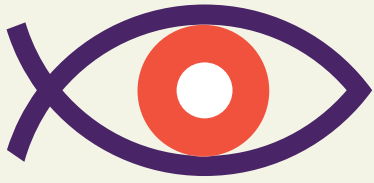


**SEEING
THROUGH
THE EYES OF
JESUS**

LENTEN STUDIES

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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!**

LENTEN STUDIES FOR ADULTS

A WORD OF INTRODUCTION:

This guide is designed for churches and groups who want to utilize CBF's resource, *Seeing Through the Eyes of Jesus*, during the Lenten season.

On a spiritual level, this resource is a great fit for the weeks leading up to Easter. After all, Lent is traditionally a season for contemplating Jesus' life and work, and this resource is full of prompts for doing that.

On a practical level, this guide takes the original eight sessions and suggests how you can reconfigure them to fit into six gatherings that align with the six weeks in Lent. It also offers discussion questions to help your group make direct connections between the curriculum and Lent. Additionally, it incorporates a prayer practice into the conclusion of each session that participants can make part of their Lenten discipline.

While this Lenten guide does attempt to include as much original material as possible, it is worthwhile to read through all of the original material before you begin. You know your group or congregation and you may find that there's something left out that is important in your setting. Please feel free to use and modify these suggestions to the needs of your group.

May your Lenten journey draw you close to Jesus, to see through his eyes and to love as he loves.

Rev. Amanda Standiford

LENT SESSION 1: MISSING JESUS

Follow the format of this session as it is written in the original resource. Consider the following changes to help guide your group's thinking and conversation to connect the work you're doing together with the beginning of the Lenten season.

During the **Journal** portion, invite participants to reflect specifically on a Lenten or Easter memory where they experienced God's presence. Be sure to make space for and be sensitive toward those who may not have much experience with Lent or the church traditions that surround it.

During the **Scripture and Reflection**:

- As you list things like walking into the grocery store without a list and forgetting the birthday gift when you attend a party, note that it's also possible to sail through Easter without really stopping to notice Jesus. Lent is a season designed to slow us down and keep us from missing the point. It's an opportunity to reorient ourselves to Jesus' life and work and to recenter ourselves in his story.
- Add the following to the second set of bulleted discussion questions: How does the Lenten season call us to pay attention to Jesus in a special way? Are there practices or rituals you can observe this season that will help you in this work?

During the **Closing**, invite participants to make time each session for a moment of reflection on how they've experienced Jesus that day. Briefly introduce the ancient practice of examen. Though there are a number of approaches to examen, one way is to simply ask, "Where did I experience God's presence today? How did I know? Was there a time when I felt God's absence? How did I know?" Ask participants to make note of anything they observe that they may want to share with the group during your next session.

LENT SESSION 2: JESUS IS LORD

Follow the format of this session as written in the original resource. Consider these additions to help ground your discussion in the Lenten season.

Sometime before you begin the **Journal** portion of the session, invite participants to add to the butcher paper or board anything they discovered or rediscovered in their examen practice since the last session. Depending on whether your group arrives in waves or all at once, this may be something you can ask them to do as they trickle into the room and greet one another at the beginning of the session.

During the **Scripture and Reflection**, after discussing distractions in our world that keep us from focusing on Jesus, ask:

- What practices might we take up during this Lenten season to help us retain our focus? Are there things we need to put down? Things we're invited to pick up?

During the **Closing**, encourage participants to not only select a word but to make that word into a breath prayer to practice through the week ahead. As you inhale, breathe in the word or phrase for God's presence you've chosen. As you breathe out, simply say, "Help me see," (Participants might opt to swap out "see" for "hear" or "know" as feels appropriate). Challenge the group to try to use their breath prayers daily between now and the next session.

LENT SESSION 3: REALLY SEEING/THE DANGER OF DISTRACTIONS

This reorganized session will follow the same format as previous sessions, but it will combine elements of Sessions 3 and 4 from the original resource. Be sure to take note of which parts are drawn from each session. Preview the videos for both sessions and decide whether you want to show one or the other or select pieces from each.

Use the **Starter** from Session 3. To save time, you may want to interview the longtime church member or staff person in advance and help that person discern what parts of his or her story are most important for your group to hear in this session.

Use the **Journal** prompt from Session 3.

During the **Scripture and Reflection** time, follow Session 3 from the beginning of the section through the first set of discussion questions. However, rather than breaking into small groups to skim Matthew, simply have the large group list as many of Jesus' miracles as they can from memory. Ask the first two discussion questions as listed. Then, pose the third question but don't discuss it —just invite participants to hold it in their minds as you move through the rest of the day's conversation.

Transition the group to John 15:1-11 as is outlined next in Session 3. Rather than summarizing the passage, go ahead and have the group read it aloud. Ask the first discussion question from the second set in Session 3 and allow for conversation.

Then, skip ahead to the **Scripture and Reflection** in Session 4. Pose the two discussion questions about John 15:1-11 listed there.

Transition back to Matthew 14. Distribute the "waves" handout and follow the directions in the **Scripture and Reflection** section of Session 4. You may need to abbreviate or combine the prompts as time dictates. End the **Scripture and Reflection** session after you're given the last prompt from the list.

During the **Closing**, break the group into pairs or trios. Use the words from Hebrews 12 to open a brief moment of reflection for the small groups. Then, ask the three discussion questions from the last section of the Session 4 **Scripture and Reflection** regarding the "waves" handout and invite the pairs or trios to talk about each of them briefly. Close by encouraging each pair or trio to pray for one another to see/hear/know Jesus and to avoid distractions in the week ahead. Ask them to make a practice of praying for one another between now and the next session. Instruct participants to depart quietly as their groups conclude their prayer time.

LENT SESSION 4: A COMMUNITY TO CHECK OUR VISION

This session follows the original Session 5 closely with a few simple adjustments for Lent.

During the **Scripture and Reflection** portion of the session, just before the last discussion question in the second set, ask:

- In our tradition, Lent tends to be an intensely personal part of the church year. We may lament collectively on Ash Wednesday, but the practices we pick up and put down during this season are typically contemplative and private. Today, we've considered how following Jesus is communal. How might that understanding expand the way we understand the work of Lent?

During the **Closing**, invite participants to find a time before the next session to pray particularly for your church. If possible, encourage them to stay a few minutes after this session or come early to the next one and walk the church's grounds or building as they pray. Suggest that they complete this task in pairs or small groups if they are able.

LENT SESSION 5: SEEING JESUS: CLAIMING JESUS' MISSION/TRANSFORMING ME

This session combines material from Sessions 6 and 7 of the original resource. While it follows the format of previous sessions, you'll want to be sure to pay close attention to which pieces come from which original session. Preview the videos for both sessions and decide whether to show the video from Session 6, Session 7 or clips from each.

Begin by using the **Starter** from Session 7.

Next, follow the **Journal** prompt from Session 7.

Turn back to Session 6 to begin the **Scripture and Reflection** section.

Say or summarize: *Our work today is examining Jesus' mission and considering how our participation in that mission might transform our lives. Though there are many passages of Scripture that describe Jesus' work, we're going to focus on three that are likely familiar.*

Divide participants into three small groups. One small group will read Matthew 28:16-20. One will read Luke 4:16-21. The third will read Luke 1:46-55. Ask each group to read the passage and summarize in a sentence or two what it says about Jesus' mission.

Regather the participants and have each group share its findings. Invite discussion comparing and contrasting the three passages. You may find that some of the questions surrounding the texts in Session 6 can help fuel the conversation.

Ask:

- How would you summarize Jesus' mission based on these three passages? Does this fit or not fit with how we typically think about Jesus' work?
- Where in the gospels do you see Jesus' mission being fulfilled?

Read Mark 8:22-26.

Ask:

- How is Jesus' mission fulfilled in this story?
- Who was involved in the work? What does that say to us about our work?

Transition now to the beginning of the **Scripture and Reflection** section in Session 7. At the end of the first set of discussion questions, add: How did life with Jesus expand the disciples' understanding of their own part in God's work? Let this question serve as the end of the **Scripture and Reflection** portion of this session.

For the **Closing**, begin with the second "Say or Summarize" section in Session 7's **Scripture and Reflection**. Stop after reading Romans 12:1-2. Challenge participants to memorize the passage during the week ahead and to let the phrase "transform us by the renewing of our minds," become their prayer between now and the next session.

LENT SESSION 6: SEEING JESUS: TRANSFORMING CONGREGATIONS

This session is Session 8 in the original resource. To modify this session for Lent and for Holy Week, follow the session as written until you reach the last “Say or Summarize” heading in the **Scripture and Reflection** section.

Instead of reading the passages from Corinthians, draw the group’s focus to the events of Holy Week, particularly the triumphal entry (Luke 20:28-44), Jesus’ teaching in the temple (Luke 20:45-48), the last supper (Luke 22:7-19), and Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46). Feel free to add other events that are important in your church’s observance or to refer to the other Gospels as you choose. Do not include Jesus’ death, burial or resurrection, as that will be part of the **Closing** for this session.

Divide participants into as many groups as you have events on your list. Assign each group one of the events and invite them to read the passage together, taking particular note of Jesus’ role and the disciples’ role in each situation.

Regather the participants and ask each group to give a quick summary of their observations.

Ask:

- What easy things did Jesus ask of his disciples?
- What difficult things did he ask?
- What things does Jesus ask of us as a congregation of disciples?
- What difficult things are we asked to do?
- How will we know when we are seeing through Jesus’ eyes and loving as Jesus loved? (If no one in your group connects this question to your butcher paper/marker board words and phrases, prompt them to consider what you’ve collected there while using this resource.)

Modify the **Closing** by inviting the group to attend any special worship opportunities or events that will be part of your Holy Week observance. Encourage them specifically to carry the questions about both the easy and difficult things Jesus asks of his disciples, and therefore of us, with them as they participate in your church’s Holy Week experiences. Then, follow the remainder of the directions for the **Closing** as written. It may be meaningful to continue to display your butcher paper/bulletin board throughout the Easter season.