

## LESSON SIX

# BELIEVING IN JESUS

*“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”*

LUKE 9:23-24



## REFLECTION

There are many opinions about who Jesus is, but a consensus is hard to find. Maybe the differences in conclusions about Jesus' identity are more a reflection of the people who are commenting. How would your friends and coworkers answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

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## SITUATION

After delivering the man in the Gerasenes from demons, Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them the power and authority to do the same. He told them to travel from village to village, proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing the sick. Later, the disciples returned to report on their efforts, and Jesus took them aside for a rest. That break didn't last long, as the crowds who followed interrupted them. This led to the feeding of more than 5,000 people in the wilderness. Shortly after these events, Jesus' own quiet time of prayer led up to asking his disciples a disquieting question: *What were people saying about him?*

## OBSERVATION

*Read Luke 9:18–27 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.*

## NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

<sup>18</sup> Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

<sup>19</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

<sup>20</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. <sup>22</sup> And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. <sup>25</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? <sup>26</sup> Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

<sup>27</sup> "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

## NEW KING JAMES VERSION

<sup>18</sup> And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

<sup>19</sup> So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again."

<sup>20</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

<sup>21</sup> And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, <sup>22</sup> saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

<sup>23</sup> Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is

himself destroyed or lost? <sup>26</sup> For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. <sup>27</sup> But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

## EXPLORATION

**1.** Why do you think Jesus posed probing questions to his disciples about his identity?

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**2.** What different views did people have about Jesus' identity? What was Peter's view?

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**3.** Why do you think Jesus warned the disciples to keep his true identity a secret?

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**4.** What does it mean to "take up your cross" daily? How is this done?

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**5.** What kind of commitment is required to follow Jesus?

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**6.** What are some of the rewards of sacrificing your life to follow Jesus?

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## INSPIRATION

One of the most dramatic scenes in the New Testament occurred in a city known as Caesarea Philippi. In the midst of this carnival of marble columns and golden idols, a penniless, homeless, nameless Nazarene asks his band of followers, "Who do you say that I am?"

The immensity of the question is staggering. I would imagine that Peter's answer did not come without some hesitation. Shuffling of feet. Anxious silence. How absurd that this man should be the Son of God. No trumpets. No purple robes. No armies. Yet there was that glint of determination in his eye and that edge of certainty in his message. Peter's response sliced the silence. "I believe that you are . . . the Son of God."

Many have looked at Jesus; but few have seen him. Many have seen his shadow, his people, his story. But only a handful have seen Jesus. Only a few have looked through the fog of religiosity and found him. Only a few have dared to stand eye-to-eye and heart to heart with Jesus and say, "I believe that you are the Son of God." (From *Shaped by God* by Max Lucado.)

## REACTION

**7.** Why is Jesus' identity crucial to your faith?

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**8.** What are some answers people give today about the identify of Jesus?

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**9.** How would you explain what you believe about Jesus to a person who has never heard his name?

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**10.** What opportunities have you had to proclaim your faith in Jesus?

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**11.** In what circumstances is it difficult for you to share your views about Christ?

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**12.** In what way does this passage motivate you to speak out about your faith in Jesus?

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## LIFE LESSONS

In today's world, there is no shortage of ideas and opinions about Jesus. Ultimately, what matters in our relationship with Christ is what *we* say about him. Saying nothing about him may be an option we take, but not one that expresses the kind of witness and honor Jesus deserves from those who claim to be his followers.

## DEVOTION

*Lord Jesus, we believe that you are the Son of God. We want to follow you, but sometimes we are scared of the risks and costs involved. But your Word teaches us that any sacrifice we make will be well worth the eternal reward. So we ask you to take our focus off of the things of this world and set our hopes on spending eternity with you.*

## JOURNALING

What things do you need to give up in your life to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?

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## FOR FURTHER READING

To complete the book of Luke during this twelve-part study, read Luke 9:1–10:42. For more Bible passages on believing in Jesus, read John 3:14–18; 13:19–20; 20:24–31; Acts 16:31; Romans 3:22; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; and 1 John 5:1–12.