

The Preexistent Christ and the Disciple

By Richard Ross

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Study two statements made by Jesus in John 17:5 and in Revelation 22:13. Prepare to share your answer to the following questions: When does the Bible say God the Son came into existence? Do you know of any Scripture where Jesus answered that question?

Assignment Two

Study 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2, 8, 10 and Revelation 4:11. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What role did God the Son have in the creation of all things?

Assignment Three

Study Philippians 2:9-11. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How does God the Father view God the Son? How does God the Father expect people to see and respond to His Son?

Scripture to Memorize

“For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through Him and for Him.” Colossians 1:16

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will have a greater heart desire to be a disciple of Christ because of new insight into His power and glory before time began.

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Richard has written or compiled twenty-four books for youth leaders and parents. His most recent book is *The Senior Pastor and the Reformation of Youth Ministry* (lifeway.com). You can connect with Richard through RichardARoss.com, [Facebook.com/rossrichard](https://www.facebook.com/rossrichard), and Twitter [@richardaross](https://twitter.com/richardaross).

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Believers who do not grasp the power and glory of Jesus can have a distorted view of who He is. They may see Him as:

Jesus, the EMT - You only call for Him when you have a crisis.

Jesus, the Santa Clause - He brings you presents, and that's about all. You do not treasure a relationship with Him or feel awe toward Him.

Jesus, the Grandfather - He gives you what you want, but He does not make any demands on your life.

Jesus, the Butler - He quickly appears when you want Him to serve you, but He fades back into the shadows when you don't need Him.

On Your Own

In the space below write which of these views of Christ you are most tempted to have when you're not thinking clearly. Then share your answer with the group.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions: Is life mostly about me, or is life mostly about Christ? Does Christ mostly exist to make my life better, or do I exist for His glory? Is Christ more of a vague idea, or do I see Him as a glorious and majestic being? What evidence do I have to back up my claim?

Read John 1:1-3 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. beginning. The first person or thing in a series. That period before the world was. **Word.** We know "Word" means "Jesus Christ" because of John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now answer the questions: Did God the Son exist before the universe came into existence? Did Jesus ever say so?

Verse 1. with God. Jesus had an existence distinct from God but was inseparable from Him. **was God.** Jesus was and is, in substance and essence, God.

Verse 2. in the beginning with God. Genesis 1:1 refers to the world in time: “In the beginning God created . . .” John 1:1-2 refers to the period before Genesis, that is, before time began.

Discussion Questions

Did Jesus come into existence in a manger in Bethlehem? When did God the Son begin to exist? Did God the Father or God the Holy Spirit ever have a beginning? How should the fact that Jesus is God impact how you view Him?

Studying the Passage

Verse 3. made through Him. God made the world by a word, and Christ was the Word. **that was made.** Matter is not eternal. All matter came into existence by Christ’s command. The fact that Christ created all things demonstrates that He is worthy to be the Author of salvation.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now provide more biblical evidence that God the Son had the primary role in the creation of all things.

Discussion Questions

How do people (maybe even you) sometimes see Jesus just as their little buddy who helps them out? If Jesus has the brilliance and the power to speak the universe and all living things into existence, can He ever really be just a buddy?

Read Colossians 1:15-17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. the image of the invisible God. God the Son became a man and thus became visible to mankind. Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father” (John 14:8). Jesus answered, “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus clearly was saying that He is God.

On Your Own

Suppose you have a friend who seems to view Jesus as a little genie who rides in his or her pocket. Your friend ignores Jesus until there is a problem. Then your friend pulls out little Jesus to poof the problem away. After the problem is gone, your friend returns little Jesus to the pocket where He easily can be ignored. In the space below write what would you say to your friend about who Jesus *really* is.

Studying the Passage

Verse 15. the firstborn of all creation. For all of eternity past, God the Son existed. Therefore, He was never physically “born” before creation. In many instances in Scripture, “firstborn” was used as a title of honor, even for those who were not actually the firstborn child, like King David. The meaning of the phrase in verse 15 is that Jesus is preeminent over all creation.

Verse 16. all things were created . . . for Him. Not only did God the Son create all things, but all things exist for Him. Today, Jesus does not exist for believers. Believers exist for Jesus. Life is all about Him and not about us.

Verse 17. in Him all things hold together. Right now Jesus could think the thought and the entire universe could cease to exist. He sustains everything by the thought of His mind. Does that sound like someone who can be stuffed down in a pocket?

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now explain how God the Father views God the Son. That person can also explain how God the Father expects people to see and respond to His Son.

Discussion Questions

Research suggests that many believers have a faith that can be described as moral therapeutic deism. That is a view that Christ exists, but He’s no big deal in terms of daily life. He only shows up when He can help make someone’s life easier or nicer. Then He goes away again.

1. How do the passages studied in this lesson argue against such a view?
2. How does this lesson prepare you for a year of discipleship study?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples are always making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

In Luke 14, Jesus made some of His clearest statements about what it means to be His disciple. Jesus said that a disciple's love and devotion for Him must be much, much greater than love for one's own family. In fact, He said the difference between love for Him and love for family should be as great as the difference between love and hate. That is a strong statement since Jesus has commanded believers to love their families sacrificially and deeply.

Jesus also said disciples must be willing to give up every earthly possession at His command. He said that following Him must be the consuming passion of a disciple's life, even if it should lead to death.

So, what is His perspective on millions of people who want only a little Jesus? Who want only a little genie in their pockets? Who only turn to Jesus if they want something from Him? Who want some of Him but have no intention of going all in?

Jesus doesn't mince words. He says such a person "cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27, 33). In fact, He said such a person "is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:38).

One of the ways believers move from "it's mostly about me" to "it's all about Jesus" is to grasp Him as a being who has always existed and always will exist; to see Him in resplendent glory even before time began; to embrace Him as the member of the Godhead who spoke all of creation into existence.

On the day of His second coming, Christ will split open the heavens and will descend to earth. His power and glory will be obvious to all, but only a few know that the glory He will have on that day is the glory He already has today. It's exactly the same! If *you* see, adore, and follow Jesus that way today, you are ready to be His disciple.

Follow-Up Question

Now that you understand more of the power and glory of Christ before time began, how does that encourage you to have an even stronger desire to be His disciple?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.