

Teaching Guide for
Meeting Jesus

Yvette Nelson

Thomas Zanzig, General Editor
Michael Carotta, Consultant



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Introduction



THIS COURSE AND THE DISCOVERING PROGRAM

The Discovering Program consists of fourteen six-session courses for use with middle school or junior high students. This course, *Meeting Jesus*, invites young people to reflect on Jesus' life ministry, and teachings, and challenges them to consider a relationship with him that is appropriate to their age.

Our life as Christians finds its source in the unique accounts of the events of Jesus' life—the Gospels. This course uses selected readings from the Gospels that are within the range of young people's level of comprehension and that may strongly appeal to them as they begin to search for a faith of their own.

Meeting Jesus may be taught at almost any point in your program schedule. Before beginning this course, however, you might prefer familiarizing the students with the Bible by using the Discovering course *Exploring the Bible*. Research conducted as a part of the revision of the Discovering Program has shown that *Meeting Jesus* is most frequently used with seventh-grade students. Refer to the coordinator's manual for specific information on curriculum design.

The six session plans of this course are each designed for a 1-hour meeting. If your group is scheduled to be together for more than an hour, the sessions can be extended with the optional approaches suggested at the end of each session plan. Also consult these approaches as alternative strategies if your teaching style or the students' learning style calls for changes.

The time estimates suggested for the session steps are based on a group size of about fifteen students. If your group has considerably more or fewer members, you may need to make minor adjustments in the session plans. This course, like all Discovering courses, works well with larger groups, but in such cases you will have less opportunity to address the students' individual contributions and needs.

BACKGROUND

The Young Adolescent and This Course

During the development of this course, several junior high students were asked what they wanted to know about Jesus. The following are some of their many responses:

- Who taught Jesus about God?
- Why did Jesus give his life for others?
- Why didn't Jesus turn away from God?
- What did Jesus look like?
- How did Jesus pick the Apostles?
- Did Jesus ever have a girlfriend?
- Was Jesus here on this earth before he was born from Mary?
- When will Jesus come again?
- Did Jesus ever argue with his parents?
- Was Jesus ever sick when he was growing up?
- Was Jesus helpful to his parents?
- Did Jesus ever get into fights with his friends?
- When did Jesus realize that he was God's Son?
- What happened to Jesus between childhood and adulthood?
- Did Jesus ever do anything bad?
- Was it hard for Jesus to help sick people?
- What did Jesus do in his spare time?
- What did Jesus do all day?
- Did Jesus go to school?
- What kind of clothes did Jesus wear?
- Did people get sick of listening to Jesus pray?
- How did Jesus' peers react to him when he was our age?

One sincere eighth grader said, "Jesus seemed so perfect, and the Bible says that he never sinned, so why would people want to be around him?" Clearly, the students had trouble recognizing the human qualities of Jesus. Their observations reveal an image of a remote, potentially powerful, not-very-interesting person. If they are to grow in their identity as Christians, they need to know Jesus as a person to whom they can relate.

The six sessions of *Meeting Jesus* offer students the opportunity to deepen and expand their picture of Jesus. The course presents the life Jesus lived within the culture of a specific place at a specific time (session 1). It goes on to teach about Jesus as a person who felt strong emotions (session 2); whose work and words challenged, comforted, and invited a response (sessions 3 and 4); who loved and needed his friends (session 5); and finally, whose life, death, and Resurrection invites a response from each of us (session 6).

This course asks the students to plunge into the Gospels and, through a variety of experiences of prayer, reflection, and interaction, to begin forming a richer picture of Jesus. This picture will necessarily take shape according to their maturity level and their felt need for a reassessment of previously unquestioned childhood views of Jesus. It will also be affected by their need for a compassionate person whom they can look up to, who will not fail them, and who shows them the unconditional love of God.

The Theology of This Course

As Catholics we profess our faith in Jesus as truly human and truly divine. Though theological formulations of this mystery were not officially promulgated until some four hundred years after the death of Jesus, faith in Jesus as Lord is evident in the Christian Scriptures. In the fourth century, the Nicene Creed formally stated what the early church had believed and prayed and what we Catholics believe and profess today—namely, that Jesus Christ is “one in Being with the Father.” Certainly, Catholics hold this as a central article of their faith. Regarding *how* one is to understand such a profound mystery is, of course, a subject of continuing study and prayer for all believers.

The church embraces this faith in a compassionate God fully revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. The young people have inherited that faith, but they must make it their own. This journey from unquestioned acceptance to an owned faith requires some struggle to seek understanding. In the best of all worlds, young people begin their life in a faith-filled family belonging to a believing community. As they mature they move from acceptance (based on their trust in grown-ups), to searching faith, to a faith they can own. A major task of the family and of the parish’s catechetical program is to guide this journey. *Meeting Jesus* can serve as one important step in this journey.

In her book *What Are the Theologians Saying?* Monika Hellwig discusses the importance of exploring Jesus’ humanity and the problems that must be avoided in doing so. She says:

If we were to think of Jesus as the hollow shell of a man with a divine inside, we would have scooped out the real channel of divine revelation, which is the human inside. Very painstakingly, [the theologian] Rahner has been busy rediscovering the human inside of Jesus—his gradually-emerging consciousness of himself, his ordinary human effort

to learn, understand, and interpret, his ordinary human feelings about friendship and loneliness, loyalty and betrayal, life and death, patriotism and the acknowledgment of the common destiny of all [human beings]. (P. 50)

Another author who writes of the importance of the humanity of Jesus is Donald Senior, in his book *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*. In discussing Jesus' experience of God, Senior says:

Mature Christian belief proclaims that Jesus is human and divine, truly human yet “more than” human. This “more than”—which Christian faith has always confessed tenaciously but can never comprehend fully—can have a side-effect of robbing Jesus of his humanity. If Jesus is divine, as the believer affirms, then we confer on Jesus all the attributes of divinity. He must be all-knowing, eternal, somehow exempt from the ignorance and anxiety that make up the ordinary human experience. . . .

But genuine Christian theology has always reacted against a perception of Christ that attempts to protect his divinity at the expense of his humanity. Both ends of the mystery must be maintained to do justice to belief. Jesus was indeed a human being, a Jew, a citizen of the first century. Nothing of the mystery of his divinity can be allowed to falsify the human dimensions of his life. He shared every aspect of human experience except that of alienation from God, an aspect that is not genuinely human in the first place. And his “sharing” should not be conceived as play acting. Jesus did not go through the motions of being human. He *was* human. He had to learn, to search, to be a fellow traveler in the sometimes tortuous pilgrimage of human existence. (P. 78)

Today's young people too are invited to travel with Jesus along the shared path of human existence.

Teaching This Course

Each course in the Discovering Program consists of two components: a teaching guide like this one that fully describes the course goals, objectives, content, and session plans, and a companion student booklet. The booklet is not a conventional textbook, in that the students are never expected to read it outside of the sessions. In fact, substantial reading is never required as a regular feature of the learning process. Nor does the booklet look like a textbook; for instance, it contains no recognizable chapters as one would expect in a standard text. The student booklet for each Discovering course, rather, is to be used only in conjunction with the session plans described in the teaching guide. It is effective in this way because of the following features:

- The booklet provides a kind of running summary of the themes and essential information that are presented through the engaging session plans. This gives the students a record of what they have learned in the course.

It is also a helpful feature when a student misses a session; at the next session, you can ask him or her to briefly review relevant pages from the booklet.

- The booklet uses sidebars related to the main topics to draw the young people further into the material and enrich their learning. You may use the sidebars in any way that seems appropriate—perhaps as discussion-starters, topics for journal entries, or simply focal points for a brief silent reflection.
- The booklet includes an occasional personal reflection or journal-writing activity that students are asked to complete quietly on their own.
- The booklet presents activities designed for use in small groups—such as discussion-starters, role-plays, and vignettes.
- Finally, the booklet's attractive design—using original art, bold colors, interesting type, evocative photos, and so on—is intended to support the total learning process.

Student Booklet Sidebars

The student booklet includes a number of quotes, brief stories, and bits of interesting information that are not central elements of the course content. Set off graphically from the other booklet materials, these sidebars are generally not referred to in the session plans. They are included in the booklet to spark the students' interest and imagination. As you prepare for each session, reflect on the sidebars and decide if you wish to use any of them in your teaching.

Student Booklet Bound into the Teaching Guide

For your convenience and easy reference, a complete copy of the student booklet for *Meeting Jesus* is bound into the back of this guide. You may find it helpful to tab or mark the booklet pages related to a given session as you prepare to teach it. That will make it easy to flip back and forth between the guide and the booklet.

Student Booklet Pages in the Session Plans

As a visual aid, reduced versions of some student booklet pages are reproduced in the left-hand margin of the session plans. Such pages appear at the beginning of the related instructions. If more than one booklet page is involved in an activity, only the first of those pages is reproduced in the margin.

The Bible

The Bible is another key tool in the Discovering curriculum. The students in this course frequently use Bibles and must be able to look up scriptural citations. If you find that they are unable to do this, session 2 offers an opportunity to teach them this skill.

If possible, provide a Bible for each of your students. Ideally, everyone would get the same translation. If this is not possible, try to divide your group into smaller groups of people with the same translation. Comparing the various translations can add a further dimension to your discussions throughout the course, though it may slightly complicate some activities and discussions.

The following translations are among the best available for Catholic young people:

- The New American Bible (1991). This version is a modern translation of the Scriptures that is faithful to ancient sources. It is approved for use during the liturgy of the word and therefore will be somewhat familiar to the students.
- The New Jerusalem Bible (1990). This translation uses contemporary language, comes closest to using inclusive language, and provides theological insights through extensive notations that accompany the text. It is also an approved translation for use in the liturgy of the word.
- The New Revised Standard Version (1989). This translation uses gender-inclusive language when such use is consistent with rigorous biblical scholarship.
- The Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English Version (1993). This translation attempts to capture and convey the meaning set forth in the original texts, in language that is accessible to a broad readership. It is truer to the original meanings than paraphrased versions, and it is presented in language that young people can more readily understand. Most students respond enthusiastically to this translation. It can be obtained from the Catholic Bible Press, a division of Thomas Nelson.

Some of the scriptural excerpts are cited as adapted. Such passages generally have been adapted to make the language more accessible and to avoid exclusive language.

Teaching Strategies

A recurring component of the *Meeting Jesus* sessions is discussion. Young adolescents, especially sixth or seventh graders, tend to think of a discussion as something that takes place between a single student and the teacher, rather than among the students with the teacher directing and moderating. Keep this in mind as you lead discussions, and continually invite and encourage the young people to consider and respond to one another's observations, rather than simply to reply or try to guess the "correct answer" to your questions.

As you come to know your students, you may become better able to predict their responses to the session plans and to adjust the procedure accordingly. For example, you may expect that response to one part of a session will be so brief that you will adjust another part. In planning such adjustments, try to keep focused on the activities that best meet the objectives for the session (see the following section on goals and objectives).

Some Preparation Needs

Before teaching this course, read each session plan and become comfortable with the learning strategies. Also take time to think about your own view of Jesus and your relationship with him so that you can better appreciate what this course is asking of your students. This course contains no strategies or activities that require an unusual amount of additional preparation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of their goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Discovering Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways.

Goals. Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator’s manual for the Discovering Program provides the goals for all the courses in the curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

Objectives. Objectives are statements that define how to get to the goals. They name specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. The coordinator’s manual identifies the objectives for each course in the curriculum. Each course, in turn, supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

The Goals and Objectives of *Meeting Jesus*

Goals

The goals for this course in the Discovering Program are as follows:

- that the students focus on the qualities of Jesus as reflected in the Gospels
- that they clarify their understanding of who Jesus was
- that they deepen their personal relationship with Jesus

Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which will help realize the course goals. The objectives of *Meeting Jesus* that follow are phrased as tasks for the young people.

Session 1: “A Young Person”

The students will do the following:

- state their understanding of Jesus
- identify the human qualities of Jesus
- compare their life experiences with those of the young Jesus

Session 2: “A Person of Feeling”

The students will do the following:

- draw parallels between the emotions Jesus experienced and the emotions they experience
- become familiar with the Gospels as portraits of Jesus

Session 3: “A Person for Others”

The students will do the following:

- recognize Jesus as a person who reached out to others
- realize that the Beatitudes describe the follower of Jesus

Session 4: “A Teacher”

The students will do the following:

- recognize that Jesus’ parables proclaim a merciful and loving God
- identify themselves as persons who are cherished by God

Session 5: “A Friend”

The students will do the following:

- identify the traits of true friends and the challenges of making and keeping those friends
- recognize that Jesus had friends on whom he depended
- reflect on the possibility of considering Jesus as a friend

Session 6: “The Lord”

The students will do the following:

- identify their understanding of who Jesus is
- express the meaning of Jesus in their life
- identify Jesus as truly human and truly divine



SESSION

1

A Young Person



AN OVERVIEW OF THIS SESSION

Objectives

The students will do the following:

- state their understanding of Jesus
- identify the human qualities of Jesus
- compare their life experiences with those of the young Jesus

Session Steps

This session uses pages 1 to 8 of the student booklet and includes the following steps:

- A. an introduction and an icebreaker (10 minutes)
- B. an art activity (15 minutes)
- C. the student booklet activity “Who Do You Say I Am?” (10 minutes)
- D. the student booklet activity “The Dimitri Talk Show” (10 minutes)
- E. the student booklet activity “Then and Now” (10 minutes)
- F. a closing prayer (5 minutes)

BACKGROUND

The opening page of the student booklet invites the students to consider their understanding of who Jesus is for them today. Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:20) addresses this group of young adolescents as Jesus once addressed his closest disciples and today addresses us. Christians in every era have been called to ponder and respond to this vital question. Through reflecting together on Jesus as one who was in so many ways like them, the students are encouraged to grow in their understanding of Jesus as "God with us."

This session focuses on Jesus as a young person who lived in a specific place at a specific time. He was a Jewish boy, a student of scripture, an apprentice woodworker in a small town in the occupied, strategically important Near Eastern land of Palestine.

The first two activities of this session prepare the young people to take their turn responding to Jesus' question, "Who do you say I that am?" by first asking them, Who are you? After they create images representing their likes and dislikes, concerns and dreams, and daily involvements, they each write a letter to Jesus about who they think he is. Then they read a short play and a series of imaginary monologs about the first-century world in which Jesus lived. These monologs invite the students' prayerful response and help them relate their contemporary experience to that of the young Jesus.

The session closes with the reading of the four Gospels' single story of Jesus' adolescent years—the family visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. Reflection on this story lets the students consider Jesus' burgeoning awareness of his lifework and his willingness to return home to live and grow in "wisdom and age and favor" (Luke 2:52).

In summary, the first session of *Meeting Jesus* is a reflection on the early life of Jesus, to help the students relate to him on a more personal, experiential level. This awareness of the humanity of Jesus will be carried into future explorations of him as a mature teacher, leader, and Lord.

PREPARATION

Materials Needed

- index cards, one for each student
- markers, one for each student
- a basket
- large sheets of newsprint, one for each student
- masking tape
- student booklets, one for each student
- blank self-adhesive labels, one for each student
- writing paper and pens
- envelopes
- stickers (optional)
- reflective music, and a tape or CD player
- a Bible, a pillow or Bible stand, a table and a cloth, a cross or statue, a live plant, and a pillar candle and matches (These items are referred to in subsequent materials needed lists simply as an enthroned Bible.)

Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you complete them:

- For step D.* Decide on the best way to handle “The Dimitri Talk Show.”
- If you wish to change the procedure to better fit your teaching preferences or the learning style of your group, see the Options section at the end of this session plan.
- For session 2.* For the next session, collect four photos or illustrations of a single subject. Try to find a subject the students are interested in. For example, you at interesting times of your life—graduating, vacationing, playing a sport, and gathering with your family. Post these photos in a prominent place so that the students see them when they arrive.
- If you wish to change the procedure to better fit your teaching preferences or the learning style of your group, see the Options section at the end of this session plan.

Teacher Prayer

Take a moment to prayerfully read Luke 9:20. In this passage Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Reflect on your own response to the question today.

God and Father of Jesus, surround us all with your love and care as we gather to begin the first session. Calm our jitters; dissolve our fears; open our heart. Help us grow nearer to one another as we grow nearer to you. Be our unfailing guide as we begin this unique journey together. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

PROCEDURE

A. Introduction and Icebreaker (10 minutes)

1. Welcome the students as they enter the room and give them each an index card and a felt-tipped marker. Tell them to write the numbers 1 to 3 down the left side of their index card. Then read to them three incomplete sentences similar to the following, pausing while they write brief responses:

- ▶ My favorite song is . . .
- ▶ If I won a lottery, the first thing I’d spend money on is . . .
- ▶ One surprising or little-known fact about me is . . .

Feel free to use other sentence-starters. Tell the students that you will also fill out a card. Tell them *not* to put their name on the card.

2. When all are done, put your completed card in a basket and pass it around to collect the students’ cards. Then pass it around again, instructing the students to take turns drawing out someone else’s card and reading it aloud. After each card is read, tell the group to guess who was described. As

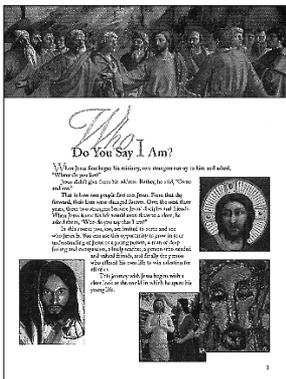
the students are identified, have them retrieve their card, write on it the name they want to be known by, and give it to you.

B. Art Activity (15 minutes)

1. Give each student a large sheet of newsprint. Direct the students to use felt-tipped markers to create a full-sheet drawing of a stick figure to represent themselves. Emphasize that they should keep this figure simple so that they can concentrate on drawing items or symbols around the stick figure: their worries or concerns (drugs, violence, passing tests), dreams (getting their driver's license, making a team), favorite free-time activities (video games, hanging out), and likes and dislikes (sports, going to the mall, Brussels sprouts, baby-sitting). Point out that they can show as many of each of these categories as they can draw in 5 minutes.

Consider drawing a figure, with symbols, of yourself today or, better, the way you remember yourself when you were an adolescent.

2. When time is up, have each student post her or his drawing and explain it.



Booklet page 1

C. Booklet Activity: “Who Do You Say I Am?” (10 minutes)

1. Comment to the young people that their drawing serves as a kind of snapshot of a more-or-less typical teen. Add that they will now look at the life of Jesus as a person their age. Point out that this course explores Jesus as a man who cared deeply about people and about God, who taught and brought healing, who befriended others, and who was willing to give his life so that we might have life.

2. Distribute the student booklets and blank self-adhesive labels. Tell the students to write their name on the label and stick it on the cover of their booklet. Explain that along with activities and group experiences, they will also use the booklets during each session. Direct the students to page 1 and read the title, “Who Do You Say I Am?” Read aloud the paragraphs that introduce the course and the session, noting the topics of the course sessions: Jesus as a young person, session 1; a man of feeling, session 2; a man of compassion, session 3; a teacher, session 4; a friend, session 5; and the Lord, session 6. Note that the works of art on page 1 of the booklet are from all parts of the world, cover different centuries, and reflect others’ views of Jesus. Ask for the students’ observations about which artworks appeal to them and why.

3. Pass out writing paper, pens, and envelopes and invite the students to write a letter to Jesus about who they think he is. Have them imagine Jesus asking them, “Who do you say I am?” Give them about 5 minutes to

write. Warn them when time is almost up. Tell them to sign their letter, seal it in an envelope, and put their name on the envelope. You may want to pass out stickers to seal the envelopes with. Collect the envelopes and tell the young people that you will keep them unopened until the last session.

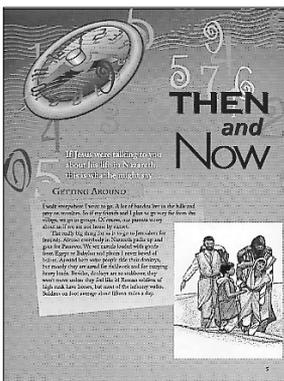
D. Booklet Activity: “The Dimitri Talk Show” (10 minutes)

1. To help the students begin to compare themselves with the young people in Jesus’ time, present “The Dimitri Talk Show” on pages 2 to 4 of their booklet. Either read it aloud as the students follow along or ask volunteers to take roles and read in front of the rest of the group.

2. After the reading ask the students to compare their dreams, concerns, free-time activities, and likes and dislikes with those of the young people in the skit.



Booklet page 2



Booklet page 5

E. Booklet Activity: “Then and Now” (10 minutes)

1. To round out the students’ exploration of Jesus as a person their age, direct them to “Then and Now” on pages 5 to 8 of the student booklet. Ask volunteers to take turns reading the imaginary monologs that cover various aspects of Jesus’ young life.

2. After the readings make the following observations in your own words:

- ▶ As a young person, Jesus had free time, worked, played games, attended school, and learned about his world.
- ▶ As a person of his time, he could not have known the experiences that are available to many young people today, such as being able to read popular books and newspapers, playing an organized sport, and using computers.

Ask the students to select the monolog that most interests them and about which they would have the most to tell Jesus. Direct them to “My Life, Here and Now” at the bottom of page 8 in their booklet. Have them use the space provided to write a brief note to Jesus telling him about their experiences that relate to his. Assure them that their note will be kept confidential. Provide an environment conducive to reflection by putting on quiet music and lighting a candle in the prayer area. Announce a 5-minute time limit.

3. When time is up, direct the students to bring their booklet to the prayer area. Reduce the volume of the music and make the following observations in your own words:

- ▶ In this session we took time to think about our concerns and dreams and preferences.

- ▶ We learned about the world in which Jesus grew up.
- ▶ We became familiar with typical experiences he might have had growing up in the only life on earth he knew—the one in his home country of Palestine and hometown of Nazareth.
- ▶ Using your own words, you told Jesus about your life and what interests you.
- ▶ We learned that Jesus' life and ours are similar; that he was once like us.

F. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. Open the Bible to Luke 2:41–52. Introduce the story by commenting that it is the only Gospel story about Jesus as a young boy. Point out that it tells about Jesus when he discovered the work he would do as an adult, but it also shows him as a young person who stayed with his parents and grew in size, learning, character, and holiness.

2. After reading aloud the passage about Mary and Joseph finding Jesus in the Temple, lead the young people in a litany, inviting them to respond, “Just like me,” after you read invocations such as the following:

- ▶ Jesus worked at home . . .
- Jesus learned in school . . .
- Jesus enjoyed his free time . . .
- Jesus spent time with friends . . .
- Jesus discovered the world around him . . .
- Jesus discovered new things about himself . . .

End this prayer by reading again the closing lines of the passage from Luke:

- ▶ Jesus went down to Nazareth with his parents. He was obedient to them. His mother, Mary, kept the events that had passed in her heart. For his part, Jesus grew in wisdom and age and favor before God and all who knew him. (Adapted from Luke 2:51–52)

Collect the booklets, telling the students that you will keep them until the next session.

OPTIONS

After reading the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make additions to an activity. Consider your time limitations first and then these optional approaches.

For step A. If the students do not know one another, use this icebreaker to help them learn one another's names and become comfortable together. Direct them to gather into groups according to their favorite soft drink. After they have found all the students who share the same favorite soft drink, have them introduce themselves to the members of their group. Then

tell them to regroup according to their favorite TV show and introduce themselves to anyone they have not yet met. Continue regrouping until all the students have met everyone. Use categories such as favorite movie actor, favorite brand-name jeans, and favorite music group.

For step B. In place of the art activity in step B, print each of the following headings on a separate sheet of newsprint: “Likes,” “Dislikes,” “Qualities of a friend,” “Problems,” and “Dreams.” Direct the students in a brainstorming exercise along the following lines:

- ▶ Think for a moment about people your age. [Point to the appropriate headings as you ask the following questions:] What do people your age *like*? What do they *dislike*? What qualities do they look for in a *friend*? What *problems* do they face? What *dreams* do they have?

Provide time for the students to write their responses on the newsprint. Once all the students are seated again, invite their comments on the responses. Encourage them to note similarities and differences among the responses. Allow about 5 minutes for this discussion.

For step C. In addition to step C, consider using the map on handout 1–A, “Palestine,” found at the end of the session plan, to give the students a fuller idea of the land of Palestine during Jesus’ time. Consider also keeping this map available to locate places referred to during the rest of the course.

For step D. To add to step D, bring props for “The Dimitri Talk Show.”

For step E. For step E use simple drawings to depict the relationship between the students’ lives and Jesus’ life. Ask the students to give an example of an activity that they and Jesus participated in—for example, work. Using the work example, point out that Jesus learned woodworking from Joseph. Draw a circle on the chalkboard representing Jesus. Then comment that students today may mow lawns or baby-sit. Draw a circle representing the students, placing it in relation to Jesus’ circle. Help them recognize how Jesus’ work was similar to or different from their work. For example: Jesus was expected to learn a trade; he was not paid. The students are paid for working outside the home, or they may receive an allowance for work at home.

Consider demonstrating this by having one student be himself or herself and another be Jesus. Have the students stand in front of the rest of the class about five steps away from each other. Explain that as you read the account on pages 5 to 8 of the student booklet, the two students should take a step closer to each other each time they hear a similarity between their experience and Jesus’ experience. For example, a student who works at his or her family’s hardware store has work experience that is similar to that of Jesus’. Or a student who spends a lot of time in unplanned outdoor activities would have a great deal in common with Jesus’ experience as a young person.

For step E. To further develop the students’ exploration of their similarities to Jesus, create Venn diagrams: Cut out of construction paper two 8-inch-diameter circular frames. Glue a circle of yellow artist tissue to one

frame and a circle of red tissue to the other. (You can also use green and purple artist tissue.) Designate one color Jesus and the other the students.

As you discuss the similarities and differences between the students' lives and Jesus' young life, place the frames to show the relationships. For example: Jesus learned a trade. If a student is learning a trade, such as farming or helping out at the family bakery, place the two circles so that they overlap considerably, creating an orange area. If a student works outside the home shoveling snow to earn money, hold the frames adjacent but not overlapping.

For step E. Pass out Bibles. Explain that the story of Jesus in the Temple is the only scriptural story we have of Jesus as a youth. To relate it to the students' experience, give an example of a discovery in your own life that was both exciting and risky. Point out that often new discoveries are both scary and exciting all at once.

If the students do not know how to find citations in the Bible, simply give them the page number on which Luke 2:41–52 begins. (If you wish to spend more time on locating citations, see the first optional exercise in session 2.) Read out loud Luke 2:41–52 as the students follow along.

Comment that Jesus made a new discovery about himself and about the world around him. He was so absorbed in his new discoveries in the Temple that he seemed to forget his family completely. Invite responses to questions like the following:

- ▶ How did Jesus' parents show they cared about him? [They returned alone to find him.]
- ▶ Do you think Mary and Joseph were upset by Jesus' seeming lack of concern about their worries? If so, why? What evidence leads you to think so? [Yes. They reminded him that they had been searching frantically for him.]
- ▶ What great discovery did Jesus make through this experience about his life and his future? [He learned that he would do the work of God, his Father.]
- ▶ What kind of life did Jesus lead after this discovery? [He returned home and grew in the normal way young people grow—in body, spirit, and intellect.]