

The Journey:  
A Discipleship Pathway For New Believers

A Training Resource From BridgeWay Community Church

by Bear Clifton

## SESSION 1: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST - THERE IS NO ONE LIKE JESUS

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life." – Jesus in John 16:6*

Whenever someone asks me why I am a Christian, or why I'm so insistent that Christianity is the only true religion, my first answer every time is to point straight to Jesus. There is no one like him. *Ever*. In all the history of humanity there has never been, and never will be anyone like him.

Christianity rises and falls with Christ. Apologetics – the defense of the faith – begins and ends with Christ. It's commendable if you can wax eloquent on proofs for God, and the inspiration of Scripture, and the problem of suffering. But the *Jesus Apologetic* – what scholars of old called the "supremacy of Christ" – is the greatest argument we can make. It's also the one that will best shore up your own faith when times of testing and doubting rake your heart.

As I've thought through how to explain the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, I've boiled it down to six reasons. I encourage you to memorize this list. Think them through. Or come up with your own list. But these six things are what settles the deal for me.

### His Words

No one ever spoke like Jesus. No one ever taught like him. Many Bibles conveniently highlight the words of Jesus in red. Go ahead and read them. Then ask yourself, who in the history of humanity has spoken like this?

There have been many brilliant orators and writers in the history of humanity. David and his psalms. Solomon's proverbs. Homer's *Odyssey*. Socrates could hold a crowd spellbound. Shakespeare knew a thing or two about words. But Jesus Christ blows the field away.

If God were to become human and parachute down to earth (which is the claim we make about Christ, minus the parachute), then he would speak as no human has ever spoken, and his words would be transcultural, transcendent, and transformational.

Indeed, Jesus' words were not a product of his time. His culture said, "Love your neighbors, but hate your enemies." But Jesus said, *Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you*. The culture said "Don't do to others anything you wouldn't want done to you." Jesus said, *That's not good enough. Do unto others what you would want done unto you*. The culture said don't commit adultery. Or murder. Jesus said, *Sorry, but virtue begins in the heart. Deal with the lust in your heart, or the anger that's churning there, or you've already broken these commandments*.

But Jesus' uniqueness goes beyond the words he used, and is seen also in the authority with which he shared them. "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away,*" (Matthew 24:35) he said with an audacity not even used by the most narcissistic politician.

It shouldn't surprise us then that Jesus invited people to build their very lives upon his words, and if they did, it would be like building a house on rock which none of the storms of life could bring down (Matthew 7:24-27).

## His Wisdom

If God were to come to earth, you wouldn't be able to trick him, fool him, or pull the wool over his eyes. People tried to do that with Jesus all the time.

*Should we pay taxes to Caesar?* they asked him. "Give me a coin," Jesus said. "Whose face is on it?" *Caesar's*, they said. "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Drop the mic.

*Lord, this woman was caught in adultery. The law says stone her. What do you say?* "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." Drop the stones.

*Jesus, who is my neighbor?* And in reply, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. Drop the mouth.

Jesus turned the tables on them time and time again. It's as though he could look right inside their hearts and read their minds. Which is what the Bible tells us: that he knew the thoughts of those who came to him and could perceive the very motives that drove them.

People who are mentally unstable can be brilliant, but there's a difference between brilliance and wisdom. You could not fool this man. Or expose him as a fraud.

## His Way

The ethical and moral quality of the way Jesus lived his life is astonishing.

A common prayer of Jewish men in those days was, "Lord, thank you that I was not born a slave, a Gentile or a woman". Yet look at the way Jesus treated each of these groups.

He healed the slave of a Roman centurion (two birds with one stone!) and healed the heart of an immoral Samaritan woman at a well. In an age when a woman's testimony was dismissed by the courts, Jesus granted that the first witnesses to his resurrection were three women. Children were treated little better than wild dogs, yet Jesus welcomed them into his arms and blessed them. (Karl Marx, who despised Christianity, was even moved by that one.)

Consider the tenderness with which he looked on a poor widow, or his touching of the untouchable leper, or his determination to find a lost soul, or his anger at unjust leaders who ripped off the weak and powerless.

Is it any wonder the crowds flocked to him? He fed them, comforted them, prayed for them, healed them, made them feel like their lives mattered, and that God himself cared for them.

Above all that, when I think of the *way* of Jesus, I think of his absolute sinlessness. Jesus came right out, and asked, "Which of you can accuse me of any sin?" (John 8:46) If I were to ask that, my mom would be first in line, followed by my wife and daughter, climbing over her shoulders. But I dare you to find a mistake, a flaw, a blemish, a scandal, one act of wrong-doing, one act of selfishness or immorality in Christ.

All the holy men who have ever walked the earth, including each and every Bible hero, were deeply flawed, and lived very unholy lives. But not Jesus. Again, I dare you. Find a sin in him. And if you can't, then that should speak volumes to you about who he is, and how you should respond to him.

## His Wonders

Consider his miracles and his acts of power. Even the first century Jewish historian, Josephus, concedes the fact that Jesus of Nazareth had stirred up the province of Galilee in the days of Pontius Pilate with miracles and amazing acts of power. The Old Testament prophesied the exact miracles the Messiah would perform when he came – healing the blind, deaf and mute – and these specific ‘signs and wonders’ were Jesus’ calling card (Isaiah 35:5-6).

But his wonders didn’t stop with his miracles. Think of the wonder of Jesus fulfilling all those Old Testament prophecies. Dozens of them. Specific ones, where he would be born, and *how* he would be born – of a virgin – the town he would grow up in, which tribe he would come from, how he would be betrayed, on which animal he would enter Jerusalem, the method of his execution, that his hands and feet would be pierced, that they would gamble for his clothing, that he would die with criminals, that a rich man would bury him, that he would rise from the dead.

To be honest, I have to take the miracles which Jesus did on faith. The angels appearing to the shepherds is a sentimental thought, but I didn’t see it. It’s just God being cool and makes for a nice Christmas carol. The miracles of Jesus I take on faith.

But the prophecies don’t require faith because they’re right there in front of me. I can read Psalm 22, which David wrote 900 years before Christ was born, and Isaiah 53 written 700 years before he came, which describe the Lord’s crucifixion as if David and Isaiah were eyewitnesses of it.

Jesus is the God of wonders beyond our galaxy, as a great old song declares.

## His Weight

By this, we don’t mean what he weighed on the scale. *“Boy, Jesus, you’ve been packing down the loaves and fishes. Have you thought about taking up jogging?”*

We use “weight” meaning his self-assurance. His swagger. His authority. Some might call it arrogance. He had no doubt of who he was and what he had come to do. You’ve heard of people who have *Messiah-complexes*? Jesus broke the mold.

He made crazy claims, like, “I and the Father are one.” And “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” The Jews heard him say these things, and at once picked up stones to execute him for blasphemy because he was claiming to be God.

He had the audacity to forgive people’s sins as though he were God. He accepted worship, as though he were God. He called himself the “Lord of Sabbath”, claiming to have authority over one of the Jews’ holiest events. He called himself the “Son of Man”, utilizing Daniel’s famous Messianic title, and the “Son of God”, claiming outright divinity. He spoke of an eternal kingdom that he would lead, and claimed to have the power to summon heaven’s angels. He said that he was greater than Solomon. And that King David wrote of him.

When you read these weighty, ridiculous claims Jesus made, you can only conclude one of two things about him (and it was C.S. Lewis that first observed this.) You can’t say of Jesus, *Oh, he’s a good man. He’s a fine teacher. I respect Jesus.*

Jesus doesn’t give you that option. Ordinary people don’t talk this way. Look at the weight of these claims and you have but two choices. He is either the nutcase of all nutcases, an utter and complete

madman or he was who he said he was – God in human flesh. You must either run from, denounce him and warn others to avoid him or fall down and worship him. Those are your only two choices.

But could a man such as this be crazy? Not when you consider the final quality Jesus exhibited.

## His Work

It's the one singular act for which Jesus was born into this earth in the first place. It's the reason there was a Christmas, and the reason we celebrate Easter. Jesus was born to die. He gave his life for you and me to *save us from our sins*, according to angelic testimony (Matthew 1:21). And three days after he died, he rose from the dead to prove that everything he had said and done was true.

The God of some religions ask you to kill for them. Christianity is the only religion where our God died for us. And this is why we call the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, the *gospel*, a special word that means "good news".

We'll have more to say about this in the next reading. But the fact that God loved us so much that he didn't want to lose us, that he took on our flesh and blood, and walked our earth, and died that brutal death for me...leaves me speechless and spellbound.

Until someone can explain away Jesus' words, wisdom, way, wonders, weight, and work, I will gladly follow him till my dying breath. There is no one like Jesus Christ.

## TRAINING WORK

### Growing In Knowledge

#### *Scripture Reading*

For this session read through the gospel of Luke. This is meant to be a flyover, to get a high-level view of the overall story.

What we want you to look for as you read are as many examples as you can find of the 6 W's. You can use the chart on the next page, or we recommend jotting these things down in your journal. Be sure to cite the chapter and verse where the verse is found. (e.g. 4:12; 15:1-10, etc.)

**Words:** Write out memorable verses or things that Jesus said.

**Wisdom:** Cite examples where Christ's wisdom is on full display.

**Way:** Write down examples of how Jesus treated people. Also pay attention to Jesus' character and integrity. While he may say some "hard" things, do you ever see him sinning?

**Wonders:** List as many of Jesus' miracles as you can find. Also do you find places where prophecy is mentioned as being fulfilled?

**Weight:** Take note of the weighty, "crazy" things that Jesus said, and the claims he made about himself.

**Work:** Jesus was "born to die". Jot down observations you make on how Jesus' talks about his mission and pay close attention to what we call the "Passion" narrative - the chapters toward the end that describe Christ's arrest, suffering, death, and resurrection.

Words

Wisdom

Way

Wonder

Weight

Work

### *Memory Work*

Memorize Luke 9:23-24 plus one other verse from Luke of your own choice. Use whatever version of the Bible that you enjoy most.

*Write out Luke 9:23-24 below.*

*Write out the other verse you choose.*

*Memorize the 6-W's from this session's essay, which will be of big help to you the first time someone tries to tell you that there's nothing special about Jesus.*

## Growing In Fruitfulness

### *Sharing Your Faith*

Each session we are going to ask you to work on a project that will help equip you to share your love for Jesus with others. In our church, we encourage our people to write out something we call *60 Second Stories*. These are short testimonies that take – you got it – no more than sixty seconds to share. When written out, it's no more than a couple short paragraphs. This makes them easy for you to share, and easy for others to listen to.

Every Christian should have a conversion story that describes how he or she came to follow Christ.

Your work then for this session is to prepare one 60-Second Story, then so Imprint it in your mind, that it becomes your “elevator pitch” for faith in Jesus, something you could share on a dime if you had to.

Choose one of the following:

***Your conversion story.*** Write out a 60-second description of how or why you gave your life to Christ. Try to have two parts in it – a B.C. part where you describe your life *before Christ*, and an A.D. part which describes your life now, *after Christ* has come into your life, and the difference he has made.

*Why you know there is no one like Jesus.* You might want to begin your story, “I love Jesus because...” or “I follow Jesus because...”. You can incorporate any of the 6 W’s if you wish, or come up with an explanation that better speaks for your experience.

Write your story out on the next page. Share with your team the 60 Second Story you prepared. We then want you to look for ways to share your story with someone else who is in your orbit of friends or family but is not yet a believer.

*My 60 Second Story:*



### *Serving Others.*

Fruitfulness also means growing in our capacity to serve others. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, one of the hallmarks of being his disciple is daily cross-bearing and learning how to deny oneself. How do we “deny ourselves”? It happens when we learn how to serve others, putting their needs before our own.

Read these verses aloud, then underline or circle any word or phrase that stands out to you:

*“You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over [others]...But is shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

*Mark 10:42-45*

From the beginning stages of your Christian journey, we want the idea of *servanthood* to be in your line of sight. For this reason, there will be a service project assigned with each session.

For this session, here’s your assignment: Ask the Lord in prayer to give you a thought or idea of how you can serve someone in your orbit of influence – a family member, friend, co-worker, a neighbor. Then in the Lord’s strength, follow through on the thought. Write it down below and share what happened with your coach.

### *Service Idea:*

## Growing In Christlikeness

### *Prayer*

From the very beginning of your discipleship journey, we will do everything we can to help you grow in the ability to pray.

To that end, the first thing we will ask will seem for some of you to be the hardest thing of all – **we’re going to ask you to get used to praying aloud**. I understand that for some, the mere thought of this may cause your skin to split or your intestines to rupture. But that’s why we’ll only ask you to do this at first with your coach or training team.

The second thing we want to teach you are some training models that will be useful in learning how to pray.

The first model is called the ACTS Model, an acronym that refers to four types of prayer:

A = Adoration

C – Confession

T – Thanksgiving

S – Supplication

The idea is that in your praying, you devote several minutes offering each type of prayer.

*Adoration* points to the idea that when you enter into God’s presence through prayer, it’s good to begin with worship. God doesn’t “need” our worship. If we refuse to praise him, then the rocks will, and creation won’t skip a beat. We however need to worship, for in giving God the adoration he is due, we are seeing the universe, and our place in it, properly. I was made by God and for God. When I start living that way, joy and rest will follow.

*Confession* is prayer where we come clean with God, and acknowledge our sins, failures, and rebellion against him. Each day we should take time to examine our hearts, and bring to God anything we’ve done, or failed to do, which has broken his heart.

*Thanksgiving* is a close cousin to adoration. “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!” says Psalm 100:4. It might be useful to think of thanksgiving as thanking God *for what he has done*, while praise is worshipping him *for who he is*. Thanksgiving can be thought of as Worship 101. We all have things we can be thankful for, and the incalculable benefits of living gratefully is something even hardened atheists recognize.

*Supplication* is the type of prayer where we talk to God on behalf of ourselves and others. Do we or someone we care for need strength, or wisdom, or provision, or healing, or help? “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you,” says 1 Peter 5:7. There is great power in off-loading all our cares on the Lord and letting him run the universe.

Your prayer work for this first session is to simply practice prayer by using this model. Try using it in various lengths. Run through the four parts for a minute at a time. Later, stretch yourself by praying for five minutes each. Twenty minutes will never go by so quickly.

*Share your heart and pray for each other.*

This is where we practice what we shared in the *Getting Started* introduction, under the *Christlikeness* section of the 3 Targets chart. Fill out this chart before the meeting and be able and willing to share what’s going on under the hood of your heart. Then pray for each other.

<p>How is my heart? Am I emotionally healthy right now? Where am I struggling? What victories have I enjoyed? What sins is the Lord working to bring to heel? (Ps.19:12-13; 139:23-24)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHRISTLIKENESS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” – John 13:34</i></p>
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