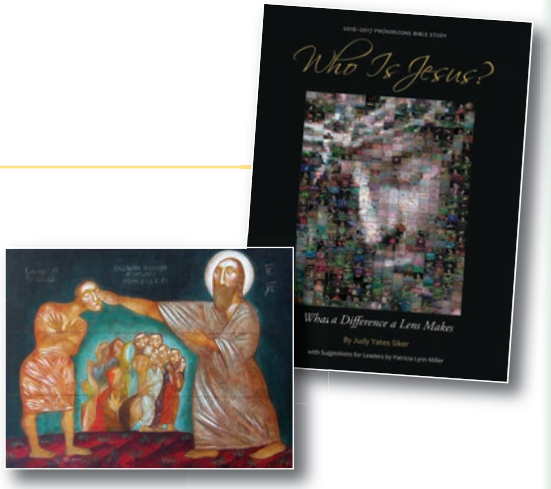
A Walk with Jesus

BY KATIE MULLIGAN



For use with Lesson One of the 2016–2017 PW/*Horizons* Bible study, *Who Is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes* by Judy Yates Siker

Scripture: Mark 8:27–33

"Who do you say that I am?" Jesus asks in Mark 8:29.

Who would I say that Jesus is? I remember all those years ago, when I made a profession of faith to the congregation that had nurtured me. Our family wasn't a church family, but a scout friend brought me with her to youth group one night. I came back again. And then again, until this became my youth group. And then it became my church. And then one day, a decade later, I decided to join the church. "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior," I said. I didn't really understand it, and I thought maybe I was the only one trying to figure it out.

A few years later, when I first began to work with youth in the church, one of our volunteers decided to lead our youth group through a guided meditation. "We're going to have a Walk with Jesus!" she said. I rolled my eyes a little bit—I wasn't the biggest fan of guided meditation, and this Jesus thing, well, I was still wrestling. But I was a youth leader, and it seemed like I ought to know what I was doing when it comes to Jesus, so when she asked us to find a comfortable place to lie down on the floor, I did what she said.

So there I was, among 30 youth and adults, lying on the floor, running through this meditation. Our leader asked us a million questions, letting the Spirit guide our hearts. Were we outside? Inside? Was there furniture? Grass? Trees? Windows? Were we sitting? Standing? Lying down? What was the weather like? Was there sound? Birds? Cars? Other people? Silence?

On and on the prayerful contemplation went, until Jesus began to walk toward us, a tiny dot in the distance. Our leader wondered aloud what we were seeing: What did Jesus look like? What was he wearing? Was he happy? Sad? Angry? Gentle? As Jesus came closer to join us in prayer, how were we feeling? What were we thinking? What questions did we have? What did we want to say to Jesus?

In short, as we lay there on the floor, we were being asked to form a picture of who we said Jesus was.

I had never considered this question in this way, and I threw it back at Jesus. Who do I say you are? Who do *you* say you are? Isn't that your job to say?

Our leader sent us out to spend some time talking with Jesus in prayer, holding onto the image that came to us as we entered into prayer. I struggled with that—I didn't have a clear image. I wondered what it would mean if I did. I wondered what it meant that I didn't.

I wondered, as I stayed in prayer, whether I was somehow a defective Christian. Everybody else seemed to know who Jesus is. Everybody else seemed to have a clear vision. I stayed in prayer. I let my doubts linger. Jesus pressed the question, "Who do you say that I am?"

"I don't know!" I said in frustration. And then suddenly, that not fully formed Jesus smiled and said, "I am the One who will stay with you in the struggle." And then, finally, I could rest.

Who do you say that Jesus is? In your prayers, how does he come to you? Do you remember that Peter knew but didn't know?

It has been almost 20 years since that prayer walk with Jesus. Since then, I've become a pastor and joined my prayers with many others. I've sat in rooms with other women and men, young and old, and we've asked together, "Who do we say Jesus is?" What does it mean for Jesus to be Lord and Savior? In our most earnest, most private prayers, how does Jesus come to us? In the midst of public prayer and relationship with one another, who is this Jesus?

In that 20 years, I've come to know that Jesus remains the One who will stay with us in the struggle. Perhaps you will join me in this prayer that never really ends: Who is this Jesus and how shall we know him?

Questions

1. **Who do you say Jesus is when you are gathered with others?**

2. **Who do you say Jesus is in your private prayers?**

3. **When you think about Jesus as Lord and Savior, what does that mean to you?**

Katie Mulligan is an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, working with youth and families in and around Trenton, New Jersey. She is a regular blogger at http://insideouted.blogspot.com.