

MENU

BIBLE REFERENCES

1

God's Son became a human being to save the world

The four gospels are the main resource for the study of Jesus. The NIV Study Bible has numerous charts spread through the four gospels, listing Jesus' miracles and parables, giving references for the significant events in the life of Jesus, the Passion week and the resurrection appearances. The Lion Bible Encyclopedia has a summary of the four gospels, highlighting significant events and Bible passages.

Perceptions of a king held by first-century Jews

1 Samuel 8:4–22	1 Samuel 16:1–13
2 Samuel 5:9,10	2 Samuel 7:8–16
2 Samuel 8:1–14	1 Kings 15:1–5
2 Kings 16:1–4	Psalm 2
Psalm 93	Psalm 99
Psalm 104:1–9,24,27–30	
Isaiah 11:1–14	

Jesus, a real human being

1 Timothy 2:5	Hebrews 2:14–18
---------------	-----------------

Jesus, Son of God

Matthew 11:27	Matthew 16:16,17
Mark 1:11	Mark 9:7
Galatians 4:4	Hebrews 1:1–3

Is Jesus God, human or both?

Matthew 2:1–12	Mark 3:7–12
Matthew 3:13–17	Mark 9:2–8
Matthew 4:23–25	Mark 14:17–26
Matthew 9	Luke 1:26–38
Matthew 15:29–39	Luke 2:1–20
Matthew 26, 27, 28	Acts 1:1–11

Who people say Jesus is

Some Pharisees	Matthew 12:22–28
	Mark 2:1–12; Mark 11:27–33

Jesus' home town and family

	Matthew 13:53–58
	Mark 3:21, Mark 6:3; Luke 4:14–30

Peter	Matthew 16:13–20; Luke 5:1–11
-------	-------------------------------

People of Jerusalem	Matthew 21:11
	Matthew 26:66–68; Mark 11:1–10

	John 19:7
--	-----------

Pilate and his wife	Matthew 27:11–19
---------------------	------------------

A centurion	Matthew 27:45–54
-------------	------------------

John the Baptist	John 1:29–34; Luke 7:18–23
------------------	----------------------------

Nicodemus	John 3:1–15
-----------	-------------

Also evil spirits identify Jesus	Mark 1:24
----------------------------------	-----------

	Mark 3:11
--	-----------

The question of Jesus' identity is treated in depth in John 7 – 10.

Jesus' identity is challenged

1 John 4:1–3	2 John 7–11
--------------	-------------

What Paul says about Jesus' identity

Philippians 2:5–11	Colossians 1:15–20
--------------------	--------------------

2 Timothy 2:8–13	
------------------	--

2

Jesus brought God's loving rule into the world**Jesus demonstrates the nature of God's kingdom through his relationships with people**

Mark 3:31–35	Luke 12:22–34
Mark 5:1–20	Luke 19:1–10
Mark 9:33–41	Luke 21:1–4
Luke 7:36–50	John 8:1–11
Luke 8:22–25	John 13:1–17

The kingdom of God versus the kingdom of Satan

Luke 4	Luke 23
Luke 24	Ephesians 6:10–18
Colossians 2:15	

The way of the kingdom

Mark 3:31–35	Matthew 5,6,7
Mark 5:1–20	Mark 9:33–41
Luke 7:36–50	Luke 8:22–25
Luke 12:22–34	Luke 19:1–10
Luke 21:1–4	John 8:1–11
John 13:1–17	

Growing opposition to Jesus

Significant passages in the Matthew account:

Matthew 9:3,10–13,34	Matthew 12:1–14,24
----------------------	--------------------

Matthew 15:1–9	Matthew 16:1–4
----------------	----------------

Matthew 19:3–9	Matthew 21:45,46
----------------	------------------

Matthew 21:12–16	Matthew 26:1–5
------------------	----------------

3

Jesus died and rose again
to save all people
from sin and death

Jesus appears to many people after his resurrection

Matthew 28:1–10	Matthew 28:16–20
Mark 16:1–8	Luke 24
John 20,21	Acts 1:1–11
1 Corinthians 15:3–8	

To save your life you must first lose it

Mark 8:34–38	Mark 9:33–35
Mark 10:17–31, 35–45	
Luke 6:27–36	Luke 7:36–50
Luke 12:22–34	Luke 14
Romans 6:1–11	2 Corinthians 5:17
Galatians 2:20	Galatians 5:24,25
Ephesians 4:22–24	

The implications of Jesus' death and resurrection for a person's life

Matthew 26:26–28	John 3:16
John 11:25,26	Acts 2:36
Romans 1:4,16,17	Romans 4:25
Romans 5:1–5	Romans 8:32–39
1 Corinthians 15:13–21	1 Corinthians 15:56,57
2 Corinthians 4:8–10	2 Corinthians 5:19–21
Galatians 3:13,14	Ephesians 1:7; 18–20
Ephesians 2:4–10	Colossians 2:6,7,13–15
2 Timothy 2:3–6	1 Peter 1:3–9
1 John 2:1,2	

Jesus continues to reign

Matthew 28:18–20	Acts 1:3–11
Ephesians 1:18–23	Revelation 5:5–14

MENU

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

1

God's Son became a human being to save the world

THE WORLD OF JESUS A knowledge of the setting and society for which the gospels were written will give students an insight into the whole question of Jesus' identity for the original readers. Bible handbooks and encyclopedias, as well as selections from the Recommended Resources Menu, will give students sufficient detail.

Divide the class into several groups, each of which researches a separate area of life at the time of Jesus. Each group produces a fact sheet. The different fact sheets can be collated to produce a brochure which can be a quick reference for students during a unit of work.

Areas to be researched:

- regions of Palestine, towns, neighbouring countries, climate. Students draw a map of Palestine showing its relationship to other countries, including major towns;
- life under the Roman Empire — pre-Jesus and post-Jesus. Students find out about the Jewish Zealots, Roman crucifixions, paying taxes, etc;
- Greek and Roman religion;
- important aspects of Israel's history, eg Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, the exile;
- religious life of the people of Israel, eg synagogues, Hebrew Scriptures, waiting for a Messiah, importance of the temple, Sabbath, Passover, food laws, clean/unclean;
- different religious groups and their role in the Jewish community, eg Pharisees, Sanhedrin.

Alternatively, incorporate an investigation of relevant background information about the life and times of Jesus into a study of one of the gospels. (1a, 1b, 2b, 3b)

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? There are various ways teachers can assess what students know about Jesus.

Option 1 The teacher creates a quiz about Jesus: his life, times, friends, teachings, mission, eg

- Where can you find stories about Jesus?
- Name three of Jesus' followers.

- What do we call stories of Jesus that teach about God? Retell one of the stories Jesus told.
- Jesus did not get angry or speak harshly to anyone. True/false?
- Jesus was a powerful miracle worker. True/false?

Option 2 Divide the class into several groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper. Students brainstorm all that they know about Jesus under headings: family, achievements, work, friends, cultural background, major life events, beliefs.

Sheets are rotated three times from group to group. Students add information not included by another group and place a question mark beside questionable details.

Option 3 Give students a number of descriptions about who Jesus is, eg Jesus was

- a good person
- a spirit who appeared as a human being
- a con person
- a dreamer
- a wise teacher about God
- someone who was both God and human
- a good friend

Students choose the descriptions they agree with and give their reasons. (1,2,3)

IMAGES OF JESUS Begin by asking students to share their own perception of Jesus and to explain what factors have contributed to their image of Jesus.

Students investigate different portrayals of Jesus found in art, film, song, poetry, belief statements. Resources are plentiful. Students write down the impressions of Jesus each stimulus piece creates.

- Find and view works of art (paintings, carvings, stained-glass windows, etc) that represent different cultures' views of Jesus and that depict Jesus at various stages and events in his life.
- Listen to songs about Jesus from shows like *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. Listen to contemporary, non-religious songs which make reference to Jesus.
- Read poems about Jesus written by James McAuley, Bruce Dawe, John Donne.
- View film clips from some of the many films made on Jesus, eg *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, *Jesus of Nazareth*, *Jesus of Montreal*.

- Read segments from the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. The Koran includes statements on Jesus.

Set up a classroom wall as a portrait gallery on which pictures and comments can be displayed and added to during the unit.

Students answer the question 'Who is Jesus?' as a way of summarising what they have viewed, read and listened to. (1a,1b)

IDENTITY Students brainstorm what it means to have an identity. They refer to documents which people have to submit to prove their identity, eg birth certificate, driver's licence and passport. They list aspects of a person's identity that are altered under a witness protection program. What aspects of one's identity can never be changed? What are people talking about when they refer to Jesus' identity? Is it important to know Jesus' identity? (1a)

IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES There are many stories (fact and fiction) which illustrate the idea that the best person to understand another person's problem is someone who has lived through the problem. Students find out who initiated the many support groups (Alcoholics Anonymous, MS Foundation) that can be found in the community and why these groups are effective in providing care and support to those who seek their help.

Follow on with activities that point to Jesus walking in human shoes. (1a)

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

Students write a statement of what they believe about Jesus.

Many people have written what they believe about Jesus apart from the gospel writers. Students read contemporary statements of faith about Jesus, eg

- the chapter *I believe in Jesus Christ* in *Fair Dinkum*
- the chapters *Jesus and Arnie* and *God in our shoes* in *A Hell of a Life*
- Luther's explanation of the second part of the creed in *Luther's Large Catechism*.

Students write down what they find surprising about the writer's view of Jesus. They compare these statements about Jesus with their own. They list questions about Jesus they would like to have answered. Student questions can be the starting point for research on the identity and relevance of Jesus for people today.

Alternatively, this activity can be used as a response activity after a study of the gospels. (1a)

MANY BUT ONE Students examine several portraits or photographs of the same person, eg Winston Churchill.

Students record what they learn about the subject from each portrait or photo. In what way is there a continuity of ideas about the subject in the portrayals? What do the variations from one portrayal to another reveal about the subject?

Students suggest what the painter or photographer wished to achieve from the composition of the portrait/photo. What atmosphere is evoked? What details have been emphasised? played down?

Students discuss

- whether any one portrayal of a person is more true than another;
- whether the various portrayals should be superimposed to create a single impression;
- the value of having several portraits of the same person.

Move on to a discussion of ways the four gospels can be seen as different portraits of Jesus that are all equally valid. (1b)

IS IT FICTION? Some students may doubt the validity of reading the gospels, questioning their reliability, labelling them as 'myth'.

Messages from the Memory Banks (video) looks at what it means to tell the truth and at the historical documentation of the gospels. Chapter 2 of *A Hell of a Life* deals with the same issues simply and directly. (1,2,3)

2

Jesus brought God's loving rule into the world

GOD PICTURES Statements such as 'I do not believe in God' and questions like 'Is Jesus God?' presuppose a view of God. The Jesus of the gospels challenges people's view of God.

Students describe their view of God, eg a remote being, a judge, a kindly old man, a force. They compare their description with the God that Jesus spoke of (after a study of the God of the kingdom). (2a)

A KING RULES With a kingdom comes a king, rules, a way of life. Students explore the relationship between the rule of a king or the leader of a country and the quality of life people experience. For example, students consider the legend of King Arthur.

- What kind of king was he?
- What were the laws of the country under his rule?
- What sort of life did the people live?

Students find out about life for individual people under a repressive king or leader such as Stalin, Idi Amin.

Go on to investigate what it is like for people when God is their king. (2a,2b)

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

Students list a range of situations which require change, eg

- a football team loses every match
- consistent poor grades at school
- bullying
- conflict and disharmony in relationships
- living under an oppressive government
- exploitation of children
- unemployment.

Students suggest the changes that need to take place in any one situation and how these changes can be effected. What expectations will people have of the changes and what risks and fears will go with the changes? What will happen if the new leader's outlook on the situation is different from the people's?

Jesus said he came to make a difference to individuals' lives (Luke 19:10; John 10:10).

Students each list the ways they would like their lives to be different. They consider how Jesus could make a difference to their lives. (2a,2b)

HEROES Students think of who the heroes are in fairy tales, computer games, films, newspaper sports pages, Australian life and history. View segments of videos which show heroes in action. Make up a Top Ten class list of heroes. Students list the kind of people who would never make it as heroes.

Students draw up an advertising poster for a hero, highlighting the personality, qualities and job description of a hero.

Go on to investigate whether or not Jesus could be considered a hero. (1b, 2a,2b)

SURVEY Students survey people in the family, school, church and community to find out of what importance Jesus is to them. (2b,3b)

LANGUAGE CUES Each culture and era has ideas, words and images that are familiar to its inhabitants. The words and images open up a world of numerous experiences for the listener. To illustrate this, students share the ideas, stories, and images contained in words such as *pub, outback, lifesaver, flood, supermarket*.

Jesus' parables use scenes from daily life in first-century Palestine. Give students information about the life, attitudes, culture of

first-century listeners (refer to TRS D1/3b). The boxes around the sheet can be a starting point for introducing students to life in first-century Palestine. *And Jesus Said* by William Barclay and *The Parables of Jesus* by Harry Wendt provide a wealth of relevant information. (2a,2b)

3

Jesus died and rose again
to save all people
from sin and death

OBJECTIONS RAISED Students list difficulties people have today in accepting that Jesus rose from the dead. They brainstorm the reasons for each of the objections raised. Go on to examine the Bible's answers to these objections. (3a)

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT Students investigate the practice of capital punishment today. They list the pros and cons of capital punishment. They compare the factors which allow the practice of capital punishment in two different countries, eg a Moslem country and the United States of America (some states). Students debate whether the death of a criminal can correct injustice.

This can introduce an investigation of Jesus' death. (3a)

FACING THE CONSEQUENCES

Behaviour management policies in schools advocate that students take responsibility for their own choices and actions. Students list the many expectations a school has of its students (some of which are expressed in school rules) and the consequences of either meeting or not fulfilling those expectations. They discuss the issue of fairness in relation to the consequences.

Students consider the notion of justice and accepting the consequences of one's actions as presented in:

Deuteronomy 28:1–10, 15–24

John 11:45–53 Romans 3:22–26. (3b)

WITNESS REPORTS Students view a television police show, such as *The Bill* or *Blue Heelers*, noting how police determine the accuracy of different witness accounts of the same crime. Students discuss how the variation in the witness accounts can affirm the truthfulness of the accounts. How might police deal with accounts from different witnesses that are identical, word for word?

This can lead to an investigation of the gospel eyewitness accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection. (3a)

THE STING OF DEATH Students share the feelings, concerns and fears that the subject of death raises for them.

Students examine the reactions of people to death, eg reactions to the death of high profile people such as Diana, Princess of Wales; reactions to the death of people in car accidents, bombings, natural disasters, suicides.

Students investigate how a movement is affected by the death of its founder, eg Karl Marx, leaders of the Jewish insurrections at the time of Jesus.

Go on to examine the significance for Christians of the death of Jesus. (3b)

LITERARY ANALYSIS Select a story known to all students, eg *Little Red Riding Hood*. After determining the key message contained in the story, students analyse how the details of the story (characters, dialogue, plot, sub-themes) contribute to the key message.

Students predict the approach writers of the early Christian church might take if the death and resurrection of Jesus are the central part of the gospel story they want to communicate to the followers of Jesus. (3b)

MENU

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

1

God's Son became a human being to save the world

READING THE GOSPELS Each gospel writer presents the story of Jesus in his own way, developing a distinctive impression of Jesus. To do a gospel justice, it is necessary to read it from beginning to end.

A number of approaches to reading a gospel are outlined below. Combine some of the approaches. *The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible* has a summary of each of the gospels, with a list of contents, themes, events and famous passages.

1. **Set the scene** by giving students information about the original readers: their background (geographic, political, spiritual), experiences and expectations.
For example, the Jewish background of Matthew's readers is reflected in references to Moses, the exodus, the giving of the Ten Commandments and King David.
During the reading of the gospel students keep a log of the message about Jesus' identity that readers are receiving.
2. Read different sections of the gospel progressively, interrupting the narrative and asking students to **predict** what will happen next.
The gospel of Matthew, for example, has a prologue and conclusion and five sections of story and sayings combined (mirroring the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible).
Give students a summary of each section and read selected pieces from each. Use a different mode for each section, eg video, dramatised Bible, different Bible translations such as the CEV and *The Message*.
What dominant portrait of Jesus emerges? How does the author present the question of Jesus' identity?
3. Students **trace Jesus' journeys on a map**, writing a brief summary of people Jesus met and what he did and said at various places he visited.
During a reading of Mark, for example, students record how different characters respond to the question of Jesus' identity and authority. How is the question of who Jesus is developed throughout the book and how does this relate to Mark's opening statement?

4. Students **plot the sequence of events**, identifying the high point(s) in the gospel. How is tension developed in the story and how is the tension resolved?
They may do this for the gospel as a whole and for individual sections of the gospel, eg the last week of Jesus' life.
5. Students **compare segments** of their gospel account with parallel accounts in other gospels. For example, divide the class into four groups, each group looking at a different account of the last week of Jesus' life. Students plot the sequence of events for that week.
Students compare the four gospel accounts, linking them to each writer's purpose for writing the gospel and the whole question of Jesus' identity, which is an issue for the authorities who arrest and sentence Jesus.
6. Working in groups, students do **character studies** of the main characters and groups in the gospel, eg Jesus, the devil, the Pharisees, the crowds, the outsiders, the disciples, the sick, women. Students record the behaviour, relationships, attitudes, sayings, responses to Jesus of each character or group.
Students deal with the question of who Jesus is from different characters' perspectives.
7. Students examine how various **contrasts, themes and metaphors** are developed in a gospel and the relationship these have to the question of Jesus' identity.
In the gospel of Mark, for example, there are contrasts between the clean and unclean, between Jesus and those who oppose him, between insiders and outsiders.
The writer of the gospel of John develops the metaphors of light, bread, water.
The gospel of Luke develops ideas such as the involvement of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' birth, baptism and ministry and the fact that the Christian message is for everyone.
8. Students **read the opening and closing comments the author makes about Jesus** and/or the purpose for writing the gospel.
Matthew 1:1 and 28:16–20
Mark 1:1 and 16:19,20
Luke 1:1–4 and 24:45,46
(see also Acts 1:1–8 and 28:28–31)

John 1:1–18; 20:30,31 and 21:24,25.

Students identify the continuity and development of ideas in the opening and concluding sections of a gospel.

Give students selected passages from the gospel. They design a book cover for the gospel which focuses on the portrait the writer gives of Jesus. (1a,1b)

THE LIFE OF JESUS The *NIV Study Bible* has a chart which maps out Jesus' childhood, ministry, death, and resurrection with selected passages from the four gospels. This is a useful resource for students to explore the identity and mission of Jesus. (1a)

WHO AM I? Some films such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* give the picture of a Jesus who struggles with knowing who he is. Students investigate how the gospel writers present Jesus' own sense of identity and purpose. They write a letter in which one of the disciples replies to the question 'Who is Jesus?'

Students analyse the identity Jesus claims for himself in the book of John. See

- the 'I am' statements (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:5)
- discussion with Nicodemus (John 3)
- discussion with a Samaritan woman (John 4)
- healing of a blind man (John 9)
- Jesus' prayer (John 17).

By contrast the author of the gospel of Mark presents a Jesus who discourages others from declaring his identity. See

Mark 1:43	Mark 3:12
Mark 5:43	Mark 7:36
Mark 8:26,30	Mark 9:9.

Students predict what would happen to someone today who made the claims that Jesus made about himself.

This activity can be extended to a comparison between Jesus and modern-day messiahs and an investigation into reasons for accepting Jesus yet rejecting other people as messiahs sent by God. (1a)

HUMAN BEING? GOD? BOTH?

Students look at gospel accounts of Jesus' birth, baptism, lifestyle, work, relationships, the company he kept, his death, resurrection and ascension.

Students draw up two columns. As they read, they list in one column details which emphasise that Jesus is a human being and in the other column details which emphasise that Jesus is God

Recommended passages for this study are:

Matthew 2:1–12	Matthew 26, 27, 28
Matthew 3:13–17	Mark 3:7–12
Matthew 4:23–25	Mark 9:2–8
Matthew 8:23–27	Mark 14:17–26
Matthew 9	Luke 1:26–38
Matthew 15:29–39	Luke 2:1–20
Acts 1:1–11	

Students answer for themselves the question 'Is Jesus God or a human being or both?'

Students examine how John expresses his understanding of Jesus' humanity and divinity in John 1:1–18. (1a)

WHAT DO YOU THINK? All four gospels open with a declaration that Jesus is more than a human being — he is God. Jesus' peer group and the early Christian community wrestled with the question of Jesus' identity, as have people since that time.

Students read stories in the gospels of people who wrestled with the question of Jesus' identity. They dramatise the stories, focusing on what it was that people were struggling with. They explore the implications of Jesus' identity for those people's lives.

Some Pharisees	Matthew 12:22–28
	Mark 2:1–12; Mark 11:27–33

Jesus' home town & family	Matthew 13:53–58
	Mark 3:21, Mark 6:3; Luke 4:14–30

Peter	Matthew 16:13–20; Luke 5:1–11
-------	-------------------------------

People of Jerusalem	Matthew 21:11
	Matthew 26:66–68; Mark 11:1–10

Pilate and his wife	Matthew 27:11–19
---------------------	------------------

A centurion	Matthew 27:45–54
-------------	------------------

John the Baptist	Luke 7:18–23; John 1:29–34
------------------	----------------------------

Nicodemus	John 3:1–15
-----------	-------------

The question of Jesus' identity is treated in depth in John 7 – 10. Give students selected passages from these four chapters.

Extension activity: Students investigate the importance of Jesus' identity for the apostle Paul. See

Philippians 2:5–11	Colossians 1:15–20
2 Timothy 2:8–13.	

Students reflect on the importance of Jesus' identity for themselves. (1a)

MARK CHAPTER 1 Students read Mark 1 and treat the events of Jesus' day at Capernaum as current news. The news coverage can include interviews with the local people and a summary that raises questions about Jesus.

The remainder of the gospel of Mark can be read with students taking the role of a Jewish journalist, a Roman detective, a Pharisee spy, etc. In those roles students examine the identity of Jesus.

The gospels of Luke and Matthew can be treated similarly. Throughout a reading of the gospel of John students write a series of diary entries from the perspective of different disciples (eg Thomas, Peter, John, Judas), illustrating what students think may be the disciple's struggles in coming to terms with Jesus' identity.

This activity can be extended to a comparison of students' findings with a film maker's interpretation of Jesus and how people responded to Jesus. (1a)

JESUS AND MIRACLES Students investigate Jesus' miracles of healing, command over nature and power over death from several angles:

- what miracles reveal about Jesus
- what miracles reveal about God's loving rule
- how people responded to the miracles
- how miracles affected the people who experienced them.

Students assess to what extent the miracles were proof of Jesus' identity for people of Jesus' day.

Students debate: 'If Christians were to perform miracles such as recorded in the gospels, more people would become Jesus' followers'. (1a,2a)

JESUS IN THE CREEDS The question of Jesus' identity is two thousand years old. Students investigate the historical background to the formation of the creeds of the early Christian church. They list the details of Jesus' life which are included in the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds. Which aspects of Jesus' identity are developed in the creeds?

Students summarise the view of Jesus promoted by people such as the Montanists, Gnostics, Manicheans, Marcion. They determine in what ways they challenged the view of Jesus presented in the gospels and why leaders of the Christian church defended the identity of Jesus presented in the gospels.

Students explore the beginnings of the debate in some of the New Testament epistles (1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7–11). *The Lion History of Christianity* is a useful resource.

Students imagine and present the debate between Gnostics, etc and the writers of the creeds.

Students explore why the identity of Jesus is still an issue today and discuss the importance for themselves of the question of Jesus' identity. (1a)

JESUS: A HERO? Many Jews living at the time of Jesus were looking for a hero to save them from Roman occupation and to restore God's rule. Students investigate:

- the Old Testament prophecies about a Messiah, the history of the Jews and Palestine in between the Old and New Testaments, and the rise of numerous messiahs in Jesus' time.

Students draw up an advertising poster for the kind of Messiah wanted by first-century Jewish people. See

2 Samuel 7:11–13 Psalm 2
Isaiah 9:6,7; 11 Ezekiel 34:20–31
Jeremiah 31:31–34 Micah 5:1–5

- to what degree the Jesus of the gospels fulfilled people's expectations of a Messiah and the promise of a Messiah in the Old Testament. Students look at some of Jesus' miracles, eg healing of the paralysed man, feeding of the five thousand, and parables such as *The lost sheep*, *The lost son*.

Students draw up an advertising poster of Jesus as Messiah, reflecting the portrait given in the gospels.

- different reactions of people in the gospels to the idea that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

See Mark 8:27–33
Mark 10:10–45 Mark 11:8–10.

Refer to Bible references in *What do you think?* Using either newspaper or television interview format, students present the results of a Gallup poll among Jewish locals on the question: 'Is Jesus the Messiah we have been waiting for?' (1b)

A JESUS EXHIBITION The bulk of the gospels is made up of independent little stories (pericopes) about two hundred words in length, loosely connected to form a narrative. Each pericope presents a portrait of Jesus.

Option 1 Working in groups, students choose from a wide range of stories which show Jesus in diverse situations, relating to different types of people, eg

Jesus forgives a woman caught in adultery	John 8
Jesus washes the disciples' feet	John 13
Jesus heals a man at Bethesda	John 5
Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha	Luke 10
Jesus at a Pharisee's house	Luke 14
Jesus discusses discipleship	Mark 8.

Each group of students poses for a photograph to illustrate the dominant image of Jesus contained in the story.

Option 2 Students work in groups, each of which investigates Jesus' interaction with a group of people, eg Jesus' various encounters with Pharisees, Jesus and outcasts, Jesus and women, Jesus and the disciples, Jesus and the political leaders. Each group of students poses for a photograph to illustrate different people's views of Jesus.

Once the photographs have been developed, students write captions describing the moment and idea captured on each photograph.

Display the photographs on the classroom walls. Students compare these portraits with how artists have represented Jesus. They select the photograph they most identify with and write a personal response. (1b)

THROUGH OTHERS' EYES Countless books have been written about Jesus. Rick Strelan in *Fair Dinkum, An Aussie Creed*, John Dickson in *A Hell of a Life, From Manger to Megastar* and Philip Yancey in *The Jesus I Never Knew* give an account of the significance of the person and life of Jesus for themselves and the world in which they live. Reading excerpts from such books is another way of introducing students to Jesus. Each of these authors raises the problems and questions they had to struggle with as they wrestled with Jesus' words and identity.

Read excerpts from these authors alongside relevant sections of the gospels. View different film-makers' interpretation of the gospel stories being studied. Select material which examines the question of Jesus' identity, Jesus' good news message and the significance of his death and resurrection.

Students keep a journal of their reactions to all three presentations of Jesus. (1,2,3)

2

Jesus brought God's loving rule into the world

GOD'S AMBASSADOR In conjunction with the study of one of the gospels or selected passages from the gospels on the life of Jesus, students identify and explain which aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus correspond to the characteristics and work of an ambassador. They determine to what extent the image of an ambassador is an adequate description for Jesus' identity and ministry.

Ambassadors for the King the Level 2 Model Unit in *Service* has a Teacher Resource Sheet (TRS D2/1) which describes the identity and mission of an ambassador. (2a)

WHAT KIND OF KING? Jesus uses various images to describe himself and his mission. Students explore what insights into the kingship of God are found in images such as servant and shepherd.

Servant:	Matthew 20:20–28
Luke 22:25–27	John 13:1–17
Philippians 2:5–8	Isaiah 53
Shepherd:	Matthew 9:35–37
Matthew 18:12–14	Luke 15:1–5
John 10:11–18	

Students present their findings in a series of tableaux or short role-plays. It is important to understand that servants and shepherds were despised in the days of Jesus.

Students reflect on how different this view of God is to the view of God as someone who causes suffering. Students discuss to what kind of people the view of God as shepherd and servant would be attractive today. (1b,2a)

AT WAR The story of Jesus' life and ministry can be seen as the story of a king (Jesus) going into battle with another king (Satan) to reclaim what is rightfully his.

Students read and analyse Luke 4:

- two kings confront one another (1–13)
- Jesus utters his battle cry (18–21) and begins his work of regaining possession and establishing the kingdom of God.

Students identify the principles which operate in the two kingdoms and the condition of life in each kingdom. They examine the rest of Luke 4. On what front does the battle take place? How is the battle being fought?

Students read about the final stages of the battle (Luke 23:26–56). They imagine and write the speech that Satan gives to his army as they watch the crucifixion.

Students discuss how Jesus' followers would be feeling about the outcome of Jesus' mission. The last scenes of *Jesus Christ Superstar* offer one viewpoint.

Students read the events of Luke 24, dramatising the impact that this would have had on Satan's campaign. They discuss the implications of the resurrection and ascension for Jesus' followers and all people. They explain the link between the resurrection and Jesus' battle cry.

Extension work: students find evidence of the battle that is outlined in Luke 4 in the remainder of Luke. They compare the weapons and strategies used by each side in the fight. What insights into this battle does Paul give in Colossians 2:15 and Ephesians 6:10–18? (1b,2a,2b,3b)

THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM Jesus' teaching corrects people's perception of God and presents a new way of being God's people for the world. Jesus uses pictures, synonymous and antithetical parallelism and extravagant language to convey his message.

Working in pairs, students read a section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7). They list the rules for living, attitudes and demands of the people of God's kingdom. They identify how each of the points Jesus makes challenges the way the world works.

Collate student findings on a large piece of paper. Students share their reactions to the Sermon on the Mount.

Students discuss the following questions:

- Who are the winners and losers in this kingdom?
- How is goodness measured in the kingdom of God?
- What kind of relationship do people have with God and each other in the kingdom?
- What brings happiness in God's kingdom?
- What choices are there in the kingdom?

Students explore how the new way of the kingdom of God is lived out in 'real life'.

Combine this activity with any of the following activities:

- View segments of films such as *Les Misérables*, *Gandhi*, *Forrest Gump*, *The Mission* as illustrations of the radical nature of forgiveness, non-consumerism and simple lifestyle.
- Read chapter 11 of *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey, which tells a true story of the radical change of career for a person who took Jesus' message seriously.
- Read the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. (1b,2b)

KINGDOM LIFE The kingdom of God is concerned about the quality of life and the relationship of people with one another. It is about entering life. Students explore stories in which Jesus demonstrates the nature of this kingdom life through his relationships with people.

Mark 3:31–35	Luke 12:22–34
Mark 5:1–20	Luke 19:1–10
Mark 9:33–41	Luke 21:1–4
Luke 7:36–50	John 8:1–11
Luke 8:22–25	John 13:1–17

Use a resource such as Wangerin's *The Book of God* to tell or retell the stories, building into them the setting and cultural background to bring the stories to life for students.

Working in groups, students analyse a story, defining the quality of life in the kingdom of

God and indicating how this quality can become part of a person's life and experience. Students contrast the priorities and motivation of the life Jesus offers with the priorities and motivation common in Jesus' day and today.

Students summarise what they have learnt about the kingdom life, using a sentence beginning *Life is like . . .* (2a,2b)

TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE

DOWN Tom Wright in *The Original Jesus* says that the stories of Jesus were 'like a stick of dynamite . . . explosive charges in the people's hearts and minds'. Working in groups, students analyse a parable Jesus told, eg *The lost son*, *The Pharisee and the tax collector*, *The great banquet*, *Workers in the vineyard*, *The good Samaritan*.

- Students research the cultural background of the story to help them understand the impact the story would have had on listeners, eg the loss of dignity of a father who ran to greet his son.
- Students examine the context in which the story is told. Who are the listeners? What event precipitated the story? What light does this shed on the revolutionary nature of the story?
- Students summarise the message Jesus is giving about the world in which God is king, the kind of king God is and the kind of people that live in the kingdom. In what way is the story like 'a stick of dynamite' in the listeners' lives?

Students discuss which of their ideas about God and life Jesus explodes.

Students dramatise the parable, including a series of asides in which the characters comment on their feelings and reactions to Jesus' story. (2b)

ABSOLUTES Jesus presents two radical images of God's kingship:

- God's ideal (Sermon on the Mount) and
- God's unmatched and unconditional love.

All people fall short of God's ideal and yet all people are offered new life in the kingdom through the gift of God's grace. That is the good news of the kingdom.

Students explore the good news of the kingdom through the eyes of people who experienced its reality in the gospels, eg

- Peter's denial of Jesus and reinstatement
- Zacchaeus
- the criminal on the cross
- the woman accused of adultery (John 8)
- the Samaritan woman
- Matthew, the tax collector.

Students analyse in depth the parables of *The lost son* and *Workers in the vineyard*. Students role-play people's responses to an act of God's grace in someone else's life.

Students discuss the implications of living out the ways of the kingdom.

- What was the response to God's grace in the gospels?
- What reactions can Christians expect today if they follow Jesus' example?
- What are the barriers that stop people from accepting God's grace? (2b)

3

Jesus died and rose again
to save all people
from sin and death

OBJECTIONS RAISED If the claim that Jesus rose from the dead is false, it will discredit the writers' stories about Jesus. Jesus will be just another human being. If the story of Jesus' resurrection is true, it forces the reader to consider who Jesus is and the implications this has for his/her life.

Brainstorm the objections that are raised against Jesus' resurrection. Students then test the strength of the objections against the evidence for the resurrection found in the New Testament. See

Matthew 28:1–10	Matthew 28:16–20
Mark 16:1–8	Luke 24
John 20,21	Acts 1:1–11
1 Corinthians 15:3–8.	

You may use the following approach:
Divide the class into two groups. For each of the objections one group determines how the evidence supports the objection, while the other group determines how the evidence dismisses the objection. Students present their information in the form of a debate.

Each student then responds to the question: 'So, *did* Jesus rise from the dead?'

The following is a list of some objections that students can investigate:

- The disciples went to the wrong tomb.
- Jesus did not die on the cross; he fell unconscious, was buried, regained consciousness, came out of the tomb.
- The disciples stole the body and later claimed that Jesus had risen from the dead.
- The disciples hallucinated.
- The writers' accounts don't agree. (3a)

WHO IS TELLING THE TRUTH?

This activity is a development of *Witness Reports* in Introductory Activities Menu.

Students compare the four gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection. They list the similarities and differences in the accounts. They discuss whether the points of agreement and difference point to the validity of the evidence and the truth of Jesus' resurrection or otherwise. (3a)

CHANGED LIVES Biblical scholars suggest that the best indicator of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus and the accuracy of the written reports in the gospels is the changed lives of Jesus' followers and the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the Roman world.

Students investigate the actions of some of Jesus' followers after the death of Jesus, noting the difference in their behaviour before and after the resurrection, eg Peter, John, James, Stephen, Paul. See

Luke 24:36–48	John 20,21
Acts 1 – 4	Acts 6 – 10
Acts 12.	

Refer to *The Church Expands: Jerusalem to Rome* in *A Lion Handbook: The History of Christianity*.

Students compare biblical accounts of changed lives with accounts of contemporary people whose lives changed dramatically when they placed their faith in Jesus. (3a)

FOR ME The creeds of the early Christian church were born out of a desire to summarise the events and beliefs about the life, ministry and identity of Jesus that are the foundation of the Christian faith. The creeds are not only a summary of church doctrine but also the statement of faith of individual believers.

Use the second part of the Apostles' or Nicene Creed as a starting point for an exploration of the life of Jesus and his significance for all people everywhere in every age. You may develop the activity in one of these ways:

- Working in groups, students search the gospels for facts on the events of Jesus' life listed in the creeds.
- Students add 'for me' at the end of each of the statements made about Jesus, eg Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary *for me*. Students tease out the implications this has for their own identity, relationships, vocation, etc.

How does believing in Jesus help a person deal with the fear of death, guilt, lack of purpose, need for security? See

Romans 8:32–39	1 Corinthians 15:56,57
1 Peter 1:3–5	1 John 2:1,2.

- Students investigate the difference the death and resurrection of Jesus made to the way the apostle Paul viewed and lived his life. See
1 Corinthians 15:3–11 2 Corinthians 4:13–18
Galatians 2:19,20 Philippians 1:21
Philippians 3:4–14 Philippians 4:11–13.
(2a,3a,3b)

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Students read the story of the meeting between Jesus and Cleopas and his companion. They imagine and write the dialogue between Cleopas and his companion in two parts: before Jesus meets up with them and after Jesus leaves them, exploring the difference that Jesus' resurrection and appearance would have made to the two people.

Students discuss in what sense the journey to Emmaus is symbolic of the journey that everyone, including themselves, has to travel when they are confronted with Jesus. Give students an opportunity to reflect on and respond personally (in their journals) to the story of Jesus' resurrection. (3b)

SO WHAT? The New Testament writers continually referred to the death and resurrection of Jesus as the motivation and means of new life and eternal life. Students examine what the writers claim the death and resurrection of Jesus will do for them personally. See

Matthew 26:26–28	John 3:16
John 11:25,26	Acts 2:36
Romans 1:4,16,17	Romans 4:25
Romans 5:1–5	1 Corinthians 15:13–21
2 Corinthians 4:8–10	2 Corinthians 5:19–21
Galatians 3:13,14	Ephesians 1:7, 18–20
Ephesians 2:4–10	Colossians 1:21,22
Colossians 2:6,7,13–15	2 Timothy 2:3–6.

Students analyse the two criminals' reactions to Jesus while on the cross (Luke 23:32–43). They note what the account tells about how the criminals viewed Jesus and the difference that their response to Jesus made to them personally. What challenge does the story have for modern readers? (2a,3b)

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE Students explore how the paradox 'to save one's life one must lose it', is evident in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Mark 10:45). It is a pattern evident in Jesus' life and relationships, in his teaching and in the way the New Testament writers saw the effect of Jesus' death and resurrection on the life of Christians. Students explore and role-play the implications of the paradox for their own life situations. See

Mark 8:34–38	Mark 9:33–35
Mark 10:17–31, 35–45	Luke 6:27–36
Luke 7:36–50	Luke 12:22–34
Luke 14	Romans 6:1–11
2 Corinthians 5:17	Galatians 2:20
Galatians 5:24,25	Ephesians 4:22–24.

(2b,3b)

THE RESURRECTION STORY

Students investigate how the details of Jesus' life and ministry included in a gospel serve to 'unpack' the resurrection story and explain its significance for the followers of Jesus.

A possible approach (refer to *Literary Analysis* in Introductory Activities Menu):

- Students read the death and resurrection accounts in the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 26:47 – 28:20).
- They list the questions that these accounts raise for them (as readers) about Jesus, eg
 - What had Jesus done to antagonise the Pharisees that led them to take such drastic action against him?
 - What is the significance of Jesus being labelled 'King of the Jews'?
 - Why didn't Jesus appear to the Pharisees after he had risen from the dead?

Select appropriate passages from the gospel of Matthew to help students find possible answers to their questions.

- Students explore what light is shed on the death and resurrection of Jesus by details such as Jesus' temptation and transfiguration, the miracle stories, teaching on discipleship and Jesus' predictions of his death and resurrection. (3b)

MENU

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

1

God's Son became a human being to save the world

A PORTRAIT OF JESUS Every artist brings his/her own interpretation of a person into the portrait they are creating, whether it is a sculpture, a painting or a biography. A portrait incorporates all aspects of a person, not just their outward appearance.

Students create a portrait of Jesus based on their reading of a gospel, incorporating their assessment of Jesus and his message.

Students give their portrait a title. Presentation can be in any form, eg picture book, essay, story, painting, a series of posters, ballad. Students brainstorm other possibilities. (1b)

SITTING IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

Students prepare a submission to make a new film on Jesus, using the world of school as the setting for the action of the film. They work in groups.

Students may choose to present their submission in the form of a portfolio containing a description (or sketches) of the setting, characters, main scenes from the life of Jesus. They present the portfolio to the class, explaining the main themes that will be the focus of the film. Students explain their choice of title for the film. (1,2,3)

JESUS AT THE MOVIES After an extended study of the gospels or aspects of the life and work of Jesus, show students segments of a variety of different films which focus on sections of the gospels which students have read.

Students form pairs. Assign to each pair a different segment of film to review. Each person in the pair prepares their own review. Brainstorm with the class questions students can be asking themselves as they prepare their review, eg

- How accurately has the film presented the events in the gospels?
- What view of Jesus does the film portray?
- Does the film challenge the viewer's understanding of Jesus or does it challenge the identity or existence of Jesus?

Present the reviews as a panel discussion or a debate. Encourage students to give a critical and personal assessment of what they have viewed and read. (1,2,3)

A DOSSIER ON JESUS Students keep a dossier (file) on Jesus during a study of one of the gospels.

The dossier can take one of many forms, eg

- a king's album
- a collection of news reports
- a collection of magazine articles
- a series of diary entries by an observer, spy, or member of Jesus' inner circle

At the end of the study on Jesus, students submit the dossier with a commentary on their conclusions about Jesus' identity and the significance of Jesus' coming for the life of contemporary people, including themselves. (1,2,3)

2

Jesus brought God's loving rule into the world

KEEPING A JOURNAL Students make regular entries in a journal during the reading of one of the gospels or study on the life of Jesus.

Students write the thoughts, questions and feelings they have about Jesus, his actions and words. What do the gospel accounts say about the importance of having faith in Jesus? What difference will knowing Jesus make to a person's relationships, self-worth, and values?

Give students sentence beginnings to stimulate their thinking, eg

- I am surprised . . .
- I totally disagree with . . .
- I agree with . . .
- I wish . . .
- I am puzzled by . . .
- I want to know more about . . . (1,2,3)

GOD'S BATTLE PLAN This activity is a possible response to *At war* in Development Activities Menu. As a way of summarising Jesus' ministry and mission, students draw up God's battle plan to deal with one of the chief enemies of human beings — death. They prepare a plan which defines the enemy and outlines the plan of action God sets in motion, with the projected results. (2,3)

DUST COVERS Students design a dust cover for one of the gospels they have studied. The dust cover should include

- information about the author
- a synopsis of the book
- reviewers' comments
- a pictorial or symbolic design which captures the main themes and the purpose for which the book was written. (1,2,3)

RETELLING THE STORY Students retell one of Jesus' parables, placing it in a contemporary setting. Students need to convey the main message Jesus wanted to communicate to people about the kingdom of God. Students brainstorm the many different ways a story can be retold, eg picture book, dramatisation, radio play, cartoon, movement. (2b)

AN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Students design a series of advertisements (radio, TV, newspaper, billboard) promoting the message and the benefits of the kingdom of God for people of the 21st century. Advertisements should inform people how they can be part of the kingdom of God. (2b)

3

Jesus died and rose again
to save all people
from sin and death

ON TRIAL Prepare a class drama of Jesus on trial. Students determine the main charges for which Jesus is being tried, eg as an impostor, as a charlatan, for blasphemy against God.

Each student takes on a role in the trial. As a class decide:

- who will play the role of Jesus
- who will act on behalf of the prosecution and defence
- which witnesses will be called to testify
- who will be part of the audience.

Also select a capable student to be the master of ceremonies (bailiff), a student who will be able to direct and control the discussion.

Set a date to conduct the trial. Students need to come to the lesson in character, wearing appropriate costumes, assuming relevant gestures, etc. They need to be well prepared, but they do not have to learn lines by heart. They can ad lib. Have fun! (1a,2a,3a)

THE GREAT DEBATE Students dramatise the debate about the reality of Jesus' resurrection presented in the four gospels. Students include the different groups in society that Jesus either ministered to or encountered (eg the blind man in John 9). Students imagine what their contribution to the debate might have been. (3a)

SO WHAT? People either accept or reject (which includes ignoring) the person and call of Jesus. Using mime or movement set to music, students present the hope and promise that is offered to people through the resurrection of Jesus and the various responses that people have had to the gift offered in this event. (3b)

JESUS IS WORSHIPPED The gospel accounts record incidents in which people responded to Jesus by worshipping him, eg

- the magi and the shepherds at his birth
- Peter after the large catch of fish
- the blind man who received his sight
- Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus
- Thomas when he saw the nail scars on Jesus' hands and feet.

Students organise a worship service in which the focus is Jesus and people's response of faith to him as Lord and God.

Students dramatise a selection of incidents in which people's response to Jesus is to worship him. These could broadly follow Jesus' life from his birth to his death and resurrection.

Students write worship responses (litanies, prayers, psalms) which refer to Jesus' identity and mission.

Students find music and songs which mirror people's response of faith.

Personal testimonies from members of the school community on the importance of Jesus in their lives can be part of the worship service. (21a,2b,3b)

MENU

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The introduction to LIFE contains suggested general resources for all LIFE concepts.
The following resources may be used to develop a unit about *God saved people through Jesus*.

Some of these resources may be out of print.

They are listed because they (or others similar to them) may be found in school libraries.

Preview these and any other resources you intend using
to be sure that they are appropriate for your students.

LITERATURE — NON-FICTION

General

Alexander P (ed) *The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible* 1986 Lion Publishing

Alexander D and P *The Lion Handbook to the Bible* 1983 Lion Publishing

Balchin J *What Christians Believe* 1994 Lion Publishing

Luther's Large Catechism 1983 Lutheran Publishing House

Wright C *Key Christian Beliefs* 1995 Lion Publishing

Background to the gospels and Jesus

Barclay W *And Jesus Said: The Parables of Jesus* 1992 Saint Andrews Press

Dowley T *The History of Christianity* 1990 Lion Publishing

Drane J *Introducing the New Testament* 1986 Lion Publishing

Joslin M *Miracle Maker* 1998 Lion Publishing

Wendt H *The Parables of Jesus* 1997 Crossways International

Looking at the gospels

Burridge R *Four Gospels, One Jesus? A Symbolic Reading* 1994 Eerdmans

Crotty R *Introduction to the Gospels* 1997 Dove

Hamann H P *The Gospel according to Matthew* Chi Rho Commentary 1984 Lutheran Publishing House

Morris L *Luke* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 1988 Inter-Varsity Press Eerdmans

Pfizner V C *The Gospel according to John* Chi Rho Commentary 1988 Lutheran Publishing House

Strelan R *Crossing the Boundaries* A Commentary on Mark 1991 Lutheran Publishing House

Vardy P & Mills M *The Puzzle of the Gospels* 1995 Fount Paperbacks

Looking at Jesus

Borg M J *Jesus, A New Vision* 1987 Harper Row

Conn R H *Jesus Christ for Youth (Encounter Book)* 1996 Abingdon Press

Conn R H *Jesus Christ for Youth, Leader's Guide (Encounter Book)* 1996 Abingdon Press

Dickson J *A Hell of a Life* 1996 Matthias Media

Morris L *Jesus* 1994 Acorn Press

Nouwen H *Letters to Marc about Jesus* 1988 Darton, Longman and Todd

O'Donnell K *Jesus: A New Approach* 1994 Hodder and Stoughton

Strelan R *Fair Dinkum* 1986 Lutheran Publishing House

Vigevano H S *Jesus the Revolutionary* 1966 GL Publications

Wright T *The Original Jesus* 1996 Lion Publishing

Wangerin W *The Book of God* A Lion Book (Albatross)

Watson D & Jenkins S *Jesus Then and Now* 1983 Lion Publishing

Yancey P *The Jesus I Never Knew* 1995 Zondervan Publishing House

Yancey P *What's So Amazing about Grace?* 1997 Zondervan Publishing House

The quest for Jesus' identity

Crotty R *The Jesus Question: A Historical Search* 1996 Harper Collins Religious

den Heyer C J *Jesus Matters* 1996 SCM Press Ltd

Sanders E P *The Historical Figure of Jesus* 1993 Penguin Books

AUDIO-VISUAL

FILMS/VIDEOS

Jesus of Nazareth

The Greatest Story Ever Told

Jesus of Montreal

Jesus (follows the gospel of Luke)

The Gospel of Matthew volumes 1–4 Visual
International

King of Kings

Jesus Christ Superstar

Godspell

The Last Temptation of Christ

Jesus in the Movies (reviews and clips of
many of the above-listed films) Anglican Media

Put a plastic sleeve in this section of your LIFE binder to keep your own collection of clippings, cartoons, stories, photos, etc which you can use for these units. Add to your collection whenever you come across something that might be useful.