

THE
BLACK LETTERS
OF JESUS

PARENT GUIDE: *JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS*

We realize that you, as parents, are the primary faith influencers in a young person's life. The best disciple making takes place when students' parents take the lead. That's why we've created this helpful guide for you to use at home with your child. It is designed to give you some basic information about what is being taught at church through *The Black Letters of Jesus* curriculum, along with some helpful tools, suggestions, and questions to help you reinforce this learning at home.

WHAT ARE THE BLACK LETTERS OF JESUS?

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 based on the things Jesus did while he was here on earth. Some themes may be familiar and some will allow students 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.

**Each lesson has a The Black Letters of Jesus statement that describes the main action we're studying.*

OVERVIEW OF *JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS* (4 Lessons)

Jesus constantly 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. We learn about how to turn to him in the middle of storms, we learn about his identity when we see him revealed on the mountain in the transfiguration, and he gives us the perfect soil and seeds analogy to diagnose our hearts. In all of these, we see Jesus' authority. He commands the wind and the waves, he is the son of God, and he is speaking the word of truth. In every way, we learn that he is the authority of our lives and our lives need his truth. Our lives can often look a lot like the wilderness, and we desperately need a true and guiding voice to lead us through it.

MAIN TOPICS AND SCRIPTURE COVERED

FOR YOU TO KNOW:	FOR YOU TO ASK:
<p>1: Get Out of the Boat (Matthew 14:22-36)</p> <p>When we go through life's difficulties, it's really easy to zero-in on your circumstances and either let them overwhelm you or furiously try to fix it all yourself. In this lesson, we look at Peter and Jesus, and the value of taking the risk to keep our eyes on Jesus.</p> <p><i>The Black Letters of Jesus:</i> <i>Jesus asks us to keep our eyes on him.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Would you rather be stuck alone in a difficult place, or have Jesus right in front of you, asking you to do something difficult? Why?▪ Share about a time when you've followed Jesus and done something difficult even when it was scary.

2: Listen to the King (Matthew 17:1-13)

When Jesus meets with Elijah and Moses during the Transfiguration, a very clear message is sent: *This is my son; listen to him.* Amid the clutter of our lives, we have a very simple job to do that cuts through the rest of the noise. Acknowledge Jesus as King and listen to him.

The Black Letters of Jesus:

Jesus shows that he is the Son of God.

- We all find it hard to trust or listen to Jesus at times. When does this seem hardest for you?
- Here’s when I have a hard time trusting or listening to Jesus...

3: Soul Gardening (Mark 4:1-20)

When we listen to Jesus’ words about the “soil” of our hearts, we’re given a tremendous opportunity to evaluate our spiritual health. In this lesson, we dive into our current readiness to hear his truth and plan a way to become more and more ready every day.

The Black Letters of Jesus:

Jesus plants his truth in our hearts, just as a gardener plants seeds in the ground.

- What are the things that you feel distract our family from focusing on Jesus?
- Does anyone have a suggestion for how to refocus or get rid of the things that tend to choke out our faith?

4: Call Out from the Storm (Matthew 8:23-27)

When we are overwhelmed, it is easy to quickly assume the worst. On the sea in a big storm, the disciples are convinced they’re going to die, even though most of them had made careers by navigating those very waters. They know they’re in trouble, but Jesus shows them that things are different now in life with him, and they need to know he’s in control.

The Black Letters of Jesus:

Jesus shows his calm reliance on his Father, even in the middle of a dangerous storm.

- Think of a difficult “wind and waves” kind of season that happened in our lives. What did we do to keep our eyes on Jesus during that period?
- What kinds of things were overwhelming or tempted us to lose our focus?

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO TOGETHER

OUTDOOR CHALLENGE

Spend time in the great outdoors! This doesn't have to be a month-long backpacking trip through the Appalachian Trail, but think of what's normally comfortable for your family in the outdoors and see if everyone can take the challenge to go one step further. If you camp out of your car twice a year, borrow some sixty-five liter backpacks and hike-in to your next campsite. If you rarely venture outdoors, plan a half-day hike (if there's a view or a destination, this is an easier sell) with the opportunity to blaze your own trail at one point. Do an internet search of the best hikes within an hour drive of your area. Don't just go outside to breathe fresh air, though. Take the opportunity to seize teachable moments and have conversations about what God is doing in your family. Create an atmosphere of being excited about the adventure of plunging into the unknown. Make sure to enjoy it! Have fun, laugh, and make the most of an "unplugged" moment with your child.

Consider asking these general questions along the way, in order to lay the ground work for deeper conversations about your child's spiritual journey:

- What do you think is the best/most beautiful thing God created? Why?
- What can you learn about God from just being outside in his creation?
- What other things has God been teaching you lately?

MEMORY VERSES

Each lesson has a corresponding verse to memorize or meditate on.

When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
Psalm 34:17-18 (ESV)

JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS 1:
Get Out of the Boat

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
Colossians 1:15 (ESV)

JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS 2:
Listen to the King

"But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."
Mark 4:20 (ESV)

JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS 3:
Soul Gardening

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
Romans 10:13 (ESV)

JESUS AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS 4:
Call Out from the Storm