The Life of Christ

MIDDLE SCHOOL BIBLE SAMPLER
Contents

Introduction to the Course

Getting to Know Who’s Who
1: Getting to Know Jesus
2: Getting to Know Matthew
3: Getting to Know Mark
4: Getting to Know Luke
5: Getting to Know John

Beginnings to Baptism
6: An Angel Brings Good News
7: The Savior Is Born!
8: Visitors for the Newborn King
9: Jesus in the Temple (as a Baby and a Boy)
10: The Baptism of Jesus

Introducing the Son of God!
11: The Lamb of God!
12: Three Temptations
13: New Wine Out of Water
14: Jesus Tells His Secret to a Lonely Woman
15: Jesus Tells His Secret in His Hometown

Ministry with His Disciples
16: Four Fishermen Become Fishers of Men
17: Faith That Goes Through the Roof
18: Jesus’ Power over a Storm
19: One Boy’s Lunch Feeds 5,000
20: Jesus Walks on Water

Lessons About Life and Death
21: A Glimpse of Glory on a Mountaintop
22: Who Will Throw the First Stone?
23: Jesus Blesses the Little Children
24: Some People Will Do Anything to See Jesus
25: A Rich Young Ruler Wants Eternal Life
26: Learning About Life and Death—the Hard Way

The Road to the Cross
27: Mary Prepares Jesus’ Body to Be Buried
28: The Plot to Catch and Kill Jesus
29: A Grand Entry into Jerusalem
30: Disruption at the Temple
31: New Meaning to the Passover Meal
32: Arrested, Tried, and Tortured
33: Jesus Goes to the Cross to Die for Us

Jesus Is Alive Forever and Ever
34: The Burial and Resurrection
35: The Resurrected Jesus Visits Friends and Followers
36: Saying Good-Bye and Spreading Good News
37: Jesus Selects Another Apostle
38: The Devil’s Destruction
39: God Makes All Things New
40: The Teachings of Jesus
Introduction to the Course

Who is Jesus?

Every Christian school teacher and student must answer that question. We are Christian educators in Christian schools with the aim of teaching and training children and young people to become Christian disciples. Jesus Christ is at the center of who we are and what we do.

Because of the centrality of Christ, this course is a critical element in the education of your middle school students. They not only need to know about Jesus, they need to know Jesus himself.

Who are your students?

As you well know, your students are in a transitional state of development. They’re in the process of developing critical thinking skills, and they are becoming more adept at handling abstract concepts, but every student is at a different place on that developmental path. A similar diversity is also evident in their physical development, with emotional highs and lows a normal part of the process.

In addition to the differences associated with physical and cognitive development, your students also come to the class with a wide range of knowledge and experience relating to Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Some students may have been raised in Christian homes and have had regular Bible teaching in churches and Christian schools. Such students may see this course as an easy task—maybe even a little boring. Students at the other end of the spectrum may have only recently been exposed to Christian teaching. They may not only be unfamiliar with many of the Bible stories about Jesus, but may even have trouble looking up Bible passages. Other students fall somewhere between.

Meeting the challenge

This course is designed to benefit all your students. For those who are still thoroughly concrete in their thinking, the lessons—and the website (lifeofChristweb.com) that supports this course—will provide a vast amount of information relating to the life of Jesus. Students’ knowledge of such information can be tracked with lesson quizzes and periodic tests. For students who have begun the transition to abstract reasoning, this teacher guide contains activities and discussion questions and projects that can help students go beyond acquiring facts to processing the significance of those facts. You will also get tips and suggestions for ongoing assessment so that you can match your instruction to developmental changes in your students.

In addition to instructional support, each lesson includes a feature titled Teacher Prep. This feature consists of a resource article to support and equip you in the task of guiding students to a comprehensive knowledge of the life of Christ—to go beyond facts about Jesus to an understanding of who he is and why it’s important to center their lives on him.

Course structure

This course features three strands of instruction. The main benefit of this approach is that these strands can be interwoven in a wide variety of patterns, providing myriad options for differentiation and customization. Given the countless sources of online information, it’s easy for a course like this to become an exercise in Bible trivia. The challenge is to help students navigate their options in ways that motivate their learning and aid in their understanding. The following are the three strands of instruction.

1. Student book

The content for this course is presented in 40 lessons. Each lesson consists of a narrative (story) related to the life of Christ, along with questions for thought and discussion. Each lesson also includes a quiz covering the facts presented within that lesson. The number of lessons will probably not correspond to the number of class days for your school, so you will need to create a schedule for the lessons. Lessons can be read in the textbook or online (lifeofchristweb.com). They can be assigned as homework or read in class. The textbook pages are perforated; the discussion questions for each lesson are printed back-to-back on one sheet, facilitating their removal when you want students to hand in work. To maximize student learning, vary your use of these pages. For some lessons, you will want students to answer the discussion questions, tear out the sheets, and hand in the sheets to you. Other
times, you may have them answer the questions, trade papers to check answers, then return papers to students so they can use the questions for discussion notes. If you assign the text as homework, encourage students to answer the questions as preparation for class discussion. The review quizzes can be used for reinforcement of the facts in the lesson text.

2. Website: lifeofchristweb.com

The student textbook is coordinated with the website lifeofchristweb.com. The website has three main tabs: Lessons, Practice, and Glossary. The Lessons section contains the same 40 narratives as the student textbook. At the end of each lesson, links are provided to items from the Practice section—for example, enrichment activities, maps, timelines, charts, and short articles. Key words within the text of each lesson are highlighted and linked to Glossary entries. This website is designed to augment the lesson with features to extend and reinforce the lesson content.

3. Teacher guidance

The student textbook and the website can provide students with enough to keep them busy, but they will need more than facts and exercises to get the maximum benefit from the course. Though you will not be the main source of data for your students, your input and guidance are absolutely essential. Here are some ways you can help make this course a life-altering event for your students:

- Additional sources of data. Help students get the most out of the school library. Ask pastors or professors to offer access to their personal libraries. Build an in-class reference library. In addition to urging students to use lifeofchristweb.com, introduce them to other research-friendly websites. (For example, biblegateway.com provides dozens of Bible translations and a number of study helps; ccel.org contains a library of classic Christian publications going back to the early Church fathers.) Ask pastors, seminary professors, and your colleagues for recommendations of sites devoted to history, archaeology, geography, culture, theology, languages, and other topics that can help students acquire a deeper understanding of the life of Christ. Post classroom search logs to help students search more efficiently.

- Contextual and background information. When it comes to knowing who Jesus is and why he is important, your students need more than a mass of facts. You play a crucial role in helping students go beyond collecting Jesus trivia. As young adolescents develop the abstract reasoning skills they need to gain deeper understanding about Jesus, they need to factor in background information, historical and cultural contexts, and theological issues. To help you identify and incorporate such information, each lesson in this teacher guide contains a feature titled Teacher Prep. As the name implies, Teacher Prep is for you to read and think about in preparation for the lesson. It will not give instructions on how to share the content with your students; you will determine the best approaches in light of your knowledge of the students.

- Higher-level activities. The website lifeofchristweb.com provides a number of activities that can help students acquire and sort facts. This teacher guide augments those activities with suggestions for projects that require students to work with those facts in ways that will enhance and deepen students’ understanding of the life of Christ. (Note: Most of the topics covered in the Teacher Prep feature can become subjects for student projects.) These projects can be done by individuals or groups and can result in reports or presentations utilizing a variety of media.

Class time

Because much of the course content is digital, there are many options for class time. Your school’s online capabilities and your own comfort with technology will influence your class-time choices. Here are a few factors to consider:

- Do your students have online access at home? If so, you can conduct a “flipped” learning process, in which students read the lesson text on lifeofchristweb.com before class; the review quizzes in the student book can be used to reinforce lesson facts; class time builds on the reading with class discussion and work on projects. If your students don’t have online access at home, you will need to find ways to provide online time at school.
• Do you have multiple computers in your classroom? If your classroom has only one or two computers for student use, do you have access to other settings—such as a computer lab or library—where a number of students can be online simultaneously?

• Do your students have portable devices—such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops—that have online access? Are you open to having students use their own digital equipment in the classroom? How can those devices be used productively in the classroom?

Assessment
This course provides opportunities for both formative and summative assessments.

Formative assessments aren’t intended to produce a grade or ranking. Instead, they provide indicators or markers that help the teacher and student make adjustments in the learning process. This course incorporates two vehicles for formative assessment: activities and projects.

Summative assessments take the form of quizzes and tests.

Activities
Point students to the activities, maps, articles, timelines, and other resources under the Practice tab on the website lifeofchristweb.com for enrichment or review. Feel free to assign some of them to individuals and others to groups. Help students choose activities, process what they learned, and track their participation. To help you monitor student learning, ask selected students to share their work.

Projects
For maximum impact, make sure each student participates in a variety of projects. Here are a few suggestions for using projects effectively:

• Assign a number of small projects toward the beginning of the course. The results will give you some indication of students’ knowledge and spiritual maturity. Small projects are those that are related to a specific event or person or statement found in a story. Such projects can be completed in a few days.

• Also have each student select a few major projects. At least one of these should be done by the student individually. The others can be group projects. Major projects deal with broader topics that go beyond the scope of one or two lessons. Many of the Teacher Prep topics are appropriate for major projects.

• Encourage students to develop portfolios of their work—not only for display at the end of the course, but also as markers of their own development and growth.

• Help students track their progress on projects, whether electronically (e.g., spreadsheets, project-management programs) or physical displays (e.g., wall charts, checklists, timelines).

Quizzes and tests
All the review quizzes from the student book have been modified and provided digitally on the ACSI website at www.acsi.org/textbooks/qrs/midsch. You can print these quizzes to use as assessments as you wish. An answer key for each quiz is proved in this teacher guide. You can also use these quizzes to create section tests and a final exam. Copy and paste questions from the digital files at www.acsi.org/textbooks/qrs/midsch and put them into a text file. Renumbe the questions, print the tests, and hand them out to students. Every student lesson also includes discussion questions. These can be used for students to take notes based on their reading and discussion; but since the pages in the student book are perforated, you may want your students to complete some of them as essay tests and hand them in.
Ministry with His Disciples

Familiar artwork from Purposeful Design’s Elementary Bible textbook series by Ron Adair and Steve Miller.
Lesson 18: Jesus’ Power over a Storm

**Topic:** The extent of Jesus’ power and authority

**Scripture:** Mark 4:35–41

**Key Verse:** He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!”
Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. (Mark 4:39)

**Teacher Prep—Jesus Is God—Power over Weather**

In the ancient world, oceans or seas were not perceived as pleasant places. People didn’t go boating for fun. Open water created feelings of dread and fear. Notice these words at the beginning of the Creation account: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). The seas represented chaos and danger. In fact, the book of Job says that God put boundaries on the sea so it would not spread any further (Job 38:8–11).

It was against this background that this lesson takes place. The Sea of Galilee was subject to sudden violent storms. Being a fisherman was considered a dangerous profession; each day, fishermen faced the prospect of danger. In this case, even for seasoned sailors, the storm made them fear for their lives. The sea fulfilled the disciples’ expectation of frightening chaos.

When Jesus calmed the sea, it’s possible that the disciples would have been reminded of Genesis 1:2. Just as the Spirit brought order to the chaos of the primeval sea, Jesus brought the Sea of Galilee under control. That was something only God could do.

**Instructional Strategies**

**General:** This lesson provides a good opportunity for your students to practice in-depth reading. Ask several students to take turns reading aloud the Scripture passage, Mark 4:35–41. Each student should read the whole passage, each one from a different Bible translation. Give the class a few minutes to think about what they’ve heard. With the Bible text fresh in their minds, they will be ready to read the Lesson Text in their student books.

**Projects:** Dramatic events from Jesus’ life—such as we see in this lesson—lend themselves to multimedia projects. Encourage students skilled in a variety of media (writing, art, design, music, video, and so on) to form project teams. Have them scan the Gospels for compelling events and stories that can be conveyed artistically.

**Lesson text:** Have students read the text of Lesson 18: Jesus’ Power over a Storm. If they read the text online (lifeofchristweb.com), suggest that they click on the highlighted words and read the definitions. Call their attention to the other online links. Then have them take the review quiz in the student book.

**Lesson 18 Text**

Jesus had been busy telling stories called parables to the crowds near the Sea of Galilee. Then he had to explain the meaning of the stories to his disciples. When evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side [of the lake].” They left the crowds and got into a boat. Other boats came along too.

The Sea of Galilee is a lake that is surrounded by mountains. The air over the lake tends to be hot; the air coming through the mountain passes...
from the ocean is cool. When the hot air and cool air meet over the lake, WATCH OUT! That mix of hot and cool air creates sudden and violent storms.

Jesus was tired. He went to the back of the boat and fell asleep on a cushion. Suddenly a wild storm arose! How the winds must have howled! Waves even crashed over the sides of the boat. The boat was about to sink! Even though many of Jesus’ disciples were used to being on the lake, they were terrified. They knew how dangerous such storms could be.

Jesus’ disciples woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” Jesus got up and the storm was still raging. Jesus told the storm, “Quiet! Be still!” Immediately the winds died down and the lake became completely calm. The storm obeyed him instantly.

No one had ever seen such a thing. People can’t make storms obey them. But Jesus was no ordinary man! The disciples were terrified again. But this time it wasn’t the storm that terrified them. It was the power Jesus had over nature. Jesus asked them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” But no one answered his question.

The disciples asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” The disciples didn’t yet fully understand who Jesus was or the extent of his great power. Jesus’ power over the storm demonstrated his authority over creation and the forces of nature. People can’t even predict the weather accurately, but Jesus could control it!

Discussion Questions
- Why were the disciples so frightened?
- How did the disciples react to the storm?
- What did Jesus do?
  Why do you think he spoke the way he did?
- How does this event help answer the question, Who is Jesus?
- What questions do you have about Jesus, and why are those questions important to you?

Lesson 18 Review Quiz
1. What do we call the stories Jesus told?
   Parables

2. The mix of hot and cool air over the Sea of Galilee creates …
   sudden and violent storms.

3. What happened after Jesus went to sleep on the boat?
   A wild storm arose and waves crashed into the boat.

4. What happened when Jesus woke up?
   He told the storm, “Quiet! Be still.” And it obeyed!

5. What terrified the disciples after the storm stopped?
   That the winds and waves obeyed Jesus’ commands.

6. Jesus asked them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you …
   still have no faith?”
Lesson 18: **Jesus’ Power over a Storm**

**Topic:** The extent of Jesus’ power and authority

**Scripture:** Mark 4:35–41

**Key Verse:** He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!”
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Name _________________________________

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