

Compelling Vision

Together, as the Church of the Brethren,
we will passionately live and share the radical transformation
and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood
engagement. To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and
equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless.

Bible Study Series

Session 8
Val Kline



Session 8 *Jesus Christ, Our Teacher*

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Focus Question

How do we understand Jesus as Teacher?

Scripture Texts

Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 13:13-16

Focus Statement

Jesus was the fulfillment of the new covenant Jeremiah envisioned long ago. Teaching by example, using everyday objects, and sharing stories about ordinary people, Jesus wrote the love of God on the hearts of those who followed him. In his final meal with his disciples, Jesus used bread and wine to symbolize this new covenant between God and people. He washed their feet in an act of unexpected servanthood and told them to do likewise. Jesus taught with authority and authenticity rooted in his identity as God incarnate. As Teacher, Jesus challenges our thinking and sets us on a path of discipleship that leads us to new neighborhoods where we can share the love and grace of God.

Supplies

- Newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- Thank You notes
- Pens, pencils
- Internet-connected device

Media Suggestions

- **Book:** *The Jesus You May Not Know* by David Jeremiah
- **Poem:** [“Count Well the Cost”](#) by Alexander Mack, translated by Ora Garber
- **Song:** “Obey My Voice” by Sheilagh Nowacki; “Lord, Speak To Me that I May Speak” by Frances R. Havergal
- **Art:** [“Christ the Servant”](#) painting by Yongsung Kim

Reflecting on the Texts

Who was your favorite teacher? Maybe it was a teacher who stretched you and expected the best from you, one who encouraged you and made you feel important, or one that you highly respected and that made you want to do your best.

Countless lives have been impacted by teachers. David Jeremiah writes, “Those who teach share an honorable profession, because they are following in the footsteps of Jesus, the Master Teacher. Did you know that he was most often addressed not as Jesus or Christ or Lord, but by his title of Teacher? This was the word the multitudes used. This was how the disciples referred to him. Jesus himself used the term when he said, ‘You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am’ (John 13:13)” (73).

Jesus taught truth because he is truth (John 14:6). His teachings amazed people. “When Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that he was living everything he was saying—quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard” (Matthew 7:28-29 The Message).

Through his words and actions, Jesus taught us about loving God, each other, the church, and our enemies. He taught us about rejoicing, grace, generosity, forgiveness, and praying. He taught us about counting well the cost of discipleship, letting our lights shine, going to the ends of the earth in his name, and servanthood.

When he knew that his hour had come to depart from this world, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. Peter objected, not understanding why the one he knew to be the Christ, the one he believed would soon establish his everlasting kingdom on earth, would take on the form of the lowest slave and wash feet. No doubt, all of the disciples were surprised.

The disciples’ surprise must have continued when, after supper, Jesus took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it and give it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:19-20).

The disciples were expecting a new era. They were expecting Jesus to begin his rule and reign as Messiah. They were not expecting to hear him talk about the blood of the new covenant. But, in that act, Jesus established the long-awaited new covenant that marked the beginning of a new age (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:10). With the new covenant came the promise of an internal power. “. . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). In the new covenant, everyone could truly know the Lord through a personal relationship rather than one that was mediated through priests and prophets.

Jesus was the fulfillment of the new covenant Jeremiah envisioned long ago. Teaching by example, using everyday objects, and sharing stories about ordinary people, Jesus wrote the love of God on the hearts of those who followed him. That ministry continues as teachers, parents, preachers, and mentors bring Jesus’ teachings to life with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Understanding Jesus as Teacher is essential to a vision of the church as disciples who passionately share the transforming love and grace of God.

Gathering

Choose one of these activities to introduce the theme of today's session.

- *Option 1*—Invite participants to think about one of their favorite teachers. How has that person impacted your life? Why? Using newsprint or a whiteboard and markers, make a list of the qualities of a good teacher.
- *Option 2*—Divide your group into pairs or triads. Have each group make a list of five Old Testament and five New Testament stories that they feel are most important to passing on the faith. Have groups share their lists. What stories are on everyone's list? What's missing? What makes these stories are so important to your faith journey?

Discovering God's Story and Vision

Read today's texts (Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 13:13-16) aloud or share the reader's theater on pages 41-42. You will need five volunteers for the reader's theater.

Exploring God's Story and Vision

Dig deeper into today's texts using these questions.

- In John 13:13-16, how does Jesus challenge the disciples' ideas of what it means to be a follower of the Messiah? In this instance, what is his primary method of teaching? What makes it so effective?
- What other teaching methods did Jesus use throughout his ministry? How did Jesus connect with his followers? What about his stories and teachings inspired people to follow him?
- Reread Jeremiah 31:31-34. The prophet speaks of a new covenant written in people's hearts. What was wrong with the old covenant? Why was it obsolete? In what ways is Jesus the fulfillment of this new covenant?
- In verse 34, the Lord says that "all the people will know me, from the least to the greatest." What does it mean to you to "know the Lord?" Is this something you can learn in a classroom?
- How is this "knowing" different than knowing facts or information? In what ways does Jesus teach us to *know* God instead of *knowing about* God?

Responding to God's Story and Vision

Reflect on the meaning of the texts with these questions.

- On newsprint or markers, draw a large heart. From your study today and your own journey of discipleship, what are the marks of the new covenant that are to be written on the hearts of people? Write responses inside the heart. Jesus is the fulfillment of this covenant, and the Holy Spirit continues it today. Where do you see the work of Jesus as Teacher and the Holy Spirit working in your life or that of your congregation?
- Everyone is a teacher in some form. You may be a teacher, youth leader, parent, or mentor to someone in the faith. How does your understanding of Jesus as Teacher inform and shape the way you teach, lead, or guide others in the faith?
- How does understanding Jesus as Teacher shape your congregation's ministry? How does your congregation write God's law and love on the hearts of persons who enter your fellowship?
- Why is understanding this facet of Jesus' ministry, as Teacher, important for a vision for the Church of the Brethren?

Empowered by God's Story and Vision

To wrap up, choose one of these activities.

- *Option 1*— How does your understanding of Jesus as Teacher permeate the ministries of your congregation? Spend a few moments evaluating the faith formation ministry of your congregation. How intentional is your church's educational ministry with children and youth? With adults? How do you support those who take on the ministry of teaching in your congregation?
- *Option 2*— Author Philip Wyle has said, "One good teacher in a lifetime may sometimes change a delinquent into a solid citizen." Write a thank you note to a teacher who has made a lasting impact on your life. Take time to thank Jesus, too, for his teachings and promises, including the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Sending

Close your time together with one of the songs listed in Media Suggestions and this prayer.

Jesus, you are our Lord and Teacher. Thank you for your earthly ministry. Thank you for teaching us, through your words and example, how you want us to live. Thank you for the Holy Spirit living in us, guiding us, and reminding us of everything you have taught us. May we be faithful learners and followers, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Readers Theater

Readers: Narrator, Lord, Reader 1, Reader 2, Peter

Narrator: But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD:

Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Reader 1: The people of God failed to keep the law of God in their natural strength.

Reader 2: So God made a promise to eventually write the law on their hearts. Many years came and went, and then, one day....

Narrator: Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Reader 1: The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

Reader 2: Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him:

Peter: "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Lord: "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Peter: "You will never wash my feet."

Lord: "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

Peter: "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Lord: "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you."

Narrator: For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.

Jesus: “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

Narrator: In the Upper Room, Jesus did the unexpected. He took on the form of the lowest servant and washed his disciples’ feet. He also took bread, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,

Lord: “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Narrator: And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying,

Lord: “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Narrator: Soon after, he said:

Lord: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.”

Narrator: And, not many days later, just as Jesus had promised, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, arrived!

Lord: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”
“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

Reader 1: It was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God’s deep secrets.

Reader 2: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”