who is Jesus?

CHURCH UNITED 2026

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

week 1

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE:

> *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*
> JOHN 3:16 (NIV)

Have you ever met someone who seemed to have everything together on the outside? They knew what to say, how to act, what was expected of them, and from what everyone could tell, they were doing pretty well. But underneath the surface, something was still missing. In John 3, we meet a man like that. . . a man named Nicodemus.

Now, here's the thing about Nicodemus: He wasn't some reckless sinner who came looking for Jesus after ruining his life or someone seeking physical healing for a lifelong ailment. He was a Pharisee . . . a respected religious leader and a man who knew the Scriptures. If anyone should have had it all together and really understood what it meant to follow God, it should have been him. And yet, he came searching for Jesus. And what did Jesus say to him? He told him something totally unexpected: "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3 NIV).

Think about that for a second: Jesus wasn't telling Nicodemus that he needed to become a little more religious, clean up a few areas of his life, or try harder to be holier, more righteous, or a better person. You see, Nicodemus was already doing all of that. His problem wasn't that he needed a better version of his old life. What he needed was a new life.

And that's true for everyone. Salvation can't be earned through morality, church attendance, Bible knowledge, family background, generosity, or good deeds. The fact is sin has left humanity spiritually dead and separated from God (Ephesians 2:1-9).

What's needed is something only God can do: cleansing, a new heart, and new life through His Spirit. This is what Jesus means when He says we must be **born again**.

Then Jesus gives Nicodemus the good news. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (John 3:14-21 NIV). Why did Jesus connect His work to the snake in the wilderness? Because all who looked at the snake on the pole were healed (Numbers 21:4-9). In the same way, all who believe in Jesus are saved/rescued from sin, healed from the curse, and will live.

In this moment, Jesus was actually pointing ahead to the cross, where He would take our sin upon Himself, die in our place, and rise again so anyone who trusts in Him can be forgiven, made new, and given eternal life. This same invitation is for **everyone**, **everywhere**. No one is good enough to earn salvation, and no one is too sinful to receive it. But listen . . . the gospel of Jesus isn't an invitation to become a better version of yourself; it's an invitation to look to Jesus, believe in Him, receive the life only He can give, and live a new life in, through, and with Him!

supporting scripture

Read this week's Scripture in addition to these supporting Scriptures:

John 1:12-13, 3:1–18, 17:3; Numbers 21:4–9; Ezekiel 36:25–27; Ephesians 2:1–9; Titus 3:3–7

application challenge

You have been saved for a purpose—to be sent out. Think of someone in your family, workplace, school, neighborhood, or group of friends who hasn't yet met Jesus. Write their name somewhere visible to you this week and pray for them daily. Then, take a deliberate step toward them. Invite them to church, share a personal story about what Jesus has done in your life, ask how you can pray for them, or find a way to start a spiritual conversation.

group discussion guide

Pick your favorites to discuss with your group, family, or friends.

1. Nicodemus was moral, religious, educated, and respected. Why do those things still fall short of what Jesus says is necessary?
2. When people hear the phrase "born again," what misconceptions might they have? How does John 3 define it?
3. Why is it difficult for people to accept that salvation must be received as a gift rather than earned?
4. Jesus says that God loves the world and whoever believes this can have eternal life. What does that reveal about the character of God and the power of the gospel?
5. What are some things people today are tempted to trust in besides Jesus for their standing with God?
6. Who has God placed around this group who needs to encounter Jesus, and what could be done individually or together to help bring that person closer to Him?

week 2

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE:

> *"He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free."*
> LUKE 4:18 (NIV)

Luke 4 gives us a glimpse into Jesus' heart and the kind of ministry He came to carry out. When Jesus reads from Isaiah, He describes His mission as bringing good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. His ministry was marked by compassion for people who were hurting, overlooked, and in need.

Jesus cared about what mattered to people. He didn't look past their pain or treat their needs as an inconvenience. He moved toward people with mercy and showed them that God's kingdom was good news for them, too. His compassion wasn't separate from justice. The way Jesus treated people gave them dignity—He welcomed those who were often pushed aside, and He showed everyone what God's heart looks like in action.

This lesson can be easy to miss when justice feels like something that only belongs to big issues or complicated conversations. But Luke 4 brings it into everyday life. Who is being overlooked? Who needs to be seen? Where is there an opportunity to bring help, dignity, or hope? Following Jesus means learning to notice the people and needs that He notices.

The invitation isn't simply to care more; it's to become more like Jesus. His mercy changes the way people are seen, and His love moves toward those who need it. When His followers do the same, God's heart becomes visible in the ordinary places where He has already placed them.

supporting scripture

Read this week's Scripture in addition to these supporting Scriptures:

Isaiah 61:1–2; Micah 6:8; Matthew 9:35–38; James 2:14–17

application challenge

Look for one opportunity this week to move toward someone who may be overlooked, hurting, or in need. Serve through the church, check in on someone who's struggling, meet a practical need, or simply take time to listen. Ask God to make the needs around you more visible and give you the willingness to respond with the mercy you've received from Him.

group discussion guide

Pick your favorites to discuss with your group, family, or friends.

1. What stood out to you most about Jesus' mission in Luke 4?
2. What does this passage reveal about the people Jesus notices and cares about?
3. Why do you think justice and mercy are so closely connected in Jesus' ministry?
4. Who are some people who can easily be overlooked in everyday life? What might it look like to see them differently?
5. What's one way Jesus has shown you mercy, and how can that shape the way you respond to others?
6. Where might God be inviting you to move from simply noticing a need to actually doing something about it?

week 3

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE:

> *"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid.' When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, 'Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.' The disciples asked him, 'Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist."*
>
> MATTHEW 17:1-13 (NIV)

Throughout Have you ever been blinded by the brightness of a place? Think about turning your lights on in the middle of the night to find your way around, or going outside at noon and taking your sunglasses off. Now imagine that feeling times 100! Peter, James, and John had the privilege of being with Jesus on a high mountain when He unveiled His glory for a moment. Matthew 17:2 (NIV) tells us, "There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light."

There's something about God's glory that involves radiance.

- **Hebrews 1:3 (NIV)** says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."
- **Ezekiel 1:27-28** describes the appearance of God's glory like fire, a brilliant light surrounding him, and a radiant rainbow!
- **John 1:9 (NIV)** says that Jesus came as the "true light that gives light to everyone."
- **Revelation 21:22-23 (NIV)** even gives us a vision of our future in a city where "the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."

In Greek, the word for glory is "doxa" and implies a true reality that refers to reputation and radiance. It's inspired by the Hebrew word for glory, "kābôd," meaning "to be heavy." Glory is all about the revelation of character and truth. This is why John writes, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. **We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son**" (John 1:14 NIV, emphasis added).

In this moment, the glory of Jesus is fully experienced by Peter, James, and John, but that's not the only thing they see. They see Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah, both revered individuals in Jewish history who represent the law of God and the prophets. In the wonder of the moment, Peter suggests setting up shelters for them so they could stay longer, but God the Father intervenes with a bright cloud. The purpose of the moment wasn't to stay there, but to encounter God through Jesus and leave changed.

God repeats what He spoke over Jesus at the beginning of His ministry when Jesus got baptized by John the Baptist. He says, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5 NIV). The Father affirmed the Son before He did any ministry, and the Father still affirms the Son through His ministry, because the basis of approval and love is that the Son is, in fact, part of the family. God's love and view of you doesn't change based on how many works you can do for Him. It's based on whether you belong in His family or not.

At this, the disciples are terrified, and what does Jesus do? He walks over to them and touches them. He tells them to get up and to not be afraid. He approaches with grace and love, reassuring them of His presence and nearness. This is how He treats us, too.

There are moments when the glory of Jesus is more tangible in this life—miracle moments, worshipful moments, revelatory moments. Yet Jesus also reveals His glory in the mundane and the ordinary, because He's Lord over all creation and all of life. One day, He'll complete His restoration so we can enjoy, know, and display His glory across all the earth as He always intended us to! This new heaven and new earth will be a place where His glory can shine without hindrance or cover. Until then, we have the honor of experiencing glimpses of His glory in our lives on earth.

supporting scripture

Read this week's Scripture in addition to these supporting Scriptures:

Ezekiel 1:27-28; Hebrews 1:3; John 1:9, 14; 2 Corinthians 4:6, 3:18; Revelation 21:22-23

application challenge

God's glory is revealed through His character, and as followers of Jesus, we have the opportunity to reflect that character to the people around us. This week, choose one person you interact with regularly and intentionally display the character of Jesus toward them. Look for a tangible way to show patience, kindness, forgiveness, generosity, compassion, or grace—even when it costs you something. Ask God to help the way you treat them to give them a glimpse of what He's like.

group discussion guide

Pick your favorites to discuss with your group, family, or friends.

1. What stands out to you most from the Transfiguration in Matthew 17:1–13? What does this moment reveal about who Jesus is?

2. Throughout Scripture, God's glory is often connected with light, radiance, and brightness. What do these images help us understand about God's character and presence?

3. Moses and Elijah were significant figures in Israel's history, yet the Father directs the disciples' attention to Jesus and says, "Listen to him!" What does this tell us about Jesus' authority and His relationship to the rest of Scripture?

4. The disciples are overwhelmed by Jesus' glory, but Jesus responds by coming near, touching them, and telling them not to be afraid. What does this interaction teach us about the character of Jesus?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. What does it practically look like to "behold" Jesus and increasingly be transformed into His image?

6. Where can we be tempted to look for God only in extraordinary or spiritual "mountaintop" moments? How can we learn to recognize and reflect His glory in ordinary moments, too?

7. If God's glory includes the revelation of His character, what's one aspect of Jesus' character we should want others to see more clearly through the way we treat them? What could that look like this week?