

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS

EPISODE 1: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Main Points

Here are the big ideas you want people to understand:

- Jesus was sent to earth as a messenger from God
- At the heart of his message is an announcement of good news: God is bringing his kingdom to Earth and offering freedom to all who enter it
- The nature of Jesus' message demands a response: we must believe and repent
- Those who believe and repent after hearing Jesus' message enter the Kingdom of God

EXPLORING THE STORY

◀ Look Back

Start by giving the group a chance to share with one another. Then introduce the series and the lesson for this week.

1. One-up (or One-down)

Invite each person to share one thing that has happened over the past week that they are grateful for (or, they can share one thing that has been weighing on them)

2. Prayer

Have a time of prayer and thanksgiving based on what was shared

3. Review

Since this is the first session for *The Message of Jesus* series, set the stage for where we're going:

“ **This week...** we're starting a series on *The Message of Jesus*. Our goal over the next four weeks is to look at the Scriptures and gain a better understanding of what Jesus taught. Off the top of your head, what would you say were some of his main teachings?

▲ Look Up

Now that you've introduced the series, shift to this week's episode.

4. Setting the Stage

“ Jesus began his public ministry by traveling around and teaching in towns and villages. Often he taught in synagogues (religious houses of worship). One day, he visited his hometown of Nazareth and taught in the synagogue there.

As we read these stories, be thinking about these things:

- What did Jesus claim about himself?
- What did he say he was sent to proclaim?

5. Read **Luke 4.14-21** and then discuss:

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- What did Jesus claim about himself? (vs. 21)
 - What did he say he was sent to proclaim? (vs. 18-19)
 - What is Jesus setting people free from?
 - How do you think Jesus wanted his listeners to respond?

Read **Matthew 21.28-32** and then discuss:

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- Who initiated the conversation between father and sons? What does this teach us about God's communication with us?
 - What point was Jesus making by the story of the two sons?
 - How did Jesus want people to respond to his message? (vs. 31-32)

► Look Ahead

Help people process the implications of this week's reading and how they should apply its truths to the way they think and live.

6. Implications and Applications

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- God has initiated with us by sending his Son, Jesus
 - Jesus has announced good news: God is bringing his kingdom to the Earth
 - All who hear this good news are called to action: to believe the message of Jesus and to enter his kingdom by repentance
 - Those who become part of the Kingdom of God are set free and enjoy God's favor
 - What do you need to do to respond?

7. Closing Prayer