

Unit 1 Reading Guide Answer Key

Jesus and Faith

Chapter 1: Getting to Know Jesus

Article 1: Discovering Jesus: The Adventure Begins

1. The Church's history is filled with stories of people who have turned their lives around after placing their faith in Jesus Christ. One dramatic example of this is Saul of Tarsus, better known now as Saint Paul.
2. Paul is first introduced as a threatening figure standing in the background, witnessing Saint Stephen being stoned to death. Paul goes on to hunt down many other followers of Jesus Christ.
3. A martyr is a person who voluntarily suffers death because of his or her beliefs.
4. Then one day, it all changes for Paul when he meets the Risen Jesus Christ. Saint Paul not only becomes a Christian but also one of Christianity's most zealous advocates, spreading the saving message of Christ crucified and risen everywhere he goes.
5. Conversion is responding to Jesus' offer of love by turning away from sin and its effects and actively seeking to do God's will.
6. Grace helps us in our efforts to avoid sin and live our lives as Jesus teaches. His grace helps us to discover and follow God's plan for our lives.
7. Clearly, there is something powerful about the life and message of Jesus Christ.

Article 2: The Life and Times of Jesus

1. The culture at that time was patriarchal. For the most part, men held the political, economic, and religious power. The primary social role of a woman was to be a wife and mother. Some of the ways Jesus interacted with women seemed to break these social norms.
2. What did the men do to make a living? Most of their work was agricultural. Many were farmers. Some were fishermen. A few were craftsmen, like Jesus and his foster father, Joseph.
3. If one primary cultural value defines life in first-century Palestine, it is commitment to family.
4. Another kind of work that ordinary people could do during the time of Jesus was to hire themselves out as indentured servants. People could do this because a very small percentage was very wealthy and needed many servants to keep their estates running smoothly. Often called the elites, these families owned large, beautifully decorated homes in the big cities, with indoor plumbing and many rooms for entertaining. They owned the majority of the land in the countryside, which they leased out to tenant farmers. They took advantage of the rest of the population through poor wages and heavy taxation.
5. This system of haves and have-nots is not God's vision for humankind as revealed in the Bible.
6. First-century Palestine was part of the Roman Empire. The Romans took control of Palestine about sixty years before the birth of Christ (63 BC).



7. King Herod the Great was the Jewish (actually half-Jewish) king at the time Jesus was born. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor who was sent by Rome to rule over Jerusalem after Herod's children proved to be poor rulers.
8. The Pharisees were a group of Jews known for its strict adherence to all the laws of the Old Testament. They believed in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees consisted largely of the elite, wealthy class; many were chief priests. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The scribes were scholars and teachers of the Jewish Law and Scripture. The Zealots believed that God wanted Israel to be an independent nation again, free from foreign rule. They preached a violent overthrow of the Roman occupiers.

Article 3: The Gospel of Mark, Part 1: The Human Face of God

1. Many scholars believe the Gospel of Mark was written around AD 70 for Christians living in Rome.
2. In AD 64, fire broke out in Rome. The emperor, Nero, blamed the fire on the Christians. This led to persecution of the Christians. During this time, many Christians were so frightened that they denied their faith in an effort to escape persecution. Those who denied their faith, and perhaps even turned in their fellow Christians to save their own lives, were called apostates. This atmosphere of fear and betrayal is part of what Mark addresses in his Gospel.
3. From the beginning, we see that Jesus, the Son of God, though welcomed by some, will be in a battle against evil in his efforts to save us from our sins.
4. In the chapters that follow, numerous accounts of Jesus helping people reveal not only Jesus' power but also his humanity.
5. The Gospel of Mark reveals a Savior who definitely knows what it feels like to be misunderstood and even rejected. Throughout the first eight chapters of Mark, Jesus repeatedly runs into opposition, and Mark describes the variety of Jesus' emotions.
6. It is reassuring to know we have a Savior who understands what it is like to be human. However, there are two important differences between Jesus and us. First, Jesus is fully human but also fully God. Second, Jesus is like us in all things except sin.

Article 4: The Gospel of Mark, Part 2: Who Do You Say That I Am?

1. The placement of these questions in the middle of the Gospel of Mark is an intentional literary technique used by the author of the Gospel. Everything that has happened so far leads up to Jesus' questions, and everything that happens in the second half of the Gospel flows from the answer to his questions.
2. Like John the Baptist, Jesus calls people to repentance and preaches about the Kingdom of God. Elijah is a miracle worker who confronts authority. Jesus also works miracles and confronts authority. Finally, Jesus speaks for God like the prophets do, so it makes sense to think he might be a prophet.
3. Peter gives the right answer: "You are the Messiah." At the time, many Jews believed the messiah would be an earthly military or political ruler, like King David in the Old Testament. They hoped the messiah would overthrow Rome's rule and return the Promised Land to the Jewish People.



4. Peter is the perfect example of this confusion over the role of the Messiah. He does not accept the idea that the Messiah must suffer and die. It may sound harsh when Jesus tells Peter, “Get behind me, Satan,” but Peter, and the other Apostles as well, were struggling to see how Jesus’ suffering was necessary.
5. We quickly learn that if Jesus, the Messiah, is willing to suffer, his followers must be willing to suffer as well.

Article 5: The Gospel of Mark Part 3: The Empty Tomb Changes Everything

1. As the Gospel of Mark moves toward Jesus’ Passion, death, and Resurrection—events that together form the Paschal Mystery—Jesus’ identity as the Suffering Messiah comes into full view.
2. The disciples’ misunderstanding and eventual abandonment of Jesus is highlighted more in Mark than in the other three Gospels. Consider these events: While praying in the garden, Jesus is in emotional agony. Where are the disciples? They are asleep. . . . As Jesus is being interrogated by the High Priest, Peter denies being one of Jesus’ disciples three times. As Jesus is dying in agony . . . none of his followers are with him. Only a few of the women are brave enough to look on from a distance.
3. However, Jesus’ suffering, abandonment, and death are not the final events of his life. The women enter the tomb and to their shock, they find not Jesus’ body, but a young man dressed in white. The young man announces the amazing news—Jesus is raised from the dead! He [the young man] instructs the women to go tell the disciples the Good News. However, the women do just the opposite, running away in fear and telling no one.
4. The original ending of the Gospel of Mark is a cliffhanger, ending with the empty tomb and no accounts of the resurrected Jesus.
5. You probably noticed that there is a longer ending to the Gospel. Despite our uncertainty about its origins, we are certain that it is part of the canon of Scripture. It is the inspired Word of God and has something to reveal to us.
6. So, what difference does Christ’s Resurrection make? It makes all the difference in this world and the next. It is the proof that God’s plan for salvation has been accomplished.
7. The Resurrection also gives new meaning to suffering. When connected to God’s plan, suffering for the sake of righteousness becomes something we as disciples can offer in imitation of Jesus.
8. We are a people of hope, knowing that suffering and death do not have the last word. Our Church community is a gathering of people committed to belief in Jesus Christ’s Resurrection and the hope that he offers.

Chapter 2: Jesus Revealed

Article 6: How the Gospels Came to Be

1. The most tangible way that God reveals himself to us is through the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fullness of God’s Divine Revelation, and the Gospels in the New Testament are a primary way to learn about Jesus’ life and saving mission.
2. The first stage in the formation of the Gospels is the actual life and teachings of Jesus Christ.



3. Many of these disciples become missionaries, traveling across the Roman Empire to share this Good News with others. Greek is their common language, and in Greek the word for “good news” is gospel, so their message became known as the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus Christ.
4. This is the second stage in the formation of the Gospels, which is called the oral tradition. As the Gospel spreads by word of mouth, when questions arise, the Apostles and other eyewitnesses provide clarification.
5. When the original eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection started to pass away, they [Church leaders] had to rethink things. To preserve the eyewitnesses’ teaching and preaching about Jesus, they [Church leaders] began to write down their accounts about the life of Christ.
6. The third stage in the formation of the Gospels is the written tradition. Over time, the written Gospels were combined with the other writings now in the canon of Scripture, forming the New Testament.

Article 7: Four Gospels, Four Authors, Four Viewpoints

1. So why are there four Gospels instead of one? The answer has to do with each Gospel being written by different evangelists, in different historical situations, for different audiences.
2. The Gospel of Matthew is like the traditional view. It focuses on showing the connections between Jesus and the traditions found within the Old Testament.
3. Mark’s brevity and fast-paced presentation of Jesus’ ministry is a little like watching highlights of a game. Mark is the Gospel that gives us the most graphic details. Mark shows the humanity of Jesus as he relates to his closest followers.
4. The Gospel of Luke is kind of like this wide-angle view. In Luke, Jesus’ life and mission are presented in a way that challenges society’s limited perspectives. Luke presents the wider appeal of Jesus’ message, recognizing that Jesus came to save everyone.
5. The Gospel of John is like this camera. It is unique when compared to the other three Gospels. It gives us a perspective from on high, with its soaring theology that focuses on Jesus’ identity as God’s Divine Son. Jesus’ dialogue in the Gospel of John circles around just like the camera on a wire.
6. John also zooms in to grass level. John focuses five chapters on the Last Supper, giving us an enormous amount of detail about Jesus’ relationships with his disciples, with God the Father, and with the Holy Spirit.

Article 8: The Synoptics: Similar but Not the Same

1. They [the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke] all tell the same story from a similar perspective. Together we call them the synoptic Gospels. The word synoptic comes from a Greek word meaning “seeing together.”
2. Most scholars believe that Mark was written first and that the authors of Matthew and Luke probably used the Gospel of Mark as a starting point for writing their own Gospels.
3. One thing the synoptic Gospels have in common are the many parables Jesus uses to teach (John has no parables!). In the end, Jesus’ parables challenge the listeners not only to think about their world differently but to act differently as well.
4. Jesus’ many miracles are also central to the synoptic Gospels. As we will learn later, the Gospel of John has only a few miracles but calls them signs.



5. As mentioned earlier, Mark is writing to a community that is being persecuted. Some people are denying their faith in Jesus. Mark highlights Jesus' suffering and abandonment as an example to the community.
6. Matthew's community is quite different. He is writing for a predominately Jewish Christian audience. The author of Matthew emphasizes Jesus' connections to Judaism and uses those connections to present Jesus as the fulfillment of all that the Jewish Scriptures (the Christian Old Testament) foretell.
7. Finally, the author of Luke is writing for a predominantly Gentile (non-Jewish) Christian audience. They are influenced by Greek culture and are relatively unfamiliar with Judaism. The Gospel emphasizes the universality of Jesus' message. Luke's accounts focus on how Jesus' offer of salvation is extended to all people, especially the outcast and marginalized.

Article 9: Scripture and Tradition: Why We Need Both

1. This living transmission of the Gospel in the Church is called Sacred Tradition, or sometimes the Apostolic Tradition.
2. Catholics, however, recognize the authority of both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. It is through both that God is fully revealed and his truth is made known to us.
3. Tradition and Scripture are inseparable. They work together to achieve the same goal of handing down the Gospel. Scripture and Tradition help to maintain the purity of the Gospel message. Scripture and Tradition support and reinforce each other and will never be in contradiction.
4. In contrast, tradition with a lowercase *t* refers to a custom. They [traditions] are not part of God's authoritative Revelation, so they can be changed or altered to suit different circumstances, time periods, and cultures.

Article 10: The Magisterium: Passing On God's Revelation

1. As the Church's Tradition is passed from one generation to the next, what keeps it from changing like the messages in the telephone game? The answer is the Holy Spirit.
2. When Jesus chose the Apostles, he commissioned them to share in his ministry of preaching the truth and proclaiming the Reign of God.
3. The Pope, who is the bishop of Rome, and all the bishops of the Church, are the modern-day successors of the Apostles. Together they are called the Magisterium, the official teaching authority of the Church.
4. Definition: The uninterrupted passing on of authority from the Apostles directly to all bishops is called Apostolic Succession.
5. Definition: Infallibility is the gift given by the Holy Spirit to the Church whereby the Magisterium of the Church, the Pope, and the bishops in union with him, can definitively proclaim a doctrine of faith and morals without error.
6. The Church places great value on seeking unity among Christians and with all people of good will.



Chapter 3: The Two Natures of Jesus

Article 11: True Man

1. It has been revealed through Scripture and Tradition that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man. This means that even though he is one Divine Person, he has two natures—his human nature and his divine nature.
2. Christology is the study of Jesus Christ—the Son of God and the Second Divine Person of the Trinity—and his earthly ministry and eternal mission.
3. Jesus is not just God appearing to look human. He has a physical, human body.
4. Jesus thought with a human mind. On the other hand, because of Jesus' divine nature, his knowledge of God and of God's will was perfect and complete.
5. One characteristic that defines what it means to be human is our free will. In his human nature, Jesus too had a free human will. The difference between our will and Jesus' will is that Jesus' human will is in complete harmony with his divine will.
6. Like Celia, Jesus lived the deepest experience of being human. And though Jesus died, his story is not over.
7. If we forget his divine nature, then we reduce Jesus to just another good moral person or great teacher.

Article 12: True God

1. Sacred Scripture is clear that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who existed before all time.
2. Emmanuel is a Hebrew name meaning, "God is with us."
3. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus displays powers that only God possesses. On several occasions, he displays divine knowledge.
4. During Jesus' earthly life, others recognized and acknowledged that he is the Divine Son of God. Twice God the Father's booming voice from the heavens declares Jesus as his Son.
5. There are also human beings who make this connection. What is holding us back from believing that Jesus is God incarnate? If we take the risk of believing the Gospel claims, we might be able to see the awesome impact that belief in Jesus' divine nature can have on our life.
6. Believing in Jesus' divine nature gives us hope that salvation is attainable despite our sins and flaws. It helps us believe that everything Jesus taught is true. However, our belief in Jesus' divine nature must be balanced with our belief in his human nature.

Article 13: True God and True Man

1. Ashanti's dad told her that the correct term for God taking on flesh and becoming man is called the Incarnation.
2. Christ was at all times one Divine Person with two natures. The theological term for this mystery of the two natures in one Divine Person is hypostatic union. The two natures of Jesus Christ do not simply exist one alongside the other; instead, they are joined so completely that both are always fully present.



3. Because Jesus is one Divine Person, a union of a fully human nature and a fully divine nature, we know and experience Jesus' divinity *through* his humanity. We come to know Jesus as God Made Flesh among us through knowing Jesus the man.
4. A good way to understand how Jesus' human nature reveals God's true nature is to compare the images of God that come through the Old Testament to the image of God revealed through Jesus in the New Testament.
5. But Jesus' compassion reveals that the Law is just a guide and that God loves us without any conditions.
6. Jesus' humanity makes it clear that God's saving power comes through sacrificial love.

Article 14: Why Does the Incarnation Matter?

1. God took on a human form because God is beyond our human understanding. In order for us to have any concept of God, grace, or salvation, God has to approach us in a way that we can understand.
2. God's taking on human form in the Person of Jesus provides the frame needed to understand more fully God and his saving love for us.
3. Artists portray Jesus as a reflection of their own culture so that we can identify more closely with him.
4. God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ because he is identifying with our humanity.
5. God humbles himself and becomes man because he wants to be sure that we understand his message of salvation.

Chapter 4: It Comes Down to Faith

Article 15: The Gift of Faith

1. Through faith, we come to accept and believe the truth God has revealed to us. However, believing in and loving God is ultimately our choice.
2. Often when we encounter truths that we struggle to accept, these are the very areas of our faith that God is calling us to dig deeper to understand.
3. A life of faith means trusting that God wants what is best for us.
4. The word *obedience* comes from a Latin root meaning "to hear, listen, or pay attention to."
5. What can we do to strengthen and nourish our faith? One way to grow in faith is to read Sacred Scripture regularly and prayerfully.
6. Spending quality time with other people is another way we can nourish our faith. We also nourish our faith through prayer.
7. Jesus founded the Catholic Church knowing that our personal faith thrives best in a community of faith.



Article 16: Learning about Faith from Paul's Letters

1. Chart: Paul's letters usually follow a pattern made of up of four parts: greeting, prayer, body, and final blessing.
2. Understanding Paul's letters can be challenging. The problems and questions that Paul is addressing are not always obvious to use because we have only Paul's half of the communication.
3. Another challenge is that Paul lived and wrote in a time very different from our own. To help us understand what Paul is trying to communicate and ultimately what God is trying to communicate to us through Paul's words, we must seek to understand the culture and ways of communicating used at the time.
4. One of the most interesting things we learn is the variety of ways Paul calls others to faith. Sometimes we see Paul as a fatherly guide. Other times, he is like a learned rabbi. Still other times, we see Paul utterly frustrated and challenging individuals who are leading others astray.
5. Yet, no matter what means Paul uses, his passion for the Gospel and his desire for others to put their faith in Jesus is always clear.

Article 17: Galatians and Ephesians: Faith and Unity

1. Why was Paul so successful at establishing Christian communities? One reason is that Paul was willing to embrace people's differences and diversity.
2. Imagine his distress when he heard that the Christian community in Galatia had abandoned this teaching after new missionaries told them that they had to follow Jewish Law before they could become Christians!
3. "O stupid Galatians!" (Galatians 3:1). Sometimes the journey to faith has bumps along the way, and the Galatians apparently hit one of those bumps.
4. As Paul goes on to defend the Gospel message, we learn more about faith in Jesus. He explains that faith in Jesus Christ is sufficient for justification.
5. Justification flows from God's forgiveness of our sin and the gift of God's sanctifying grace to renew our holiness. The truth Paul proclaims is that the Old Law brings judgment only; only faith in Jesus Christ brings justification and our salvation.
6. Apparently, in Ephesus the Jewish Christians were not getting along with the Gentile Christians. The divisions were going against Christ's teachings and had the potential to hinder the spreading of the Gospel.
7. Then Paul speaks about our redemption in Christ. Redemption is another word used to describe how God's saving plan works. It is the process by which one is brought back from slavery to sin into right relationship with God.
8. We need only accept God's gift of salvation in faith. Once transformed, believers are called to live holy lives that reflect the restored unity between God and humankind. By treating one another with dignity and respect, Christians are a sign of the unity that God desires for all people.



Article 18: First Corinthians: Faith Overcomes Division

1. During Paul's time, Corinth was a bustling seaport city, which meant it was a crossroads for travelers from all over the world. Like most large first-century Roman cities, Corinth was a mix of cultures and religions. Corinth also had a reputation for prostitution and sexual promiscuity.
2. Unfortunately, instead of focusing on Jesus, they [the Corinthians] have divided themselves into cliques. Some groups say they are followers of Paul, and others are following a preacher named Apollos. Paul is reminding the Corinthians that they are followers of Jesus Christ, not a particular Church leader.
3. Sadly, the divisions among the Corinthians have also shown up at worship. Some wealthy people bring food to eat before the celebration while others in the community go hungry. This emphasizes the divisions between the rich and the poor.
4. Apparently, Paul was asked if Christians were morally allowed to eat meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to an idol, or pagan god. In the letter, Paul says that the answer is both yes and no. On one hand, Christians would be fine to eat it, knowing that there are no gods besides the one, true God. On the other hand, Paul also cautions that it is not okay to eat this meat if another Christian whose faith is weak or uncertain would be offended by your behavior.
5. For Paul, "being right" is not as important as preserving the unity that we have with other Christians.
6. Paul's reminder to keep our focus on Jesus Christ does help us to respect and appreciate one another.

Article 19: We Celebrate Our Faith in Community

1. More than anything else, faith is a relationship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Faith makes it possible for us to believe in all that he [God] has revealed about himself and to respond to his revealed truth with our whole heart, mind, and will.
2. Having faith in God can be likened to falling in love. When we fall in love, our whole life is changed.
3. Although they are different from each other, true faith is intimately connected with authentic religious practice.
4. We commit to our faith as individuals and then express our faith together in our religious beliefs and practices. Expressing our faith in community involves prayer, worship, and service—in other words, religious practices.
5. In religious worship, we acknowledge our utter dependence on God and offer grateful thanks for all God's works. It is through worship that we give back to God all that we, as his creation, owe him. As Catholics, our most powerful way of worshipping God is through the celebration of the Mass.
6. In adoration, we lift our mind toward God and celebrate his endless mercy and love.
7. Though participating in the Mass is the source and summit of our faith lives, it often seems that getting up to go to church is even harder than getting up to be on time for school! We have to make God a priority and be present with our entire selves.
8. In sacrificing our time, money, or other resources for the good of others, we unite ourselves more fully with the sacrifice Christ offered on the cross and make our whole lives a sacrifice to God.

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