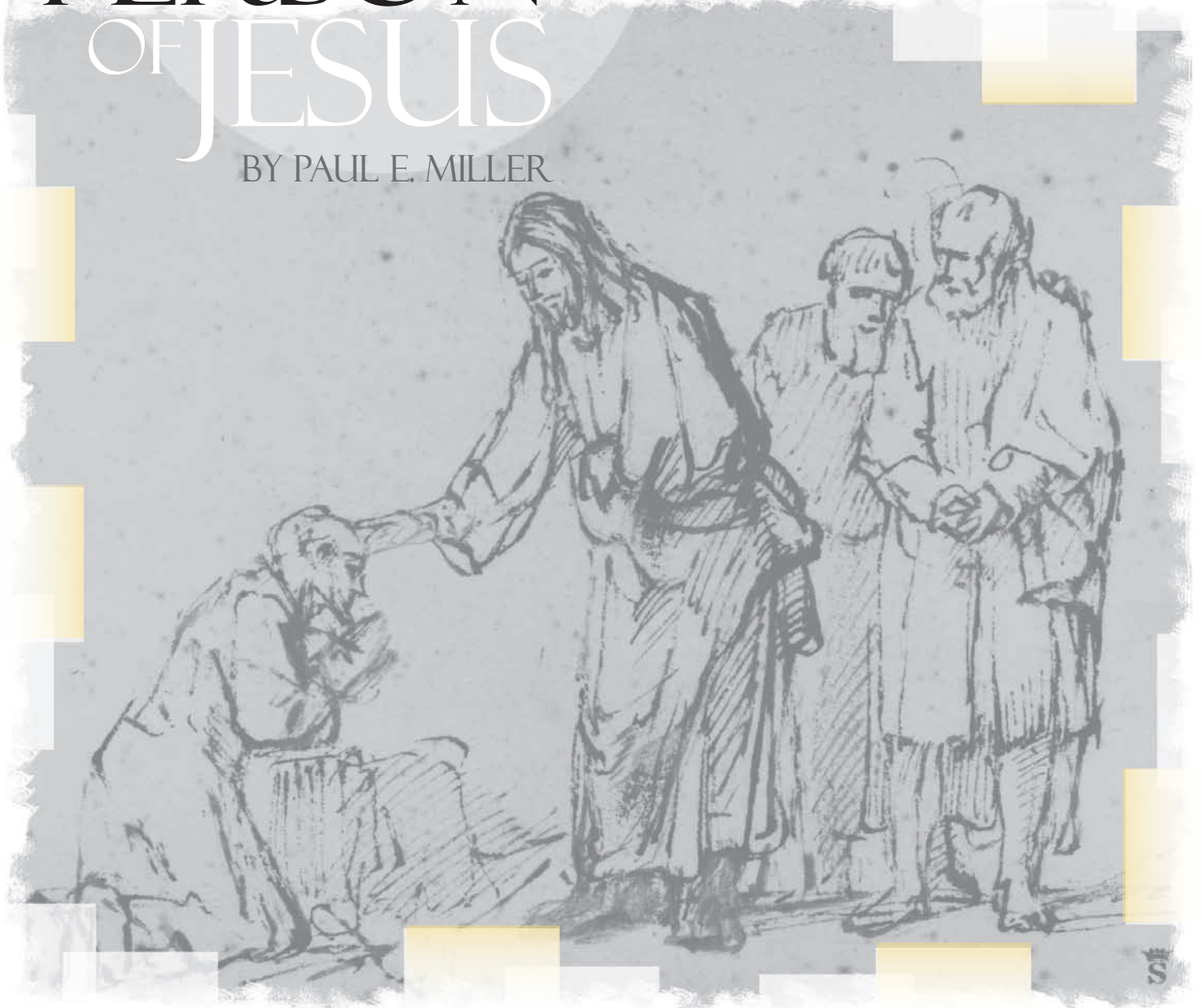


CLICK HERE TO WATCH PAUL MILLER LEAD THIS LESSON.

THE PERSON OF JESUS

BY PAUL E. MILLER

SAMPLE LESSON



A Study of Love

see Jesus®



P.O. Box 197
Telford, PA 18969

Phone: 215-721-3113
Fax: 215-721-6535
E-mail: info@seeJesus.net
Web: www.seeJesus.net

Author: Paul Miller
Editor: Keith Howland
Proofreader: Jane French
Layout design: Tim Howard
Cover and icon design: Jeffrey Phillips (www.pixelfare.com)
Cover art: Rembrandt, "Christ Healing a Leper," ca. 1650-1652 (courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

© 2002 Paul Miller

You are free to make unlimited copies of this Sample Lesson and to freely distribute it to anyone, so long as in each instance you distribute it in whole (including this copyright page), without making changes and at no charge to the recipient.

Under no circumstances are you to sell, modify, adapt, transform, translate or create any derivative work based on any portion of *The Person of Jesus Sample Lesson*, or otherwise use it in a manner that would infringe the copyright therein. All rights are retained by the copyright holder. Copyright notices, other notices or disclaimers included in this document may not be removed, obscured or modified in any way.

Rights and permissions requests should be directed to seeJesus.net, PO Box 197, Telford, PA 18969, (215) 721-3113, email: info@seeJesus.net.

Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this manual are taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Compassion

These text boxes that appear throughout the lesson are not a part of the manual, but are notes to you explaining various features of the lesson.

Summary

When Jesus is confronted with suffering, he looks, feels compassion, and then acts. This pattern may be found not only in Jesus' life but also in his teaching. The Good Samaritan looks, feels compassion, and then helps. The father of the Prodigal Son looks for his son, feels compassion, and then runs to greet him.

Jesus' act of looking is featured in numerous Gospel stories. For instance, in the home of Simon the Pharisee, Jesus teaches Simon to look by turning toward the woman and telling Simon, "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:36-50).

Three enemies of compassion are judging, self-righteousness, and legalism. The story in John 9 of the blind man is a study in judging versus looking. Jesus and the disciples are walking along, but only Jesus looks at the man; the disciples simply judge him.

We conclude this unit by seeing that Jesus' love follows the pattern of his incarnation. Love *incarnates*—goes inside the world of the person being loved. The Golden Rule is an invitation to incarnation.

Chapters in *Love Walked Among Us*—1 through 6.

Each unit begins with a Summary of the unit (including a note about what chapters in the book *Love Walked Among Us* the unit covers) and a list of Lessons that are in the unit.

Lessons

1.	Compassion	3
2.	Looking	15
3.	The Father's Looking	25
4.	Judging	31
5.	Power for Love	43
6.	Self-Righteousness	51
7.	Self-Righteousness & Grace	63
8.	Legalism	69
9.	Practical Legalism	77
10.	Incarnation	83
11.	Incarnation Changes Us	91

On the next page is a chart that shows how the lessons in *The Person of Jesus* study correspond with the chapters in the book *Love Walked Among Us*.

	Lesson in <i>The Person of Jesus</i>	Chapter in <i>Love Walked Among Us</i>
UNIT I Compassion	1 Compassion	1 A Mind Full of Someone Else
	2 Looking	2 Looking Shapes the Heart
	3 The Father's Looking	
	4 Judging	3 "I Know What's Best For You"
	5 Power for Love	
	6 Self-Righteousness	4 "I'm Better Than You"
	7 Self-Righteousness & Grace	
	8 Legalism	5 "This Is What You Should Do"
	9 Practical Legalism	
	10 Incarnation	6 The Golden Rule
	11 Incarnation Changes Us	
UNIT II Honesty	12 The Gift of Honesty	7 A Time to Speak Up
	13 Living Without Masks	
	14 Good Anger	8 Honest Anger
	15 Good Irritation & Rage	
	16 A Time to Shut Up	9 A Time to Shut Up
	17 Honesty is Patient	
	18 Reconciliation	
	19 Love Your Enemies	10 "I Know How Hard It Is; I Do the Same Thing"
	20 Prudence	
	21 The Secret to Love	11 The Secret to Love
UNIT III Dependence on God	22 Guidance from God	
	23 Saying "No" to Someone You Love	12 Saying "No" to Someone You Love
	24 Giving Up Control	
	25 Saying "No" to Yourself	13 Saying "No" to Self-Gratification
	26 Satan Returns	
	27 Love Moves Toward People	
	28 Touching	14 Saying "Yes" to Gentle Intrusion
	29 Selfless Openness	
	30 The Balance of Love	
	31 Faith Empowers Love	15 Faith Empowers Love
UNIT IV Faith	32 Faith Gives Up Control	
	33 Faith Surrenders	16 Faith Means Losing Control
	34 Faith Looks at Jesus	
	35 The Intimate Stranger	17 The Intimate Stranger
	36 Oneness	18 Oneness
	37 Repentance	
	38 Humility	19 The Way of Humility
UNIT V Journey Through Death Into Life	39 Sadness	
	40 Facing Death	20 Facing Sadness
	41 The Problem of Sin and Death	
	42 Gethsemane	
	43 A Symphony of Love	21 A Symphony of Love
	44 The Trial	
	45 The Cross	
	46 Death, the Center of Love	22 His Life for Ours
	47 The Resurrection	23 The Birth of Hope
	48 Love is Forever	24 Opening the Door

LESSON 1

Compassion

Each lesson has an introductory page like this one, with a Summary of the lesson, an Outline of the lesson, Goals for the lesson, and tips for Lesson Preparation.

Summary

In the midst of a large crowd, Jesus sees a widow coming out of a city, at the head of a funeral procession for her only son. As Jesus looks at her, his heart goes out to her. With this one death, she has lost everything and has just a lonely life of poverty ahead of her. Jesus first moves toward her—not toward her dead son—and comforts her heart by saying, “Don’t cry.” He cares for her even before he starts working on her problem. After the son is raised to life, Jesus presents the son to her. It shows Jesus’ total focus on her.

Chapter in *Love Walked Among Us—1: A Mind Full of Someone Else*.

Outline

This is the chapter in the book that contains the same content as this lesson. It is helpful if you read the chapter before teaching the lesson.

1. Introductions 5 min
2. Background to Widow of Nain Story 10 min
3. Jesus Loves the Woman 5 min
4. Step One: Looking 5 min
5. Step Two: Compassion 15 min
6. Step Three: Comfort 5 min
7. Step Four: Helping 5 min
8. Step Five: Focus on the Person 10 min

Total 60 min

This lesson is divided into 8 sections. The individual times shown help you to pace yourself as you teach.

You can shorten a lesson by eliminating material or summarizing some of the interactive material.

Goals

The **Love** goal is our obedience, the **Faith** goal is realizing God’s love for us, and the **Jesus** goal is seeing something about Jesus that makes you worship.

Love: Love not only helps the other person, it is attentive to the person by focusing on him or her.

Faith: God looks at us with eyes of love.

Jesus: Jesus did not come just with power to fix a broken world. He came with a heart to feel our pain and bear our burdens.

Lesson Preparation

Lesson Preparation focuses on preparing your heart.

In the week before you do this lesson, watch how you relate to people who are in need: Are there “Widows of Nain” (kids, spouse, friend, co-worker) in your life whom you rush by? When you help someone, do you pay attention to him or her as a person? Do you find yourself lecturing people that you help? Lecturing comes naturally when you help someone, partly because our hearts are so prone to “advice giving” and partly because the people that you help either made a mistake (which is why they need help!) or when you get close to them in the act of helping you discover things in their lives that could be better. Let God’s Spirit teach this lesson to you before you teach it to others.

Most lessons begin with an engaging question or “hook” to generate interest.

1. Introductions

5 min.

- A. **Introduce the Group.** [If you are just getting to know one another, you may need to take at least 15 minutes.]
B. **Introduce Jesus.** Listen to this interview of Einstein about Jesus.

Icons are visual indicators of what is happening in the lesson.

- Q. To what extent are you influenced by Christianity?
A. As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.
Q. Have you read Emil Ludwig’s book on Jesus?
A. Emil Ludwig’s Jesus is shallow. Jesus is too colossal for the pen of phrase-mongers, however artful. No man can dispose of Christianity with a *bon mot* [a witty remark].
Q. You accept the historical existence of Jesus?
A. Unquestionably. No man can read the gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.¹

If you have a seeker present, assume that no one knows where the gospels are, so the seeker does not feel left out.



Teach: Introduce the Bible. [Have Bibles available for those who do not bring one, or photocopy the page that contains the passage for this lesson. I prefer them to have the whole Bible from the very beginning because that is what I want them to learn and grow into.] Look at the table of contents that lists the Old and New Testaments. At the beginning of the New Testament you will see the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus’ disciples wrote these four accounts not long after Jesus’ death in order to describe Jesus. The gospel accounts are unique among historical writings because they have very little commentary in them. But they paint detailed descriptions of scenes and of how people related to each other.

2. First Century Jewish Funeral

10 min.



Read: Luke 7:11-17—The Widow of Nain Story

- Q. What is a modern, suburban American funeral like? In other words, if you were a Martian coming to America, what kinds of things would you see and hear?



[Write their answers on the tablet, as below under “Modern Funeral.” This is an open brainstorming time. If they forget to mention a key part of a funeral, such as a procession, say, “How do we get the body from the funeral home to the graveside?”]

This icon signals you to write their answers on a flipchart.

MODERN FUNERAL	FIRST CENTURY FUNERAL
Black clothing Casket with dead body Driving procession Flowers Quiet crying	Open wicker basket Walking procession No flowers Loud wailing

These questions in bold type are the heart of each lesson.

Write their answers with their exact wording on this side of the chart.

This side is what you teach from the “Historical Background” on the next page.

Historical Background

First Century Jewish Funeral²

[Using the list below, note the similarities and differences. Move through this material quickly or you will get bogged down. You do not have to mention every detail.]

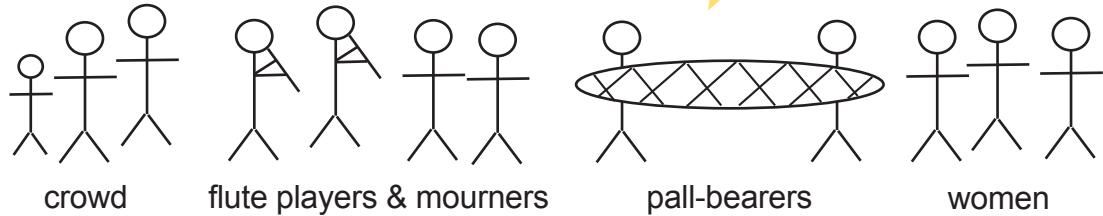
Similarities: a procession, something to carry the body in, and people mourning.

Differences: a first-century funeral would be very loud and emotional; and there would be no flowers—they came after Christianity and point to the resurrection.



Draw: Funeral Procession [To keep the drawing quick and simple, you may draw the people as lines.]

All sketches in the lessons may be drawn quickly.

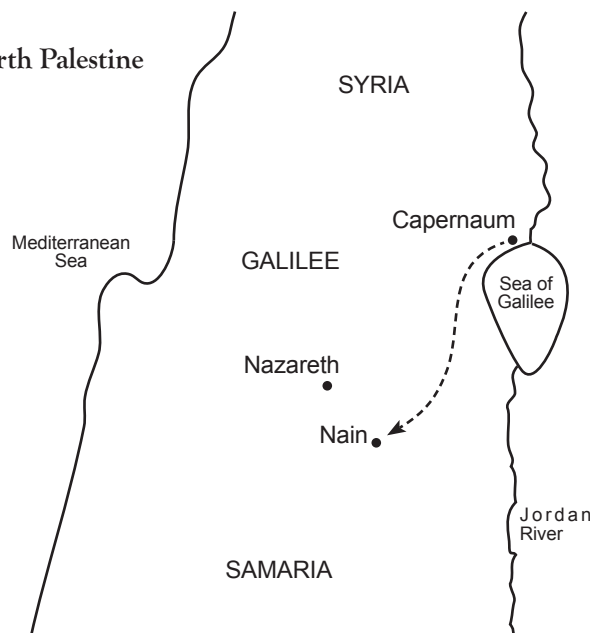


Go through these points quickly. Not every one needs to be covered.

- The body is buried within 24 hours (same as Jewish funerals today).
- The body is placed on the ground in the house. It is washed and dressed. The hair and nails are cut.
- Everyone in the town is expected to come. Mother sits on the floor moaning.
- As procession begins, the body is placed in an open wicker basket, face up with the hands folded.
- In the Galilee region, the women lead the procession because (in the belief of the day) they brought death into the world.
- Unshod pallbearers frequently change hands so that many can bear the burden.
- Mourning women and flute players accompany the procession. Even a poor family is expected to have one mourning woman and two flute players. These were real professions. Amos (5:16) and Jeremiah (9:17) mention those who are “skilled in mourning.” An example of professional mourners is in Luke 8:52-53, when Jesus says that Jairus’ daughter “is not dead but asleep,” and all the mourners begin to laugh—only a professional can go from weeping to joking and back again.
- They encourage one another to grieve by saying, “Weep with them, all you who are bitter of heart.”



Draw: Map of North Palestine



- a. The Setting
 - “Nain” sounds like the Hebrew word for pleasant.
 - Jacob’s promise to his son Issachar (the tribe that settled in that region) is that “he sees how pleasant is his land” (Gen 49:14,15).
 - Nestled on the southern side of a hill overlooking the beautiful valley of Jezreel.
- b. The Time
 - About 6 PM since funerals were usually in the early evening and a journey from Capernaum would put Jesus in Nain in the early evening.³
- c. The Crowds
 - Graveyard in use in that day is to the east of the city, so procession is heading directly toward Jesus and the large crowd following him.
 - In Greek, the funeral crowd is called “considerable.” Nain had a population of about 300 to 500 at the time and all were expected to come.
 - In Greek, Jesus’ crowd is called “a great multitude.” The same language is used of the crowd at the feeding of the 5,000, so this crowd size could easily be 1,000 to 2,000 people, if not more. The crowd with Jesus is larger than the crowd coming out of the city.

Do not be afraid of silence after you ask a question. Give them time to think.

3. Jesus Loves the Woman

5 min.

Q. How did Jesus love this woman? I’m not hunting for anything deep—just what you see Jesus doing. After we’ve listed them, we’ll go through each one slowly.



[Write their answers. Some possible answers, in order, are:]

1. He sees the woman.
2. He feels compassion for her.
3. He tells her not to cry.
4. He brings the son to life.
5. He gives the son back to his mother.

Teaching Tips are not actually a “part” of the study. They are included to assist the leader in facilitating the study. Read this one carefully to help you draw out the group.



Teaching Tip:

- The five answers listed are the five points of the lesson. But use the group’s wording.
- List their answers in the order that Jesus does things in the text—leaving room for blank spaces.
- By saying you are not hunting for anything deep, you are steering them into the text.
- Write exactly what they say, not your summary of it.
- People might want to get into a discussion about the individual things Jesus does. Accept those comments, but say, “Right now we’re just listing what things you see in the text, then we’ll come back over it more slowly.”
- Usually, the last two things people see are the first and the last things Jesus does, because they are the subtlest. You might need to draw them out by asking, “What is the very first thing Jesus does?” Good inductive Bible study keeps uncovering mysteries. If you peel them off too quickly, then it is ho-hum.
- Often people will come up with more ideas. If it is a comment that describes the whole scene, write the answer down at the side and draw a large arrow showing that it describes the whole scene. Here are some examples of good comments:
 1. He interrupts his schedule.
 2. Shameless, he does not shrink back from death and the mess that death involves.
 3. He touches the coffin and a dead man, taboo for any Jew.

4. **Step One: Looking/Seeing “When the Lord saw her...”** 5 min.

Let's begin by looking at the first thing that Jesus does.

Q. What else could Jesus be looking at instead of the widow? What would you be looking at?

The mourning women or all the people weeping. (At Lazarus' funeral John tells us that Jesus sees Mary and the people with her weeping. Jesus focuses on a whole group of people. The passage doesn't mention Jesus looking at just one person [John 11:33].)

Q. If I pick out one of you in this small group to look at, can you tell who it is?

Yes, it's pretty easy.

Q. Now, imagine that there are 400 of you; can you still tell who I'm looking at?

Possibly, but it's much harder now to figure out who I am looking at.

Q. If I'm looking at one person in a crowd of 400, how am I likely looking at that person?

Fairly intently. At least it's more than a glance.

Q. What does that tell you about how Jesus is looking?

It was likely quite focused, because of the size of the crowd. Also, it would be harder to notice in Jesus with so many people around him. Yet in the confusion of Jesus' own crowd, someone notices Jesus' focus on her. All of this suggests that Jesus' looking has some intensity to it.

Q. Why do you think Jesus looks just at her?

She is the one in pain.

5. **Step Two: Compassion “...his heart went out to her...”** 15 min.

Now, let's talk about what compassion looks like.

Q. The answer to this question is so obvious that it's hard to answer: How do we—sitting here 2,000 years later—know that Jesus felt compassion?

The Bible (or Luke) says that Jesus felt compassion.



Teaching Tip:

People are not used to easy questions, so if the answer is obvious they will think they are missing something and will be afraid to answer it. So you need to qualify easy questions by saying they are easy. You need to do the same thing with hard questions.

Q. Turn with me to Luke 1:1-3 and read it. Did Luke see this event directly or did he interview someone who saw it?

Luke interviewed someone who saw Jesus having compassion.

Go through these questions quickly.

This Teaching Tip explains why the question begins with “The answer to this question is obvious...”

Q. How did the eyewitness know that Jesus felt compassion?

We don't know. The eyewitness must have seen compassion expressed physically in Christ in how he related to this woman.

This question is to get them to see that Jesus' compassion was physically manifested.



Teach: The eyewitness saw compassion all over Jesus. It must have been noticeable because it is the most frequently mentioned emotion of Jesus in the gospels.

Q. Let's discuss what compassion looks like physically. But since it's hard to visualize, let's begin with anger. What does anger look like, physically, on a person? What do you see, feel or hear when someone is angry?



[Write their answers, as below under "Anger." You want physical characteristics, not emotional ones. If they give you something emotional say, "What does that look like physically on a person?" It is fun to joke about how easily some of them recognize what anger looks like.]

Mini-teachings like this are interspersed throughout the lesson. Do them quickly. Don't linger.

Q. In contrast to anger, what does compassion look like, physically, on a person?



[Write their answers in a column to the right, as below under "Compassion." They might have a slightly harder time describing compassion than anger.]

By doing anger first, you get them mentally prepared to do compassion.

ANGER	COMPASSION
body tense face red eyes burning raised voice clenched jaw may strike the other person	body relaxed focused on other person eyes soften speaks quietly moves softly toward person touches other person tenderly

Q. What is compassion? Where are you going physically? emotionally?



[Write their answers.]

- **Compassion has two movements:** Inside the other person feeling her pain, and moving toward her to care for her and to be with her in her pain.
- **Literally:** According to B. B. Warfield, the phrase "heart went out" (Luke 7:13) means "moved with compassion"—a movement toward someone combined with a stirring of your heart.

This is additional information about compassion that you can teach after they have given their definitions.



Teach: Jesus' actions that the text mentions are all characteristics of compassion: He looks at her. He moves close enough to her to speak to her. He comforts her. So the reference to compassion could simply be gleaned from observing those actions.

Q. If you were walking next to Jesus, what might you see? What might Jesus look like? Visualize the scene. Whoever saw Jesus at that moment noticed something about his whole person. (It's okay to repeat things we've already said.)



[Write their answers. Possible answers:]

- He's quiet. Someone asks him a question but he doesn't answer.
- He looks up—his eyes are focused on the distant funeral. He becomes fixated on her. He is unaware of what's going on around him.
- His eyes moisten. Strain on his face increases as Jesus sees more.
- Perhaps a quietness and gentleness come across his face.
- Perfect opportunity to notice Jesus because of the crowd situation. Jesus' compassion would stand out even more because of the crowd.

Visualization can bring the text to life.

Q. Why is Jesus feeling compassion? What does he see that makes him feel this way?

This woman has lost everything. Her only son is dead; she is already a widow, which means poverty, loneliness, nothing to live for, no future. With this one death she has lost everything. He feels her pain. He understands and senses her loss.

Q. What are all the things that this woman has lost?



[Write their answers.]

- She has already lost a husband.
- She has now lost a child.
- But it's not just any child—it's a son.
- And it's not just a son. It's an only son.

Q. What are some of the additional things she has lost? What are their modern equivalents?



[Write their answers. Usually they have already mentioned one or two of these.]

Health insurance, pension plan, savings, etc.



Historical Background

The Death of a Son

To have a son meant everything in Ancient Near-Eastern culture. When the prophet Jeremiah tells the people of Jerusalem how to weep when their city is under siege, he says, “O my people, put on sackcloth and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us” (Jeremiah 6:26).

Q. What kinds of thoughts might the widow have had about God? What kind of thoughts would you have about God in a situation like this?

Possibly guilt: “What have I done wrong?” Possibly anger: “Why is God picking on me?” (In the first century, guilt would be a more common reaction. In the twenty-first century, anger at God is more common.)

You don't have to ask every question. This is a good one to skip if you are short on time.



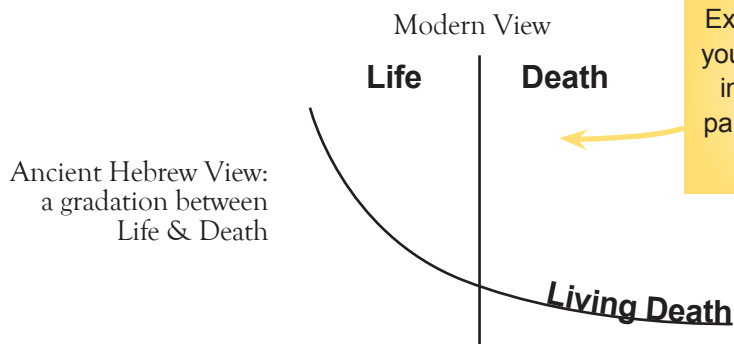
Historical Background

A Living Death

We think of death and life as two distinct categories, but in Hebrew thought there was an in-between state—a person could be considered half dead. In the Old Testament, when Naomi returns home after burying her husband and two sons, she says to the town folk: “Do not call me Naomi [‘pleasant’], call me Bitter, because God has made my life very bitter” (Ruth 1:20). Naomi was alive, but felt dead. So when you greeted Naomi on the street you would say, “Hi, Bitter.” This widow, like Naomi, has entered into a living death, cut off from Israel.



Draw: A Living Death



Explain the drawing as you draw it. [The words in the smaller font are part of the explanation, not the drawing.]

stop here if dividing lesson into two sessions

Each lesson has a suggested place to divide it in two parts if your time is short.

6. Step Three: Comfort “...and he said, ‘Do not cry.’”

5-min.

Q. Why does Jesus tell her not to cry?

- When you show love to someone, you introduce hope into his or her world.
- There’s no need for her to cry, because the situation really is going to be okay. *[If they have trouble getting this answer, then use the next question to draw it out.]*

Watch your time so you don’t go too long. Slow is boring.

Q. Describe a situation when it is appropriate for a mom to tell her child not to cry.

Her 3-year-old son comes in crying as if he’s about to die because he has scraped his knee. He doesn’t think the pain will ever go away. She takes him in her arms and says, “Don’t cry. It’s going to be okay.” She can say this because she knows the wound will soon heal, and that the pain will go away even sooner.



Teach: That’s what Jesus is doing with this woman. It truly is going to be okay, because Jesus is going to raise her son from the dead. Notice that Jesus’ compassion is not an unlimited absorption into her world. He does not make an idol out of empathy by wallowing in it.

Here’s an example of something you can skip (unless someone brings it up).



Modern Culture: Today it’s considered wrong to tell someone not to feel a certain way, so people may object to Jesus telling the widow not to feel an emotion. “Jesus has interrupted her grieving.” But Jesus is just being real. If Jesus raises her son to life, she does not have to weep anymore. Hope is coming. It’s easy to turn something like the grieving process into a modern legalism. Love takes sensitivity and flexibility. The grieving process can be a good way of teaching us to grieve, but it can also become a demand to always act a certain way. *[If I have only Christians in the group, I tell them that when they object to something in Jesus, that is a good time to examine themselves.]*

7. Step Four: Helping

5 min.

Q. How does Jesus stop the procession?

He touches the casket. *[You might have to tell people to look at the text. There is no magic or charisma in Jesus—when he stops the casket, the whole procession automatically stops.]*

Move immediately into this question; don’t linger over section 6.

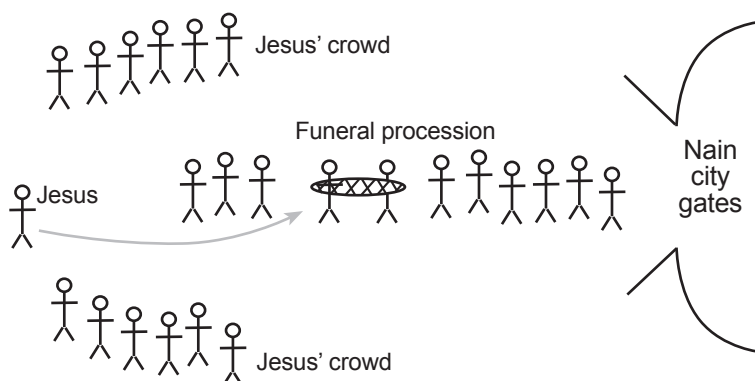
Q. If Jesus needs to stop the procession, what has the procession still been doing up until that point? It is something that modern funerals have in common with ancient ones.

The funeral had not stopped for Jesus and his crowd. They were going right through, just as modern funerals go through traffic lights.



Draw: Procession halted

You can just draw lines for the people, or this sketch will take a long time!



Q. Just from this little snapshot (which is typical of the gospels) what does Jesus' method of stopping the procession tell you about what he is like as a person?



[Write their answers.]

Gentle. Confident authority. [You may get a range of answers, but focus on gentleness to connect with the following short teaching.]



Teach: In Isaiah 42:3, the prophet tells us that the Messiah will be so gentle that he won't break a bruised reed or put out a smoldering wick. If a stalk of grain has been broken, then the slightest bump will knock it over. He will be so tender that when he holds an oil lamp whose wick is barely lit, he won't

The group may have a hard time picking up Jesus' gentleness until you go on to the next question and then ask "How is Jesus different from how most American men would act?"

Q. How would most American men stop a procession of 400 people?

They would likely shout or wave their arms.

Q. When people are truly powerful, like the head of a major corporation or the President of the United States, do they tend to overstate or understate their actions?

They tend to understate their actions.

Q. When people are not powerful (but want to be), do they tend to overstate or understate their actions?

They tend to overstate them.

Q. Now, are Jesus' actions overstated or understated?

Understated.



Historical Background

Ancient Kings

- We are watching the behavior of an ancient king, someone who is really powerful. Think of what Jesus is about to do: he is going to bring a dead person back to life, but he is humble and understated about it. He has nothing to prove. He does not need to draw attention to himself. There is a gentle yet powerful dignity in wordlessly stopping a procession of 400 people by touching the casket.
- An example of the subtle behavior of a king comes from the Roman arena where the head of the games would indicate with his thumb whether or not a gladiator should spare the life of the person at his feet. (The actual phrase was that the Caesar signaled "with pressed thumb." This needed to be visualized for film depictions, so it was turned into "thumbs up" or "thumbs down.")

Go through these questions rapidly.

Go through this material rapidly.



Historical Background

Touching the Dead

Touching the dead, or the things of the dead, was the greatest of all defilements. “A priest must never be in the presence of a dead person” (Ezekiel 44:25). But Jesus touches things and makes them clean.



Teach: Raising the Dead Son

Now Jesus brings the dead son to life. [For people who might be skeptical of miracles read the FAQ: “What about miracles?” in *The Person of Jesus Leader’s Guide* or on our website, www.seeJesus.net.]

8. Step Five: Focus on the Person 10 min.

Q. What is the reaction of the crowd? What two people are the crowd thinking about?

Jesus who raised the son. God who has now visited his people.

Q. What does the crowd call Jesus?

A prophet.



Historical Background

A Prophet

- Nain is only about three miles from where Elisha raised the only son of a couple at Shunem. Only once before in history had a dead person been raised and it was just a few miles from here, and it was also an only son. So this miracle points to a prophet from God like Elisha.
- The crowd immediately thinks, “God has visited his people.” For the previous 400 years (the inter-testamental period) there had been a prevailing perception that God was distant from the Jewish people. There were no prophets in the land to bring the Word of God. For example, in the time of the Maccabees (200 years earlier), after Antiochus Epiphanes had polluted the altar by sacrificing a pig on it, the priests wondered if they could use the defiled altar stones; but there was no prophet to tell them what to do. “So they tore down the altar and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them” (I Maccabees 4:45-46). (Maccabees is not a book of the Bible, yet like the writings of Josephus, it is generally a useful source.)

Q. After the miracle, the crowd is thinking about the miracle, Jesus, and God. But what is Jesus thinking about? (Hint: What is the last thing that Jesus does?)

He’s thinking about the woman.

Q. How do we know that Jesus is thinking about the woman?

Jesus gives the son back to his mother after he raises him from the dead.



Draw: [Write “Jesus,” “Widow,” and “Son” in a line, as below. Then add the arrows following the answers to the next three questions. This chart shows Jesus’ physical movements during the miracle. Jesus first addresses the woman then, after bringing her son back to life, he returns him to her.]

Q. Whom does Jesus go to first?

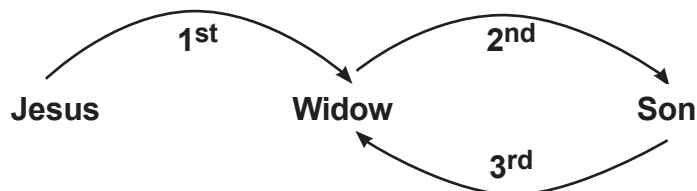
The widow. [Draw 1st arrow.]

Q. Whom does Jesus go to next?

The dead son. [Draw 2nd arrow.]

Q. Whom does Jesus go to last?

The widow. [Draw 3rd arrow.]



Q. Who is at the physical center of Jesus’ love?

The widow.



Teach

- Jesus models a perfect balance between focusing on the person and on the project.
- The compassion that Jesus initially feels shapes the way that he performs the miracle. By first focusing on her and feeling for her as a person, rather than seeing her as a project or a stepping-stone in his ministry, he is able to make her central to the miracle itself.

Q. Why does Jesus give the son back to his mother? It seems unnecessary.

- She is more important than the miracle.
- It mirrors the miracle. In the miracle he gives the son back to her by restoring his life. Now he enacts what the miracle has done.

Q. What would a preacher who has just raised a dead person be tempted to do at this point (especially if he thought he were the Messiah)?

Go on tour with the dead son; sell the book and movie rights; take up an offering, etc. Show off!

Q. Why doesn’t Jesus preach a sermon? What does this tell you about Jesus?



[Write their answers.]

- Jesus is completely other-centered when he loves. He isn’t thinking about himself. We’re watching humility in action. Jesus doesn’t use the miracle to draw attention to himself. He’s wholly focused on the widow.
- He doesn’t help her with her problem and leave her out of it. She isn’t separate from her problem.
- His concern for her is genuine. He isn’t using her for his own gain.
- Jesus isn’t into numbers and success. He is into people.
- By not saying anything, Jesus does effectively preach a sermon: “I haven’t come with magical power but with a heart to feel and bear your burdens. Your needs and predicaments are central; not the tidiness of my life.”

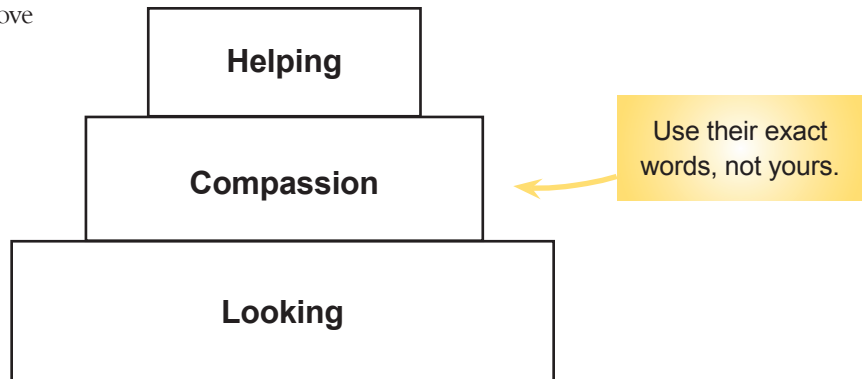
Q. How might Jesus have given the son back to his mother?

[This is a visualization (based on the text) that makes Jesus more personal.]

Q. Based on what we've seen in this description of how Jesus loved this woman, what would you say are the steps of love? What is the first..., second..., third thing that you might do?



Draw: The Three Steps of Love



Q. When you first read this passage, what stood out the most?

The dead son being raised to life.

Q. Now that you've examined the passage in depth, what has become more noticeable?

Jesus' compassion.

Q. Reflect on this story. How are you different than Jesus?



[Write their answers. Answers will vary.]

- I shy away from broken people because it's uncomfortable.
- Love like this takes time.
- I sense the cost of love.
- I stay on task, unaware of people.

Me	Jesus

Q. How does Jesus effect you? What do you think about him?

[Answers will vary.]

Lessons have a Gospel Connection to guard against moralism.



Gospel Connection: [It might be too early to share this with unbelievers, so use your discretion.]

In this story we're watching how God loves us. This one incident reflects the whole pattern of Jesus' life. He looks at us, feels compassion, and acts by giving his life on the cross for us. That is the gospel. Sometimes Jesus' death on the cross seems abstract; but by connecting it with his life, we flesh out the gospel and see how concrete God's love is for us. Through Jesus, God looks at us, feels our pain, and acts for us. We are not alone.

Notes:

1. S.Viereck questions Albert Einstein (1879-1955) in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Oct. 26, 1929.
2. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 552-559. Also, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), pp. 148ff.
3. If Jesus died in A.D. 30, then this is possibly the summer of A.D. 27, give or take a year. That would make Jesus about 32 years old; he was born around 4 to 5 B.C.