

**LESSON 2: I AM A PERFECT REFLECTION OF GOD**

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

**1. LEADER PREPARATION****LESSON OVERVIEW**

A lot of people say that God is simply a mystery—that it's not possible to understand him, really. But that's just not true. Jesus came to us in the form of a human being expressly to help us know and understand his Father, whom we can't see. Knowing Jesus well will help you to know God well, because Jesus is an exact mirror of God the Father—"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does" (John 5:19).

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- 1. WHAT:** When we slow down to study Jesus, we gain a deeper understanding of who God really is and what he's really doing in our world.
- 2. WHY:** A false understanding of Jesus will lead to a false understanding of God—and a false understanding of God can lead to confusion, heartbreak, and even destruction in our lives.
- 3. HOW:** By treating Jesus as a "perfect reflection" of the God we can't see, we destroy false beliefs and assumptions about him.

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

John 5:19

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURE**

John 16:12-15

**TEACHING PREP**

**LEADER  
TIP**

**Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.**

**Read John 5:19; you may want to read the broader context of John 5:16-30, but this lesson is built around verse 19.**

The great journalist and apologist G.K. Chesterton said: "If you meet the Jesus of the Gospels, you must redefine what love is, or you won't be able to stand him." This is so deeply true—it *is* hard to "stand" Jesus if you're really paying attention to what he did and what he said. He is the most redemptively disruptive person who ever walked the earth. Philosophy professor and C.S. Lewis scholar Dr. Peter Kreeft once told a class of Boston University students: "Christ changed every human being he ever met.... If anyone claims to have met him without being changed, he has not met him at all. When you touch him, you touch lightning."

Jesus alone is worthy to be worshipped, but not because we're "supposed to"—everything Jesus said and did fits together into a perfect mirror of the God we can't see but long to know. And the image of God we see in Jesus will bowl us over and transform us, if we will only pay attention. A quick read through the Gospel of Matthew, looking only to faithfully represent what he said and did, can profoundly challenge our misconceptions of who Jesus is and what he's busy doing. For example, here are 15 observations:

1. Jesus spent more time praying than speaking.
2. Jesus enjoyed spending time with self-confessed sinners.
3. Jesus said we'd know we were starting to make an impact when people started insulting, persecuting, and defaming us because of him.
4. Jesus hated it when people hid themselves behind religious rule-keeping, and he told his followers to plunge themselves into the mainstream culture like a lamp in a dark room or salt added to a recipe.
5. Jesus spoke openly about hell and warned that there are real consequences for those who cling to self-sufficiency and unbelief.
6. Jesus hated it when people prayed or served or sacrificed to boost their profiles or feed their egos.
7. Jesus was quick to forgive those who were repentant and quick to condemn those who weren't.
8. Jesus said the richest people were those who'd banked a lifetime of actions that honored God.
9. Jesus told us to ignore people who talk big but don't act big and to honor those who talk small but act big.
10. Jesus healed people of incurable diseases and permanent disabilities.
11. Jesus loved celebrations and enjoyed himself so much that the religious rule-keepers accused him of public drunkenness.
12. Jesus said, metaphorically, that farmers who sat around in the farmhouse waiting for corncocks to launch themselves through the door were sadly misinformed about the concept of "harvesting."
13. Jesus said our loyalty to him and his ways ought to outweigh our loyalty to our biological family and its traditions and practices.
14. Jesus told us not to focus our energies on fighting sin (pulling weeds), but instead to do everything we can to encourage good growth (growing wheat).
15. Jesus said the root of our lack of faith is our penchant to forget the acts and character of God—our biggest faith battle is remembering to remember God.

Even in this little journey through Matthew, it's easy to understand why we often prefer "lesser gods" to Jesus—he's consistently offensive to our Western Christian sensibilities, our "inalienable rights," and our everyday, self-absorbed behaviors. And that's ultimately what makes us passionately, inexorably, and irreversibly drawn to him. When we slow down and pay attention to Jesus, it won't take long before we won't be able to stand him, and then we won't be able to stop worshipping him.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **TEXT OR TWEETS**

**Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- What does God see when he looks in a mirror? The Bible tells us exactly what he sees—come find out this week.

- Ever heard someone say something like “God is a mystery we can’t really understand”? That’s not true—come tonight to find out why.

## **PARENT EMAIL**

**Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

We’re two lessons into our series focusing on how Jesus described himself in Scripture—a series we’re calling “In His Own Words.” Each week, we’re exploring the ways Jesus “framed” who he is—his purpose, motivation, and intentions.

In this second lesson, we explored John 5:19, where Jesus explains the overshadowing purpose for the Incarnation—God becoming man. Yes, he came to save us from the penalty of our sin and he came to restore us to intimate relationship with God. But overshadowing all of that is this truth: He came to show us exactly what the God we can’t see, hear, taste, or touch is really like.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking with your teenager about our lesson. Consider building your conversation around these questions:

- Brennan Manning says: “We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; however, we must deduce everything about God from what we know about Jesus.” How does this impact your view of God?
- What’s something true about Jesus that challenges how you’ve seen God in the past?
- What’s the most encouraging thing you’ve learned about God by seeing his “reflection” in Jesus?

Have an amazing week!

## LESSON 2: I AM A PERFECT REFLECTION OF GOD

## 2. LESSON GUIDE

## GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

LEADER  
TIP

Bring in as many mirrors as you can find—it doesn't matter how small or big they are. And bring paper and pencils—enough for each student to have one of each.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead students in this opening activity.

Give each student a piece of paper, a pencil, and a mirror (if you don't have enough mirrors for everyone, have people share the available mirrors). Then ask them each to look at their reflection in the mirror and draw a quick picture of their face. After everyone has had a chance to draw their own face, go around the group and have people each share their drawings.

## ASK:

- *How did it feel to draw your own face?*
- *If we had no mirrors in the world, how would that impact the way you feel about yourself?*
- *You can't get an accurate picture of yourself without an accurate mirror—in what ways are we surrounded by "inaccurate mirrors" that distort who we really are?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Author and speaker Brennan Manning says: "It must be noted that Jesus alone reveals who God is... We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; however, we must deduce everything about God from what we know about Jesus." In John 5:19, Jesus says: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does." Jesus is telling us that we can learn much about God from simply paying attention to the things he says and does, because he's a perfect reflection of God.*

## TEACHING POINTS

LEADER  
TIP

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read John 5:19 again, this time together as a group. Because this passage is so brief, consider having students read the verse several times, from different translations of the Bible.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Let's explore more deeply what Jesus is trying to tell us in this brief passage from Scripture.*

## 1. EVERYTHING HE SAYS, AND EVERYTHING HE DOES

### ASK:

- Remember, Brennan Manning said: “We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; however, we must deduce everything about God from what we know about Jesus.” How does this insight impact your view of God?
- Jesus is a perfect reflection of the God we can’t see—so, what’s something true about Jesus that challenges how you’ve seen God in the past?
- If Jesus does nothing except what he sees his Father doing, what does that imply about what God is doing right now in the world?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *In John 16:12-15, Jesus says this: “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’ ” Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit’s “job” is to help us understand and come to know the “secret, mysterious” things of God—he wants to be known. He’s not trying to hide from us.*

## 2. HIDING IN PLAIN VIEW

### ASK:

- What are some things about God that seem like a mystery to you?
- Jesus says that the Spirit will “disclose” truths about him to us—in what ways can we “listen” to what the Spirit is telling us about Jesus?
- We often think that it’s hard to understand or comprehend God, but what are some ways God has shown himself to you and to others?
- Jesus isn’t trying to hide who he is—he wants to be known—but what are some things we need to do to receive what he’s trying to give?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *We see the truth about God reflected in what we know about Jesus. Because this is true, we won’t get a true sense of who God is and what he’s doing right now if we don’t slow down and study his “reflection.” A false understanding of Jesus will lead to a false understanding of God. And a false understanding of God can lead to confusion, heartbreak, and even destruction in our lives.*

## 3. STARING AT GOD’S REFLECTION

**Have students form pairs. Make sure your students each have a Bible, and have paper and pens or pencils available.**

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Let’s take a whirlwind tour through the book of Matthew. With a partner, skim through Matthew in the next five minutes, looking for everything Jesus said or did. List them in categories, such as “Healed people of diseases” or “Scolded the Pharisees.” The idea is, in five minutes, to list as many things Jesus said and did as you and your partner can. Ready? Go!*



**LEADER TIP** Make sure each person has a partner (you may need to form one group of three, depending on the size of your group). Give students about five minutes to skim through Matthew.



**ASK:**

- How did this “lightning” overview of Jesus impact your understanding of him?
- What surprises you about something you’ve listed?
- If all you had was this list of attributes and behaviors as clues to who God is and what he’s like, what would be your one-sentence description of him?

### EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to stay with their partner(s) for these questions.



**ASK:**

- Jesus said he is “the way, the truth, and the life”—what’s an example of how you’ve found your way, or learned something true, or found the life you hunger for, through Jesus?
- What’s something you’ve always assumed about Jesus that has been challenged by this deeper plunge into who he is?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

### LIVING IT OUT

**ASK:**

- At the beginning of our time, we sketched ourselves by looking in a mirror—what words would you include in your “sketch” of God, by looking at his reflection in Jesus?
- What are three ways we could pay better attention to who Jesus really is? Which one of those ideas would you be willing to practice for a week?
- Most of us love to talk about the people who fascinate us—what’s one aspect of Jesus that fascinates you, and who could you share that fascination with?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Jesus wants us to know him, and to know his Father. And the Spirit is here to help us with that. Let’s close by simply quieting ourselves and asking the Spirit a simple question: “What do you want me to know about Jesus today?”*



**LEADER TIP** Have students find a quiet spot to ask this question, in prayer, and then give them two or three minutes in silence to simply listen for a response. Then close in prayer.

## SUMMARY



LEADER  
TIP

Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

## FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

*"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does" (John 5:19).*