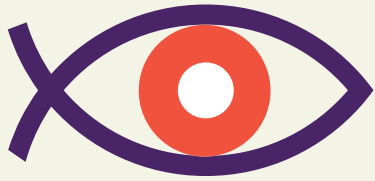


**SEEING
THROUGH
THE EYES OF
JESUS**

**YOUTH
CURRICULUM
SESSION 2**

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SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

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

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SESSION 2: JESUS IS LORD

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 14-22-33
Matthew 16: 13-20
Hebrews 12:1-2

MAIN POINT:

Seeing through the eyes of Jesus means we keep our focus on Christ, looking for where Jesus is speaking to us and using us for His good.



INTRODUCTION:

We're going to talk today about how truly important it is to focus on Jesus. The truth is we live in a world with many influences and sometimes the voice of Jesus, who wants to guide us to what is good, wholesome and true, can be disguised, confused or covered by other voices. We might claim that we're only trying to follow Jesus; but it can be really hard with everything else that's going on. Is anyone willing to volunteer to answer a few questions?

- Have you ever tried to communicate with someone else in a crowded room?
- How was that experience?

- Was it easy or difficult to convey your message or to receive theirs? Why?
- Were you able to effectively communicate? How so or why not?

As we try to follow Jesus, there can be many other voices calling for our attention. Even if those voices want something that is good for us, they distract us from the ultimate goal that is living into who God created us to be and following our Good Shepherd. We're going to look at how Jesus tried to teach his disciples to trust, follow and claim him as Lord and then look at how we might do that as individuals and together.



SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION:

*Matthew 14:22-33; Matthew 16:13-20;
Hebrews 12:1-2*

In reading the story of Jesus walking on water, we can be quick to focus our attention on the courage of Peter to take that initial step. We should not minimize the importance of his courage, but we miss something important if our understanding stops there. Peter's sinking into the water, close but not yet there with Jesus, reminds us that even when acting courageously, we must remain focused on our Lord.

Truly naming Jesus as Lord of our lives requires rejecting the other ways in which we might find direction or purpose in our lives. This part can be especially difficult for adolescents. Youth are constantly working to figure out "who I am" while deciphering a multitude of influences that attempt to define that for them—social hierarchies at school, teachings of parents or mentors, consumerist tendencies in

media and more. Claiming Jesus as Lord requires rejecting what peers, influencers, coaches and others might offer as sources of identity and belonging. We offer new Christians, and especially young people, the chance to commit their lives to Jesus through baptism. But similar to interpreting the story of Peter, we are misguided if our end goal is a public profession and not getting careful guidance forward following baptism.

We, the Church, must help young people find a new identity, apart from other external influences, that begins with baptism and extends to transforming their lives. Baptism is a beginning, not an end. A healthy youth ministry, not unlike a team with good chemistry, requires careful tending to each member's growth and an understanding of the common goal for the group. This shifts the focus once youth have bought into their personal faith journeys, not only to how they might live, but to how the youth group/ministry might focus on Jesus as a whole and as a part of the larger church body.



ACTIVITY:

Prior to the meeting, mark a large square on the floor with masking tape. Design a short, but not simple, line that connects two of the corners. Depending on group size, you may need multiple squares or, for added difficulty, use an additional line connecting the other corners of the square. In either case, the goal is for there to be a short "obstacle course" of segments and turns leading from a "start" spot to an "end" spot. There are no right designs. Let your creativity run wild.

Break the group into smaller teams (multiples of five) so that at any time one youth will be following the course while four others remain outside of the square. Blindfold the

participant designated as the follower. Separate from that follower, designate one of the four remaining participants as the guide. Their goal is to get the blindfolded youth to successfully navigate the course. The remaining three members, then, serve as distractions, hoping to get the follower off track. Instruct the blindfolded participant whose voice/instruction they should follow. Allow enough rounds for many participants to follow, guide or distract.

Afterwards, debrief:

- Was it easy or difficult to follow the voice that was your guide? What made it easy or difficult?
- How did it feel to be the guide when others were intentionally trying to distract your follower?



DISCUSSION:

Even though the disciples were actively following Jesus day in and day out, trying to learn directly from Jesus what God's plan was for the world, they still didn't always understand what Jesus was trying to teach them. Peter calls Jesus "Lord" and yet, in his most difficult moment when trying to walk on water, he fails to keep focus on Jesus and eventually sinks into the sea.

We've just lived through an incredibly difficult time with the coronavirus pandemic. I wonder if you can help me answer a few questions that will help us understand how hard it might have been to follow Jesus during the hardest parts of the pandemic.

- What about that time made it difficult to connect with God?
- How did the sudden stop in March of 2020 make it difficult to focus on Jesus?
- During the time when we couldn't gather together, what other voices tried to tell you how to live your life?
- Which ones, looking back, were helpful? Which ones were hurtful?

As Christians, we make the bold claim that Jesus is Lord. This means that we're going to focus on Jesus' voice, influence

and guidance more than we pay attention to anything else. We find our identity, our whole selves, when we listen to Jesus. That was really hard during the pandemic and has been in the months since. We all probably felt disconnected from focusing on Jesus during such a difficult time. It was hard for each of us to remain committed to following what we thought God wanted us to do when we were all so separated. And, as a youth group, it was hard to help build each other up and help each other grow because we couldn't even be together.

Let's think on this some more:

- In what ways, personally, was it hard to listen for Jesus during the pandemic?
- How did you feel disconnected from others? How did you feel connected?
- After such a difficult time, what did you learn about following Jesus?
- How can you use what you learned to help others?

The past few years have been hard on each of us individually, but they have also been really difficult for us together. We all have the goal of following Jesus, but it's one that we need each other to fulfill. As we continue moving forward, we'll work to rely on God and on each other to show us God's love in the hardest moments.



SMALL GROUP REFLECTION:

Have the youth break into groups of roughly three or four. Instruct them that the goal is for them to be in a group in which they feel comfortable sharing and one that's small enough that each person will have a chance to respond to the questions. Provide the following questions and allow each group to work at their own pace. After a reasonable amount of time, or when most groups seem to be done, draw the group back together for shared discussion around the same questions.

Small Group Questions:

- When we were all separated, what made it hard to listen to and follow Jesus?
- What makes it hard to hear Jesus' voice still today?
- How can I help others follow Jesus?
- How can we together work to listen to our Good Shepherd and share God's love with those around us?



PRAYER:

Dear God, you are our true guide. You sent Jesus to us so that we might have an example of how we are supposed to live. Help us to hear your voice more clearly and to follow where you might lead. Give us the courage and the strength to help each other to listen, too. And, grant us the peace and cooperation to allow others to see your love through our actions. You are our Lord. And we want to serve You! AMEN.

ACTION STEPS:

Ask the youth to pay attention to moments when they have trouble understanding someone else. Have them consider what made those moments easier or more difficult. Invite them to keep notes or to journal their thoughts. Then, provide an opportunity for sharing these moments in your next meeting.