

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)**Lesson Plan:** Introduction (Day 3)**Learning Goal:** Students should recognize the temptation to create Jesus in our own image and the importance of letting the Gospels speak for themselves, challenging our assumptions.**Question:** How do you picture Jesus?

Prayer.

Go over books of the New Testament (Four Men on an ARC Go Eat Pop-Corn)

Material for this lesson drawn from *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Phillip Yancey (specifically, chapters 1 “The Jesus I Thought I Knew” and 5 “Profile: What I Would Have Noticed”)

If you were writing a modern biography about someone famous (describing their life so that others in a later generation would know them), what are the things you would include?

- Appearance, birthdate, death date, birthplace, what they sounded like, family, job, influence, childhood/influences, school, impact, etc.
- Notice that the Gospels do not include many of these. These aren’t the things that are important to the Gospel writers. The Gospels are not good modern biographies (they aren’t supposed to be).

Brainstorm (write on board): when you think about Jesus, how do you picture him? Describe him.

If students need help, encourage them to think about:

- facial features (attractive or not?)
- features (hair color, eye color, etc.)
- build (strong or wimpy)
- voice (soft-spoken or loud)

Show images of Jesus in art:

White, black, Asian, Arab, Ancient, Renaissance, Modern

What thoughts come to mind when you see those images?

The truth is that we almost always make Jesus in our own image.*This is the main point that we want to get across in this lesson. This is also the main thing that we will be fighting against throughout the year - to let the gospels speak for themselves. We must distinguish between what scripture says and what we “know” scripture to say.*

Think back to Vacation Bible School and Sunday School when you were younger. What did Jesus want to do? (Be nice, share your toys, don’t fight, obey your parents, read your Bible, pray . . .)

- How would telling people to be nice get a man crucified? What government would execute Mr. Rodgers or Barney?

What do we know about Jesus?

- Jewish
- from Palestine
- Carpenter
- Spoke to 1,000 people without a microphone

- Probably not all that attractive - see Isaiah Prophecy (53:1-4): *Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*
- A charismatic leader/communicator - people would sit for three days without eating to hear him speak
- A man not afraid to show emotion (cried at least 3 times in front of disciples, showed compassion for those who were hurting/struggling, felt overwhelmed in the garden, etc.)
- People trusted him - he inspired intimacy
- Gentle (children, women)
- He could get distracted (how many of his miracles took place when he was on the road somewhere else?)
- People liked being with Jesus; where he was there was joy (was friends with tax collectors, rich people, Roman centurions, prostitutes, victims of leprosy, etc.)
- Was accused of having a devil
- He was a rabbi/teacher - ("He taught as one with authority")
- He was a gifted storyteller
- He never backed away from conflict (single-handedly took on a whole mob who wanted to stone an adulterous woman)

Jesus would have had dark features and not a thin, skinny face. Jesus was definitely not passive but authoritative and at times unpredictable and blunt.

Read Luke 4:14-30

Read Luke 11:37-54

Jesus called the Pharisees "you brood of vipers!", blind guides, and hypocrites

His own townspeople (whom he grew up with) wanted to kill him.

Wimpy, passive people do not have this affect on others.

"Nice" guys don't have this effect on others.

"The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore – on the contrary, they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified him 'meek and mild,' and recommended him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies."

Dorothy Sayers, "The Greatest Story Ever Staged," in *The Whimsical Christian: 18 Essays by Dorothy Sayers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 14.

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- What is the great temptation we discussed regarding the ways we picture Jesus?