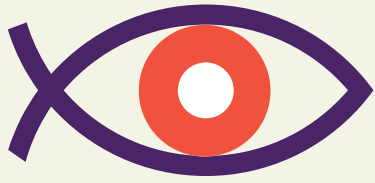


**SEEING
THROUGH
THE EYES OF
JESUS**

**YOUTH
CURRICULUM
SESSION 3**

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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 3: REALLY SEEING

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 14:22-33
John 15:1-11
Galatians 2:19-20

MAIN POINT:

Seeing through the eyes of Jesus helps us to see Jesus as our guide through life and helps us with decision making.



INTRODUCTION:

Close your eyes for a minute. Imagine this scenario: you're in a class when the teacher describes a game you think you will be particularly good at. Whether it's a puzzle or a physical challenge, you know your skills and you think that you have a chance to dominate. You lock eyes with a close friend with whom you share a similar skill and know, you just know, that together you will own the remaining class period.

Then, the teacher begins to divide the class into teams. At first, there seems to be a sort of "every other one" selection, but as the process continues, even though you and your friend are accordingly spaced apart, the teacher seemingly changes the count and you end up on opposite teams. What once seemed a sure, combined victory now appears to be competition. Your friend

is now your enemy and you might see red just thinking of them.

- How would you participate in this activity?
- How would you view your friend as you do?
- Does being on opposite teams change how you feel about the activity?
- What does your friendship look like during the game?

We're going to talk today about something that may be a little difficult to understand. When we talk about focus, there are very subtle differences between what you hope to be true and what you actually know to be true. We're not really talking about competition, but rather we're focusing on how your perspective might change given different circumstances.



SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION:

*Matthew 14:22-33; John 15:1-11;
Galatians 2:19-20*

Peter's encounter with Jesus on the water begins when Jesus speaks and Peter is finally able to see his Lord. Upon seeing Jesus, Peter is overcome by the urge to be with Jesus, even if it means being in the middle of the roaring waves. The Gospel of Mark asserts that Christian discipleship begins with being with Jesus. And it makes sense. In order to learn from a teacher or mentor, we must first spend time in their company absorbing as much knowledge and wisdom as possible. Peter, perhaps, knows that in order to truly appreciate the wonder of that stormy sea miracle, he needs to be with Jesus.

Seeing Jesus transforms Peter's timidity into courage. Only while on the water, when he averts his gaze, does he start to

sink into the water. So long as Peter remains focused on him, Jesus is able to change Peter's heart to move fear into action. And the same is true for us. When we orient our lives around Jesus the Christ, we are also changed from the inside out. Our heart begins to be more like Jesus' heart and our actions then follow. When we learn from the compassion of our Lord, empathy, care and humility overflow.

Taking this knowledge alongside the instruction of Jesus in the Gospel of John to abide, the answer becomes clearer. It is not enough just to have heard of Jesus, or to have thought of Jesus, or even to have sort of seen Jesus from afar. Rather, the Christian life depends on being with Jesus in its deepest sense, abiding in the way, the truth and the life so much so that it brings real change. It is more than a moment of clarity. It is a consistent faithfulness to the One who is most faithful.



ACTIVITY:

Place or choose different focal points within the gathering area. These can be preexisting objects (i.e. chairs, couches, posters, etc.) or they can be different marks on a whiteboard, PowerPoint, or other display. Try to have the designated focal points further away, although the activity should work even at close range.

Have participants hold up their thumb and position it in their line of sight so it is on a focal point that you designate (i.e. a particular object or mark on your display). They should do this with both eyes open, trying to centrally locate the focal point in their vision.

Once centered, instruct them to alternate closing either eye. Depending on their individual eye dominance, one eye should remain steady while the other seems to cause a shift in focus. In rare instances or in close proximity, both eyes may confirm the same point. Repeat with multiple foci.

Afterwards debrief:

- Which eye when open seemed to remain steady on the point/object?
- What happened when you closed that eye and opened the other?



DISCUSSION:

In the story of Peter walking on the water, our typical understanding of the passage may not reveal all that is intended by its author. The story runs deeper than a man's fear, courage, doubt and salvation. Instead, we see that Peter only asks to come out of the boat when he sees Jesus. He knows that Jesus will help him survive the storm if only he can reach him. Jesus calls him out onto the water and only when Peter loses focus does he start sinking.

Consider a time in your life when you felt the "storm" was too overwhelming. What difficulties did you face? Did you notice Jesus during the turmoil? If so, how did your feelings change when you focused on Jesus' presence with you? Jesus calls for our attention and assures us of his steadfastness as we take the courageous step forward. Let's unpack this a little more:

- What made Peter able to leave the boat to try to reach Jesus?
- What helped him make progress? What caused him to sink?
- In your "stormy" moments, is it easy or difficult to trust that Jesus is there amid the storm?
- How do you learn that you can rely on Jesus to be present in troubling times?

Peter knew he could rely on Jesus because he had already seen how faithful and true his Lord was. He had witnessed

Jesus feed 5,000, heal those who were sick, love those who felt outcast by their peers. In each situation, Jesus had an open invitation into the loving presence of God.

After hearing Peter's story, we turn to John's Gospel and read that Jesus instructs the disciples to abide with him. By abiding in Jesus, the disciples then begin to draw on his wisdom and understanding of God's love so that they can begin living that out themselves, especially once Jesus is crucified and they are left to continue sharing the good news.

- What does the word "abide" mean to you?
- How does abiding in someone differ from being together with them?
- When we give someone so much power and influence in our lives, what happens to us?
- How do we see, act, love differently as a result of their guidance?

Our goal as Christians is to abide so fully in Jesus that we keep our eyes fixed on him, take holy risks to deepen our faith in Christ, find and accept grace from Jesus when we fall short, and encourage others to remain focused on our risen Savior. It's not something that happens overnight and it's not just a moment of feeling close to God and all of the sudden having earned that achievement. Rather, abiding in Jesus comes from a lifelong journey of seeking him and attempting to follow in his footsteps.



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:

- Have you ever experienced a “storm” in your life? What was it like? (Remind youth to share only as much as they are comfortable sharing.)
- When you were in that difficult moment, were you able to keep your focus on Jesus and how God might want you to respond to the situation?
- What moments in your life have taught you that Jesus will remain faithfully with you in life's difficult moments?
- How are you working to grow your relationship with Jesus to abide in him so that his love and compassion can change your heart and your daily life?



PRAYER:

Dear God, we know that it is not enough just to be familiar with your son, but that we are called to abide in Jesus. We can be tempted to assume that we are with you, that we've seen you, and that you are near. Help us to find the determination and the patience to go on the journey of learning how to abide in Jesus. When we do, our lives will be changed for the better and we will impact this world with your love in the way you desire. May it be so. AMEN.

ACTION STEPS:

Invite the youth to take some quiet time in the mornings before school. Then, ask them to pay attention to how their day changes when they have reoriented their lives to abide in Jesus. Have them note what made the days feel different, more special. Invite them to keep notes or to journal their thoughts. Then, provide an opportunity for sharing these moments in your next meeting.