

## Teach the Life of Jesus in 10 Lessons

Our goal is to teach the Life of Jesus in just 8-10 lessons. The question becomes: With such a limited time frame, how do I select which lessons to teach? There is a framework understanding of the Life of Jesus that the teacher can use to make their selection. From the Gospel of John, we know of 3, possibly 4, different Passovers that are recorded. This is what gives us our framework of the 3 to 3-1/2 year ministry of Jesus Christ. Using that framework, we can see the progression of what is happening over the three years.

But Jesus didn't just POP out of nowhere and start proclaiming, "I'm the Messiah!" In fact, the prophet Isaiah said that God was going to do something in advance so that no one but God would get the credit for it. That means that when Jesus came, He was actually fulfilling prophecies told in the Old Testament, and these prophecies would be the key markers that this was indeed the Messiah. The birth accounts of Jesus in Matthew and Luke specifically are to identify and connect this little baby in Bethlehem as the Son of God, born of a virgin, fulfilling these Old Testament prophecies.

After He is identified in the birth accounts, He is introduced to the nation at His baptism, and then He is led into the Wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

In the early ministry of Jesus, there are many miracles that are going on, but His main ministry is one of teaching: in the synagogues and also in the countryside. This is when we have the Sermon on the Mount. It is very *open* and very *direct*. In fact, it is so direct that the religious leaders really start to take offense at what Jesus is saying.

Among the people, however, there is a growing popularity because of the miracles, and because they enjoy the teachings. This growing popularity causes a backlash from the religious leaders, who by the middle of Jesus' ministry come out with a statement that they believe Jesus' power is from Satan.

It is at this time that Jesus begins to teach in parables—after the religious leaders publicly denounce Him. The purpose of the parables is so that those who have received Him and his *plain* truth will gain *more* understanding, and those who have already rejected Him in their hearts will have no idea what He is talking about when He tells them a parable.

His popularity continues up to the feeding of the 5,000, which is just at that second Passover marker, and we have one year until His death and resurrection. The people try to force Jesus to become the king. The next day He makes some very difficult statements, and it says in John that *many* stopped following Him. This is not the Twelve, but that popularity really drops off after this.

At this point, Jesus focuses His attention and teaching mainly on training His twelve disciples more privately for about six months. Then in those last six months leading up to that final Passover, He makes one last sweep through Galilee, Perea, and Judea, on His way up to Jerusalem, where He is crucified and rises again on the third day.

Now, your students probably won't get all this framework chronology, but it's helpful to have as a teacher, because you can put your lessons into the progressive order in which they occur. This is an example of how I would lay out the lessons:

My first lesson would be to connect the Old Testament with the Life of Jesus. The second lesson would cover Jesus' birth because that is when He is identified. The third lesson would be the baptism and temptation, because that is when Jesus is anointed and introduced. Fourth would be His popularity through the miracles. I chose to focus only on two miracles: the paralytic, which shows that Jesus can forgive sins, and the leper, which shows that Jesus can make a person clean. For the fifth lesson, I jump to the parables because this represents the shift in Jesus' ministry after He is publicly denounced by the

religious leaders. In the sixth lesson, the feeding of the 5,000 is the watershed for the massive crowds following Jesus. For my seventh lesson, I chose Zacchaeus, because this occurs during that final sweep that Jesus is making up to Jerusalem, and it reemphasizes the purpose for which Jesus came. The eighth lesson then climaxes with the crucifixion and resurrection and concludes the main content. If there is time, the two lessons at the end would be the ascension, which sets up the book of Acts, and then a content review would be lesson number ten, to re-cap through the whole Life of Jesus.

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Written by Leiann M. Walther