

Jesus' Ministry Begins

*God's solution for our sin problem
is not a "What" but a "Who."*

Introduction

Religion is always about "What." What am I supposed to do? What should I stop doing? What clothes should I wear? What words can't I say anymore? What will people think of me? And the hit parade of "Whats" just keeps going!

By chapter 23 of *The Story* the people of Israel had compiled a massive list of "Whats" in an attempt to please God and show that they were worthy of his love and acceptance. Some religious leaders of that day had become experts in telling everyone else what they were supposed to do.

Into this climate God breaks in with his Upper Story and surprises everyone. Salvation is not based on a list of what we do to make God happy and what we won't do because it is against the rules. Of course, God cares about our behavior and wants his children to grow in holiness, but this is not his first concern. Before we begin thinking about being good people, we need to meet the One who can help us become good.

The solution to the problem, way back in the first century, was not a "What" but a "Who." It was all about Jesus. Now, two thousand years later, it is exactly the same. Before we begin thinking about the "What," we need to meet the "Who." He is still Jesus!

Talk About It

Some people today still think salvation is about a list of do's and don'ts. When people head down this road, what are some things they put on the "What we have to do" list and the "What we can't do" list?

DVD Teaching Notes

As you watch the video segment for session 23, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

John the Baptist introduces us to God's solution

Jesus is the Lamb of God

Encounters that teach us Jesus is the "Who" we have been waiting for

John the Baptist dies knowing who Jesus is

DVD Discussion

1. At the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17; *The Story*, p. 322), what did the people see and hear and how did this clarify who Jesus was?

John the Baptist tells us that the solution to our problem is not a "What" but a "Who." We have to understand who he is before we can understand what he came to do. What he is going to do will only make a difference if he is who he says he is.

2. After forty days in the wilderness Jesus faced three temptations from the devil (Matthew 4:1–11; *The Story*, pp. 322–323). What was each temptation and what did Jesus say to fend off each? How does Satan use similar types of temptation in our lives today?
3. How can knowing Scripture help us battle against daily temptations? Tell about a time you used Scripture to stand strong against the enemy.
4. Chapter 4 of *The Story* told of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:1–30; *The Story*, pp. 51–52) which was slain and whose blood was placed on the doorpost to protect God's people in Egypt from the angel of death. Now

John the Baptist calls Jesus “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29; *The Story*, p. 323). First-century Jews knew all about the Passover and the sacrificial system. What message would John’s words about Jesus have sent them and what message should it send us today?

Jesus is the Lamb of God. No Jewish person could have misunderstood what John was saying. The young, unblemished, innocent lamb of the Old Testament was the one whose life was given up and whose blood was shed to pay for sins.

5. As Jesus called people to follow him, many immediately invited someone else to meet the Savior. Who has God placed in your life that you would like to invite to know Jesus? How can your group members pray for you as you seek to reach out to this person with God’s love and grace?
6. In Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21; *The Story*, pp. 326–327), Jesus talked about the Upper Story while Nicodemus focused on the Lower Story. How do you see these two stories conflicting in their conversation? How did Jesus help Nicodemus think in Upper Story terms?

What does Jesus reveal to Nicodemus and to us about the heart of God, heaven, and judgment in this passage?

7. Jesus told the woman at the well that God looks for people who will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth (John 4:21–24; *The Story*, p. 328). What helps you connect with God’s Holy Spirit? What helps you grow more authentic and truthful as you worship?
8. Jesus sought out quiet places where he could meet with the Father face-to-face (Mark 1:35; *The Story*, p. 330). Why is it important that Christians today make regular time to be quiet before God? How are you doing in this area and how can your group members support you in this discipline of spiritual growth?
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9. Read movement 4 of *The Story* (pp. 11 of this participant’s guide). If one of your group members has memorized this short statement that describes the heartbeat of the fourth movement, allow them to quote it and tell about what God taught them as they committed this statement to memory.