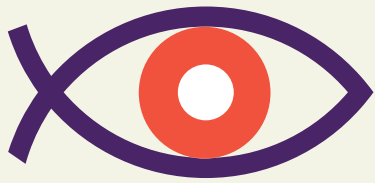


**SEEING
THROUGH
THE EYES OF
JESUS**

**ADULT
CURRICULUM
SESSION 8**

www.cbf.net/eyesofjesus



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*

www.cbf.net/eyesofjesus

SESSION 8: SEEING JESUS: TRANSFORMING CONGREGATIONS

In this session, participants will be asked to reflect on Jesus' invitation to Peter to get out of the boat and to consider how our calling today may be similar.

Prepare:

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

Pay special attention to the starter segment of this session and consider whether you need to ask readers to participate in advance or if you'll have volunteers in the moment.

Gather:

Make sure you have access to the marker board or butcher paper and markers you used during the previous sessions.

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)

Play a game as you begin this session. Invite two volunteers to stand in different places in the room, but be sure all of them are within reach of someone in the group. For the duration of the game, the volunteers are not allowed to move their feet. The other participants are not permitted to move from their seats. One at a time, list items that the volunteers must gather, choosing things that people in the room are likely to have on them or within reach: a necklace, a pair of glasses, a watch, etc. As long as they adhere to keeping their feet still, the volunteers can be as creative as they want in acquiring the items you list, including having others in the group pass things to them. Continue as time allows, keeping the goals achievable, even if challenging. Encourage cheering and celebration when items are acquired.



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 in advance and consider sharing it with the group to help get the ideas flowing.

PROMPT: These last few years have been exceptionally difficult ones in the lives of our churches. Rising political divisions, a global pandemic, and any number of other obstacles have frustrated us and made it hard to find our way forward. And yet, God has remained present. Where have you most clearly seen God in the life of your church over the last few years?

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)

SAY OR SUMMARIZE:

In this session, we'll take one last look at Matthew 14:22-33. This time, we'll explore some of the context of this story and consider the significance of Peter's determination and Jesus' response to him.

Read Matthew 14:22-33 aloud. Ask the group to pay special attention to Jesus' words and actions.

SAY OR SUMMARIZE:

Some difficult things have transpired in the chapters leading up to this passage in Matthew. Jesus has been rejected in Nazareth, his hometown, which surely aggrieved him and disheartened the disciples. Shortly after that, Jesus and disciples received word of the violent death of John the Baptist (and according to John 1, at least two of Jesus' disciples had followed John the Baptist before they encountered Jesus). Both mourning and mounting fear must have accompanied the group as they continued on their way. And still, this story took place.

Ask:

- In Session 3, we reflected on the particular historical moment we're living in and the challenges for the church that come with it. What emotions rise up when you think about all of this? In what ways are they similar to and different from what Jesus and the disciples were experiencing?
- In today's game, all of us were glued to our own contexts. No one could walk across the room or reposition themselves into a better spot, but you were still able to gather what you needed. While we weren't in danger or (hopefully) experiencing any serious frustration, I wonder if this admittedly imperfect exercise has any connection to what the disciples were going through as recorded in this passage or what we're experiencing in our church and world right now? I wonder if there's anything worth noting about what turned out to be possible anyway.
- As we read the passage this time, you were asked to be attentive to what Jesus' role was in this story. Where does Jesus first show up in this passage?
- When Peter sees Jesus, what is Peter's response?
- Does Jesus encourage or discourage Peter's impulse to join him on the water?

- What do you think Jesus was concerned about as Peter made his way across? Peter stumbling or drowning? Peter giving up? Peter turning back? Something else?
- On the other hand, what are Peter's concerns? Are they the same as those of Jesus or different? Do you think Peter is ever afraid that Jesus might leave him alone on the water? Are we ever afraid of that?
- Peter didn't begin a new chapter of his life with Jesus for his sake alone. As we've noted, alongside other disciples and apostles, Peter became a preacher, a teacher, a healer and a prophet. He dedicated the whole of his life to building God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. He poured love into countless lives. Who in our community and world is in need of our congregation's love?

SAY OR SUMMARIZE:

Peter asked Jesus for an invitation to be bold—to step out of the boat—and Jesus gave it. Jesus did not tell Peter to wait for calmer water or for all the emotional turmoil of the season they were in to pass. Instead, Jesus invites Peter to turn the page in his story with Jesus and to begin a new chapter right there in the midst of the turmoil, just as he invites us.

Ask:

- I wonder what we would do as a congregation if we knew we could turn a page in our church's history and start a new chapter, confident that Jesus will be there too? What boldness might that inspire?

SAY OR SUMMARIZE:

We are called to follow Jesus boldly—to speak, to act and to share as he does. Scripture has much to teach us about what this looks like in practical terms; but for today, let's take a quick look at two passages.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

Ask:

- What invitation do you hear in this passage?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

Ask:

- What important reminder does this passage have for us?



CLOSING:

(3-5 minutes)

Close in prayer. Ask God to lead your church forward boldly from exactly where you're standing now.

Before you dismiss the group, add one last phrase to the butcher paper/marker board you've shared during these sessions: "May [your church name] know the presence of Jesus, see the world through his eyes, and speak and act as the Spirit leads." Consider adapting part or all your group's work to display on a bulletin board in your church that you can keep available for viewing in the season ahead. If no such space exists, you could also photograph the finished product or create a typed version to print for participants to keep.