

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

## GOAL

The goal of this lesson is twofold:

1. *To help students understand and follow* the actions of Jesus in their own lives through Bible study, hard questions, activities, and specific life application.
2. *To make it easy for you* to facilitate and teach students. That is why the Facilitator Guide is packed with easy-to-use instructions, timeframes, and questions that promote thinking and draw out real responses.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- A copy of the Facilitator Guide for you and any other facilitators
- A copy of the Student Guide for each participant
- Be sure to check out the Live It Out section ahead of time to prepare. You'll need:
  - 10 sheets of paper and one roll of tape per team
  - level surfaces (like stacks of books or facing chairs) for each team.
  - an assortment of items to serve as gradually increasing weights (wallet, canned good, book, etc.)
  - measuring tape
  - prizes (optional)

## BACKGROUND

This lesson is found in the WHO NEEDS JESUS? set of *The Black Letters of Jesus*

1. That's Not Good Enough (Matthew 3:1-17)
2. Mind the Gap (John 1:1-18)
3. Intervention (Isaiah 61:1-9)
4. Who's Thirsty? (John 4:1-26)

## ROOT SUGGESTION

This lesson correlates well with other lessons in the [Identity Root](#) of *Deep Discipleship*. Here's an overview of the Identity Root, which helps students discover their unique identity in Christ:

God created humans in his own image, unique in all creation. Then sin entered the picture, and all people developed a warped version of their original identity. Christ came and died on the cross and rose again to offer us a new identity, even better than the first. He took on our sin and shame so we could take on his righteousness. He identifies with us so we can find our identity in him—a redeemed identity.

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## WHO NEEDS JESUS?

### HOW TO USE: Small Group or Large Group

The Facilitator Guide contains everything in the Student Guide, plus some additional material. This table outlines the elements of each lesson and provides an approximate timeframe, which you can adapt to meet the needs of your group.

- For a **SMALL GROUP** setting, use the white boxes below.
- For a **LARGE GROUP** talk, refer to the grey boxes on the right

		FOR A SMALL GROUP SETTING		FOR A LARGE GROUP TALK
		FACILITATOR'S GUIDE	IN STUDENT GUIDE	*include personal illustrations to make this a powerful talk
LESSON ELEMENTS	OVERVIEW	Read before facilitating	<b>X</b>	Read before facilitating
	OPENING QUESTIONS	Get students thinking and begin conversation (2-3 minutes)	✓	Use these questions as an ice breaker
	WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT	A Bible Study with discussion questions (15-20 minutes)	✓	Main Scripture and teaching
	A SECOND LOOK	Another take on this study with discussion questions (10-15 minutes)	✓	Use as an illustration to bring the topic to life
	LIVE IT OUT	An experiential activity to help students reinforce and internalize the lesson (10-15 minutes)	<b>X</b>	Consider using this as an object lesson
	APPLY IT	A practical application for students to do this week (2-3 minutes)	✓	Use this as a springboard to present students with practical next steps
	THINK ABOUT IT	Challenging quote to consider	✓	Challenging quote to consider
	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	Additional illustrations/object lessons	<b>X</b>	Additional illustrations/object lessons
	MEMORY VERSE	Verse to meditate on *text or post the graphic included in your download	✓	Verse to meditate on *text or post the graphic included in your download

# MIND THE GAP

## WHO NEEDS JESUS?

**The Black Letters of Jesus:** Jesus adopts us into his family, bridging the gap between us and God.

### OVERVIEW

Call it what you will. There is a division between God and humanity. It is more than a distinction between deity and human, although that's there. It is more than the difference between the physical and the spiritual, although that's there, too. Everything about the human race opposes the nature of God. There is a gap in our relationship with the Creator.

Who needs Jesus? Anyone who wants to bridge that gap. What makes Jesus qualified to do so? Well, John addresses that quite well in the first chapter of his book. Students will (hopefully) come away with a better understanding of the vastness of the gap and the goodness of the one who minds the gap.

### OPENING QUESTIONS

- When was a time you struggled to find the right words to describe something amazing.
- What makes you feel connected to other people?

### WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT

If you've ever travelled to London, you've probably heard the computerized voice on the Tube (England's subway system) reminding passengers to "mind the gap." The phrase serves as a safety reminder so that commuters pay attention to the space between the Tube and the platform at the station stop. Although it's too small for an adult to fall into, the gap has the potential to wreak havoc enough to merit the repetition. People have probably tripped, stumbled, or lost shoes enough times to cause travel delays or injuries.

There is a much bigger gap—a chasm—between God and humanity. We are separated by the very nature of being Creator and creation, spirit and flesh, holy and sinful. For us to ever relate, there must be something (or someone) that minds the gap, someone who connects the two opposing sides.

But how do you explain something so profound? How do you describe an inexplicable concept, much less an unfathomable person? More often than not, you are forced to use metaphors. That's what the apostle John does in the first chapter of John.

Keep in mind that of all the people who spent time with Jesus while he walked the earth, John (the author of this book) is perhaps the one who knew him best. He was one of the twelve disciples. Along with Peter and James, John was there for it all. The great days (the miracles, the celebrations) and the worst days (the long nights and betrayal by close friends). From the cross, Jesus asked John to watch after his mother, Mary. The entire book of John is this disciple's account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the first chapter, John introduces us to Jesus in all his glory.

**Read John 1:1-18**

## WHO NEEDS JESUS?

**Discuss:**

- What metaphors did John use in his attempt to describe Jesus?
- What gaps between God and humanity are noted here?
- Which phrase in this passage stuck out most to you? Why?
- Why do we need Jesus to “mind the gap” for us?

**FACILITATOR'S NOTE:** A lot of important theological truths can be found in this passage. The first is that Jesus isn't just another person, he's completely God, and now he's entering the world as a man. He is deity and humanity all in one. This makes him uniquely qualified to bridge the gap between sinful humans and a holy God, because he is the only one without sin—no one else could do this, only Jesus. It's also important for students to realize that there's nothing they can do to build that bridge. No amount of good deeds (or “Christian” checklists) can save us—only Jesus saves. Instead, our good deeds are done in response to the saving grace of Jesus' work on our behalf. The last thing to note is that the “Word” isn't a metaphor for Jesus, it is Jesus: “who is all that God is and the expression of Him (1:1, 14).”<sup>1</sup>

**A SECOND LOOK**

Verse 12 says that Jesus gives those who believe the right to become children of God. In other words, he makes our adoption possible. Adoption is the legal means of creating a familial relationship where one previously did not exist. It changes people from not being family to being family, from not being related to being related.

In order for adoption to be possible, a few things must happen. First of all, the biological parents have to surrender their rights through death or a signed document. Secondly, the judicial system must look for other biological family members who might be willing to raise the child. If none are found, then and only then is the child eligible for adoption.

Just because a child is eligible for adoption doesn't mean he or she is adopted immediately. There are foster children all over the United States who are anxiously awaiting their forever families. In order to be adopted, a suitable adult must agree to take responsibility for the child. Essentially, they raise their hands and say, “I want this child to be MY child. I will treat him/her as though I gave birth to him/her. This child will be as much a part of my family as any of my other children.”

From the child's perspective, this means they are accepted permanently into somebody's household. It means that they get a new last name and a new identity as either a daughter or son. It means that they no longer face the world and the future alone or unsure.

When Jesus gave believers the right to be called God's children, he did more than make us eligible for adoption. He didn't make us wait and wonder. He claimed us as his own.

**FACILITATOR'S NOTE:** Be sensitive. There may be fostered or adopted children in your group. Based on how well you know the student, you might ask him/her to share their experience.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Th.D., Ph.D., *Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1619.

## WHO NEEDS JESUS?

**Discuss:**

- Explain how adoption is one way Jesus minds the gap.
- Based on what you know of his relationship with Jesus, what kind of father is God?
- What assurances would/do you have as an adopted child of God?

**LIVE IT OUT: BRIDGING THE GAP****What you'll need:**

- 10 sheets of paper and one roll of tape per team (teams should have no more than 3 members)
- level surfaces (stacks of books or facing chairs) for each team, 12-16 inches apart. This is the gap they will bridge (make sure all teams have the same-sized gap).
- an assortment of items to serve as gradually increasing weights (wallet, canned good, book, etc.)
- measuring tape
- prizes (optional)

Before beginning the explanation, divide the group into teams of two or three students and give each team a set of supplies. At the end of the designated time, test the bridges one at a time to see which is the longest and which holds the most weight without collapsing.

**Say Something Like:**

*The world's longest bridge over water is the Lake Ponchartrain Causeway in Louisiana.<sup>2</sup> It spans 24 miles, connecting the North Shore of the vast lake to the South Shore. For approximately eight miles of the drive travelers cannot see land at either end of the bridge.*

*Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to build the best paper bridge. Appearance doesn't matter as much as functionality. In other words, we're going to test the bridges. There will be two categories of winners: the bridge that holds the most weight and the bridge that reaches the farthest without sagging.*

*Each team will have the same supplies to use. You have 10 minutes (less if there's a time constraint) starting now.*

**Discuss:**

- What was the most difficult part of this activity? Why?
- What are some things you try to do to build a bridge between you and God? How's that working out for you?
- Why is it hard (or impossible) for us as humans to bridge the gap between God and us?

**Say Something Like:**

*Under enough weight, all of these paper bridges would collapse. In the same way, the bridges we try to build to God will collapse. Only Jesus can bridge the gap for us so we can join him and be adopted as children in the family of God.*

<sup>2</sup> Lake Ponchartrain Causeway Bridge. "About the Causeway Bridge." Accessed May 15, 2017.  
<http://www.thecauseway.us/information/>

## WHO NEEDS JESUS?

## APPLY IT

What is one thing you can do this week to strengthen your relationship as an adopted child of God?

**Be specific:**

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

## THINK ABOUT IT

"A son or daughter in any human family is either born to or adopted by the parents. By definition, a child can't be both. But with God we're both born of him and adopted by him." – William Nicholson, *Shadowlands* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- There are many types of bridges or gap-fillers to use as examples. Consider using the example of how sign language interpreters connect two very different worlds—the hearing and the non-hearing—using hand motions. This can even be more powerful if you have a sign language interpreter in your church you could bring up to illustrate the point.

## MEMORY VERSE

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."  
John 1:12 (ESV)



**Disciples of Christ are God's adopted children.**

\*Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.