or paper.

You'll also need enough pens or pencils and paper for your group.

Have participants bring a journal or provide one for them.

### **STARTER:**

*(5-10 minutes)*

Invite participants to introduce themselves, if needed, and to share something they loved to do when they were 12(ish) years old. Depending on your group size, you may choose to do this activity all together or in smaller groups of 5-8.



## JOURNAL:

*(5-7 minutes for journaling; 3 minutes for sharing)*

Each session in this series has a journaling segment. Participants may draw, write, doodle or simply sit quietly with their thoughts during this time. Prepare your own answer ahead of time and share it with the group to help set the tone and get ideas flowing.

**PROMPT:** What is your favorite church memory or tradition? It does not have to be connected to this congregation, and it can be from any time in your life, from childhood to now. What do you remember about it? How did you experience God's presence there? (Offer sensitivity and freedom to write about a non-church experience to anyone who needs it.)

At the end of the journaling segment, invite the group to briefly share their responses in pairs or trios.



## SCRIPTURE AND REFLECTION:

*(15-20 minutes)*

Begin by reading Luke 2:41-52 as a group.

At the conclusion of the reading, share this reflection using these words or your own:

Jesus was missing, but Mary and Joseph did not know it. They continued on their journey, thinking he was there in the group somewhere. He wasn't right beside them. They hadn't seen him in a bit. But he was there somewhere, right? Jesus was missing, but Mary and Joseph did not know it. Until they did. Perhaps you've had this experience in some way. You've walked into the grocery store only to recall that the shopping list is still on the refrigerator and no one is at home to text a photo to you. You've shown up for a birthday party and realized your carefully chosen and wrapped gift is still on your kitchen table. You've locked the car just in time to notice that the keys are lying on the console. Like Mary and Joseph, you've forgotten something that's central to what you're doing.

Discuss as a whole group or in small groups:

- What do you imagine Mary and Joseph felt in that instant when they recognized Jesus was not where they thought he was?
- What would it feel like to pause and look at a good thing that we or our church do and to recognize that Jesus is not present in it?
- How are these feelings similar? Different?

### SHARE THIS REFLECTION:

Mary and Joseph did what most of us would do. They made a u-turn and headed back to Jerusalem to search for Jesus. Their fear in this moment must have been immense. Where could he be? What might have happened to him? Was he in trouble? Was he hurt?

When, after days of searching, Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, the relief must have been palpable. (And it is difficult to fathom here all the ways that Jesus was God along with all the ways that Jesus was 12-years-old.) But they asked the exasperated question most of us would ask a 12-year-old: "Why did you do this to us?"

But Jesus, in answering, seems to speak as God. "Why did you spend all that time searching? Didn't you know where I'd be?"

Discuss as a whole group or in small groups:

- Mary and Joseph probably traveled with a crowd of family and friends as they made their way back to Nazareth, and it was likely easy to be swept along and to assume that Jesus was there somewhere. Can doing life as a congregation have a similar effect? Why or why not?
- Jesus' parents accused him of getting lost, but he seems to indicate to them that they're the ones who weren't paying attention. Whose perspective is correct? Why?

Turn the group's attention to Matthew 14:22-33. Because you'll revisit and read this text several times in the coming weeks, don't read it in full today. Simply summarize the story in your own words or using these words:

Mary and Joseph continued their journey assuming that Jesus was with them. They had expected him to stick with them.

We see a variation on this theme in a story from Jesus' adulthood. After feeding more than 5000 people, Jesus wanted to be alone to pray; so he sent the disciples ahead of him into a boat, dismissed the crowds, and went up the mountain alone, staying into the evening. It was a windy night and despite the disciples' efforts to stay close to the shore and wait for Jesus, they were blown out into the Sea of Galilee. They must have decided that they were powerless and that there was little to do but to wait out the weather and then circle back to find Jesus in the morning. But when morning came, they were astounded to discover that Jesus was already headed toward them, walking across the water.

Mary and Joseph expected Jesus to follow as they went, and he did not. The disciples felt unable to get to where they expected Jesus to be, but Jesus came to them.

Discuss as a whole group or in small groups:

- There's a common thread in these two stories—Jesus wasn't where people anticipated he would be. Do you see this in other instances in Jesus' life?
- Imagine that the church is a boat, tossed around by the winds and waves of culture, politics and everything else that complicates life. We'll discuss this in more depth in a later session, but what are some of the winds and waves that are making it difficult to be church faithfully right now, in this time and place?
- In both stories, Jesus' presence, or lack thereof, was surprising. What would it look like for Jesus to surprise us, here and now, amid the winds and waves we're facing?



## **CLOSING:**

*(3-5 minutes)*

Close in prayer. Include an invitation to God to awaken us to and even to surprise us with the presence of Christ.

As you dismiss the group, invite participants to look back at their journaling from early in the session and to reflect on the discussions that have taken place.

Ask anyone who is willing to pause and add a word or a phrase to the whiteboard or butcher paper as they exit the space describing what it's like when Jesus is present. You'll use this as your starting place for Session 2.