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Session Time Frame

The sessions in this guide have been created to work in periods of 60 to 75 minutes. The sessions' core activities—listed at the beginning of the sessions, under the "At a Glance" heading—will fill a 60-minute session. If you have more time available, using the optional 15-minute session extensions. The session outlines include additional discussion questions and media suggestions that can be incorporated to extend sessions that go beyond 75 minutes.

2 JESUS CHRIST, TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN

Session Overview

In this session the participants will consider the question “Who are you?” in relation to one another and to Jesus. By asking one another the question “Who are you?” they will identify the many characteristics that define a person, including name, origin, background, family members, and so on. They will then explore the Scriptures and Church teachings to discover more about who Jesus is, with special emphasis on Jesus’ being fully God and fully man. Through reflective sharing the participants will have an opportunity to recognize that without a personal relationship, we cannot truly know Jesus or one another, and that personal relationships help us to overcome misjudgments or prejudices that result from differences among us. In the optional session extension, the participants will reflect on events that take place at Christmas-time and how they might modify some of these events to keep Christ in Christmas.

Objectives

Enable the participants to do the following:

- explore the question “Who are you?” in relation to one another and to Jesus
- learn that Jesus is fully God and fully human
- understand that we learn about who Jesus is through the Scriptures, Church Tradition, participation in the sacraments, personal and communal prayer, and personal relationship with Jesus

At a Glance

A. Quick-Start Activity	(5 minutes)
B. Welcome and Opening Prayer	(5 minutes)
C. Who Are You?	(10 minutes)
D. Who Is Jesus?	(20 minutes)
E. Knowing and Being Known	(15 minutes)
F. Closing Prayer	(5 minutes)
Optional Session Extension: Keeping Christ in Christmas?	(15 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

Gather the following items, one for each participant:

- ☐ index cards
- ☐ Bibles

Gather the following additional items:

- ☐ cards or slips of paper with the question "Who are you?" printed on them, for any participants who have working memory or auditory processing problems
- ☐ slips of paper with the following Scripture citations written on them: John 1:14, Philippians 2:6–7, John 8:58, John 10:30, Mark 9:7, Luke 3:21, Matthew 1:18–23

Preparation Tasks

- ☐ Set three chairs in the front of the meeting space facing where the participants will sit.
- ☐ Write on the board the following instructions for the quick-start activity:

Pick up an index card and find other participants who

- were born in the same month as you
- have the same favorite food as you
- have a first name that starts with the same letter as your first name

Have them sign the card with their initials.

- ☐ Have the index cards available for the participants to pick up as they enter the meeting space.

Catechist Prayer

Who are you, Jesus? Lord, I ask that question with my group of young people. Open my heart to the truth of your message and your love, and give me courage and strength to share that truth. Amen.

Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapter 9
- CCC, numbers 422–483 (Jesus)
- John 1:1–5, 14; Matthew 1:1; Matthew 2:1; Matthew 1:18–23; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:21; John 8:58; John 10:30; Philippians 2:6–7

Session Steps

A. Quick-Start Activity (5 minutes)

Greet the participants as they enter the meeting space. Point out the following instructions on the board, but also share them verbally if any participants need help referencing the board:

Pick up an index card and find other participants who:

- were born in the same month as you
- have the same favorite food as you
- have a first name that starts with the same letter as your first name

Have them sign the card with their initials.

B. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** everyone and make any announcements.
 2. **Light** a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."
 3. **Invite** a volunteer to read John 1:1–5.
 4. **Pray** the following:
 - ▶ Creator God, we stand before you today with open hearts and minds, seeking to know more about your Son, Jesus. Through the Scriptures, Church Tradition, and personal relationship, help us to truly know you, Lord. Amen.
- Close** with the Sign of the Cross.
5. Briefly **explain** that this session will explore the importance of relationships, with Jesus and with one another.

C. Who Are You? (10 minutes)

1. **Invite** three brave risk takers to volunteer to be interviewed by the rest of the participants. **Choose** young people who are very different from one another. **Ask** them to step out of the meeting space for just a moment. While they are gone, **explain** to the rest of the participants that they will be asking the volunteers only one question, over and over again each time: "Who Are You?" Write "Who Are You?" on the board.
2. **Welcome** the volunteers back into the meeting space one at a time, and invite each to sit in one of the chairs in the front. **Explain** to the volunteers that when it is their turn, they will each call on other participants, who have many questions to ask. **Tell** the volunteers that their job is to

answer the questions truthfully, but that they may not repeat answers; they must give a different answer for each question asked.

Suggest to less verbal or shy volunteers that they write their responses on the board or even act out their answers. **Invite** the volunteers to call on others who have their hands raised. **Monitor** the asking and the answering to make sure the participants ask only the question "Who are you?" and the volunteers never answer in the same way twice. **Encourage** fun by raising your hand and asking "Who are you?" in a funny voice, by writing it on a note and passing it to the volunteers, or by asking the question in a different language (e.g., "¿Quién eres tú?" or in sign language). Each volunteer should be asked the question five to ten times before inviting in the next volunteer.

3. When the participants are done interviewing the third volunteer, **ask** the volunteers these questions:

- ▶ Did you enjoy being interviewed?
- ▶ How did it feel to be asked the same question over and over?

Ask the rest of the participants:

- ▶ What did you learn about our volunteers that you didn't know before?

4. **Thank** the volunteers for being brave risk takers.

D. Who Is Jesus? (20 minutes)

1. **Share** with the participants that they are going to brainstorm to identify all the categories the volunteers used to answer the question "Who are you?" They probably will have started with their names, followed by responses like "I am a student" or "I am Italian." **Give** a few minutes of thought time for slow processors. Write the heading "Categories" on the board. Invite the participants to consider other ways of answering "Who are you?" to add to the category list. **Include** *name, origin, birthplace, age, family members, friends, titles, occupation, residence, religion, gender, nationality, education, hobbies*, and other categories that give us clues about who a person is. Leave this list on the board as a reference.
2. **Explain** that you are now going to read two Gospel passages and then spend a few minutes studying some of the words from the passages for insight about who Jesus is. Distribute a Bible to each participant and then ask everyone to open to the beginning of the Book of Matthew. Invite the participants to help others who might be having trouble finding it. While the young people are finding the Gospel in their Bibles, write "Matthew 1:1" and "Matthew 2:1" on the board. Also start a chart on the board with the following headings: "Word," "Category," "Who Are You?"

3. **Explain** to the young people that their job is to read along and listen carefully as you read these two Scripture verses, and to snap their fingers or say the word *who* like an owl when they hear something about Jesus that sounds like any of the “Who are you?” categories listed on the board. **Read** the Scripture verses slowly, emphasizing, if necessary, the words in the following chart. After each snap, or “who,” invite the participants to identify the word from the verse, the category the word fits into, and how the word answers the question “Who are you?” about Jesus. **Record** this information under the headings on your chart. When you are finished, the chart should look something like the one that follows. As you record the information, share the italicized explanation of the deeper meaning of each word.

Word	Category	Who Are You?
Jesus	name	gives Jesus' name, which means “God saves”
<i>The name Jesus means “he is our Savior.”</i>		
Christ	title	Jesus' title is Christ, which means “the anointed.”
<i>Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah. The title Christ tells us that Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit as priest, prophet, and king.</i>		
Abraham	religion	Jesus is a descendant of Abraham.
<i>Jesus is descended from Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. This tells us that Jesus was Jewish.</i>		
David	family	tells us Jesus is connected to the family of David
<i>Jesus is descended from a King. He is a descendant of David and meets the requirements to be the Messiah.</i>		
born	origin	Jesus was born as a human baby, of a human mother.
<i>Jesus entered into human history and was born as a human baby, which helps us recognize that he is truly human.</i>		

4. **Divide** the large group into small groups of two or three. Be flexible about allowing some young people to work in pairs or even solo if group work is a problem for them. **Distribute** to each small group a slip of paper with a Scripture passage to look up (use Matthew 1:18–23, Mark 9:7, Luke 3:21, John 1:14, John 8:58, John 10:30, Philippians 2:6–7). **Explain** that their job is to locate and read the passage, and then try to figure out how it answers the “Who Are You?” question about Jesus.

5. **Invite** a representative from each small group to read the group's Scripture passage and to share what the group thinks it tells us about who Jesus is. **Support** each presentation with your own insights.
6. **Describe** the Catholic perspective on who Jesus is by explaining the following points in your own words (be sure the participants have their *Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers* available):
 - ▶ As Catholics we believe we learn much about who Jesus is through the Sacred Scriptures and Church Tradition. The names and titles for Jesus, his family, his ancestors, and other aspects of Jesus' life teach us a great deal about who Jesus is.
 - ▶ We believe Jesus is a divine Person with two natures. He is fully man and fully God. As fully God [reference image of Christ on page 100 of handbook that emphasizes his divinity], Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity and is eternal. As fully human [reference image of Christ on page 98 of handbook that emphasizes his humanity], the Son of God took on flesh and became like us in all things but sin.
 - ▶ The truth that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human is called the Incarnation.
 - ▶ The account of Jesus' baptism helps us to see that he is in an eternal relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

E. Knowing and Being Known (15 minutes)

1. **Discuss** with the participants some of the many ways Jesus has been misunderstood. Include misunderstandings from his day [the Pharisees' seeing him as a threat to their authority, the

Part 2: Jesus the Christ

Did You Know?

Jesus Talks About His Divinity

Jesus is slow to reveal he is God. In the Gospels he sometimes refuses to answer questions about his godhood (see, for example, Matthew 16:20, Mark 8:11–12, and Luke 20:1–8). Why? If you look closely, you will see it depends on when and to whom he is talking.

God had taught the Jewish people that he was the only God. If Jesus had claimed to be God right from the beginning, the other Jews would have killed him for blasphemy—which eventually happened, anyway (see John 8:59, 10:31). Blasphemy is an action regarded as an insult to God. Jesus needed time to show by words and deeds that divine power worked through him. Then his followers could accept his word that he was one with God. Jesus often would not answer questions about his divine nature from those who ignored the proof of his words and deeds. They wished only to trap him, not know him.

man will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin" CCC, number 470).

Jesus Christ is truly God. He does things only God can do. He performs miracles of healing and raising the dead. He forgives sins and forgives the future. He dares to explain and add to God's teachings from the Old Testament. Simon Peter calls him "the Son of the living God," and Jesus agrees. "For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:16–17).

A

Miracles, like Jesus walking on water, are signs of Jesus' divinity. He truly is God.



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Zealots' seeing him as a potential military leader against the Roman occupation, and so on].

2. **Share** a story that is appropriate for the age-group about a time in your life when you were misunderstood. Perhaps you were the victim of a rumor, or someone got a bad first impression of you. Describe how you felt, how the misunderstanding impacted your relationships, and how it was resolved.
3. **Invite** a few volunteers to share their own stories of times in their lives when others had impressions of them that were not true. **Tell** these volunteers that their sharing must be appropriate for public sharing; they should not use offensive or derogatory language. **Support** the volunteers with compassionate, thoughtful responses to their sharing.
4. **Facilitate** a large-group discussion using the following questions as a guide:

- ▶ How do others learn about who we are?
- ▶ How do others get false impressions of who we are?
- ▶ How are people with special needs sometimes misjudged?
- ▶ Have you ever thought badly about someone, but then after spending time with her or him, realized that she or he is a good person?
- ▶ How do we learn about who Jesus is?
- ▶ Is hearing about Jesus from the Scriptures and Church Tradition enough? What else can we do to answer the question "Who are you?"

Part 2: Jesus the Christ

Who Is Jesus Christ?

How do we get to know who Jesus Christ is? We might start by thinking about how we get to know and understand people in general. We spend time working, playing, and relaxing with them. We think about what they say and do. We get to know them as persons. Someone is kind and caring. Someone else is determined and stubborn. We get to know their talents and abilities. One is great in math. Another is a terrific storyteller.

We get to know Jesus Christ in a similar way. Only, because his earthly life is long in the past, we have to rely on the reports of others who were with him at the time. Those reports are part of God's Revelation, which is passed on to us through the Scriptures and Tradition. What do the Scriptures and Tradition tell us about Jesus?

They show us that Jesus is a divine person with two natures. He keeps the divine nature that he has had for eternity. He also takes on our human nature. He is not just God or just man or some sort of half-and-

Jesus wept when his friend died. He must have laughed sometimes too, because he was one of us. He was like us in all things except sin and experienced the same emotions we do.



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5. **Witness** to the importance of entering into and maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus in order to really get to know him. **Encourage** the participants to continue to learn about who Jesus is through the Scriptures, Church Tradition, personal and communal prayer, frequent participation in the sacraments, and recognition that we can experience the risen Lord in the hearts of others in the Body of Christ.

F. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** everyone to open their handbooks to page 97. When all are ready, ask a volunteer to read the prayer in the "Pray It!" sidebar.
2. **Encourage** each participant, in turn, to respond to the following question asked in unison by the group: "Jesus, who are you?" Each participant will answer by saying, "Jesus is . . ." **Reference** the categories on the board, and **encourage** a variety of answers.
3. **Conclude** with the following:

► Jesus, we thank you for revealing yourself to us. As we discover more about who you are, we discover who we are. We love you and are grateful for your eternal love for us. Amen.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Note: If doing the optional course project, you may wish to take time now to explain the project and hand out any take-home instructions for parents.

Optional Session Extension

Keeping Christ in Christmas? (15 minutes)

This session extension works best just before the closing prayer.

Chapter 9: Jesus Christ, True God and True Man

As good as news like this is, the Church has even better news for the whole human race. The Gospel of John tells it as follows: "The Word became a human being, and full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son" (John 1:14). This incredible Good News of the Gospels is called the mystery of the **Incarnation**, the truth that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second Person of the Trinity, is both fully God and fully man. He took on our human nature, which means that the Son of God became one with us. By doing this Jesus makes it possible for us to get to know him; trust him, love him, follow him, and show him to others. He wants us to join freely with him in the great adventure of spreading his Kingdom. He wants to teach us what human and divine life are all about. He wants to give us the power to imitate him, to become like him, so he lives through us. He wants us and those around us to be happy now and forever.

He always had the nature of God, but . . . of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. (Philippines 2:6-7)

PRAY IT!

Jesus,
Thank you for your great gift of love in becoming human for us. Help me to honor and love you as my Savior, Lord, and God in all my thoughts, words, and actions. Teach me through your holy life to live a holy life too. Through the Holy Spirit, give me the grace to know and follow your teachings with humility, generosity, and persistence. May others see your goodness in me. Amen.

Materials Needed

Gather the following items:

- ☐ an audio recording of a Christmas song and a tape or CD player

1. **Start** the Christmas song and then **brainstorm** with the participants a list of things that happen at Christmastime. Include both sacred and secular traditions and happenings (e.g., midnight Mass and last-minute shopping). Record the participants' ideas on the board.
2. **Ask** the participants to consider each event on the list and whether Jesus would fit in, feel comfortable, or be welcome. **Write** a "J" beside each event during which Jesus would fit in.
3. **Consider** with the participants the remaining items on the list, discussing whether the event could be modified to be more welcoming of Jesus. **Write** the modifications of the event on the board next to the event, and add a "J" next to them as well. For example, exchanging gifts with family could be modified to purchasing and giving gifts to families in need.
4. **Challenge** the participants to make a list of their own practices at Christmastime, and to modify their plans to keep Christ in Christmas.

Discussion Starters

- Think about the people in your life whom you do not like very much. Could getting to know them better change your view of them? What steps could you take to get to know them better?
- Do you feel as if you really know Jesus? If yes, how can you get to know him even better? If not, what are some things you can do to get to know him?
- Identify some of the barriers in your life to a good relationship with Jesus. What can you do to remove those barriers?

Media Connection

- As an introduction to the session, as the participants are entering the meeting space, you might want to have a song playing that is related to the "Who are you?" concept, such as "Who Do You Say?" by the Paul Colman Trio, on the album *One* (Essential Records, 2003).