



## #1: Making Sense of Jesus | Pastor Joe Wittwer | March 14, 2010

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

**Introduction:** When someone makes astonishing claims, we have to decide if we believe them. Are they telling the truth, are they lying, or are they just plain crazy? Today, we are reading in Mark 3 about Jesus' family coming to take Him home because they think He's lost His mind. We'll also read about the Jewish religious leaders who accused Jesus of being in league with the devil. They were all struggling to make sense of Jesus, something that many people are still struggling to do today. [Read **Mark 3:20-35** together now.] Why did some think Jesus was crazy or evil, while others thought He was God in the flesh? And what do you make of Jesus? This is the big question. We can dismiss Him as crazy. We can attack Him as evil. Or we can worship Him as God. Let's take a closer look.

#### 1. His family thought Jesus was crazy.

In **Mark 3:20-21**, Jesus' family went to "take charge of Him." The Greek word translated "take charge of" was used for arresting or forcibly seizing someone. Jesus' family was conducting an intervention because not only was Jesus saying and doing some very extreme things, but He and His followers were so busy attending to the large crowds they didn't even have time to eat. Also,

- Jesus had left a profitable carpentry business to become a traveling preacher. No man in his right mind would leave the security of a good job and steady income to become a vagrant with no place to lay his head.
- Jesus was obviously on a collision course with the power brokers of his day. No man in his right mind would openly challenge these powerful people.
- And Jesus had called together a team of men who were a bunch of nobodies. No man in his right mind would pick a team like this.

While His family is on their way, Jesus had an encounter with the Jewish religious leaders. They accused him of being in league with the devil. At the end of this encounter, Jesus' family arrives to take him home. They are standing outside the crowded house, unable to get in, so they send a message through the crowd, "*Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.*" **Mark 3:33-35** tells us that Jesus makes a shocking statement. "*Who are my mother and my brothers?*" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "*Here are my mother and my brothers!*"

- **Jesus' family are those who do God's will.**

"Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Was Jesus renouncing His family? No. He redefines family as those who do God's will. First, He warns us not to assume that we are a Christian because of who we're related to. Jesus' brother James had been the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and Jesus' mother Mary had achieved an honored status. Many people assume they are Christians because they were raised in a Christian family, but it doesn't work that way. We have to decide to follow Jesus and do God's will, and no one can decide that for us. And Jesus indicates there is a bond stronger than blood. Our first and highest commitment is to Jesus, even before our family. [Refer to **Matthew 10:37**.] We live God-first, not family-first. Any loyalty elevated to first place above God is idolatry. Loving Jesus first and doing God's will is the best thing you can do for your family. The more we love Jesus, the better we love our family.

#### 2. The Jewish religious leaders thought Jesus was evil.

**Mark 3:22** says, "*He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.*" While they do not deny Jesus' power to perform miracles, they question the source of

His power. But in **Mark 3:23-27**, Jesus points out to the religious leaders that the devil would not cast out his own demons. **1 John 3:8** says the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work, and the only way He could do that is to be stronger than the Satan.

- **Jesus is stronger than Satan.** Whenever Jesus confronted someone who was demonized, He set them free even though the demons begged for mercy. **Luke 11:20** says, "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you." Although many people today dismiss Satan as an outmoded idea, Jesus took Satan seriously. Jesus didn't engage in theological debates about the existence of the devil. Instead, He frees people who are in bondage. Many people are still in the grip of evil. We should follow His example and by God's power, confront evil and set people free. Peter describes the devil as "a roaring lion looking for someone to devour," Jesus is stronger and we have nothing to fear. **1 John 4:4** assures us, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." In this context, Jesus also talks about the "eternal sin" which will "never be forgiven": blaspheming the Holy Spirit. [Read **Mark 3:28-30** together now.]

- **The eternal or unforgivable sin is being wrong about Jesus.** It's looking at Jesus and seeing evil instead of good. God comes in the flesh and stands in front of us. Do we recognize Him as God incarnate, or reject Him as the devil incarnate? And why is this an eternal or unforgivable sin? Because when a person is unable to distinguish God from the devil, he will be unable and unwilling to acknowledge his sin and need for God, so he will not turn to God for forgiveness. And when this attitude hardens to permanency, one becomes guilty of a sin that cannot be forgiven. So anyone who is worried about committing the unforgivable sin, hasn't. Otherwise, they wouldn't care. Jesus' family thought He was crazy. The religious leaders thought He was evil. So what do you think?

### **3. Christians think Jesus is God.**

For two thousand years, Christians have come to the conclusion that based on eye-witness evidence, Jesus made claims that only God could make. Jesus did things that only God could do. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis put it this way: "You must make your choice. Either [Jesus] was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But don't let us come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He hasn't left that open to us." So, was Jesus a lunatic, a liar, or the Lord?

### **C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)**

1. Many people feel more comfortable thinking of Jesus as a great teacher, or a social and moral leader, but does Jesus give us that option? Read **John 8:12-14**, **John 10:7-18** and **John 11:21-27** together and discuss your understanding of who Jesus really is.
2. Why would Jesus' ministry and claims be a challenge for His family to accept? How does Jesus respond to their concerns, expressed in **Mark 3:33-35**? Jesus redefined the order of priorities from family first to God first; do you find this ordering difficult to live out? Why do you think that it is important to put God first even in front of your family?
3. The religious leaders were unable to distinguish God from Satan, what do you think prevented them from seeing the truth of who Jesus was? What do you believe about Satan? Do you take him seriously? How does knowing that Jesus is stronger than Satan bring us hope and freedom?
4. C.S. Lewis said in his book *Mere Christianity*, that there are three ways to see Jesus as crazy, the Devil or as God. Which way do you see Him? How has your view of Jesus made a difference in your life?

### **D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes)**

- Begin praying and making a "love list" of people you know that do not know or understand who Jesus really is. Pray about ways you can love them and ask God for boldness-- invite them to Easter service.

### **E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)**

- Thank God for sending Jesus so that we might have life and hope.
- Ask God to help you keep him first, allowing nothing to supersede your relationship with Him.
- Bring other praises or request to God that came up during the discussion.