**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 3 of 4

# Who is Jesus?

### MEETING AIM

To reflect on the names of Jesus, including Messiah and Son of the living God.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 16:13-20

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Names matter and it matters who we think we are. The names we give to other people matter, as does who we think Jesus really is. Encourage the children to use everyday words (and not jargon) when they talk about Jesus. Before the session, reflect on this Bible passage and think about how you would answer Jesus’ question in verse 15: “Who do you say I am?”

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children and share some simple refreshments and ask the children to share about the week they have had. Talk about names – first names and family names, nicknames, nasty names, titles, roles which come to be used as a name, such as ‘Mum’. What is the point of a family name? Some people have two family names – different names in different contexts. Is a headteacher called Mrs, Mr or Ms in their home? What does a name say about you?

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Play a game of ‘Simon says’ with a twist. You give instructions to perform a set of actions in the name of several people, maybe the names of children in the group. But only if you announce that say ‘Mephibosheth says’ to do something, are the children to do what he says. Any child who acts on the order of anyone other than Mephibosheth sits down for three instructions, then joins in again. Listen out for the right name.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of mixed-up lettered names for Jesus (adjust the codes to be more or less challenging for your group); pencils

Before the session, write out these anagrams on a sheet of paper and make enough copies for the children to have one each:

SUS**J**E

N**S**O F**O** HE**T** ING**L**IV OD**G**

ON**S** F**O** EPH**J**OS

LIJAH**E**

REMIAH**J**E

HN**J**O HE**T** PTIST**B**A

ON**S** F**O** N**M**A

SIAH**M**ES

Give everyone a copy of the anagrams and see if the children can solve any straight away. It doesn’t matter if they don’t get them all – the solutions will all appear in the story:

Jesus was travelling to Caesarea Philippi, to the north of Lake Galilee. He spent most of his time around the lake. It had been a village, without many people living in it. King Herod Philip’s father, Herod the Great, had built a temple there. Herod Philip later made the village larger and gave it a new name after himself – Caesarea Philippi.

It was a pleasant and quiet place. Maybe Jesus wanted to rest and spend time with his disciples. He often wanted to do that because he was preparing them to share the good news about him across the known world.

Jesus had many names and titles. He wanted to find out just who his friends thought he was. How much did they understand about him! So, he asked them: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

‘Son of Man’ was a title Jesus sometimes used for himself. Centuries before his lived, the prophet Daniel had a vision when he saw someone “like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven” (Daniel 7:13). This was no ordinary person. He had great power and authority and people worshipped him, all speaking many different languages. ‘Son of Man’ was a good description of Jesus.

Jesus asked his disciples another question. “Who do you say that I am?” They gave him several answers. Some of them were not correct.

Jesus’ friends said that some called Jesus John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah.

Peter told him that he thought Jesus was “the Messiah, the Son of the living God”.

Give out pencils and split children into small groups to untangle the letters in his names. The letters are in order but start with the emboldened letter.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Many things in this story make us wonder. Ask children for their comments before you ask wondering questions like these:

* Which three of the anagram names are wrong, which one is Jesus’ everyday name and which four are titles, like Mum?
* What do these names tell you about Jesus?
* Why do you think Jesus was pleased with Peter’s reply in verse 16? (Peter had understood that Jesus was the one and only Messiah, who had come from God. For centuries God’s people had been waiting for him to come to rescue them. Peter only understood this because God had helped him understand.)
* Are you sometimes called the wrong name? Does it matter what we are called? What do our names say about us?
* When you look at Jesus’ names, what can you discover about him that is awe-inspiring?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper; felt-tip pens; paint; brushes; collage materials; glue sticks

Ask children to choose one of Jesus’ names and to write it on a sheet of paper. They can then decorate the name and turn it into a picture of worship. These could be put on display or children could take theirs home.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** a song about names or characteristics of God, such as [‘You are king’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q8KPnrrqW4) by Mark Willoughby; the means to play it

Listen to your chosen track and encourage children to speak out a name for Jesus, saying one line of praise to him, in the same way that the song does.

**RO WILLOUGHBY**

ministers with people of all ages at St Chad’s Woodseats.