

Who Is Jesus' Daddy?

MOVIE:
SPIDER-MAN 3



Lesson Objective:

To communicate to teens that Jesus Christ's sense of self (identity) drove everything he said and did. Jesus emphatically understood himself to be the one and only Son of God. While Jesus was clear about his identity, many people did not get it at all until after his death and resurrection. Then it all made sense!

Intro to the Movie:

After what seems like an endless series of personal and public battles in the first two episodes, things are finally beginning to look bright for Peter Parker. His relationship with Mary Jane Watson is going well. The public is praising his alter-ego, and even the strained relationship with his best friend, Harry, begins to show signs of improvement.

In this episode, Peter learns who really killed his Uncle Ben. He responds in rage when the city's police captain informs him that the killer, Marco Flint, has escaped from prison and is free. Parker wants revenge. Interestingly, a black symbiote from outer space happens to find its way into Peter's spider suit, turning it black and enhancing Spider-Man's power. It attaches itself to a host and brings out the worst. Peter finds the new power liberating at first. But it soon becomes obvious that Peter is a totally different man. During the darkest moments of Peter's life, he leaves a wide path of destruction. It isn't until he accidentally hits Mary Jane that he finally begins to come to his senses. He tears off the black suit with great effort in the bell tower of a church and chooses not to act out of revenge, anger, or hatred. He even is able to go back and restore the broken relationship with Harry. But, unfortunately, the black parasite finds a new host in Eddie Brock, a rival freelance photographer at the *Daily Bugle*. Eddie wants to kill Peter for exposing one of Eddie's photos of Spider-Man as a fake, which left him humiliated and dejected. As if possessed by a

demon, Eddie partners with Marco Flint, or Sand-Man, to eliminate Spider-Man and Peter Parker once and for all. In the end, Spider-Man and Harry are able to team up to defeat the villains. Harry even honors the words he spoke earlier in the movie by giving his life for his friend Peter. In the closing scene, Peter and Mary Jane are reunited.

(The 3D Lenses) There are three dominate themes in the movie: 1) identity 2) revenge, and 3) forgiveness. Since this is a series of studies on identity, we will focus our attention on identity. As you prepare your teens to watch the movie, have them focus on how the characters' understanding of themselves (identity) impacted their actions.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. What is the catalyst for Peter's rage? How did the black parasite find a suitable host in both Peter and Eddie?
2. Do you believe Mary Jane has a secure sense of herself? How do you know? From where does she derive her identity?
3. At the beginning of the movie when Spider-Man was awarded the key to the city, from where do you believe Peter derived his identity?
4. What about the identity of Eddie Brock? Where did he get his identity from?
5. How did these characters' sense of self (identity) impact their actions?
6. As best as you can discern, what is the source of your identity? How does your sense of self impact your actions?

Group Input:

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *To communicate to teens that Jesus Christ's sense of self (identity) drove everything he said and did. Jesus emphatically understood himself to be the one and only Son of God. While Jesus was clear about his*

identity, many people did not get it at all until after his death and resurrection. Then it all made sense!

Bullet Objective:

Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:

As I watched this movie, one of the things that impacted me was the connection between the characters' sense of self, meaning the understanding of their identity, and their actions. Take Mary Jane, for example. Her identity is wrapped up in what other people think about her. The poor reviews from the papers on her opening debut on Broadway devastated her. Did you notice how she also always needed the attention of another guy? If Peter wasn't available, whom did she call? Harry.

Or what about Peter? At the beginning of the movie when people were lauding Spider-Man, what did he do that showed he was getting carried away in the moment? (Answer: He kissed the daughter of the policy captain.) He allowed the fame from his alter ego to hurt the girl he really loved. Then later when the good-natured Peter was transformed, he became an angry, vengeful, "hurt-locker" maniac. Here, his identity was wrapped around the murder of his uncle.

Can you begin to see the connection between our identity and our actions? How we act out is based on our sense of self. This session our attention will focus on one man in particular. He is perhaps one of the most controversial figures in human history. He simultaneously brings people together and pulls others apart. What makes him so divisive is not necessarily what he did but who he claimed to be (identity). Having said that, though, it must be stated that everything he did was in harmony with his identity. That person is Jesus Christ.

Listen as I read **Matthew 16:13-17**. Notice carefully how Jesus responds to Peter's answer.

¹³Jesus went to the territory near the town of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴"Some say John the Baptist," they answered. "Others say Elijah, while others say Jeremiah or some other prophet." ¹⁵"What about you?" he asked them. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷"Good for you, Simon son of John!" answered Jesus. "For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven."

Couple of observations:

1. What does Jesus want to know? (Answer: What other people, and especially the disciples, understand who Jesus to be. He's asking them to focus on his identity)
2. What answer did Simon Peter give? (Answer: the Messiah, the Son of the living God.)
3. Did Jesus affirm or deny that title? (Answer: He affirmed it in the most explicit terms.)

Friends, that last point bears repeating. Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus ever deny being the Son of God. Throughout his life, he consistently and emphatically understood himself to be God's appointed representative on earth. His identity was inseparable from God's. He saw himself as being sent from the Father, which implied he was divine as well as human.

It's been said that "Jesus never really claimed to be God. That was something other people ascribed to him well after his death." People who make that statement apparently have not read the Gospels.

Why is Jesus' identity so important? Because on him all eternity hinges. Jesus said that he is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one can come to the Father except through him (John 14:6). Nothing else in all your life is more important than what you think about Jesus Christ. Listen to what C.S. Lewis, considered to be one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century and author of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, had to say concerning Jesus' identity:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing [sic] nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. *He did not intend to* [italics mine].¹

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980), 52.

Another brilliant thinker, Josh McDowell, summarized the options we have concerning Jesus' identity. He said that Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord.

Challenge:

1. On a piece of paper we want you to write down three words: "Liar. Lunatic. Lord." Before you leave this room, circle who you think Jesus is.