



CATHOLIC DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR YOUTH

DISCOVER THE SAVIOR
WHEN HE WAS A CHILD.

the YOUNG MESSIAH

IN THEATERS MARCH 11

The Young Messiah



Catholic Discussion Guide for Youth

This guide is designed to help youth experience and reflect upon the movie, *The Young Messiah*. This can be used in a youth group setting, within a religious education or catechetical setting, within a Confirmation preparation program, or a Catholic high school course. Youth will prepare to watch the movie by considering their life experience and key Scriptures that are featured. After watching the movie, youth will reflect on key themes developed in the story and will be invited to continue their exploration of Scripture.

A guide is also provided to prepare families of adolescents to view the movie together, reflect upon the movie, and continue their exploration of Scripture.

PREPARATION SESSION

GETTING READY

- You will be reflecting on Scriptures as part of your preparation to watch the movie. It would be helpful to have one copy of the Bible for each young person, preferably of the same translation.
- Write down the lists of questions on newsprint or project them as a PowerPoint slide so that the group can view the questions.
- Access resources for *The Young Messiah* at this site: <http://youngmessiahresources.com/>

GETTING STARTED

Welcome the youth participants and have them introduce themselves if needed. Begin with an introduction using these or similar words:

Today we will be watching the movie *The Young Messiah*. This is a story rooted in Scripture and based on history that imagines a year in the boyhood of Jesus. Let's take a few minutes to remember our own childhood as a way to get ready. Try to remember some things about yourself when you were younger, let's say five to ten years old.

- What were your favorite activities?
- What words do you think people used to describe you when you were a child?
- What are some things about what you were like as a child that are still true about you now?

- What is different now about what you understand about yourself then when you were a child?

Invite participants groups of two or three and share their answers. After several minutes, gather again as a large group. Ask for volunteers to share answers to the questions. Then, using the following questions, lead a large group discussion asking the group to consider the life of Jesus as a child of seven.

What do think his favorite activities were?

- What words do you think people used to describe Jesus when he was seven?
- What are some things about Jesus at seven that were also true about his as an adult?
- What do you think was different about Jesus at seven than he was as an adult?

Summarize the answers, then continue with these ideas:

- Jesus was fully God and fully human.¹ We can't know or fully understand how these two natures existed together. But we hear in the Gospel of Luke that "...Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man." Many who have studied this would say that as a human baby and child, Jesus may have noticed that he was different from others, but he grew in his understanding of his identity as the Son of God over his time of growing up.²
- Imagine what it must have been like being Mary and Joseph and parenting the young Jesus. This must have presented some challenges for Jesus and for his parents.
- We know from history and from Scriptures that among these challenges would have been concerns for Jesus' safety. The area that we now call Israel and Palestine was occupied by the Roman Empire who used ruthless soldiers and a local puppet government to create order and to squash enemies. Anyone who threatened the current government status would have been persecuted and would likely have been killed.
- We need to remember the amazing, and almost incomprehensible love of God for us that He chose to become human so that we would be saved and so that we would know how to be faithful to God. It is also comforting to know that Jesus was fully human, which means that he experienced everything that we experience except for sin. We can imagine that he was physically sick, that he sometimes felt rejected as a child, and that he felt sad when he experienced a loved one who died. We know that we can turn to him with everything in our lives, because he knows us and loves us.

Let's look at some of the Scriptures that will be referred to in the movie.

Divide the group into five groups and assign each group one of these Scriptures:

- The Annunciation – Luke 1:26-38
- The Nativity and Epiphany – Matthew 2:1-12
- The Flight into Egypt – Matthew 2:13-15
- The Killing of the Innocents – Matthew 2:16-18
- The Return from Egypt – Matthew 2:19-23

Ask each group to read the Scripture, discuss what they notice, and then prepare a group report to summarize the reading and answer these questions: *What is happening in the story? and What does this tell us about who Jesus is?*

After several minutes of group work, each group will be responsible for retelling this part of the story in their own words and for sharing their insights about what this tells us about who Jesus is.

After several minutes, have the groups make their presentation in the following order . Fill in details of the story as needed after the group reports:

- The Annunciation – Mary receives a message from an angel who tells her that she will give birth to a baby. The baby will be the Son of God.
- The Epiphany- Jesus is born in a manger. Three wise men traveled from the East to honor him. King Herod, the puppet king of the Roman Empire, was threatened by this baby and asked the wise men to return and tell him where the baby is. They receive a message in a dream not to go back to Herod.
- The Flight into Egypt – Joseph receives a warning in a dream that Herod is seeking to kill Jesus. Joseph, Mary and Jesus escape to Egypt.
- The Killing of the Innocents – Herod is angry when he realizes that he was tricked by the wise men. He orders his men to kill all of the children under the age of two in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas.
- The Return from Egypt – Joseph receives another dream in which an angel tells him to return home.

After the reports, ask participants what they notice about the stories. Collect responses from the group.

Add these ideas to their responses:

- Notice the importance of dreams and of listening to the messengers of God.
- Notice the different ways that people respond to God’s messengers and to Jesus:
 - Mary and Joseph trust God and listen to him.
 - The wise men honor and adore Jesus. They also trust the message of their dream.
 - Herod fears Jesus and wants to kill him.

ENDING WITH PRAYER

Conclude in these words:

We know that this movie comes from the imagination of the author. She provides us with this story to help us think about who Jesus was at seven. More importantly, we have the opportunity to look at the choices people make in this story, especially in response to meeting Jesus. We also have the chance to ask ourselves, who Jesus was at seven, but for the sake of our faith, who is Jesus to us now?

Let us join in prayer:

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit

Loving and all-knowing God,

You have been with us for our whole lives.

You want us to know you, to know that we are loved, and to follow your ways.

Thank you for giving us Jesus.

Help us to open our eyes and see him in new ways so that we can grow as his disciples.

We ask this in the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

REFLECTING ON THE YOUNG MESSIAH

GETTING READY

- Write down the lists of questions on newsprint or project them as PowerPoint slides so that the group can view the questions.
- Write this prayer on newsprint or project it as a PowerPoint slide:
- "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."
- Provide index cards and pens or pencils, one per person.
- Prepare a simple prayer space using a small table, a cloth, a Bible, and a candle.
- Ask someone to proclaim Luke 7:1-10.
- To prepare yourself for the discussion about the centurion, consider viewing this video: [Lisa Hendey - Jesus and the Centurion: The Decision](https://youngmessiahresources.com/lisa-hendey-jesus-and-the-centurion-the-decision) (youngmessiahresources.com/lisa-hendey-jesus-and-the-centurion-the-decision)
- Set up an LCD projector or a large monitor to view the film scene.
- You will need internet access to view or download the video segment of the film that is available at this location: The Decision - <https://vimeo.com/147394678>

GETTING STARTED

After viewing the film, invite youth to gather again in pairs or groups of three and reflect on these questions:

- What did you notice in the story?
- What surprised you?
- What feelings did you experience in watching the film?
- What do you think are the important parts of the story?

- What does this story tell us about being someone who meets Jesus and wants to follow him?

Regather as a group and ask for volunteers to share responses to the questions. Continue the conversation with this comment and question:

This story reminds us of an important truth that we know by faith: those who meet and know Jesus are changed by the experience. What are some examples from the story in this film?

As for volunteers to share about a character and the ways that they are changed.

After the examples provided by the group, ask them to also consider: Cleopas, Jesus' uncle who experienced being healed in the Jordan river; the women attacked on the road who was invited to join the family in traveling to Nazareth; the blind Rabbi who taught Jesus about the killing of the innocents and then was cured of his blindness; and the centurion who chooses to free Jesus.

Let's look closer at the centurion. In this story, the centurion first meets Jesus as he travels from Egypt to Nazareth. Jesus is on the road when men attack Roman soldiers. In this first meeting, the centurion prevents a soldier from harming Jesus. The centurion is then charged by Herod to find and kill the child Jesus. He meets Jesus in the temple. Let's view this scene again.

Play the scene from The Decision at <https://vimeo.com/147394678>.

Engage the large group in discussing the centurion.

- What do you think the centurion was feeling when he met Jesus in the temple?
- What was his reaction to the miracle of the return of sight to the blind rabbi?
- Why do you think the centurion chose not to kill Jesus?
- The centurion had killed children before, but after meeting Jesus, he chose to free him. How would you describe the change in the centurion?

Summarize the responses to these questions and share these comments:

- The centurion met Jesus and became aware of who he really was in the miracle of the return of sight to the blind rabbi. He felt that Jesus read him and knew his heart. This led him to change and to choose life over death.
- This story happens frequently in the Gospels. People meet Jesus, grow to know who he really is and feel that he knows them. This can lead to awareness of our sin and our need to change to become more faithful.³
- We meet Jesus in many ways. We meet him in prayer, in other people, in the sacraments, especially Eucharist. We meet him in Scripture, in the act of doing service or helping others. We meet him in the community of faith. This can lead us to change our hearts and change our lives so that we can follow him more closely.

I invite you now to take a moment to reflect privately on these two questions:

- What are the places or occasions that I meet Christ?
- How am I feeling called to change and grow at this time?

Distribute index cards and pens for youth to use in reflection. After a few minutes, invite participants to share about these questions with a partner. Remind them only to share what they are comfortable sharing.

ENDING WITH PRAYER

Ask someone to read Luke 7:1-10, The Healing of the Centurion's Servant.

After the reading, provide these comments:

- The Young Messiah is a story rooted in Scripture and history. The author imagined Jesus as a child of seven. We can imagine that the centurion in the author's story could be the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. Notice the faith of the centurion; he was a man who knew Jesus' power to heal. The centurion was also humble; he did not feel worthy to have Jesus come to his home.
- In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we pray prior to receiving Eucharist, using the words from this Scripture. We make this prayer because, like the centurion, we humbly acknowledge God's power. We know that he can heal us; he can help us change and grow! Take a moment of silence to recall the ways that you meet Christ and the ways that you need to change.

After one or two minutes of silence, ask the participants to close this session by joining you in praying this prayer. Refer to the poster or slide that you created.

"Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."⁴

CONTINUING THE REFLECTION

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Many of the scenes that the author imagined in this story point to the actions of Jesus described in Scriptures when he is older. As a group, you may wish to follow-up on these reflections by reading and studying these Scriptures:

- Jesus Lost in the Temple, Luke 2:41-52
- The Baptism in the Jordan, Matthew 3:1-17
- The Raising of Lazarus, John 11:1-46
- The Healing of the Blind Man, John 9:1-41

SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Invite youth to post their reflection to the Scripture passages suggested in this guide using hashtag #theyoung-messiah. They could also connect their post to throw back Thursday by including a picture of themselves when they were between five and ten years old, including hashtag #tbt.

¹ See the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #464 and 467.

² See the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #470 and 472.

³ See the story of the call of Simon Peter, Luke 5:1-11, or the Woman at the Well, John 4:1-42.

⁴ The Roman Missal, English Translation according to the Third Typical Edition, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011. #132, page 669.

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"Captivating, inspiring and deeply moving."
—Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Boston

"Succeeds beautifully in imagining the mystery."
—Steve McEveety, CEO, Mpower Pictures, Producer of "The Passion of the Christ"

"It's a remarkable movie that is tightly paced, excellently scripted and well-filmed."
—Bob Waliszewski, Focus on the Family

"Moving, inspiring, and hope-filled. For everyone who believes that Love wins. A MUST SEE!"
—Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

"I'm telling you, you've never seen it done this way before....You will want to take your friends--the conversations will be incredible! It is SO SO AWESOME!!!"
—Christine Caine, President, A21

ABOUT THE FILM

Remaining true to the character of Jesus revealed in the Bible, The Young Messiah is an inspirational story for the whole family about the childhood of the Savior. When the mystery of Jesus's divinity begins to unfold in His childhood, He turns to His parents for guidance. But Mary and Joseph, in an effort to protect their child, are afraid to reveal all they know. How do you explain the ways of the world to the Creator of the world? How do you teach the Teacher? How do you help the Savior who came to save you? Follow the young Messiah as He and His family take the dangerous journey from Egypt to Nazareth and on to Jerusalem, where His true identity and profound destiny are fulfilled.

For more info text the letters "TYM" to 313131

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THEMATIC ELEMENTS
Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13

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