



Questions about the life and
impact of Jesus Christ

The **Man** of **Galilee**

Presented by **Keith Garner**

Study guide

Features

Nazareth | Capernaum | Tiberias
Magdala | The Sea of Galilee

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‘Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.’

Throughout my ministry, I’ve been very conscious of the importance of the Galilee in Jesus’ ministry. It was where he lived, taught and brought about remarkable change in people’s lives. Two thousand years later, it is possible to imagine, and even enter into God’s calling in the person of Jesus Christ, through conversation with others as you visit this beautiful area.

My hope for this series is that it enables you to understand the region and feel the call of Jesus Christ upon your life today. We are invited to consider afresh not only what his calling meant for the first disciples, but also what it can mean for those of us who have to live out our faith in the cities, towns and villages of the 21st century.

In this series, there are times when you feel you are experiencing the first-century days of Jesus, but there are other occasions when the noise of cars, contemporary trading and security restrictions remind you that our exploration and search for the meaning of the ministry of Jesus Christ is very much a journey of today.

I hope you enjoy these studies as you consider the ministry of Jesus Christ and what it can say to you.



Keith Garner



Episode 1

Who is the Man of Galilee?

Jesus was born during a time of change and unrest under the political and economic leadership of the Galilee region.

He was born during the rule of Herod the Great, and lived under the rule of his son Herod Antipas in the region that Jesus called home: the Galilee.

The Galilee was a client kingdom of the Roman Empire, which meant the Herodians and all of the people of that region were subservient to Roman rule.

Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor at the time of his birth, and Caesar Tiberius was Emperor during the time of Jesus' ministry.

Each leader played an important role in the early Christian story, which resulted in Jesus Christ being born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. This was due to their political influence upon circumstances.

Throughout his ministry, to some Jesus was a teacher. To others he brought healing, or worked wonders. To the disciples and those close to him, he was a captivating leader and friend.

On the other hand, to his adversaries he was a religious, political and social nuisance who needed to be silenced.

Whether teaching in the open air, in small and intimate settings, or when speaking with individuals, Jesus encouraged, corrected, motivated and equipped people with a purpose. He led by example and told stories which had universal themes.

Before the start of his ministry, Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River, then led by God into the wilderness to be tested. He was tempted to turn away from his purpose and put God's promises to the test, and even perhaps to switch allegiances by accepting wealth and a position of influence in his day.

On all occasions, Jesus resisted temptation and remained true to his purpose.

Questions for discussion

In the days before the birth of Jesus, we see in Mary and Joseph a quality that would become a characteristic of much Christian discipleship and later religious orders. This quality was obedience.

- How would the obedience of Mary and Joseph speak to the early Christian community?

The Sermon on the Mount is a significant body of teaching from Jesus.

- Did the Sermon on the Mount set the tone for Jesus' ministry?
- How could the Beatitudes be paraphrased into today's language?

It is important to note that Jesus was led by God into the wilderness to be tested, and the temptations that Jesus overcame have universal themes.

- How do the temptations of Jesus in the desert compare with the temptations we face every day?
- What do you recognise most in Jesus Christ as he endured the temptations?
- How important is trust and obedience during moments of temptation in our own lives?



Episode 2

How does Jesus call people?

Jesus lived during a time of relative peace and economic prosperity in the Galilee and religion was very much a part of everyday life.

Herod Antipas oversaw the development of cities along the Via Maris trade route and by the Sea of Galilee, which drew people to the region and, as a consequence, resulted in pressure on local farmers and field workers to produce more for the growing population.

There were various religious groups calling for people's allegiance, each presenting their own understanding of God's laws, acceptable ways of living and expectations of a coming Messiah.

Collectively, this resulted in simmering discontent, and political and religious tensions among the people of the Galilee, which were pervasive at the time of the ministry of Jesus.

When calling people, Jesus Christ was aware of the changing times and the uncertainty this brought. In the first century, there was little separation between religion and community activities. The synagogues were places of worship on the Sabbath, and community centres throughout the week. Religion was part of everyday life, reflected in the laws, customs and traditions of the day.

Jesus called people who were not usually seen as having spiritual or religious influence in their communities, even if they were influential in other circles. These people may have had business or administrative skills, a level of community and social awareness, and a quality that drew them to Jesus Christ.

When calling people to follow him, Jesus gave purpose, meaning and a reason to follow, and called them in a way which was meaningful and relevant to them. Jesus called the disciples from their vocations, their sense of identity, from friends and peers, and even from family ties.

Today, Jesus Christ calls people from all areas of life.

Questions for discussion

The calling of Jesus Christ has three aspects: First, an invitation to come. Second, a purpose. And third, power to help fulfil the purpose.

- How important are the three components of the calling of Jesus in the first century, and for us today?
- What do you consider are the differences or similarities between being called in the first century and being called today?

When calling people to follow him, Jesus called people from their current way of living to a new life. They didn't prove their worth before being called, but they found their purpose in their calling.

- What did each follower do as a response to the calling?
- Was there anything people did to qualify being called by Jesus?
- What were the effects of this call of Jesus Christ upon people's lives?

Quite often, we feel that we need to be qualified or do something extraordinary in our everyday lives to be called by God.

- What do you think Jesus looked for in people before calling them?
- When considering some of the significant characters in the Christian story, what did Jesus Christ call them from and to? Consider Peter and Mary Magdalene, for example.
- How do we know if and when we are being called today?



Episode 3

How did Jesus teach people?

Jesus Christ was unquestionably one of the best storytellers of all time, and many of his followers continue to share their faith by telling stories.

Men and women in the realms of music, literature, politics, film and entertainment continue to share the message of God's love through their chosen pathways. Sharing the Christian faith and storytelling go hand in hand.

When Jesus told stories, he was always communicating from experience, through experience and to experience, using everyday examples to teach people. He told stories that had universal and generic themes, and could be easily understood and applied to people's lives.

Jesus didn't just use his words to teach his followers about the kingdom of God; he related his words to his actions for all to see. Jesus taught by doing, and allowed his deeds to show God's love for all.

When he healed the sick and the blind, and called children to him even after they had been sent away by the disciples, he was pointing to the value of all people, be they young or old, rich or poor, sick or healthy. These actions taught everyone about the universal nature of God's love.

By doing God's work, more and more people were attracted to him, his teachings, and ultimately to the message of God's love for all.

Jesus taught a message of forgiveness and acceptance that called for a response in the deepest places of people's lives.

So he taught by telling stories and through actions, which shared God's love and compassion. He gave of his time, he gave people his attention, and Jesus shared lovingly from his heart.

Throughout this series, we have focused on instances where Jesus taught those around him firstly by responding to need, and secondly by sharing confronting truths that called for a change of direction.

When approached by Jairus to heal his daughter, Jesus responded by agreeing to go to his home. Along the way, a woman seeking help was healed by touching his garment. When he arrived at Jairus' house, the daughter was reported to have died, but Jesus brought her back to life.

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked three disciples, Peter, James and John about who he was, and through the ensuing discussion corrected misunderstandings that existed about him, equipping them for what lay ahead.

Questions for discussion

The stories Jesus Christ told continue to resonate with people today. The stories were not limited by setting, place or time.

- What are some examples of the stories Jesus Christ told that were relevant to the people of the first century, and which continue to be meaningful for us today?

The instances we focus on in this episode reveal Jesus Christ teaching his followers by doing God's work in the feeding of the crowd and the reinstatement of Peter.

- Discuss how in each scenario the actions of Jesus, what he said and what he did, teach us about the nature of God's love.
- Why do you think Jesus chose to teach his followers with his actions in these two ways instead of simply delivering the same message in a story?

Common to these incidents is Jesus Christ teaching those around him about the nature of God's love and God's purpose for all.

- What do Jairus and the sick woman have in common? How do the healings differ? What do Jesus' encounters with Jairus and the sick woman have in common?
- At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus encourages Peter to declare that he is the Messiah. How does this change Peter's understanding of Jesus Christ and his mission?



Episode 4

How Jesus spoke to others

Much of the ministry of Jesus Christ is centred around what he said, when he spoke, and how he used his words in a way that was appropriate to the situation. Jesus spoke to groups as well as individuals and among those groups were his adversaries, friends and followers. We also look at how Jesus Christ spoke to God the Father.

When speaking with his adversaries, Jesus delivered some of his most profound and memorable teaching. He spoke directly in specific contexts with words that demonstrated the God-given authority which had been given to him after his baptism.

When he spoke in the synagogues, he offered a new perspective on existing interpretations of the scriptures and the subsequent laws. When confronted by religious rulers, he managed to cut through the questions being asked, and addressed deeper, underlying issues in the mind of the questioner. He would invariably answer a question with a question – and in doing so expose the heart of the person who was questioning him. Jesus spoke to his disciples as both a leader and a friend – stepping in when needed to bring correction or teaching, and encouraging them to trust him in real-life situations.

He continually provided purpose, established meaning, and brought a new way of thinking and living to his disciples and friends. There were times when he was direct, and other times when he was much quieter in his approach. He was always concerned to share God's purpose and prepare them for their own mission. Jesus Christ spoke to the crowds with authority, drawing on universal themes that would resonate not only with the people present, but with all who would listen to his teaching over time. And when he spoke to individuals, irrespective of how they came to him, he was always ready to meet them at their point of need and demonstrate the value of all people to God, regardless of their standing.

He demonstrated his skill in speaking across the entire social spectrum in relevant and meaningful ways, whether in people's homes, in small groups, in public, or before large crowds.

At regular intervals in the gospel accounts, Jesus takes time out to pray. When he speaks with God, we learn of the intimacy and closeness of their relationship, and the love that Jesus has for his followers. He takes ownership of all who God has given to him and is concerned for them. He seeks God for understanding and unity among his followers, both present and those to come.

Jesus Christ and God the Father are understood to be at one, with a common purpose.

Questions for discussion

Jesus Christ was confronted by adversaries everywhere he went, and those challenging him would very often appear after a high point in his public ministry.

- How did Jesus respond when being tempted in the desert? What do we learn from the way he handled temptation? What were some of the questions put before Jesus after some of the high points in his public ministry?

When addressing adversaries, disciples, friends and followers, Jesus did not confuse the issues presented before him with the people asking the questions.

- What are some examples where Jesus Christ addressed challenges before him while displaying respect for the person bringing the challenge?
- What are some examples of Jesus sharing God's purpose and preparing his disciples and followers for their own mission?

Jesus spent time alone with God at regular intervals throughout his ministry.

- How important was it for him to spend time alone with God?

How significant are the occasions when Jesus chose to spend time alone with God?

- Read John 17. What is the significance of each of the three critically important sections of Jesus' prayer; for himself, for his disciples, and all who will believe through their witness?



Episode 5

Detractors and adversaries

The challenges Jesus Christ faced were presented to him by the people with whom he interacted, at the places and events he attended, and in moments of great contrast – all in the spotlight and scrutiny of a public ministry.

In response to every challenge, Jesus showed love and respect towards people, and demonstrated that his life was one of purpose and a higher call.

When the disciples challenged Jesus, they didn't seek to discredit him. The challenges came from their unbelief, their pride, and in the form of questions pertaining to his death and resurrection.

The religious rulers who opposed Jesus, however, did seek to discredit him. He questioned their power base and challenged what they taught; speaking against the rules and traditions that at face value excluded people from God's love. He brought a new understanding of scripture and, in return, they sought to silence him. Having a public mission that challenged religious traditions and many of the accepted customs of the day meant Jesus had to be ready for confrontation at all hours of the day, everywhere he went.

He was confronted by religious leaders in the synagogues, by individuals in the crowds that followed him, and by people from all walks of life in first-century Galilee.

As we have observed, the challenges that Jesus had to deal with from his close followers, crowds and religious rulers, irrespective of where he travelled, typically presented after a high moment.

There were many contrasting moments in Jesus' ministry that speak to the constant spiritual challenges he had to face.

The temptation of Jesus Christ in the desert immediately after his baptism and affirmation as the Son of God provide an insight into the timing of the challenges he would encounter.

The temptation experience was in stark contrast to his baptism and affirmation.

In Caesarea Philippi, after the high moment of seeing Peter receive and respond in the revelation from God the Father that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus was challenged and suggested that Peter was speaking the words of Satan, not of God.

Questions for discussion

Jesus Christ chose a public mission to reveal God's love to all, and was met with challenges everywhere he went. It would certainly have been easier for him to have a private ministry and avoid public scrutiny.

- How did Jesus Christ address the disciples when responding to their questions of unbelief, pride and his death and resurrection? Focus on Jesus' interaction with the disciples at Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, after the transfiguration, and especially when the disciples argued over who was the greatest among them.
- What was it that Jesus said and did that drew opposition from the religious rulers?
- How did he show God's love and acceptance for all?

The challenges presented to Jesus by the religious rulers and synagogue leaders questioned his teaching and authority, and sought to discredit him and his mission.

- How important is it to make a distinction between those who bring challenges, and the people who help us to grow in our faith? And particularly the challenges that seek to discredit us?
- How should we deal with each set of challenges?

The spiritual conflicts that we face can, in many ways, define our relationship with God.

- What are some of the contrasting moments in the ministry of Jesus Christ that stand out in this regard?
- What did Jesus do to prepare for these moments?
- How did Jesus respond in moments of conflict?



Episode 6

Life and religion

It can be said that the teachings of Jesus Christ transcend time and place. They have reached across the boundaries of culture, race and peoples. His message was up to date, and changed the way people saw life in the first century, and continues to speak powerfully to us today.

Jesus lived at a time when religion and community activity were all of a piece – when the Roman Empire ruled much of the known world, during a time of expansion and change in the Galilee, and during a time of political and social division that resulted in simmering tensions between different religious and community groups.

When Jesus Christ spoke to the needs of people, he did so in a way that empowered them to discover the fullness of God's purpose for their lives. He offered hope and brought people into a closer relationship with God. When speaking to personal, social and economic needs, he pointed people in new directions and empowered them to develop their own understanding of what he was teaching. Through stories and interpreting history, he enlightened people's minds. When he taught, he was often questioned by those present. Sometimes they sought clarification, and at other times some who didn't approve of him tried to catch him out.

But he would not turn away from difficult matters. The mission of Jesus Christ required a response. He had a way of interacting with those who followed him that saw through the immediate need to their spiritual needs. He empowered people to discover spiritual truth for themselves, and brought change and transformation that impacted all areas of their lives.

When considering world religions, Christianity stands out in offering new life as a gift from God, rather than a reward to be earned or a destination to be achieved – and Jesus Christ is at the heart of this gift.

It is when we see the totality of his life, death and resurrection that we can begin to understand what he came to bring. This message is one that opens the gift of eternal life and offers a way of selfless, compassionate service towards others.

We are not forced to believe or belong, but it is as we draw closer to understanding Jesus Christ, we will be able to receive all that he has to offer and gain a special heart for the poor and otherwise neglected. His heart for others becomes our heart for the world.

Questions for discussion

Jesus Christ taught about many of the most important aspects of life. He touched on universal themes such as faith, hope, love, acceptance, meaning and purpose, with the underlying dominant theme of God's love for all.

- Why were so many people attracted to Jesus?
- Why was he so listened to, even by those who opposed him?
- What was it about Jesus' teaching that made him stand out from the religious authorities?

While the context in which the questions being asked of Jesus, his purpose and his message have changed over time, there is a familiarity about the questions themselves.

- What questions do you have about Jesus Christ, his purpose and his message today, as they apply to your life?
- Look at the first-century reactions to Jesus and his ministry, and the questions being asked of him and his teachings in the gospels. Discuss the similarities and differences to the questions being asked today.

Jesus did not turn away from challenges or questions. He often used the questions to bring a fresh understanding of God's love for those present.

- What questions or comments do you hear from people with respect to the Christian faith? The Church? And towards Jesus Christ?
- What questions should we be asking of his message today?
- How can all the above questions and comments be beneficial to us all in our understanding of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith?

