



PodClass: Who is Jesus

Syllabus & Episode Questions ***Your Guide for Self-Learning***

Instructor and Host

Melisa Ortiz Berry, PhD is an author, speaker, and scholar exploring spirituality, identity, evangelical history, and the language that shapes modern faith. Through thoughtful conversation and accessible teaching, she helps listeners engage theology, culture, and spiritual formation in ways that are intellectually grounded and deeply human.

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Course Description

Who Is Jesus? explores one of the most important questions in human history through conversations with pastors, theologians, scholars, missionaries, and practitioners from diverse backgrounds and traditions. Each episode examines a different title, image, or understanding of Jesus found in Scripture and Christian experience.

Purpose of / Reason for the Course

Create an accessible space for people to investigate their questions about the Bible as a book and about the many different views that people have about it.

Goals

1. People around the globe will have access to a Christ-centered theology class.
2. PodClass will serve as Christian continuing education for listeners.
3. Listeners will deepen their understanding of Jesus through thoughtful conversation.
4. Provide a variety of voices and perspectives that illuminate the person of Jesus.
5. Model positive learning experiences and respectful engagement across differences.
6. Appreciate the global nature of Christianity and the many ways believers encounter Jesus.
7. Encourage listeners to reflect on who Jesus is and how that understanding shapes their own faith and practice.

How to Grow

- 1.) Listen once a week.
- 2.) Read through and explore the books and topics explored
- 2.) Share each podcast with a friend with whom you can continue the conversation with.

Podcast Order

Jesus as the

The Word	Bradley Jersak, Author, theologian, and educator
Creator	Randy Woodley, Co-founder of Eloheh Indigenous Center for Earth Justice and Distinguished Professor of Faith and Culture Emeritus, Portland Seminary
The Jewish Messiah	Tamir Kugman, Missionary with Jews for Jesus Israel, media evangelism director, and elder/co-pastor in Tel AvivJesus of Nazareth
A Nazarene	Azar Ajaj, President and Lecturer, Nazareth Evangelical College
Son of God, Son of Man	Jacqueline Winston, Theologian, church historian, and professor
Leader	Greg Brock, Educational leader and scholar of trust, leadership, and generosity
Healer	Melanie Howard, Associate Provost and Dean of Arts & Sciences, Simpson University
Redeemer	Matthew and Melissa Stock, Missionaries in Cambodia serving in anti-trafficking, counseling, leadership development, and church ministry
Image of God	Joshua Little, Scholar, pastor, and teacher
Alpha and Omega	Aaron Dilla, Pastor and Bible teacher

Study Guide Questions

Jesus is THE WORD: Bradley Jersak

Bradley Jersak explores one of Christianity's most foundational claims: Jesus is the Word of God. Drawing from John 1 and Hebrews 4, he argues that Jesus is God's ultimate self-revelation—the clearest picture of who God is and what God is like. Rather than seeing Scripture as an end in itself, Jersak encourages listeners to understand the Bible as a witness that leads us to encounter the living Christ.

1. Christians often use the phrase “divine revelation” to describe how God makes himself known to human beings. In this episode, Bradley argues that Jesus is the clearest and fullest way God reveals himself. How does this help us understand what it means to call Jesus “the Word”?

Consider John 1:1–18: “In the beginning was the Word.” If Jesus is the Word, then Jesus is not only a messenger from God He is _____. What is the significance of this?

2. Bradley says that Scripture points us to a living person: Jesus. How does this idea affect the way Christians read the Bible?

What changes when the Bible is understood not as the final destination, but as a witness that leads us to Christ? How has this impacted your own life?

3. In the conversation about Hebrews 4, Bradley suggests that the “living and active Word” is Jesus. How does this change the way we understand Jesus’ ability to know the human heart?

How does this passage hold together both truth and grace: Jesus sees us clearly, but also invites us to receive mercy? How can you model this in your own life and relationships? Which relationship or situation are you in now that need this the most?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is THE CREATOR: Randy Woodley

Randy Woodley explores Jesus as Creator through Scripture and an Indigenous Christian perspective. Drawing from John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1, and 1 Corinthians 8, he argues that Jesus is not only involved in creation in the past, but is also sustaining and holding all things together right now. Woodley invites listeners to consider how seeing Jesus as Creator changes the way Christians understand creation, culture, healing, and daily life.

1. Christians often speak about God as Creator, but Randy emphasizes that Scripture also presents Jesus as Creator. How does this expand or challenge the way you understand who Jesus is?

Consider John 1 and Colossians 1. What does it mean to say that all things were created through Jesus and are held together in him? how does it change your think to realize that you are being held together by Him also?

2. Randy says that “all places are sacred because Creator is there.” How does this idea affect the way Christians think about creation and the natural world?

What responsibilities might come with believing that creation is not just something God made long ago, but something Jesus continues to sustain? What is one thing you can do today to participate in this caretaking?

3. Randy talks about the importance of humility when trying to understand God, especially because God is greater than our categories. Why is “mystery” important in theology?

How can Christians study Scripture carefully while still admitting that they do not fully understand God? What is an area of Scripture that you have struggled with or struggle with now?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is THE NAZARENE: Azar Ajaj

Azar reflects on growing up in Nazareth and reading Luke 4, where Jesus announces his mission in the synagogue. He argues that Jesus challenged his hometown by declaring that God’s salvation was for more than just one group of people.

1. Jesus announces his mission in Nazareth by reading from Isaiah and declaring that God’s promises are being fulfilled in him (Luke 4:16–21). What does this tell us about how Jesus understood his own identity and purpose?

Why might this have been exciting news for some people but troubling news for others? Who is this currently good news for and also troubling for now?

2. Azar suggests that the people of Nazareth were happy to hear Jesus speak until they realized that God’s love and salvation extended beyond their own community. How does this challenge common human tendencies to divide people into “us” and “them”?

What might this passage teach Christians about loving people who are different from them? Azar is a Palestinian, Arab Christian who is also Israeli. How does his situation exemplify the problem many people have with loving the “other”?

3. Throughout the episode, Azar emphasizes that Jesus was a real person who lived in a real place among real people. How does understanding Jesus within his historical and cultural setting help us read the Gospels more carefully?

What can be gained by studying the geography and history of the biblical world? How can you step further into studying the Bible’s geography and history this week?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is THE JEWISH MESSIAH: Tamir Kugman

Tamir explains how reading both the New Testament and the Hebrew Scriptures led him to believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah promised throughout Israel’s story. He argues that understanding Jesus requires understanding the Old Testament background that points toward him.

1. Tamir describes opening the New Testament and being surprised to discover how thoroughly Jewish Jesus was. Why do you think Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy connecting Jesus to Abraham and David?

How does this opening shape the reader's understanding of Jesus? How does this impact a Jewish reader and a non-Jewish reader differently? How did you react?

2. Tamir argues that the story of the Old Testament creates a growing expectation for a coming Messiah. How does the idea of a promised deliverer connect different parts of the biblical story together?

Why might this theme have been important for first-century Jews? Do you have an experience or know of someone who this was a significant revelation for? If not, what do you imagine that might be like? What was it like for Tamir?

3. In discussing Isaiah 9, Tamir argues that the Messiah is portrayed as more than an ordinary human ruler. What titles are given to the child in Isaiah's prophecy, and what do those titles suggest about the Messiah's identity?

Read Isaiah 9. What stands out to you? What are some of the other titles of Jesus that you can find in the Bible?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your "take away"?

Jesus is THE SON OF MAN AND SON OF GOD: Jacquelyn Winston

Jacquelyn Winston explores two of the most important titles given to Jesus in the New Testament: Son of Man and Son of God. She argues that these titles must be understood together because they reveal both Jesus' full humanity and his full divinity. Through passages in Luke, John, and Hebrews, Winston explains that Jesus became human to restore humanity's broken relationship with God, while also possessing the divine authority to forgive sins, heal, save, and bring people back into communion with God.

1. Christians often describe Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. Why do you think both parts of this claim are important to Christian theology?

Dr. Winston argues that Jesus had to be human to represent humanity and had to be divine to restore humanity's relationship with God. How does this help explain the Christian understanding of salvation? Why is it significant in your life that He is both?

2. Throughout the episode, Dr. Winston returns to the idea that salvation is the restoration of a broken relationship between God and humanity. How does this definition differ from common ideas about salvation?

How might understanding salvation as reconciliation and relationship change the way Christians think about faith, forgiveness, and spiritual growth? Look at the Lord's Prayer

and the verses that follow in Matthew 6:9-15. What is God asking of you and why? How can you practice this today?

3. Jesus frequently refers to himself as the “Son of Man” in the Gospels. Dr. Winston explains that this title emphasizes Jesus’ identification with ordinary human beings and their struggles.

What does this teach us about the kind of Messiah Jesus chose to be?

How does Jesus’ willingness to share in human weakness, suffering, and limitation shape your understanding of God? How has this helped you to relate to or grow closer to God? How might it help you share Christ with others?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is A LEADER: Greg Brock

Drawing on his background in educational leadership, Greg Brock argues that Jesus redefines what leadership looks like. Rather than focusing on status, power, influence, or achievement, Jesus models leadership as a form of service rooted in relationships. Through passages such as Matthew 21 and John 21, Brock suggests that faithful leadership is marked by generosity, humility, trust, presence, and a commitment to the well-being of others.

1. In this episode, Greg argues that leadership is not primarily about power, status, or influence, but about relationships. How does Jesus’ example challenge common cultural ideas about what makes someone a successful leader?

What qualities does Jesus demonstrate that differ from modern ideas of leadership? Give an example from your own life of how a situation could have been very different if a leader led more like Jesus.

2. Greg suggests that leadership should be understood as an act of service rather than personal achievement. How does this idea connect with Jesus’ life and ministry?

Consider examples from the Gospels where Jesus uses his authority to serve, heal, teach, or restore others rather than advance his own interests (see Mark 10:42–45, John 13:12–15). What is the lesson God has for you today in this?

3. Greg defines generosity as “giving something of value freely to another.” How does this broader understanding of generosity expand beyond money or material possessions?

What forms of generosity do you see Jesus practicing in his relationships with disciples, crowds, and those on the margins of society (see Matthew 9:36, Luke 19:1–10)?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is HEALER: Melanie Howard

Drawing from both personal experience and her work as a New Testament scholar, Melanie Howard argues that Jesus' healing ministry is about more than curing physical ailments. Through passages such as Matthew 8 and Mark 5, she suggests that Jesus heals people by restoring them to community, dignity, belonging, and flourishing. Howard explores different ways of understanding disability and challenges listeners to see healing as something that can happen not only in bodies, but also in relationships, churches, schools, and communities.

1. Melanie introduces several different ways people understand disability and healing. How do these perspectives affect the way we read the healing stories of Jesus?

How might healing involve more than simply fixing a physical problem? Has Jesus ever healed you? In what way? How did that impact your faith?

2. Read Matthew 8:1–4. Here a man with leprosy asks Jesus to make him “clean” rather than simply heal him. Why might that distinction matter?

What does this story teach us about belonging, acceptance, and restoration within a community? Have you ever experienced this? How did it change you or how could it change you?

3. Near the end of the episode, Melanie encourages Christians to think about how churches can become more welcoming and accessible to all people. What practical steps could a church or ministry take to help everyone participate fully in worship and community life?

How might this reflect Jesus' ministry as a healer? What is your church doing now and what area could they grow in? How can you be a part of that solution?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is REDEEMER: Matthew & Melissa Stock

Drawing on their experiences in Cambodia working with anti-trafficking ministries, Matthew and Melissa Stock describe Jesus as the Redeemer who frees people from bondage, shame, and false identities. They connect biblical themes of redemption, liberation, and Jubilee to modern experiences of healing and restoration. For the Stocks, redemption means more than forgiveness; it means discovering a new identity as a beloved child of God and becoming an agent of redemption in the lives of others.

1. Throughout the episode, Matthew and Melissa connect redemption to identity. Why is it important that redeemed people see themselves differently?

Would God's child be bad or unlovable? How does the idea of being a child of God challenge messages of shame, failure, or worthlessness?

2. The Stocks work with survivors of human trafficking and describe redemption as freedom from being treated like a commodity or transaction. What can this teach us about how Jesus values people?

Have you ever experienced shame or rejection? How has Jesus been a safe and healing place, a redeemer, for you? Who in your world—think of those you encounter in your neighborhood, downtown, or at church—looks like they need to not only be redeemed by Jesus but be treated by others as having been redeemed?

3. Near the end of the conversation, Matthew says that “redeemed people become agents of redemption.” What do you think this means?

How might someone who has experienced God’s grace and forgiveness help bring healing, hope, or freedom to others? How can you be that person in your family and in your church?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is the IMAGE OF GOD: Joshua Little

Joshua Little describes Jesus as the perfect image of God and the one Christians are called to imitate. Drawing on passages such as 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Matthew 21, he argues that following Jesus involves much more than agreeing with theological ideas. Christian formation is the lifelong process of allowing Jesus to transform our inner lives, reshape our priorities, and teach us how to live. Through practices such as prayer, community, spiritual disciplines, and daily discipleship, believers become people whose lives increasingly reflect the character of Christ.

1. Joshua points to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Why do you think Paul could say this with confidence?

What does it mean for Christians today to model their lives after Jesus in practical ways? Give an example.

2. The conversation focuses on Jesus cleansing the temple in Matthew 21. Joshua suggests that Jesus sometimes “turns over tables” in our interior lives. What do you think he means by this?

Can you identify attitudes, habits, fears, or assumptions that Jesus might challenge in people today? Which ones do you think are the most difficult to have challenged and the most difficult to overcome?

3. Throughout the episode, Joshua emphasizes the importance of spiritual practices such as prayer, Scripture reading, solitude, and participation in Christian community. Why do these practices matter in becoming more like Jesus?

What are some spiritual disciplines that you practice now? Which spiritual discipline do

you find most challenging, and why? What is a new one you can try or lean more into?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega: Aaron Dilla

Aaron Dilla explores Jesus as the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end, the one “who is, who was, and who is to come.” Reflecting on Revelation 1:8, Aaron explains how this title points not only to God’s sovereignty over history but also to God’s presence in every moment of life. Rather than focusing only on the future or the past, Aaron encourages believers to encounter Jesus in the present through gratitude, prayer, trust, silence, and awareness of God’s ongoing presence.

1. Aaron describes becoming fascinated with Jesus through studying Revelation and the promise that Christ will return. How does hope for the future shape the way Christians live in the present?

Read Rev 22:1-5. What is this? What stands out to you about it? Why is it important to remember that the Christian story does not end with death but with restoration and renewal? How can that impact our thoughts about sickness, death, and dying?

2. One of Aaron’s main themes is that God is present right now. He connects Jesus as Alpha and Omega with God’s name in Exodus: “I AM WHO I AM.” What does it mean to say that God is present in every moment?

Do you feel God’s presence in your life? If you don’t “feel” it do you believe it? How might this understanding help you when you feel lonely, anxious, or overwhelmed?

3. Near the end of the episode, Aaron explains how remembering God’s faithfulness in the past builds trust for the future. Why is remembering an important spiritual practice?

What was a time that you could say “God was faithful” in my life? How can reflecting on God’s past faithfulness help Christians trust Jesus as the Alpha and Omega in the challenges they face today?

4. What stood out to you in this episode? What was your “take away”?

Recommended Books From Our Guests

Bradley Jersak

Jersak, Bradley. *A More Christlike Word: Reading Scripture the Emmaus Way*. Pasadena, CA: CWR Press, 2021.

Jersak, Bradley. *A More Christlike God*. Pasadena, CA: CWR Press, 2015.

Jersak, Bradley. *Out of the Embers: Faith After the Great Deconstruction*. Nashville: Whitaker House, 2022.

Randy Woodley

Woodley, Randy. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

Woodley, Randy. *Becoming Rooted: One Hundred Days of Reconnecting with Sacred Earth*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2022.

Woodley, Randy. *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2025.

Tamir Kugman

Zimmerman, Michael L. *Does the Jewish Bible Point to Jesus?* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2021.

Additional resources recommended by Tamir:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_hi_oZzh3Y

<https://yeshuanekuda.co.il>

Melanie Howard

Howard, Melanie. *Twelve Biblical Characters: Trials and Triumphs*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2023.

Matthew and Melissa Stock

Additional ministry resources: www.stockreplugged.org