



Jesus Christ: a priest's perspective teachers' notes

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

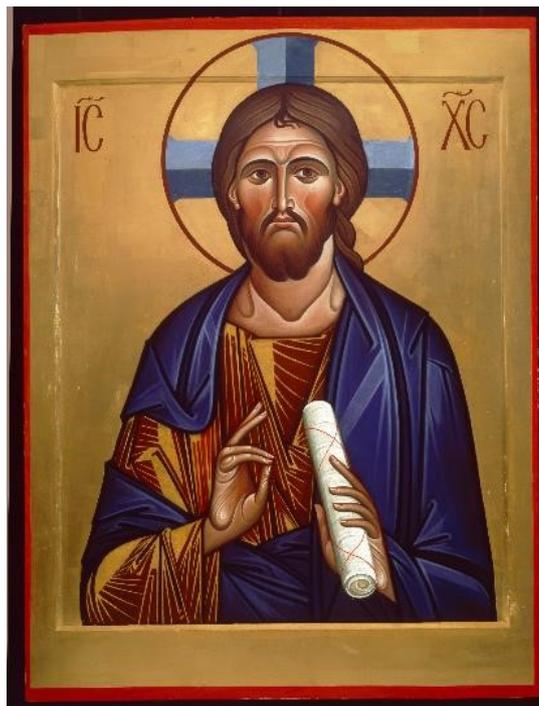
As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this [five-question survey](#).

Follow-up tasks

Ask pupils to look closer at this image, using the high-resolution image provided.

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you think is going on here?
3. What does it make you wonder?

For your reference, this image is an icon, or devotional painting, of Jesus Christ, which is displayed in the nave at Westminster Abbey. The icon was created by Russian artist Sergei Federov and is displayed near a stand where candles can be lit for personal prayer. Pupils may discuss the colour of Jesus Christ's skin, the clothes he is wearing, the scroll he is holding and the position of his right hand, which is the gesture for blessing. They may also pick up on the different colours present. It may be helpful to share that gold often represents God, blue represents Heaven and red or brown represents Earth. This task is not about giving "right" answers to the questions above, but instead encouraging students to look slowly and closely at an image, taking time to discuss their interpretations and the meaning behind the image in relation to Christianity.



Ask pupils to discuss in pairs or in a small group: In what ways does Jesus' crucifixion influence Christians today?

Ask pupils to write an answer to this essay question: "The resurrection of Jesus was the most important event in his life." To what extent do you agree?

Transcript

How do Jesus' teachings about forgiveness affect a Christian's life? – beginning at [0.00:00]

Forgiveness is a concept central to the Christian faith, individually and collectively. It's at the heart of our relationship with God, our relationship to ourselves and with others.

Forgiveness acknowledges that we make mistakes, we do wrong - we are human - but also that we can re-orientate and make a fresh start. So far, this is very good news indeed. But like anything so potent, I believe it needs handling with thought and care.

Forgiveness is core to the teaching of Jesus. When his followers asked him to teach them how to pray, he included, in what is known as the Lord's Prayer, this petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us.'

Jesus repeatedly spoke about forgiveness: When his close follower, Peter, came and asked him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Elsewhere, he said, 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also.'

So, Jesus spoke often about forgiveness, but he also modelled it in his living and in his dying. Before he was crucified, Jesus was cursed and flogged, yet from the cross, he prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' This focus on forgiveness at the cross emphasises the need to take forgiveness seriously, not lightly.

Our question is 'How do Jesus' teachings about forgiveness affect a Christian's life?' The good news is that Jesus' teaching, his living and dying invite us to take hold of the possibility of a fresh start. Many of us need to know the release that comes from being forgiven, even to forgive ourselves.

We are also invited to consider the path to forgiving others. To cut away the shackles of hate and bitterness which may bind us. To consider the possibility of fresh starts for others and for our relationships.

So, forgiveness speaks to our being human, with all our capacity to make mistakes, to get things wrong, even very badly wrong, and to our need to start again. Forgiveness taken seriously, though, insists that there is a cost and a need for accountability - this is not cheap, but costly grace.

'If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.' Jesus said.

Forgiveness then, is never about ignoring or sweeping issues, and the pain they cause, under the carpet. Far from it. In fact, Jesus' teaching on forgiveness involves having the challenging conversations, the holding to account. It invites naming and addressing serious issues.

What does the Bible teach us about incarnation? – beginning at [0.04:14]

"Incarnation"; the term comes from the Latin, meaning 'to take flesh'. It's a central Christian belief that, in Jesus, God took human form.

The opening passages of the Gospel of John include these words: 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.'

Key to the concept of the incarnation is the understanding that Jesus, uniquely, was and is, both and simultaneously fully God and fully human. Jesus had both a human and a divine nature. The Christian creeds declare that he was both 'made man and suffered death' and that he was 'true God from true God.'

Looking to the gospel accounts, we find that Jesus experienced what it is to be human, except without sin. He needed to sleep and he enjoyed eating with others. He noticed the work of vinedressers and farmers. Jesus grew tired and he bled when he was harmed. He was part of a human family, he lived among neighbours and alongside friends. Jesus, the son of Man, felt compassion, joy, sorrow, anger, fear; ultimately, he suffered and died.

The doctrine of the incarnation says that, in Jesus, God enters fully into the place of humanity, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone.

Incarnation also describes the belief that Jesus, God the Son, came to dwell with us, to teach us, to show us how to live, to bring salvation and offer eternal life. Because he was fully God, he had the authority to forgive sins, heal the sick, and even to resurrect the dead.

The good news, then, is that God knows what it is to be human. The joys and sorrows, the challenges and the wonders of our lives. As the writer of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews says: 'We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

Jesus, God incarnate, provides us with an example of how to live as we follow his example and he sets right the failings of all humanity to live according to our calling as children of God.

For me, the incarnation also means that matter, matters. That God is at work in and about our world. Not indifferent but imminent. The intricacies of our lives, the welfare of others, of this planet, of creation are of infinite significance, not only to us, but to God.

What does Jesus teach Christians about the importance of not judging others? – beginning at [0.08:01]

A social media pile-on can be brutal. Sometimes it seems that everyone has an opinion, even if it's not always an informed one.

Jesus, a devout Jewish believer, would have known the Psalms, and among them Psalm 103, whose writer says, 'The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.'

In the midst of a Twitter storm, or when, in real life, someone does or says something which causes us offence, we can be quick to judge, to attribute negative motivations and intent. It can be tiring and robs us of life.

In contrast, Jesus said, 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful' and 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.'

I don't think that Jesus means we shouldn't have a view or an opinion, but we are to be rightly cautious about how we form our opinions, particularly of others. In John chapter 7, Jesus says, 'Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.' Our many biases can skew our thinking and perceiving, we can make assumptions, for good or ill, about others based on our preconceptions.

Caution is a wise starting point because we do not have the ability to truly judge the heart and motivation of another person. Only God can read the heart and the motivations of each of us. Stephen Covey has written that we tend, conveniently, to judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behaviour, which highlights the hypocrisy with which most of us struggle. It's a thought akin to the saying of Jesus, captured in Matthew 7: 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?'