Introduction:

- Regardless of one’s view or personal belief system, Jesus Christ is without a doubt the most influential person who has ever lived. Whether regarded as a Great Teacher, Miracle-worker, Revolutionary, Messiah, or Founder of Christianity, Jesus’ life and teaching are the center of much debate, controversy, and ardent devotion.

- Barbara Walters has become the master of the personal interview. Her claim to fame centers around her ability to get behind the “common knowledge” and find out what makes people tick. She asks what we are “dying to ask ourselves,” and is not afraid to tackle the tough issues.

CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT BARBARA WALTER’S FIRST INTERVIEW WITH JESUS MIGHT SOUND LIKE . . . ?

Q-1: “Who exactly are you? Where did you come from?”

A-1: “1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

John 1:1-5 (NIV)

Summary:
Q-2: “Not to be disrespectful, but can anyone corroborate your story? These are fantastic claims!”

A-2: “6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”

John 1:6-9 (NIV)

Summary:

Q-3: “When you look back on your earthly ministry, what was your greatest disappointment and by contrast, your greatest joy?”

A-3: “10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. 11 He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. 12 Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

John 1:10-13 (NIV)

Summary:
Q-4: “Why did you choose to come to Earth in the way you did? What purpose or mission were you seeking to accomplish?”

A-4: “14 The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testifies concerning Him. He cries out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.'" 16 From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.”

John 1:14-18 (NIV)

Summary:

Conclusion:

The eternal, second person of the Trinity, the Creator of the Universe, took on human flesh and came to live upon the Earth. His name is Jesus and He came to show you what God is like and how much you matter to Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you could ask Jesus one question about His life and/or ministry, what would you ask?

2. What new insight did you gain about Jesus from today’s message?

3. In what specific ways does Jesus distinguish Himself from all other religious teachers?

4. How does Jesus’ reason for visiting this planet affect you? How would you describe your relationship with Jesus in a paragraph or less?
Introduction:

What do you think makes a person “good?”

- Character?
- Morals?
- Religious Convictions?
- Spirituality?
- Service to Others?

The Story of a Very Good Man:

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs You are doing if God were not with Him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” 4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at My saying, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.
10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.”

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. 18 Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

John 3:1-19 (NIV)

1. Nicodemus is an upright, moral, devoutly religious man who has come to Jesus to seek truth.

   - **His Assumption:** Being good make me right with God.

2. Jesus emphatically points out that “being good” (even devoutly religious) isn’t good enough.

   - **The Truth:** Spiritual life demands a spiritual birth.

3. Jesus explains the truth to Nicodemus.
4. Jesus explains the truth to us. John 3:16-19

- God’s Invitation: salvation John 3:16
- God’s Motive: forgiveness John 3:17
- Our choice determines our: eternity John 3:18
- God’s Commentary: grace John 3:19

Summary:

Discussion Questions:

1. When most people are asked, “How does a person get into heaven?,” what is the most common response?

2. Why is our own self effort, good works, and even religious activity no substitute for a relationship with God? (Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8-9)

3. According to Jesus, how does a person begin a relationship with God? (See John 4:3-5) What exactly does it mean to be “born again?”

4. Have you ever been “born spiritually?” Share with your group when and how this occurred in your life.

5. Are you unsure of your relationship with God? Why not talk with a pastor, or ask a knowledgeable friend for information to help you make a wise and informed decision about your eternal life.
Introduction:

Debbie’s Life: “Been there, done that.”

Debbie’s Heart: Isolation, pain, rejection, and yearning

Jesus’ Game-plan for a Lonely, Wounded Woman

Step 1: Break down the barriers

1 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that He was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but His disciples.  
2 So He left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4 Now He had to go through Samaria.  
5 So He came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.  
6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give Me a drink?”  
8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to Him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can You ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Life Lesson #1

We must intentionally break through any and every barrier to the Gospel of Christ.
Step 2: Offer to quench her deepest thirst

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.”

11 “Sir,” the woman said, “You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can You get this living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

15 The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Life Lesson #2

Grace, not condemnation
Is what draws people to Jesus Christ.

Step 3: Help her face the truth in love

16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

17 “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe Me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

Life Lesson #3

Honesty, with ourselves and with God is a prerequisite to an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ.
Step 4: Explain how true worship works

22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”

26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am He.”

Life Lesson #4

True worship is a matter of honest relationship not religious systems.

Step 5: Allow her “wounds” to be leveraged for God’s glory

27 Just then His disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do You want?” or “Why are You talking with her?” 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward Him.

31 Meanwhile His disciples urged Him, “Rabbi, eat something.” 32 But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.” 33 Then His disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought Him food?” 34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. 35 Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”
39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days. 41 And because of His words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

John 4:27-42

Life Lesson #5
God will even use our “baggage” to bring others blessing as we sow the Words of Life.

Discussion Questions:

1. What cultural and religious boundaries did Jesus “break” in order to help the woman at the well?

2. List three to four cultural and/or religious boundaries that prevent “us” from reaching others for Christ?

3. Why do you think this woman listened to Jesus? What was His attitude toward her? How did He speak the truth in love?

4. Which of the 5 Life Lessons from John 4 impacted your life the most? Why?

5. Have you ever felt that you’ve done “too much wrong” for God to ever love you? How does Jesus dispel that lie?
Introduction: What do you do when you can’t change your situation?

The Story… is “Strange”

1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 4 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, He asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

11 But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ” 12 So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

An Analysis: What is “strange about this story?
The Conflict: Intentional

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute Him. In His defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working.” For this reason they tried all the more to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 5:16-18 (NIV)

The Teaching: Direct

Point #1 – Jesus explains His relationship to the Father

Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. Yes, and He will show Him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him.

John 5:19-23 (NIV)

Point #2 – Jesus explains His relationship with the world

He is our Savior.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself.

John 5:24-26 (NIV)
• He is our judge.

27 And He has given him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man.
28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice 29 and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. 30 By Myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me.

John 5:27-30 (NIV)

The Message: There’s hope for the hopeless

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Man</th>
<th>Us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The man’s <strong>physical</strong> Condition = Helpless</td>
<td>Our <strong>spiritual</strong> Condition = Helpless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The question for him - “Do you want to get well?”</td>
<td>The question for us - “Do you want to get well?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The man’s response - “I need help!”</td>
<td>Our response - “Ask for help!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The man received <strong>physical</strong> Life and Power</td>
<td>We receive <strong>spiritual</strong> Life and Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Warning – Your sin will be judged</td>
<td>The Warning – Your sin will be judged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Questions:

1. What was so “strange” about this story? Why?

2. Are there times in our lives when we really don’t want help? Why do you think this is so?

3. Why did Jesus purposely heal on the Sabbath? Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus?

4. Diagram John 5:24 in a way that shows the relationship of the key verbs in this verse. What three things occur in a person’s life when they hear and believe?

5. How does Christ’s role as “judge” impact how you live your life? Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-33 and discuss the implications for daily living.
**Introduction:** Need a miracle?

1. If you could ask God to do a miracle in your life, what would it be?
2. Why did Jesus perform miracles?

**Miracle #1 – Jesus feeds the 5,000**

- The “Sign”

- The Lesson

- The Response

**Miracle #2 – Jesus walks on water**

- The “Sign”

- The Lesson

- The Response
Jesus exposes the error of “Spiritual Consumerism”

- The Rebuke
- The Lesson
- The Invitation

The people ask for “proof” of Jesus’ claims

- A miracle requested
- An explanation given
- A promise made
- Another invitation extended

The people reject Jesus’ invitation

Jesus repeats His offer of eternal life
Jesus amplifies the condition of His offer of eternal life  

- The condition
- The meaning of the condition
  - Then?
  - Now?

Those who see the miracles respond in one of two ways  

- The disciples of convenience - defection
- The disciples of conviction - steadfastness

Conclusion: Do you want Christ or something from Christ?
Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Jesus perform miracles?

2. What impact did miracles have on His followers?

3. What are the dangers of “spiritual consumerism?”

4. What did Jesus mean when He said, “I am the bread of life?”

5. What would it look like for you to fully partake of “The Bread of Life?” Explain.
Introduction:

Four Honest Skeptics -

- John
- Ralph
- Lee
- Bill

They all have one big question that must be answered!
How Jesus Answers Honest Skeptics:

Scene 1 – An Empty Tomb

John 20:1-9 (NIV)

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put Him!”

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Scene 2 – A Broken Woman

John 20:10-18 (NIV)

10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

13 They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put Him.”

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

17 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). He said, “Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’”

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that He had said these things to her.
Scene 3 – His Fearful Followers

John 20:19-23 (NIV)

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 20 After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Scene 4 – An Unreasonable Doubter

John 20:24-31 (NIV)

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

26 A week later His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.”

28 Thomas said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.
Conclusion: Four timeless truths for Honest Skeptics

1. Jesus reveals Himself to different people in different ways.

2. Meeting the resurrected Jesus produces a total life transformation.

3. The evidence is overwhelming (then and now) that Jesus is alive!

4. God’s desire is not a religious response, but a real relationship that comes by belief.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be an honest skeptic?

2. Discuss the Four Timeless Truths For Honest Skeptics (above). Which “hit home” the most with you? Why?

3. How does Jesus’ response to Thomas encourage you? How interested do you think God is in revealing Himself to you?

4. What specific action step would demonstrate a “step” of faith on your part toward Christ? Will you take that step?
This message is taught by Joe Bishop, Chip’s colleague at Santa Cruz Bible Church.

There are no Message Notes.
This message is taught by Steve Clifford, Chip’s colleague at Santa Cruz Bible Church.

There are no Message Notes.