



# PHILIP YANCEY



# THE JESUS I NEVER KNEW

SIX SESSIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

SESSION 1

# THE JESUS I THOUGHT I KNEW



The more I studied Jesus,  
the more difficult it became to pigeonhole him. . . .  
As [theologian] Walter Wink has said, if Jesus had never lived,  
we would not have been able to invent him.

*THE JESUS I NEVER KNEW, P. 23*

INTRODUCTION (8 MINUTES)

**DVD Introduction by Philip Yancey**

## Questions to Think About

- In your mind's eye, what did Jesus look like? Where did you get this picture of him (films, paintings, books, Sunday school)? Can you describe specific images from the past?
  
- If you met someone from another religion or culture, how would you answer their question: Who is this man, Jesus?

## GROUP DISCOVERY (44 MINUTES)

### DVD Teaching Notes

As you listen to Philip Yancey and watch the scenes from these four films, use the space provided to note anything that stands out to you.

*King of Kings*

*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*

*Son of Man*

*Jesus of Nazareth*



3. What types of things muddy our perceptions of the real Jesus?

4. Reread the following quote by Philip Yancey from the DVD:

Jesus was born not in Rome, the seat of power, but in tiny Bethlehem. He grew up not in Jerusalem, the center of religion, but in Galilee, the butt of country-bumpkin jokes. . . . Jesus was born in Asia, like half of all babies born today. He spent several years as a refugee in Africa, where many refugees have lived. Poverty, a refugee, a minority race, living in occupied territories . . . those were the choices God made and the kinds of people Jesus would love so much.

What does this tell us about God? How should these facts encourage us? How might they alter our perspective?

## Bible Exploration

Could it be true, this Bethlehem story of a Creator descending to be born on one small planet? If so, it is a story like no other. Never again need we wonder whether what happens on this dirty little tennis ball of a planet matters to the rest of the universe. Little wonder a choir of angels broke out in spontaneous song, disturbing not only a few shepherds but the entire universe.

*The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 45

1. We often forget that people in Jesus' day had no clearer picture of him than we do today. Read Mark 6:1–6 and John 7:40–43. What do these passages tell us?
2. Read the following passages and note what each says about who Jesus is and what he's really like:
  - Matthew 11:28–30

- Luke 19:10
- John 2:13–16
- Philippians 2:6–8
- Colossians 1:15–20

SESSION 1

3. Read Luke 2:1–20, probably the most well-known Gospel account of Jesus' birth. How does this rendering compare with what gets emphasized about Christmas today? Which aspect of the story seems most surprising to you? Why?

**WRAP-UP** (5 MINUTES)

**DVD Wrap-up by Philip Yancey**

## Closing Group Question

If time permits, take a minute or two to respond to this question: What one new thing did you discover in this session about the “unexpected Messiah”?

---

No one who meets Jesus ever stays the same. I have found that the doubts that afflict me from many sources—from science, from comparative religion, from an innate defect of skepticism, from aversion to the church—take on a new light when I bring them to the man named Jesus.

*The Jesus I Never Knew, p. 25*



3. Read about Satan's tempting of Jesus in Luke 4:1–13. What do you learn about the nature of temptation in this passage? What do you learn from Jesus about how to respond to temptation?

4. What scares you most about getting to know the real Jesus? What excites you most? Have you put Jesus in a box? How?