

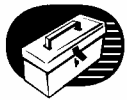
RULE 2 ■ Know Your God

Jesus—God's Being and Doing in the Flesh



Surveying the Site

Read the Blueprints. What does it mean to call Jesus “the reflection of God’s glory” and “the exact imprint of God’s very being”? Ponder that question quietly within yourself, then share your response with the group.



Checking Your Tool Box

God invites us into a relationship. We receive a call to be and do with our God of being and doing. Entering that relationship, however, can be difficult. How can we relate to a God who is deeper than our most profound thoughts, not bound by time and space, and beyond our descriptive powers? We can acknowledge the presence of God, but it takes more than that to have a relationship with God.

The Christian faith proclaims that God bridges the gap between divinity and humanity. We consider Jesus the most complete expression of this. Jesus brings humanity and divinity together. We know him as a man who lived in Nazareth and as “Son of God.” It remains a mystery how a human being can also be divine. People have wrestled with that concept for centuries. At the heart of this mystery lies the belief that Jesus reveals God’s being and doing in the flesh.

Jesus puts a face on God. The author of Matthew names Mary’s child “Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us” (Matthew 1:23). Just as fathers put their faces close

and let their newborn children grasp their noses and Little League coaches bend down to look their players eye to eye, in Jesus, God comes to our level. In Jesus, God wears a human face.

■ Out of all the ways that God could interact and communicate with us, why would God come “in the flesh”?

Jesus reveals how God functions. In his life and ministry, Jesus reveals the kind of doing God intends. Jesus touched people others shunned and spoke to people religious leaders ignored. He told stories that made foreigners and failures models of faith. He ate in the homes of the influential and the despised. He taught all those who would listen and cared for all who had need. He offered physical and emotional healing, and he forgave sins. He revealed the inclusive and loving nature of God’s being and doing. He did that to the point of dying on the cross for us, indicating how much God wants a relationship with us.

■ What does the variety of people among whom Jesus lived and worked reveal about God?

Jesus reveals what God expects. Jesus said things such as “you cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:13) and “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). He challenged those who follow him to “deny themselves and take up their cross” (Mark 8:34). Following that advice and obeying such commands demand our best efforts. Jesus makes it clear that having a relationship with our inclusive and loving God means accepting life-changing obligations and responsibilities.

Blueprints

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

Hebrews 1:1-3a

- We often come to church looking for what it has to offer. Jesus reveals that God wants to know what we are willing to offer. For you, which responsibilities and obligations of faith are the most demanding and which are the most rewarding?

Jesus represents the hope of God. As we know well, we fail in our attempts to accept the responsibilities of a relationship with God. There is a profound difference between our being and doing and God's being and doing. We may not like the word, but the most appropriate label for that difference is sin. Sin nailed Jesus to the cross. He died as a result of our sin and for our sins. Yet within the gracious doings of God, that was not the final word. God raised Jesus from death, and his resurrection gives us hope that God can and does overcome even the worst we can do. Even though we fail, God can transcend and transform our being and doing. Our hope lies not in the perfection of what we do for God, but in the wonders God works in and through us as we strive to be and do like God.

In and through Jesus, we discover how far God will go to have a relationship with us, what that relationship offers to us, and what that relationship demands of us. Although ample mystery remains, Jesus gives us a clearer picture of God. He is God's being and doing in the flesh.

- In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" They respond with a variety of titles, leading up to, "You are the Christ (the Messiah)." In your own words, who do you say Jesus is? Can you think of a song or hymn that helps you express what you think of God?



Conversation with the Master Carpenter

Close your session with prayer. Lift up any prayer requests or insights. Thank God for Jesus of Nazareth, the one in whom God chose to be revealed to us all, God's being and doing in the flesh.



On-the-Job Experience

Most of the gospels are only a little longer than a major newspaper article. Read one of the gospels (Mark is the shortest) in a single sitting. Pay attention to the kinds of things Jesus does and to or with whom he does them. Then ponder the following questions:

How does this story of the life of Jesus help me know who Jesus is to me? What does this picture of Jesus reveal to me about God? What does all this have to say about me? (For a more demanding [and rewarding] experience, read and compare a second gospel!)