

WELCOME TO

THE

SAMPLE

BLACK LETTERS

OF JESUS

WHAT IS THE BLACK LETTERS?

A lot of studies focus on Jesus' words—the red letters of Scripture. But what would it look like if we focused on his actions—the black letters? *The Black Letters of Jesus* is a yearlong curriculum (52 lessons) based on the [8 Roots of Deep Discipleship](#). Throughout *The Black Letters of Jesus*, students will examine the things Jesus did while he was here on earth, allowing them to see Jesus in a new way. These are lessons drawn from the life of the one who became flesh and lived among his creation. By focusing on his actions throughout the ministry year, students will grow a deeper understanding of what it means to follow him every day.

DESIGNED FOR MULTIPLE ENVIRONMENTS



Each lesson provides you with TWO TRACKS—a *Small Group Lesson* or a *Large Group Talk*—and includes these key elements: a Bible study, modern day examples, discussion questions, an experiential activity, a focus on clear life application, and additional illustrations or object lessons. The Facilitator Guide contains everything in the Student Guide, plus some additional material. We've built in flexibility to meet your changing needs.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

The Black Letters of Jesus includes 52 Lessons, divided into smaller, 4-lesson sets (PDF and Word). We've included one lesson in this sample with corresponding Memory Verse and Mark of a Disciple graphics. *The Black Letters of Jesus* is the foundation of the Deep Discipleship system (including the [8 Roots of Deep Discipleship](#)), designed to help your students grow deep faith. Each one of the 8 Roots is covered in-depth in its own set of lessons.

ALSO INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING (NOT INCLUDED IN SAMPLE):

*For a full list, see [What's Included](#) on page 8.

- Live It Out activities in every lesson
- Video Training for Adult Leaders
- Parent Guides
- Media and Graphics

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

It's simple. Included in this sample is one lesson (*Who's First?*) from the *JESUS AND THE LEAST* set of lessons. Open the folder entitled *JESUS AND THE LEAST* and you'll find a Facilitator Guide and Student Guide.

To learn more about *The Black Letters of Jesus*, check out the *SCOPE AND SEQUENCE* that give you an entire overview of this resource.

Have Any Questions?
Give us a call!

THE
BLACK LETTERS
OF JESUS

deep
DISCIPLESHIP

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YOUTH MINISTRY

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MAKING DISCIPLES. DEVELOPING LEADERS.

THE 8 ROOTS OF DEEP DISCIPLESHIP

RESCUE

The Rescue Root helps students understand their need for a savior:

We are slaves, held captive by terrible enemies: sin and death. In this fallen, corrupt, and shattered world, we need a rescuer—Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. In fact, he's the only one who can free us. And once we've been freed, we have the opportunity to join in the rescue mission for others.

APOLOGETICS

The Apologetics Root, which prepares students to explain the hope they have in Christ:

The Bible encourages us to defend our faith: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," (1 Pet. 3:15, ESV). That's the point of apologetics—to explain our hope in Christ to others. In the Apologetics Root your students will find ways to do just that.

COMMUNITY

The Community Root, which helps students understand the meaning of biblical fellowship:

We weren't created to be alone. Our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-beings depend on deep, loving relationships with other people. God has created a family for you. They are his people, and they will help you grow in another essential connection—with God.

IDENTITY

The Identity Root, which helps students discover their unique identity in Christ:

God created humans in his own image, unique in all creation. Then sin entered the picture, and all people developed a warped version of their original identity. Christ came and died on the cross and rose again to offer us a new identity, even better than the first. He took on our sin and shame so we could take on his righteousness. He identifies with us so we can find our identity in him—a redeemed identity.

KNOWLEDGE

The Knowledge Root, which helps students understand the basics about God:

God is enormous. He's too big, too awesome, and too complicated to wrap our minds around. Yet he wants us to know him. He wants a relationship with us, so he has revealed himself in a number of ways. We will never know everything about God. But in order to become his disciples, we need to know some essential truths about the One we follow.

WORSHIP

The Worship Root, which helps students explore what it means to have a lifestyle of worship:

Worship is more than just singing. It is a lifestyle. It's how you go about your day, and it happens when you get a vivid glimpse of God, his power, and his majesty. In the Bible, anyone who has a close encounter with God can't help but marvel at his glory. The angels, his messengers, are in a constant state of worship. We, too, can express a life of worship by encountering God on a daily basis.

KINGDOM

The Kingdom Root, which helps students understand how to live in the Kingdom of God every day:

When students embrace the Kingdom life, they begin to look at the small things differently. They realize the weight that their decisions carry, and they can start to live by God's value system instead of the world's tainted values.

OUTREACH

The Outreach Root, which helps students understand their God-given mission:

Jesus gave his followers one last command: to spread the good news of his death and resurrection—the gospel—to the whole world. When we become members of Christ's body of believers, the story doesn't end. That's just the beginning! Now we get to join in a remarkable mission to care for the least, to love other people, and to share Jesus as Lord wherever we go.

THE BLACK LETTERS OF JESUS

SCOPE

We recommend that you start with the four lessons included in *JESUS REDEEMS*, then base your sequence on the needs of your group. Below is a description for each set of lessons included in *The Black Letters of Jesus*, as well as a suggested overall sequence.

*Note that the *SEASONAL* Lesson Set can be used throughout the year during holidays and major milestones in your group.

SUGGESTED SEQUENCE



1. JESUS REDEEMS (4 Lessons)

Jesus came to rescue and reconcile. Students must understand that their sin puts them in peril, they need rescue, and Jesus is the only One with the power and purity to forgive sin. Any hope of being reconciled to Creator God comes through Jesus, our Rescuer and Redeemer.

Lessons/Passages:

1. What Rescuers Know (Matthew 1:18–25)
2. Headliner (John 3:1–21)
3. Faith on the Line (Mark 2:1–11)
4. Do You See What I See? (Luke 23:26–43)

Connected Roots:

Rescue, Apologetics, Outreach



2. WALKING WITH JESUS (4 Lessons)

Wherever Jesus walked, people followed. Some only wanted to see a cool miracle. But a few wanted to become like him by walking with him. To become his disciples, what Jesus wants most from us isn't pious performance, but a deep relationship with him.

Lessons/Passages:

1. The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:25–35)
2. Durable Faith (Hebrews 12:1–13)
3. Walking in the Light (1 John 1:5–10)
4. Just Be with Jesus (Luke 10:38–42)

Connected Roots:

Kingdom, Identity, Community, Worship



3. JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS (4 Lessons)

Jesus used the natural world as both a teaching point and as a platform in his ministry to teach us who we are, who God is, and how to follow him. Our lives can often look a lot like the wilderness, and we desperately need a true and guiding voice to lead us through it.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Get Out of the Boat (Matthew 14:22–36)
2. Listen to the King (Matthew 17:1–13)
3. Soul Gardening (Mark 4:1–20)
4. Call Out from the Storm (Matthew 8:23–27)

Connected Roots:

Rescue, Worship, Identity, Knowledge



4. JESUS LIKE ME (4 Lessons)

Jesus showed a range of emotions in his life. The Gospels capture moments of him weeping, angrily clearing out the temple courts, loving people, and confronting others. Following Jesus does not mean putting on a smile and just being nice to everyone. Instead, Jesus invites us to bring our whole selves as we draw closer to him.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Giving Up (Mark 10:17–31)
2. Angry Jesus (John 2:13–25)
3. It's Okay to Cry (John 11:17–44)
4. Knock on the Door of a Killer (Acts 9:1–19)

Connected Roots:

Kingdom, Worship, Outreach



5. THE UNBELIEVABLE JESUS (4 Lessons)

In *Unbelievable Jesus*, we see what happens when humans encounter the unbelievable in Christ's ministry on Earth. Your students will learn how to rely on Jesus when they experience deep belief as well as when they deal with soul-rocking doubt.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Belief and Doubt (John 20:24–31)
2. Mary Believes (Luke 1:26–45)
3. Hometown Rejection (Mark 6:1–6)
4. Centurion's Faith (Luke 7:1–10)

Connected Roots:

Knowledge, Kingdom



6. JESUS AND THE ORDINARY (4 Lessons)

Everything about Jesus, from conception to resurrection, was extraordinary and miraculous. In these lessons, students will explore how a very extraordinary Jesus interacts with the ordinary world around him. Your students will learn how Jesus uses ordinary people and things to accomplish his extraordinary mission.

Lessons/Passages:

1. From Ordinary to Extraordinary (John 6:1–13)
2. Blindsighted (John 9:1–11)
3. Significant Sacrifice (Mark 12:41–44)
4. Let It Shine (2 Corinthians 4:1–12)

Connected Roots:

Identity, Apologetics, Kingdom, Outreach



7. WHO NEEDS JESUS? (4 Lessons)

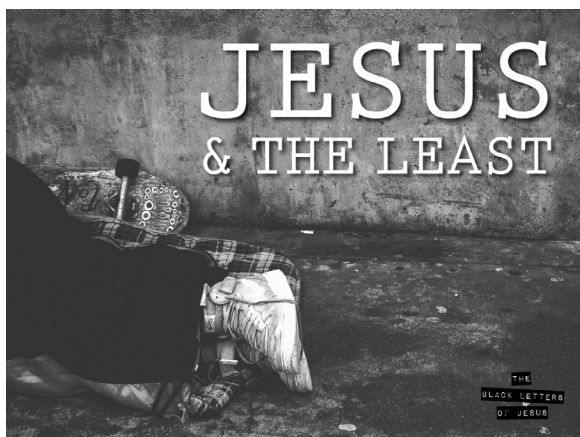
Who needs Jesus? Everybody does. We all need Jesus to be enough, to bridge the divide between God and humanity, to intervene in our hopelessness, and to quench our spiritual thirst. Not only do we need those things, but the people around us do, too, and they need us to tell them despite (or because of) our brokenness.

Lessons/Passages:

1. That's Not Good Enough (Matthew 3:1–17)
2. Mind the Gap (John 1:1–18)
3. Intervention (Isaiah 61:1–9)
4. Who's Thirsty? (John 4:1–26)

Connected Roots:

Rescue, Identity



8. JESUS AND THE LEAST (4 Lessons)

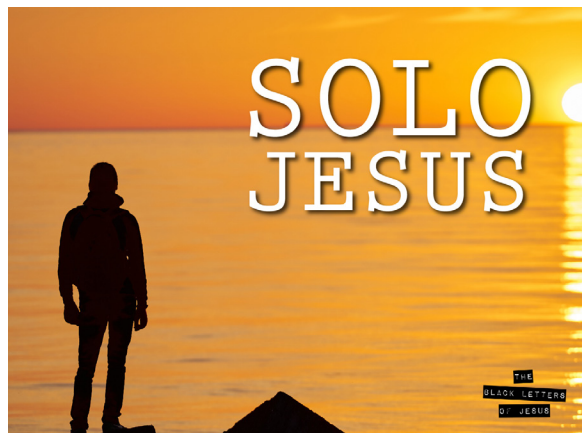
Jesus was especially compassionate and loving toward the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the outcasts, the sick, and the poor. Jesus valued and invested in people based on their faith, not their worldly worth or background. And Jesus took it one step further, not just showing kindness to those who were considered “least” in his culture, but treating them as part of his family.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Who's First? (Matthew 19:13–15 & Mark 9:33–37)
2. Jesus' Insider List (Matthew 15:21–28)
3. Jesus Unleashes the Potential of the Least (Mark 1:16–20 & Luke 9:1–11)
4. Jesus Treats the Least as Family (Mark 5:21–34)

Connected Roots:

Kingdom, Community, Identity



9. SOLO JESUS (4 Lessons)

In *Solo Jesus*, we'll examine situations when Jesus was alone—by choice or not—and how he responded. Sometimes, Jesus sought alone time to better connect with his Father. Other times, he found himself alone and needing God's help. Your student will learn about the importance of spiritual connection, using Jesus as a model.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Getting Alone with God (Mark 1:29–35)
2. Tempting Temptation (Luke 4:1–13)
3. Asleep in the Garden (Mark 14:32–43)
4. The Prayer Formula (Luke 11:1–13)

Connected Roots:

Worship, Knowledge, Identity



10. DINNERS WITH JESUS (4 Lessons)

The dinner table is a unique place where life (and life change) can happen. Imagine what it was like for the disciples to eat with Jesus multiple times a day for three years. Your students will see how Jesus disciplined those around him when meals provided the backdrop for some powerful moments.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Hey, You...Yeah, You! (Matthew 9:9–13)
2. A Dinner to Remember (Matthew 26:14–30)
3. Name Calling (Luke 7:36–50)
4. Back Up (John 21:4–19)

Connected Roots:

Community, Outreach, Identity



11. JESUS ON PURPOSE (4 Lessons)

Not only did Jesus live his life with purpose, but he called all of us to a purpose greater than ourselves. In these lessons, students identify Jesus' example of service, his calling to a kingdom mission, and our responsibility as the ambassadors he equipped with the Holy Spirit.

Lessons/Passages:

1. Doing the Dirty Work (John 13:1–17)
2. Famous Last Words (Acts 1:1–11)
3. Community (Acts 2:42–47)
4. Unity in Diversity (1 Corinthians 12:1–20)

Connected Roots:

Kingdom, Outreach, Community

SEASONAL/HOLIDAY (8 Lessons)

These seasonal lessons are independent from each other yet tied together by one common thread—they focus on the things Jesus did while he was here on earth. By focusing on his actions throughout the ministry year, students will grow a deeper understanding of what it means to follow him every day.

Lessons/Passages:

1. *New Year/Beginnings: Fresh Start (Luke 19:1–10)*
 - Jesus sees a repentant heart in Zacchaeus.
2. *Easter 1: Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28–44)*
 - Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey and weeps for the city.
3. *Easter 2: Jesus, The Lamb of God (John 1:23–34)*
 - John the Baptist recognizes that Jesus is the Lamb of God.
4. *Easter 3: Jesus' Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:14–22)*
 - Jesus rose from the dead to bring us life.
5. *Graduation: Whatever You Do (Colossians 3:12–17)*
 - Jesus gives you a new life to own.
6. *Thanksgiving: The Thankful Leper (Luke 17:11–19)*
 - Jesus inspires us to live thankfully.
7. *Christmas 1: Jesus' Birth (Luke 2:1–20)*
 - Jesus becomes one of the least when he comes to earth as a baby.
8. *Christmas 2: Who Is Your King? (Matthew 2:1–18)*
 - The wise men recognize Jesus as the King of Kings.

Connected Roots:

Kingdom, Knowledge, Apologetics, Worship, Kingdom





WHAT'S INCLUDED

52 LESSONS



- **FACILITATOR GUIDE** PDF and Word Versions
- **STUDENT GUIDE** PDF and Word Versions
- **WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT** Easy-to-use teaching points that unpack biblical themes
- **A SECOND LOOK** An additional illustration with discussion questions
- **LIVE IT OUT** An experiential activity to reinforce the lesson
- **APPLY IT** A practical application for the week
- **THINK ABOUT IT** Challenging quotes or verses
- **MARKS OF A DISCIPLE** Identify signs of growth in students
- **MEMORY VERSE** Promote Bible memorization
- **HOLIDAY LESSONS** Seasonal teaching
- **ONLINE TEACHER MANAGEMENT*** Give your volunteers online access to digital curriculum

** Included with HERO Membership*

ANNUAL MINISTRY BLUEPRINT



- **GOSPEL THREAD** 8 roots of Deep Discipleship
- **SCOPE AND SEQUENCE** Suggested yearly teaching outline
- **DUAL ENVIRONMENT** Specific instructions for use in small group and large group

VOLUNTEERS



- **FACILITATOR GUIDE** PDF and Word Versions
- **VOLUNTEER TIPS AND TRAINING** Advice for Lesson Facilitators
- **VOLUNTEER TRAINING VIDEOS*** 18 Youth Ministry Training Videos for Volunteers
- **STUDENT DISCIPLESHIP TRACKER*** Equip Volunteers to Create an Individualized Discipleship Plan for Every Student
- **ONLINE TEACHER MANAGEMENT*** Online Access to digital curriculum
- **ONLINE MESSAGE CENTER*** Update Volunteers via the Message Center

** Included with HERO Membership*

MEDIA



- **POWERPOINT SLIDES** Background, Title, and Teaching Point Slides
- **PROPRESENTER SLIDES** Background, Title, and Teaching Point Slides
- **PROMO ART** Sized for Instagram, Posters, and Web Banners
- **MEMORY VERSE** Graphic of Weekly Verse
- **GOSPEL THREAD VIDEOS*** Animated Videos of the 8 Roots of Deep Discipleship
- **COUNTDOWN VIDEOS*** 20 Animated Countdown Videos
- **MOTION LOOPS*** 22 Animated Motion Loops
- **BUMPER VIDEOS** 44 Animated Bumper Videos

** Included with HERO Membership*

PARENTS



- **PARENT GUIDE** Lesson Overview and Scripture Covered for Every Series
- **QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK** Debrief Questions Designed for Parents
- **FAMILY ACTIVITY** Activity Designed for the Whole Family
- **HOW TO RUN A PARENT MEETING*** Video Training for Youth Workers
- **ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP TRACKER*** Partner with Parents to Create an Individualized Discipleship Plan for Every Student

** Included with HERO Membership*

TECHNOLOGY



- **ONLINE TEACHER MANAGEMENT*** Online Access to Digital Curriculum
- **ONLINE MESSAGE CENTER*** Update Volunteers via the Message Center

** Included with HERO Membership*

DOWNLOAD A SAMPLE

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