**Study Series: More Than a Carpenter**

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**Lesson Title: “Lord, Liar or Lunatic?” (pp. 19-28)**

March 14, 2021 Session 02

The main point of this lesson is: Intellectual honesty demands that we recognize Jesus as something other than a good man, moral teacher, or prophet.

Focus on this goal: To help adults weigh their view of Jesus against the evidences regarding His character and nature.

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 16:15

During the Session

**Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion**

**Ask:**

1. What kinds of things might people discover about you if they Googled your name?
2. How much of that information would you say truly reflects who you are?
3. What kinds of things might people “discover” about Jesus with an Internet search?
4. What percentage of the information that they might gain about Christ would you say truly reflects who He is?

**Note** that the author asks in Day One (p. 19), “Given the smorgasbord of competing views, can we still have confidence in the historical Jesus?”

**Read** the main point of this lesson statement (p. 29).

**Recall** this study emphasizes that the Christian faith is not unreasonable, illogical, or anti-intellectual. This session takes a rational, logical look at the evidences regarding Jesus’ nature.

**Step 2. Day One – Not a “Good Man”**

**Discuss** Day One, activity 1 (p. 19).

**Explain** Caesarea Philippi, located north of the Sea of Galilee, was a site for the worship of the Canaanite god Baal, the Greek god Pan, and the Roman emperor Augustus. Jesus chose this location where dead gods were worshiped to affirm His identity as the Son of the living God.

**Invite two volunteers to read** what C. S. Lewis, an atheist who became one of Christianity’s most influential apologists, said about Jesus from the two quotes in Day One (pp. 19-20).

**Ask:**

1. How might this offend some people?
2. What challenge does it present to every person?

**Request a volunteer read** the Day One margin/pull quote (p. 21).

**Request adults identify** from the last paragraph of Day One (p. 21) the only two alternatives if Jesus’ claim to be God were false.

**Step 3. Day Two – Was Jesus a Liar?**

**Ask:**

1. What would we have to call Jesus if He claimed to be God, but knew His claim was false?
2. If Jesus lied about that claim, why would we also have to say He was a hypocrite, a demon, unspeakably evil, and a fool? (**See** first paragraph of Day Two, p. 21.)

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 1 (p. 21).

**Ask rhetorically:**

1. If Jesus were trying to back up the lie that He was God and the promised Messiah, would He have told His disciples to keep that fact quiet?
2. Would He have willingly pressed on toward His death?
3. Would He have called His followers to die if He were trying to deceive them?

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Day Two margin/pull quote (p. 23).

**Analyze** what it was about how Jesus lived, taught, and died that confirms He could not have been a liar.

**Step 4. Day Three – Was Jesus a Lunatic?, Part 1**

**Ask:** If Jesus’ claim to be God was false, but He wasn’t a liar, then what would He logically have to be?

**Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 24).

**Guide the group to evaluate** how Jesus is different from people throughout history who have claimed to be God.

**State:** In the Gospels we never see Jesus rushing, anxious, or frustrated at interruptions. Even though we see Him express righteous anger, we never see Him lose self-control. “If He was insane, His poise and composure was nothing short of amazing” (p. 24).

**Lead the group to discuss** how following the teachings of Jesus sets His followers apart from followers of other teachers.

**Step 5. Day Four – Was Jesus a Lunatic?, Part 2.**

**Note** from Day Four (p. 25) the psychiatrist’s assertion that Jesus’ teachings from the Sermon on the Mount contain a blueprint for successful human life.

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 26).

**If time allows, read** verses such as Matthew 5:23-25,27-8,37,44; 6:3,19,25; 7:1,12.

**Ask:** Are these the ravings of a lunatic?

**Note** that not just Jesus’ teachings but His balanced life indicate He was completely sane.

**Invite a volunteer to read** the quote by Gary Collins in Day Four (p. 25).

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 2 (p. 26).

**Step 6. Day Five – Was Jesus Lord?**

**Explain** the Council of Nicaea took place in AD 325 to answer the question, Who is Jesus? Constantine convened this council of Christian leaders to resolve the controversy over Arianism, a doctrine that claimed Jesus was a created being and not divine. The council affirmed what Jesus and the New Testament claim—that Jesus Christ is God.

**Note** that in Day Five (pp. 26-28), the author uses historical facts and quotes to prove that Constantine did not turn Jesus into a deity as novelist Dan Brown asserted, but rather that Jesus Christ always has been and always will be Lord and God.

**Step 7. Practical Application - Live Out the Lesson**

**Read** from the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 28), beginning with “You cannot call Him merely a great ….”

**Urge adults** to contemplate Day Five, activity 1 (p. 28) during the day, and to complete it if they have not already done so.

**Close in prayer.**