



All Christians' Fellowship International

INTERACTIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTLINE FOR YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Foundations The Light of the World

Overview

Summary

In this fourth teaching of the Foundations series, you and your students are turning from the darkness of sin to the light of the world: Jesus. There's no one quite like Jesus... literally. We call him Savior, but what does it mean to call him king? It means he's in charge, and we follow his rule to bring heaven to earth. Jesus was not just a great teacher. He made the way of salvation for us. He did things only God can do; he was and is truly Immanuel, God with us in the flesh. He experienced the darkness for our sake, and he overcame death. His eternal life is ever resurrecting us, still setting captives free today.

Key Takeaways

1. Jesus is the light of the world.
2. Jesus is human and divine.
3. Jesus is with us today.

Scriptures

Mark 1:15 / John 21:25 / Mark 2:5-7 / John 1:1-4, 14 / Luke 4:18

Introduction

I know it's [month], but let's talk about Christmas. Raise your hand if you're the kind of person who can sing Christmas songs in July. Whether you're for or against Christmas songs outside of December, I have a few lyrics for you. Let's see if you can recognize them and finish the line with me....

Joy to the world, the Lord has come...let earth receive her king!

Hark! the herald angels sing...glory to the newborn king!

O come and behold him...born the king of angels!

What do all three of these famous Christmas hymn lines have in common? They refer to Jesus as king. Now, the little baby born in a manger may not look like much of a king, and he never sat on a throne in this world but calling him king is not just a metaphor. God sent his Son into this world to rule it. The mission of Christ was not just to make sure we feel good about God, or

even just that we make it to heaven one day. Jesus came announcing that God's kingdom is coming here, on earth, and it's coming now!

The first words of Jesus recorded in the Bible are in Mark 1:15. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" The Good News is that Jesus was making a way for us to get back to what we were created to be: living as God's people, doing things God's way. Because of Jesus, we can be people of God's kingdom, no matter where we live and who rules in our land. We can be people of God's marvelous light, even in a dark world, and Jesus came to make that possible and show us the way.

A lot of people believe in Jesus. Many folks believe he existed and even believe that he was a great moral teacher. But for Christians, Jesus is more than that. We believe that he's the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the defeater of death, and the hope for all humankind. And this isn't just because he was a really good guy. Christianity makes the claim that Jesus actually is God, the second person of the Trinity.

Transition

Now that's a lot. And we can use a lot of big fancy words to talk about who Jesus is and what he does. But when it comes to Jesus, it's not just talk. It's not just cool stories to tell about a guy who lived 2,000 years ago on the other side of the world. The story of Jesus is also about my story and your story. About the right here and the right now.

Think back to the cave allegory we've been exploring for the last few weeks. Remember how we talked about darkness and shadows, the chains, and the captors. But also remember that ultimately the story is one of liberation, of freedom! Jesus is not only the light of the world; his light shines into the darkness of the caves of our lives and rescues us from what binds us. Because of Jesus, we see the truth of the world, we see ourselves rightly, and we learn to love God and neighbor.

So, let's keep going.... Out of the cave, into the story of Jesus....

Point #1: Jesus is the light of the world.

When you think about Jesus, what's the first story that comes to mind? Do you think about him calming the sea or walking on water? Did you know about him multiplying food to feed thousands? Have you heard how he cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised people from the dead?

The Gospels tell us all these stories and even more. Things that Jesus did which are wonderful and wild. And yet, after recording so many of the teachings, miracles, and interactions of Jesus, the Gospel of John (21:25) says, *Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.*

And yet, even with all the amazing and beautiful things that Jesus did, there were a lot of people who didn't like him. Jesus said some things that were, and still are, pretty hard to hear. He said some things that people thought were too weird or just plain wrong. He liked to challenge the status quo, and he always pointed everything back to his Father, God; he really wanted everyone to quit hurting one another.

Jesus was like the light outside of the cave, beautiful and wonderful once you're living in it, but maybe a little frustrating and hard to get used to at first. A little scary because of the revealing

power of the light. That's the thing about Jesus— you're safe with him, but your sins aren't. He didn't come to earth just to hang out; he came because humanity needed him. Like the sick need a doctor, like sheep need a shepherd, like the darkness needs the light, we need Jesus.

And we need Jesus for something more than miracles and modeling good behavior. We need Jesus to forgive us of our sins. This leads to the amazing claim of the next point....

Point #2: Jesus is human and divine.

In Mark chapter 2 there is a paralyzed man whose friends go to great lengths to carry him to Jesus. Jesus heals the man's body, but verses 5–7 record what happens first: Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven." But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

Only God can forgive sins, and yet here is the man Jesus doing it! Now let's not get ahead of ourselves; Jesus was definitely human. He was born like us, walked like us, ate like us, and slept like us. He was just like us but not only like us. The Bible says that Jesus was the Word of God, and John 1 puts it this way:

In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

He existed in the beginning with God.

God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.

The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

So the Word became human and made his home among us. (vv.1–4, 14a)

When God wanted to rescue us, he came to us himself. Jesus is God in the flesh, God made human. We call this the incarnation. Jesus didn't just speak about God; Jesus spoke as God. Jesus is Immanuel— God with us.

I'm willing to bet that most of you know more of the story of Jesus. Jesus, the perfect one who never sinned, was killed upon a cross. For our sinful sakes, Jesus got up close and personal with the darkness. He even let death take him captive. But no chains are stronger than the power of God's love. The grave couldn't hold him, and because of his victory over death, our caves can't hold us either.

So death isn't the end of Jesus' story. But his resurrection isn't the end either. Jesus is still alive and shares his eternal life with us! This way we know that the Good News of the Bible is still good news for us now, which leads us to....

Point #3: Jesus is with us today.

God's kingdom is still alive and well. And we are his people, citizens of his kingdom, when we follow Jesus' way. He hasn't left us alone. He has given the gift of his Holy Spirit to comfort us and empower us when the darkness threatens. Jesus is still with us here and now, shining light into the dark world and calling us as God's image bearers to help him.

We must remember that our eternal life doesn't begin when we die. Eternal life has already begun, and we get to take part in it when we die to our old sinful ways. God's life-giving presence and life-changing grace are available to us now, no matter the darkness that surrounds us. His resurrection power is always with us, making all things new.

When Jesus got the chance to preach in the synagogue, he read from the prophet Isaiah and said that the prophecy about the Messiah was about him. It says,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free”

Luke 4:18

This is how Jesus saw himself and his ministry: there to soothe the hurting and give strength to the weak and here to bring us, no matter who we are, back to God.

Are there still people who are oppressed? Then there is still Jesus.
Are there still the sick and the poor? Then there is still healing and hope.
Are there still captives? Then there is still freedom.

Is there still darkness? Jesus is the light of the world.

He's still raising us from death to life.
He's still calming storms and bringing the kingdom near.
He's still in the business of setting captives free.

Closing

To end, let's make it personal. Some of you have already experienced the rescue of Jesus. You know what it's like to hear the chain hit the ground. Jesus is the lord of your life.

Do any of you need some good news? Is there darkness in your life where you need the light of Christ to shine? Are there chains you need him to break? There's no such thing as too far gone or too much darkness for Jesus. Not even death can stop him. The call of Christ to repent and believe is still open for us now. He is king of the cosmos, but he also wants to be king of your life. He's listening. You can talk to him.

Remember back to how we started tonight... Christmas songs? Angels heralding the whole earth? If we try and listen now... maybe, we can still hear them singing... joy to the world.... The light came and made his home with us. Jesus is here and will never leave us. Every day is Christmas.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you feel like Jesus is present and active in your life? If yes, what does that look like? If not, why do you think that is?
2. Jesus' calls everyone to repent and believe. But turning away from sin is hard. What makes it difficult for you to leave sin behind and believe what God says?
3. Jesus calls us to live by the ways of God's kingdom rather than the ways of the world. What does this look like in your day-to-day life? What does it mean for your plans?