the 13 most important BIBLE LESSONS for teenagers

COMPLETE MEETINGS FOR YOUTH GROUPS AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

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The 13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Teenagers:
Complete Meetings for Youth Groups and Sunday Schools

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INTRODUCTION

"Why did Jesus die on the cross, anyway?" Jenna finally voiced the question that most of the other students were thinking. "I mean, why didn't God just wipe out sin and suffering? It doesn't make sense."

The youth leader suddenly realized she'd been speaking over students' heads. She'd been talking about Jesus' final words on the cross, but some of her students weren't even sure who Jesus is. And they didn't understand why an all-powerful, merciful God would allow his only Son to be brutally killed.

The leader needed to refocus her lesson—and the next several lessons—to teach her students the basics:

- **Who is Jesus?**
- **Who is God?**
- **What's a faith commitment?**
- **What's the church?**
- **Why do we need a Savior?**

Young people need a firm faith foundation to stand in the midst of challenging influences and competing "truths" in life. They need to know what they believe and why they believe it. Otherwise, they can be easily swayed by others who challenge their faith or lead them into an imitation Christianity.

But many teenagers don't have a strong faith foundation. Even students who've grown up in the church sometimes can't explain who Jesus is or what it means to be a Christian.

So how do you cover faith "basics" and still keep your lessons interesting and fun so young people will really learn?

Use *The 13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Teenagers!* These lessons cover 13 foundational doctrines of Christianity, without boring lectures and endless note-taking. By using R.E.A.L. (Relational, Experiential, Applicable, Learner-Based) techniques, these fun lessons will hold students' interest. Students will find it easy to learn about important Christian doctrines, such as:

- **the power of Jesus' death and resurrection,**
- **the Holy Spirit's role in their life,**
- **the beauty and necessity of prayer, and**
- **the privilege of telling others about a relationship with Jesus.**

The lessons also provide a biblical perspective on issues such as Creation and Jesus' return. And with fast instructions and easy-to-use handouts, you can help students learn these vital concepts with ease.

Use these lessons as Sunday school curriculum. Or plan a series of weekly Bible studies that focus on a different topic each week. The lessons work especially well for a confirmation class or a course for new Christians.

You can also cover certain topics as needs arise in your youth group. For example, in the scene described at the beginning of the Introduction, the youth leader could use three lessons: "Who Is Jesus?" "Who Is God?" and "The Family of Faith." Each provides valuable information about Jesus' identity and his mission here on earth.

As you explore these lessons, watch students' faith blossom as they build a foundation in Jesus that will last forever

LESSON 1

WHO IS JESUS?

By Cindy Hansen

Who is Jesus, anyway? How do you define him for teenagers who have little knowledge of the Bible or the Christian faith? Well, Jesus isn't merely …

- **A super-nice guy.**
- **A great teacher and prophet.**
- **A good man who helped a lot of people, so we should model our lives after him.**
- **A mysterious guy who most people don't really understand but still talk about today anyway.**

All these descriptions of Jesus way-underestimate him—and students need a true understanding of the God-man at the center of the Christian faith.

Use this lesson to teach young people about who Jesus is, what he did, and why he's so important to our everyday life.

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- **explore what they already know about Jesus,**
- **search the Bible for descriptions and insights about Jesus,**
- **use "If ... then" statements to make connections to their lives today,**
- **design wanted posters of themselves, and**
- **receive a reminder of Jesus' love for them.**

THE LESSON

1 Wanted—a Definition of Jesus

You'll need a copy of the "Wanted" poster on page 9, enlarged to 11×17 inches if possible. Tape the poster to a wall. For each person, you'll need a pencil and two large sticky notes.

As students enter the meeting room, give them each a pencil and two large sticky notes. Show the "Wanted" poster, and have students each write on their labels what they already know about Jesus. It can be as simple as "He was a man" or "He lived a long time ago."

After students have written their answers and stuck them to the poster, read their statements aloud. Say: **We're going to add to what we already know about Jesus and make connections to our lives today. We're all "private eyes" in search of a most-wanted man: Jesus.**

2 Mystery Theater

You'll need a Bible, a manger or a box labeled "Manger" that's filled with hay or straw, and as many of the following Sherlock Holmes props as you can get: a hat, a trench coat, a pipe, and a magnifying glass.

Put on the Sherlock Holmes outfit and walk over to the manger. In your best British accent, say: **Welcome to Mystery Theater. We're in search of a most-wanted man: a man named Jesus. But what do we know about this person? How do we solve the case of his true identity? Let's look at what we already know about Jesus' birth and early years.**

1. **Jesus' mother was the Virgin Mary, and his earthly father was Joseph. Jesus is God's Son. You can read about those amazing facts in Luke 1:26-35.**

2. **Jesus was born in a small town called Bethlehem. He was born in a manger like this, because there wasn't room for his parents to stay in any of the town's inns (Luke 2:1-7).**

3. **Angels and a star led shepherds and wise men to see the baby Jesus. They'd been waiting for this amazing moment. Prophets from ages before had predicted Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 2:8-20).**

4. **At age 12, Jesus astonished religious teachers in the temple with his knowledge about God (Luke 2:41-52).**

5. **Jesus began his ministry when he was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23).**

Say: **And here ends our Mystery Theater. Let's continue our search for other clues to this man's identity.**

Jesus Clues

(For every two people, you'll need a Bible, a marker, and a copy of the "Clue Search" handout on page 10.)

Form pairs by having students, one at a time, say either "Sherlock" or "Watson." Have the Sherlocks each find a Watson for a partner.

Give each mystery-solving duo a Bible, a marker, and a "Clue Search" handout. Tell pairs the clues they'll analyze are found in the Bible. If students are unfamiliar with the Bible, have everyone use the same translation, and give students the page numbers where their verses are found.

Have pairs each look up one or more of the following Bible passages and write at least one fact about Jesus on their handout. Depending on the number of students you have, you may need to give more than one passage to each pair so all the passages are covered.

Here are the passages and clues:

- **Matthew 2:4-6 (Prophets predicted God would send a Savior. Jesus fulfills that prediction or prophecy.)**
- **Matthew 3:17 (Jesus is God's Son.)**
- **Matthew 6:8-15 (Jesus teaches us how to pray to God.)**
- **Matthew 8:26-27 (Jesus did many miracles and amazed many people.)**

- **Matthew 28:20b (Jesus promises to be with us forever.)**
- **John 3:16-17 (God loves us so much he sent Jesus to live and die for us. If we believe in Jesus, we'll live forever.)**
- **John 14:6 (Jesus is the only way to be with God. Jesus is truth. Jesus is life.)**
- **1 John 3:16 (Because of Jesus' example, we know how to love each other.)**

When pairs are finished, have them each tell what they wrote on their handout. Congratulate the pairs on their investigative abilities.

Brilliant Deductions, Watsons

(You'll need a marker, tape, and either a whiteboard or newsprint taped to the wall. At the top write, "If we know...." In the middle write, "Then we know....")

Have students stay with their partners. Say: **Now that you've searched for clues, let's test your "private eye-Qs." For all the facts we learned, we'll come up with ideas about what they mean for us today.**

Call students' attention to the board.

Have pairs each read a fact (or facts) about Jesus they wrote on their "Clue Search" handout. After they read, have them each tape their handout under "If we know..." Then, as a large group, complete and write an example of "Then we know...." For example:

If we know... Jesus died for our sins because he loves us.
Then we know... love is what motivates him.

Continue until all the handouts are taped up and you've written an example of what each fact means. Then ask:

- **How is our private-eye search like our search to find meaning in life?**
- **Which of these "If…Then" statements best describes something that's already true about your life, and which describes something that's not yet true?**

- **What's one conclusion that especially impacts you? Explain.**
- **Which conclusion seems most out-of-reach or difficult to live out for you?**

You're Wanted

(You'll need white paper, markers, and tape.)

Say: **As you've deduced from your private-eye search, Jesus loves all of us, and he wants to be the center of our lives. Jesus wants *you*.**

Give students each a piece of white paper and some markers, and have them draw a small self-portrait in the middle of their piece of paper. Then have them stop and close their eyes, with their paper in front of them.

Say: **Be quiet right now—let's spend some time just listening to Jesus. That's all prayer really is—talking to Jesus and listening to Jesus. "Listening" really means paying attention to his "still, small voice." So, in just a moment, silently ask Jesus this simple question: "What do you really think of me?" After you ask, pause in the quiet and listen. You might get a word or a phrase or a Bible verse or even a picture in your head. Whatever it is, write it or draw it in the white space that's left on your paper. We'll do this for several minutes, so you might have a few things to add to your paper. First, I'll pray to lead us into this time: "Jesus, thank you for speaking to us. Help us hear your voice, just as you promised we could. We take authority over our own voice now, and we also tell your enemy to be quiet. We want to hear only your voice. Please, help us each hear what you really think of us….**

Pause for three minutes in silence, giving students time to listen and add to their paper. Then have them each tape their paper around the "Wanted" poster.

6 Case Closed

(You'll need a marker. Copy and cut apart enough "Cross Patterns" on page 11 so each person has one. Gather five different-size sacks, and put the crosses in the smallest sack. Number the sacks from largest to smallest, and on each sack write one of Jesus' affirmations from below. Place the sacks inside each other—starting with the smallest and ending with the largest—so everything ends up in the largest sack.)

Write these affirmations from Jesus on the sacks:

- **Bag 1—"Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7).**
- **Bag 2—"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).**
- **Bag 3—"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28).**
- **Bag 4—"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).**
- **Bag 5—"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (John 15:16).**

Form a circle, and show students the large sack (with the other sacks inside it). Pass around the sack while having students quietly sing the old children's song "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know." When the song ends, have the person holding the sack read aloud the affirmation on it. Then remove the outer sack and continue passing while students say the words again. Continue until all five affirmations are read. Have the person who opens the smallest sack present a cross to each person.

Encourage students to keep their cross on their bathroom mirror or in their school locker as a daily reminder of Jesus' love.

WANTED:

The identity of this man.

Those who help identify him will receive a

—REWARD—

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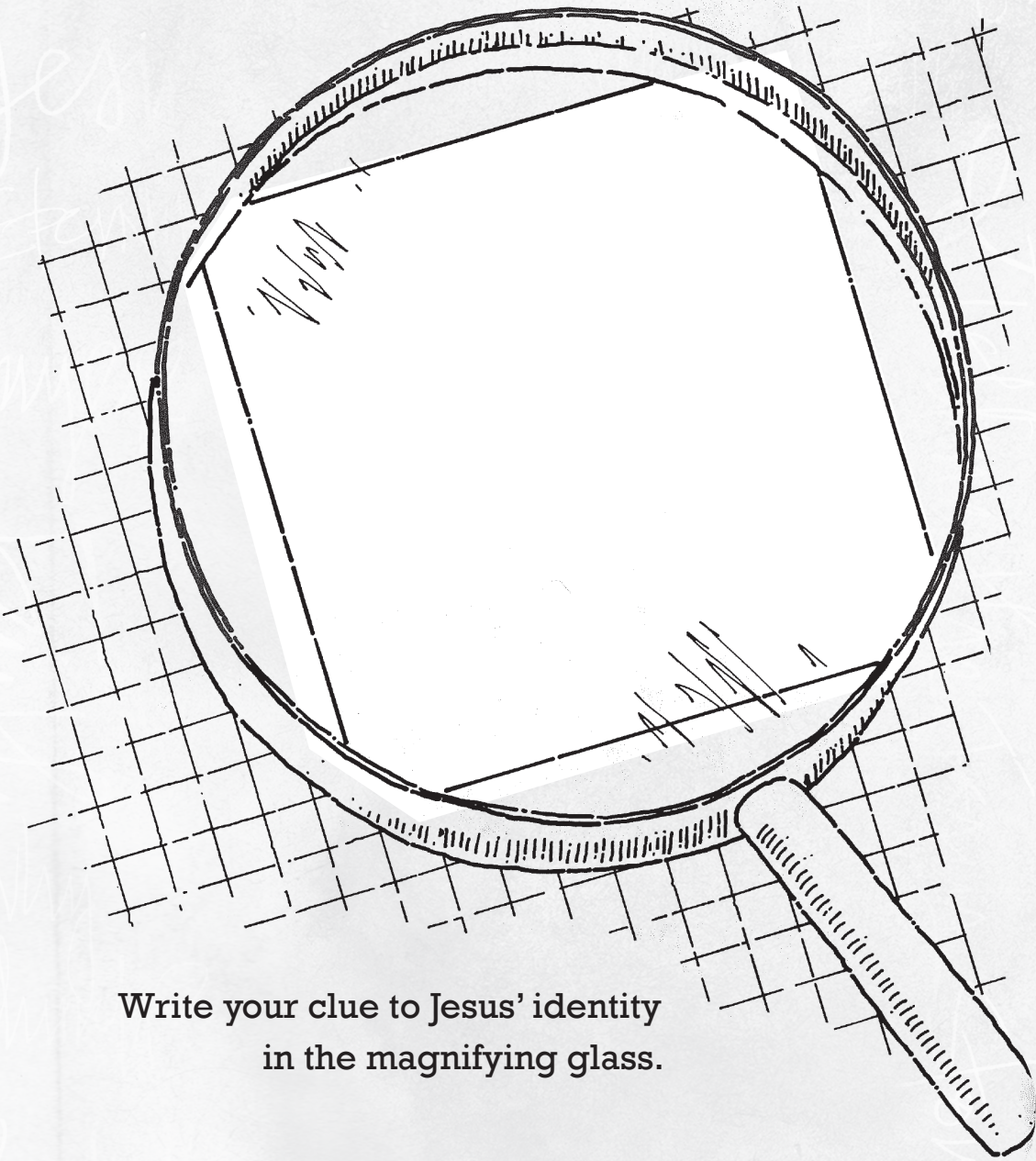
CLUE SEARCH



Write your clue to Jesus' identity in the magnifying glass.

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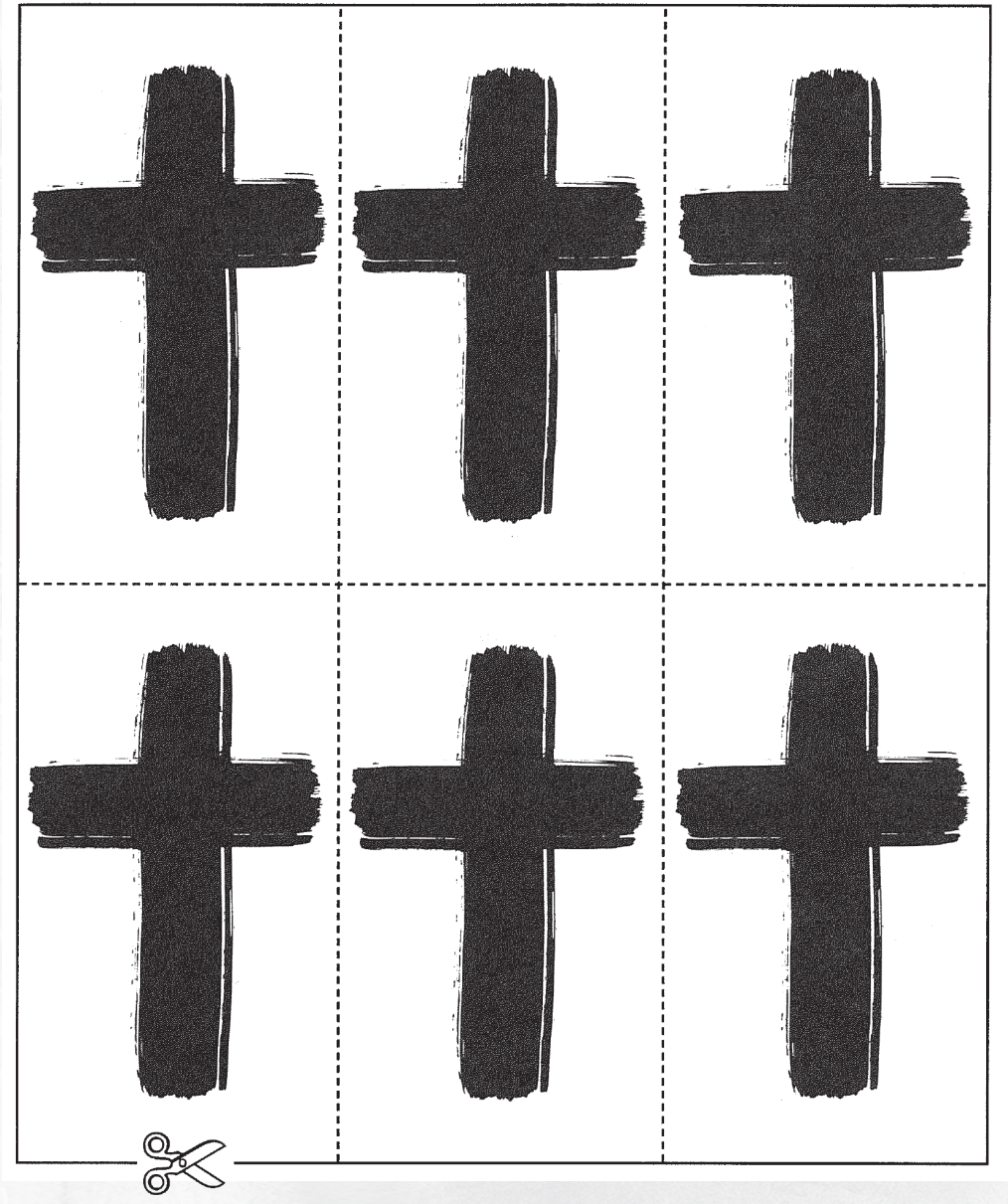
CROSS PATTERNS

Photocopy and cut apart these crosses.



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JOB #1: HELPING KIDS BUILD A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS!

This collection of lessons, covering the most important truths in the Bible, gives you an easy-to-use resource that will plunge your teenagers into the beautiful basics—the reality of God in the world, the truth about who Jesus really is, why all of us need a "Good Shepherd" to find us and reclaim us…13 powerhouse lessons in all. And because they're created by the editors of Group/Simply Youth Ministry, every lesson uses the R.E.A.L. Learning approach—Relational, Experiential, Applicable, and Learner-based.

This approach is not only easy to lead, but it guarantees that your students will engage with these great truths. They'll learn how to live out their relationship with Jesus in their everyday life as they wrestle with issues that really matter…

- Why bad things happen to good people, and how Jesus brings beauty out of ugly;
- What it means to "grow into" Jesus—living and loving others the way he does; and
- Learning how to depend on the Holy Spirit.

No matter what the life issue, the Bible offers foundational truths that can help your students live more confidently, with a deeper ongoing connection to Jesus. And our concise instructions and easy-to-use reproducible handouts make your job simple.

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