

## Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

**rfour.org**

**Year 4: Session 4** – Advent and Jesus

**Class 12: Matthew 16:13-20** – Identity of Jesus and Peter

### CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Read and discuss the story of Jesus asking his disciples about his identity
- Highlight / discuss the meaning of the word “messiah”
- Discuss why Jesus didn’t seem interested in telling anyone other than his disciples about his identity

### Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Iron Man*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. For activity
  - Printed out names that are cut into readable sizes (located at end of lesson)
  - Tape (to tape names to back of students)

## THE LESSON

### OPENING PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question: Who is your favorite (or least favorite) super-hero? And do they have a cover-up identity to hide their super-hero identity?*

### TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- Today is our last lesson in the “Advent and Jesus” session
- Some quick reminders about what we’ve talked about so far:
  - Advent simply means “to prepare” -- and it is the season before Christmas (the 4 weeks before Christmas).

- The idea is that we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus as well as prepare to live into what the birth of Jesus represents: That God wants to be at work -- in *us* and through *us*
- We saw how God was at work with Mary when Mary is faced with the scary aspect of being pregnant with Jesus, so God directs her to spend time with her aunt, Elizabeth
- We then read the story of God working with John the Baptist to prepare the people to be ready for Jesus with baptism (and repentance which simply means “turn around”) – and then John even baptizes Jesus
- Part of “getting prepared” is knowing *why* we might *want* to be prepared to follow Jesus. Many of our following lessons will be about helping you get to know who Jesus is so that you would be better informed about why you might follow him.
- To start getting to know Jesus, we’re going to read a Bible story today that’s about Jesus talking about his identity.
- To get started, we’re going to do an activity.

## EXPLAIN ACTIVITY of “Who Am I?”

- I’m passing out folded slips of paper.
- Inside the fold is the name of a Bible character who has been in one of the stories we’ve discussed during this year or is pretty well-known in general.
- Do NOT show or tell anyone else the name you’ve been given
- *[pass out slips of paper with names on it – for list of names to print out, see end of lesson]*
- Now I’m going to pass out pieces of tape to each of you
- *[pass out tape]*
- I now want you to tape your slip of paper on to the back of the person to your left in a way that can be read by other people
- OK – so now each of us have a name attached to us, but we don’t know what that name is
- The object of the activity, then, is to figure out “who you are”
- We will do this by asking each other yes/no questions.
- You will go up to someone, you will each look at each other’s back and then you will each ask each other ONE yes/no question.
- You can only ask a question that can be answered with a yes or a no.
- And when you are answering, you may only say “Yes” or “No” or “That’s not a yes/no question.”
- Once you’ve both asked and answered your one question, then you have to go talk to/ask someone else.
- If you ask someone, “Is my name \_\_\_\_” and the other person says yes, then you can sit down
- Any questions?

## DO ACTIVITY

*NOTE to teachers:* Students might have trouble asking questions that help to eliminate possibilities: If this turns out to be the case, encourage them to find out if their person is Old Testament or New Testament, a man or a woman, if s/he is more known for good things or bad things, etc.

## ASK

- What questions did you ask to help yourself figure out who you were?
- Did it help to know the general type of person you were (that is: A Bible character)?
- Was it easy to answer the questions that were asked of you? Why / why not?
- When answering questions, were you ever not 100% sure, but still said “yes” or “no” instead of “I don’t know”?

## TELL / TRANSITION to Scripture Story

- We just finished an activity where we got to guess who we were by asking other people in the class questions to help us know who we were.
- In asking other people who we were, some of us might have seen that others didn't know who you were.
- Or, that they only knew certain things about you
- In some ways, then, it was like a test, right?
- In the scripture we're going to read next, let's see if you notice something similar to our activity happening with Jesus and his disciples
- This story takes place probably about mid-way through Jesus' ministry.
- Let's see what happens...

## READ Matthew 16:13-20 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my

Father in heaven. 18And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah."

## ASK

- In verse 13, what does Jesus ask his disciples? (who other people say that the Son of Man is)
- Verse 14 -- what are the answers?
- Thinking back to our activity, why do you think there are so many different answers? (because just like some of us didn't know the Bible characters very well, it seems like the people, in general, don't know Jesus very well)
- Verse 16 – After Jesus gets more personal and asks his disciples who THEY think he is, what is Peter's response? (the Messiah, son of the living God)
- Verse 17 – Do you think Jesus agrees with Peter's response? (yes)
- Verse 18 – And because Peter knows who Jesus is, what's going to happen for Peter? (the church will be built upon him)
- Verse 18 cont. – Do you think Peter believes Jesus?
- Verse 19 – Sounds like there's some power gained when you know who Jesus is, doesn't it?
- Who do you hear other people (your parents, people in church, kids at school) say Jesus is?
- A bit more personal: I invite you to share who you think Jesus is and why – note that we're not going to argue with you; we're just sharing what we think (*expect to not have many speak up about this – in that case, as teachers, be willing to share some of your own understandings if you want but be careful in how you frame it – otherwise it might sound like you're saying that what you think is how your students should think as well – and agree or not – that's not the intent of Sunday school. We don't want to force our beliefs upon our students. Instead, we want to give them information about God, Jesus, Christianity [as well as your own reasons for why you made your choices to follow Jesus] so that they can make their own decisions*).
- In verse 20, it almost sounds like Jesus has a secret identity, doesn't it?

- Can you think of people or stories, like movies, where the characters have secret identities? (Superman, Spiderman, Batman, spies, undercover cops)
- Why do those characters have secret identities? (Keeps them safe. Let's them see things they normally wouldn't be able to see. In the case of superheroes, it keeps other people from interfering with their regular life).
- Of these reasons that you just named, what reason do you think best fits why Jesus is wanting to keep his identity secret at the time?

## TELL

- So three things to talk about 1. The word *Messiah* 2. Jesus building his church on Peter and 3. Jesus' secret identity
- "Messiah" is a Hebrew word. And the Greek word for Messiah is – Christ. That's right. *Christ* is not Jesus' last name. It's just the Greek word for Messiah. So Jesus Christ is the same thing as Jesus Messiah
- Messiah was and still is a word that is understood by Jews to describe a person with super-like powers given by God who will restore Israel to greatness, in a political nationalistic sort of way.
- But like most things like this – there are a lot of areas in the definition that are disagreed upon. For instance, some people think the Messiah can't ever die (which is why some people argue Jesus couldn't have been the Messiah). Others think that the messiah will lead an army. Others think that the messiah will be able to heal thousands of people on a whim. It goes on and on.
- Overall, though, a bigger, better King David (remember him – dancing in the streets?) is how the general consensus of the Messiah seems to be – someone who will lead Israel to be a great country.
- Another term in today's story is "Son of Man" and it is a term that scholars believe is very similar to Messiah, but probably has some subtle differences that we aren't entirely able to articulate
- So when Peter calls Jesus the Messiah – Peter is saying a really big and even controversial thing.
- In verse 18, it seems like Jesus is rewarding Peter for his answer about who Jesus is.
- But what Jesus is actually saying is that because Peter knows who Jesus is, then he'll have what it takes to help other people get to know who Jesus is -- which is what the church is supposed to be: A way to help people better know Jesus → which then helps them better know God → which then helps them better share God's gifts with others.
- Why Jesus tells the disciples to keep his identity secret is probably for a number of reasons. Here are the main two to consider right now:
  - 1. It's a controversial statement – no one really knows what being the messiah really means and then what Jesus had to say/teach would get lost in the argument about whether he's the messiah or not
  - 2. People who DO think he's the messiah, but think he's going to be a better, bigger King David messiah might derail Jesus' ministry by getting Rome involved much earlier than Rome actually does get involved (this would've been bad because the way Rome takes care of kings is by killing them)
- To help us better think about why Jesus doesn't want this concept of him as messiah getting shared with others who do not yet know him, let's watch the following movie clip from the first IronMan movie where Tony Stark, who *is* Iron Man, finally tells people that he's Iron Man.
- Let's see what happens when he tells them.

## WATCH MOVIE CLIP

## ASK

- When Tony Stark says at the beginning of the clip that he COULD be Iron Man, who tells him he is not? (his secretary, Pepper)

- And then, who, at the press conference, doesn't think Tony Stark is Iron Man? (the woman reporter)
- Finally, before he reveals that he is Iron Man, what reasons does Tony Stark give for why he couldn't be Iron Man (many, public, character deficiencies)
- Once he does say that he is Iron Man, do the people respond very differently to him?
- What do you think, was there an advantage for Tony having people NOT know that he was Iron Man? If yes, what?

## TELL

- So, you may have noticed that the video clip is just about the exact opposite of the story we read
- Those who are closest to the main character don't CLAIM to know his true identity (though some of them DO know his true identity) and then the main character reveals his true identity to EVERYONE
- What IS the same is that there seems to be some doubt about who Tony is
- And, furthermore, we can really see how differently the crowd of reporters treats Tony once he claims to be Iron Man
- At that point, then, it becomes all about what it means to be Iron Man, etc.
- So this is why Jesus wants to keep the Messiah thing a secret.
- To repeat the two reasons:
  - 1. The title makes people crowd around him because of the title, not because of what he has to offer/teach
  - 2. The title brings the authorities/Rome into the picture
- So, this may seem strange, but the same thing is true for us today -- the important thing about Jesus is *not* Jesus' title – the important thing is what Jesus is offering and teaching – which is: How we can better know and connect with God.
- Jesus knew this – and he also knew that the more the people got to know him (instead of the title) and learn from him, the better they'd know who he was – which is exactly what we see happen with Peter.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Bible Names to print out*

# Nebuchadnezzar

# John the Baptist

Adam

Abel

Eve

Daniel

Cain

David

Naaman

Mary

Moses

Elizabeth

Aaron

Gabriel