

Faces of the Savior

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages

[All references taken from the ESV]

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited.

These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

Think of various pictures of Jesus that you have seen. What is your favorite depiction of Jesus? Why? Share with a partner or small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. You might need to set the example. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group throughout the study. The leader might want to bring various pictures of Jesus to share with the group; these could be found on the Internet or in children's Bible story books. Try to find a variety of facial expressions.**

Some years ago, I read a children's book in which the author told the life of Jesus from birth through resurrection. This book always intrigued me because the illustrator chose never to show the face of Jesus. Instead, the reader observed through the illustrations of Jesus' hands and feet, but never Jesus' face. During this study, we will look at the various "faces" of the Savior and the significance of those "faces" for each believer.

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, Your name, Lord, is majestic above all! We thank You for sending Your own Son to be our Savior from sin, death, and the power of the devil. We rejoice that He faced death on a cross to blot out the sins of all. We thankfully bask in the forgiveness won by His perfect life, suffering, and death on the cross ... *for us!* Thank You for the Your Holy Spirit who enables us to turn our eyes and faces in faith to our Savior. Please bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

In the Old Testament, no one would survive in the presence of God, unless God allowed it. According to **Exodus 33:20-23**, what does God say would happen to Moses if he saw the face of God? **He would die.** Why? See **Exodus 33:5a**. **Our just and perfect God cannot abide sin – sinful man would be consumed.** **Exodus 33:20-23** ²⁰But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." ²¹And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²²and while my glory passes by I will put you in

a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

Exodus 33:5a For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you.

Isaiah 6:1-7 gives us the vision of this prophet when he saw God. When Isaiah beheld God's glory, what did he know about himself? **See v.5 – Isaiah knew he was sinful and knew he was lost.** However, what is the Gospel message in this passage? **See v. 6-7 – God had mercy on Isaiah and took his guilt away; atoned for his sin.**

Isaiah 6:1-7 ¹In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" ⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Read **John 1:14-18** and **John 14:6**. As New Testament people, how are we privileged to see the Father? **We see the Father in Jesus Christ, His Son, and our Lord and Savior.**

John 1:14-18 ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 14:6 ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Let's take a few moments now to look at the faces of our awesome Savior in His Word.

The Face of the Son

Read **Luke 2:7**. Imagine the face of the Baby Jesus. What feelings do you experience as you remember that this Baby was "born to die" for the sins of the world? **Answers may vary, but could include words such as awe, wonder, sorrow mixed with joy, thankfulness, love, etc.**

Luke 2:7 ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In **Matthew 3:16-17**, what face of the Savior do you see? What expression do you imagine on His face? **Answers will vary.** What is the significance of the Father's words? **He is confirming for all that Jesus is His beloved Son. The Triune God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present.**

Matthew 3:16-17 ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The Face Transfigured

Read the account of Jesus' Transfiguration in **Matthew 17:1-8**. What face of the Savior were the disciples privileged to view? **A transfigured face – a changed face – a glorified face** How were the Father's words similar to Jesus' Baptism? **"This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased..."** What additional statement does God add? **"Listen to him."**

Matthew 17:1-8 ¹And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Read further in **Matthew 17:22-23** shortly after the Transfiguration. What did Jesus know was about to happen? **His suffering, death, and resurrection** Do you think that the disciples were "listening"? **Answers will vary, but will probably include the fact that the disciples heard because they were "greatly distressed," but probably did not really understand the full implications of what Jesus was saying.**

Matthew 17:22-23 ²² As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, ²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

The Face Set to the Task

Luke 9:51: *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Define the phrase "set his face." See also **Isaiah 50:7.** **In firm resolve – a resolve as hard as a rock; synonyms – determination, steadfastness, tenacity, doggedness, firmness**

Isaiah 50:7 ⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

According to **Philippians 2:1-11**, what task was Jesus resolved to face? **His task was already begun – He humbled Himself and became a man; He lived a perfect life; He suffered and died on the cross; and He rose again from the dead. He is exalted in heaven.**

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Faith Talk: Have you ever “set your face” to a particular task? Was the task a difficult one? Was Jesus’ task a difficult one? **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

The Face Crucified

Read the following passages and identify specific phrases that indicate the physical description of the Suffering Servant, the Savior.

Isaiah 50:6

⁶ I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

Isaiah 52:13-15

¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴ As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.

Isaiah 53:1-6

¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Mark 15:16-20; 33-37

¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the

ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

Faith Talk: Describe in your own words the face of the Savior in the above passages. How could that description help you in sharing your faith in Jesus? **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

The Face Resurrected

The account of Jesus’ appearance to Mary after His resurrection is found in **John 20:11-18**. Why do you think that Mary did not initially know who Jesus was? **She was not expecting to see Jesus and thought He must be the gardener.**

John 20:11-18 ¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.

Read the following accounts of Jesus’ appearing after His resurrection. Identify who saw Him and what truths they learned from Jesus.

John 20:26-29 Thomas and all the disciples/we can believe by the power of the Holy Spirit without physically seeing His face.

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although 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, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**”

Luke 24:30-32 The disciples on the road to Emmaus/we are blessed to see Jesus in His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

The Face Victorious

What specific phrases in these passages describe the glorious and victorious face of Jesus?

Revelation 1:12-16

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a **son of man**, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Revelation 22:1-5

¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will **see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, **for the Lord God will be their light**, and they will reign forever and ever.

Read the following. What does a believer’s “face” look like?

Psalms 34:4-7 They are radiant; their faces are not ashamed.

⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵Those who look to him are radiant,

and their faces shall never be ashamed. ⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

1 Corinthians 13:12 We will see fully – we will see God face to face.

¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 We see the Lord without a veil; we are being transformed; we reflect the light of Christ into a darkened world.

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

As stated earlier in this study, Exodus 33:20 says: *But,*” he [God] said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” In his commentary on this verse, Martin Luther states: “He [God] says, ‘Man shall not see Me and live.’ Therefore, He put before us an image of Himself because He shows Himself to us in such a manner that we can grasp Him. In the New Testament, we have Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, absolution, and the ministry of the Word. (*Luther’s Works*, American Edition, Volume 2, Page 46.) Discuss this quote in light of the [your] Christian life in the past, present, and future. **Answers will vary, but could include our past of sin and Christ’s forgiveness; our present as we live sanctified lives through the Holy Spirit and share the Gospel message with those around us; and our future as we look with hope to the future in heaven with Jesus.**

Faith Talk: Sin, death, and the power of the devil, as well as worldly concerns, often cause us to neglect the Means of Grace (God’s Word and Sacraments) in our lives. How can you take fuller advantage of these gifts that our Lord offers? Be specific. Share with a partner or the small group. **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

If time permits: During this study, or on your own, look up the following accounts from Jesus’ life. Imagine the varied faces of our Savior in these verses. Share with a friend or in a small group. Perhaps you can think of more. **Answers will vary.**

John 4:1-30: Woman at the well
John 8:1-11: Woman caught in adultery
Mark 11:15-19: Cleansing the temple
Matthew 23:37-39: Weeping over Jerusalem
John 11:1-44: At the tomb of Lazarus
Luke 22:54-62: Peter's betrayal
Luke 19:28-40: Triumphal entry into Jerusalem
Matthew 26:36-46: Garden of Gethsemane

Faith Walk:

1. Thank your Savior daily for His grace and mercy in your life.
2. Turn your eyes to Jesus by participating daily in the study of God's Word.
3. By the power of the Spirit, share with at least one person the face of Jesus that you are privileged to know and the hope that you have in Him.

Closing Litany: Psalm 67

All: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,
Leader: That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.
All: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
Leader: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.
All: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!
Leader: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!
All: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us!
Amen.

Sing together *Renew Me, O Eternal Light* (LSB # 704; *LW #373; TLH #398*).