

Isa. 49:1–7
Ps. 40:1–11
1 Cor. 1:1–9
John 1:29–42

Look! The Lamb of God!

Goal for the Session

Adults will explore how John invited others to know Jesus and discover ways that they can be witnesses to the good news.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on John 1:29–42

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Troy A. Miller

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WHERE is God in these words?

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This string of Sundays that we encounter in the lectionary as “after the Epiphany” serves to remind us that a baby in a manger is not enough to support our theological claims for the incarnation. We need more than Christmas, even if we wait patiently for the arrival of the magi. We need to see Jesus walk into the Jordan. We need to see the clouds part. We need to hear the booming voice name Jesus a beloved Son. We need to hear Jesus himself ask us, as he asks Peter and Andrew in this passage from John, “What are you looking for?” (John 1:38).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Rodger Y. Nishioka

It may be better for us to ask, not so much WWJD? [What would Jesus do?] but rather WWJBD? What would John the Baptist do? Lately, I have been challenging myself and my students to be more like John the Baptist—to call attention to Jesus Christ and then to say to all who are within hearing distance, “Hey, look! See! God is alive. God is in our midst. The Holy Spirit is at work in us and through and for us and even in spite of us! Behold! The Lamb of God!”

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Greg Garrett

However we understand these events theologically, we can say, with Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, that we know forgiveness through the resurrection event, and that we “cannot be understood apart from Jesus,” since we received our name and identity in the process of baptism, a beginning that reminds us of the end, the death, burial, and resurrection. It is this story—our understanding of ourselves in the larger story of God through Jesus—that we can tell others. So our anxiety about evangelism—or its narrow focus on a salvation moment—can be overcome. We can see how the first disciples invited others to experience how they might know hope, peace, and joy because of this Jesus and with the community that has formed around him.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

John 1:29–42

Focus on Your Teaching

Most Christians would agree they feel an obligation to spread the good news (evangelism) about their faith in Jesus to others. Articulating what the good news is and knowing how to best tell others about it in their context is the challenge many adults face. Too often, one or two bad experiences either telling or receiving the gospel cause Christians to be hesitant and unsure about this obligation. Retelling the stories of the Epiphany, stories of God coming to earth in human form, may help those who are silent find new ways to express what they believe to others.

*O God, guide me as I lead this session and also help me continue to grow
in my faith while teaching. Amen.*

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ newsprint or board
- ☐ marker
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ hymnals
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheet 1 for January 26, 2020

For Responding

- ☐ option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1, paper, pens
- ☐ option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 1

The Gospel of John is always the Gospel reading for the second Sunday after the Epiphany. Compared to the other Gospels, John paints a more divine portrait of Jesus, reminding his readers that this earthly Jesus is God's Son who existed before all time.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session begins, print the opening questions from Gathering on the board or newsprint. If using option 2 in Responding, invite guests and orient them to the focus of the activity and what they will say.

Welcome participants and any visitors. As they arrive ask them to be thinking about the following questions written on the board or newsprint:

✠ Have you ever tried to explain Jesus to a non-Christian? If so, what did you say?

When you are ready to begin, invite a couple of volunteers who have done this, if any have, to briefly tell their experience. If you have done this, tell of your own experience as well. If none have done this, explain that who Jesus is will be the focus of this session.

Remind participants that this is the second Sunday after the Epiphany, a word that means manifestation. The church has established a particular date (January 6) to recall the moment when people began to recognize Jesus was God incarnate. However, this year, for seven weeks following the Day of Epiphany, we explore what it means that God came to earth as a human. Last week Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist from the Gospel of Matthew was the occasion. Today, the baptism story as told in the Gospel of John is the focus scripture. Say this prayer or one of your choosing:

Holy God, we know you best through reports of your son Jesus who lived on earth. Send your Spirit to us as we learn about you through the baptism of Jesus. Amen.

EXPLORING

In preparation to read the focus scripture, distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on John 1:29–42) and read the "Where?" excerpt aloud.

Jesus' question "What are you looking for?" (1:38) serves as both an invitation and examination for disciples to follow him. For all disciples, it is not just if they wish to follow him, but what and whom are they looking for.

Distribute Resource Sheet 2 (Readers' Theater Presentation) and tell participants this is a readers' theater version of John 1:29–42, written in scenes in order to emphasize the three scenes. Assign the parts of narrator, John the Baptist, Jesus, Andrew, and Another Disciple to volunteers. Read the stories.

Remind participants that last week Matthew 3:13–17 also covered the baptism of Jesus. Form groups of three and have each group look at both Matthew 3:13–17 and John 1:29–34. Ask them to look for differences and similarities between the accounts. In a general discussion about the two passages, listen for these points: in John's text God tells John who Jesus is rather than opening up the heavens to everyone and shouting it out. John then tells others. In both accounts, people find out who Jesus is at his baptism. Either remain in small groups for the remainder of Exploring or return to a large group.

Call attention to the fact that in John 1:29–42, John the Baptist twice declares Jesus to be the Lamb of God. Lambs were one of the animals prepared for religious slaughter, sacrifices to God. Ask:

✠ By calling him "Lamb of God," what clues does John the Baptist give about the kind of savior Jesus would be?

Some may remark that Jesus would not be the powerful warrior many expected, but rather a docile one. Others may mention the belief that Jesus as a lamb sacrifice would take away the sins of the world.

Have the participants turn to John 1:29–37. Ask:

✠ How did John the Baptist recognize that Jesus was God's son?

When he called Jesus "Lamb of God," John's disciples immediately went to Jesus. Ask:

✠ How does this clarify the role of John the Baptist in this story?

Some may remark that he prepared others by baptizing them, he pointed people to Jesus, and when Jesus came he got out of the way and pushed followers to Jesus in a selfless way.

Have the group now turn to John 1:35–42. Point out that John's disciples did not answer Jesus directly when he asked them what they were looking for. Ask:

✠ As disciples of John the Baptist and now Jesus, what do you think they are looking for?

✠ What might the significance be of Jesus changing Simon's name to Cephas, translated Peter, which means rock?

Affirm their answers and tell participants that it is not known exactly what transpired but we do know that the transformation of the disciples, the ones who followed Jesus, began immediately when they followed him.

Finally, have a volunteer read the "So What?" excerpt from Resource Sheet 1. Ask:

✠ How could these new disciples of Jesus model the style of John the Baptist?

As a transition to Responding, ask:

✠ How can Christians today witness to the good news and tell others about Jesus?

**EASY
PREP**

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following activities, depending on the length of your session:

- 1. Pointing Others to Christ** Journaling provides the opportunity to think about what one believes and design a plan of action. Ask the group to read “Now What?” on Resource Sheet 1 silently. Distribute paper and pens and invite participants to take a few minutes to write the essential elements they would include when telling someone about Jesus. Then have them think about one instance in the next few weeks where they might have the chance to tell others about what they believe and point others to Jesus. Ask:
✠ How might you prepare to speak about Jesus?

- 2. Church Evangelism Presentation** Hearing how your church leaders point others toward following Jesus can help participants get involved in witnessing to the good news. Invite a pastor or a member of your church’s evangelism or mission committee to explain how your church understands witnessing to the good news of Jesus. As they explain all the activities the church does, have them tell how participants can get involved. If possible, ask the guest to bring a list of such activities to distribute to the group. At the conclusion of this activity, invite the participants to reflect silently for a moment on how they can witness to the good news of Jesus through one or more of the activities just described.

- 3. Evangelism Strategies** Brainstorming ways to witness to the good news can help participants formulate how they can best do this. Ask the group to read the “So What?” and “Now What?” excerpts on Resource Sheet 1 silently. Remind participants that in the text Andrew was a disciple of John and then followed Jesus. He also invited his brother Simon to come with him. Ask:
✠ How do we invite others to meet Jesus today?

Perhaps the obvious way is to invite others to your church, but challenge people to think broadly about what it means to witness to Jesus today. As a group select one activity and commit to doing it together in the coming weeks.

CLOSING

Distribute hymnals. Sing or read in unison the hymn “Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak.”

Prepare to read the responsive prayer found in the sidebar by asking participants to repeat the phrase “Look! Here is the Lamb of God!” together each time you raise your hand during the prayer.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for January 26, 2020, or e-mail it to the participants during the week. Encourage class members to read the focus scripture and resource sheet before the next session.

If your church’s hymnal does not include the hymn, “Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak” play a recording of it from YouTube.

Leader: Lord, when
John the Baptist
baptized Jesus,
everyone present
heard you had
come.

**All: Look, here is the
Lamb of God!**

Leader: John was
so convinced he
couldn’t stop
saying:

**All: Look, here is the
Lamb of God!**

Leader: Jesus invited all
to come and follow
him.

**All: Look, here is the
Lamb of God!**

Leader: May we follow
too and tell others
you are present.

**All: Look, here is the
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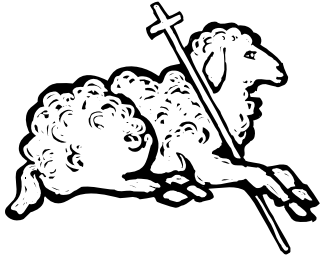
Readers' Theater Presentation

Based on John 1:29–42, NRSV

SCENE 1 (John 1:29–37)

Narrator: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and declared,

John the Baptist: Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!



This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel. I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

Narrator: The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed,

John the Baptist: *(to Andrew and Another Disciple)* Look, here is the Lamb of God!

Narrator: The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

SCENE 2 (John 1:38–39)

Narrator: Jesus turned and saw them following.

Jesus: *(to Andrew and Another Disciple)* What are you looking for?

Andrew: *(to Jesus)* Rabbi!

Another Disciple: *(to Jesus)* Teacher!

Andrew and Another Disciple: *(together to Jesus)* Where are you staying?

Jesus: Come and see.

Narrator: They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

SCENE 3 (John 1:41–42)

Narrator: Andrew left to find his brother Simon.

Andrew: Simon, we have found the Messiah, the Anointed One!

Narrator: Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him.

Jesus: *(to Simon)* You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas (Peter).