



LESSON 1: ALIKE BUT NOT ALIKE

WHAT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO LEARN: They are called by Jesus to be in the world, but to live as if they were separate.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED: To honestly evaluate their relationship with culture, and who their choices say they more strongly identify with: Christ or the world.

Scripture Focus: John 15:18-21

Supporting Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17

OVERVIEW: Do your students know what Jesus meant when He spoke of “the world”? If they don’t, after this lesson they will. When Jesus referenced “the world” in John 15, He was talking about the world we live in. The one that is defined by its opposition to God and His Kingdom. God and His Kingdom are sacred. The world is secular. The world is where your students live, breathe, and do life. It’s kind of like another way of talking about their culture. And in their particular context, the world is most commonly interacted with through media. Movies, TV, music, the Internet, social networks... each of these are consumed daily by students, and each is a major part of what defines the “world.” So, what is their relationship with culture? How comfortable are they with its messages and values? Do they fit in? Or stand out? In this lesson, you’ll help students see that the nature of their relationship with culture is directly related to the nature of their relationship with Jesus. The closer they identify with Christ, the less they’ll identify with the world.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-culture-teacher-prep>

BIBLE BACKGROUND

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- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John, son of Zebedee, a fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus. John also penned the book of Revelation as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

THE SETTING

John 15 comes in the midst of what the ESV Study Bible calls, “the farewell discourse.” This is a great term describing exactly what Jesus is doing in chapters 13-20. Jesus is at the end of His earthly ministry and is preparing His disciples to carry on without Him.

John 15 comes shortly after Jesus and His disciples had finished the Last Supper. They were preparing to walk from the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where Jesus would eventually be arrested. Jesus was teaching them as they were going, or at least preparing to go. This passage about “the world” comes immediately after Jesus' teachings on the vine and the branches.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point is that teenagers must see that they are called out by God, set apart to live differently than the world around them. When a person is saved through faith in Christ, he or she is given a new identity, mission, and standard of living. Jesus said the world, those who are opposed to God and His ways, doesn't understand this because it doesn't know God. And thus, the world is hostile to the Christ-follower. Jesus warns that this is exactly what we should expect as the world was hostile to Him, too.

The idea is to help your students grasp the fact that they are different, they are set apart. And because of this, their interactions with culture must be different as well. They can't follow Christ and blend in. The way in which they consume culture and interact with it will show where their hearts are.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin to think about the concept of fitting in and not fitting in.
- **Set-Up:** Arrange to display the “Lesson 1 Lead In Activity Sheet” contained in your lesson 1 folder, either by printing the PDF (which you’ll want to do if you’re doing the activity in groups) or by presenting it digitally. If you do the activity in small groups, you’ll want to make sure students have paper and something to write with.

FIRST, decide if you’ll divide your students into three groups or if you’ll do this as one large group. If you divide up into groups, assign one “people group” to each group by giving them one of the images from the Activity Sheet. If you’re doing the activity as one large group, simply display the pictures of the various people groups as you move through the discussion.

NEXT, explain that you want to take a moment and consider what it means to be a part of various groups. After all, most teenagers would identify with some group of people, such as a team, a club, or even just a group of friends. Explain that you’re going to have a little fun brainstorming what it might be like to be included in a few specific groups.

If you’ve broken up into small groups, you’ll want to give the following instructions to each group. (If you’re doing the activity as a large group, work through the following prompts for each of the three different people groups.) Have students answer some or all of the following about each group:

- What are some examples of how people in this group might talk?
- Where might these people hang out together?
- What kind of music might they like?
- What might their names or nicknames be?
- What kind of car might they drive?
- What might they do for fun?

If you’re doing the activity in small groups, allow a few minutes for students to come up with their answers, then have them take turns sharing with the class what they came up with. Have a lot of fun with this. Encourage creativity and overall fun.

THEN, when you’ve finished brainstorming what it might be like to be in each of these groups, lead students in a brief discussion.

Ask:

- **Would one of the people from the other groups fit in with the other groups? Why or why not?**
- **Why do you think groups develop their own way of talking, dressing, etc.?**
- **What if one day, one of the members of the group started acting like one of the members of another group? How might they be treated?**

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by *saying something like the following:*

- **This activity isn't meant to poke fun at anyone, or to say that there is anything wrong with certain groups having their own culture. The idea is to help you begin to think about what it means to fit in. And what it means to not fit in. We're starting a four-week look at what Jesus had to say about how we interact and engage with our culture, you know, the world around us everyday. In today's discussion, you're going to see that Jesus had some pretty straightforward words on the idea of fitting in. Let's take a closer look.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that they are called by Jesus to be in the world, but to live as if they were separate.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, make sure you and your students are on the same page when it comes to the concept of culture. Ask students what they think of when you talk about what it means to interact with culture. Allow for a few responses, engaging students based on correct or incorrect responses. Then, use the following explanation to clear up exactly what you mean when you talk about culture. Say something like:

- The Bible uses the phrase "the world" to talk about the culture we find ourselves living in. When the Bible talks about the world in this way, it's talking about the world around us that is in opposition to God and His Kingdom. God and His Kingdom are sacred. The world is secular. The world is where you live, breathe, and do life. The biblical idea of the world and our understanding of our culture are basically one in the same. We interact with the culture around us, most commonly through media such as movies, magazines, TV, music, the Internet, and social networks. You interact with these each day, consuming so much of our culture's values and characteristics. Over the next few weeks, we'll be looking at exactly what Jesus had to say about how we engage with culture.

NEXT, explain that you're going to start by looking at what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of John. Instruct students to turn to John 15. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Pay close attention to the Setting. Summarize it for your students so that they grasp exactly when this passage of Scripture occurs in Jesus' ministry.

NEXT, read or have a student read John 15:18-21. Once you've read the passage, explain that you're going to work back through the passage a few verses at a time to see exactly what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples, and by extension, us.

Begin the discussion by drawing students' attention back to verse 18. **Ask something like the following:**

- **What was Jesus' point in trying to compare the way His followers are treated by the world and how He was treated?**

Answer: Jesus was trying to reinforce the connection between His followers and Himself. He was making sure we understand that as Christ-followers, our identities are found in Christ. We will be received like Christ was because we are His children.

- **What do you think Jesus meant when He said that the world might "hate" us?**

Answers will vary. But help students see that Jesus was referring to the hostility we often face because we identify with God and His ways instead of culture's ways.

- **What are some examples where you or others you know have experienced the "hate" of the world simply because you identified with Christ?**

Answers will vary.

THEN, explain that Jesus gets to the heart of the matter in verse 19. Consider reading the verse aloud again **then asking something similar to the following questions:**

- **What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "I have chosen you out of the world"?**

Answer: First, Jesus is speaking of the call to a saving relationship with Him. Second, Jesus is talking about being separate from the world. He called us to be set apart from the culture we find ourselves in.

- **This truth is a pretty powerful one. As a 21st century Christ-follower, what does it mean to be set apart, or separated from the world you live in?**

Answers will vary. This is a pretty big, sort of open-ended question. See how your students respond and then get a little more specific with the following questions.

- **Think for a moment about how we interact with culture through TV, or movies, or the Internet. As Christ-followers, how are our interactions supposed to be different from the rest of the world?**

Answer: Jesus desires for our interactions with these types of media to be impacted by our identity as Christ-followers. He has called us to live differently than the world around us through the choices we make.

- **How does this impact the decisions we make when it comes to what we watch or listen to?**

Answer: We should accept the fact that there will be things we won't watch or listen to because of our relationship with Christ.

- **What other aspects of culture come to mind that present opportunities for us to set ourselves apart as different from the world?**

Answers will vary. These will include a host of moral issues such as attitudes toward sex and sexuality, drinking, relationships, and so on. Encourage students to really think about issues that come up where they see themselves taking a stand that is opposite from the position of those around them.

This is a good time to remind students that we can sometimes drift into legalism when it comes to how we engage with culture. Ask students if anyone knows what legalism means. Help them understand that legalism is the mistaken belief that simply doing the right things and not doing the wrong things somehow makes us a better Christian in God's eyes. Legalism isn't motivated by love for God, it's motivated by rule following. **Say something like:**

• **The idea of not watching certain movies or TV shows, or not listening to certain music is convicting, isn't it? No one has a perfect track record here, but that isn't even the point. The motivation for not watching certain movies, or not doing something everyone else is doing, isn't to somehow be seen as extra super awesome in God's eyes. God sees us through the lens of His Son's sacrifice on the cross. We're awesome in God's eyes only because Jesus washed away our sin. Period. No, the motivation for choosing to live set-apart lives in our culture comes from our identity as Christ-followers. We are God's children. We are in His family. And our character should reflect our Father's character. We should want to live as Christ would live if He were us in our context. And that means saying no to certain aspects of our culture, even though in the moment, it can make life a little tough.**

NEXT, explain to students that Jesus' words here made an impact on John. How do we know? Because years later, we see in 1 John 2 that John has picked back up this thread and fleshed out even more what it means to live as those set apart from the world. Instruct students to turn to 1 John 2:15-17. Read or have a student read the passage. Then, lead them in a brief discussion before transitioning into the Last Word. **Ask something similar to the following:**

- **How do you tie this to what Jesus was saying in the passage we read earlier? How is what John is saying here similar to what Jesus was saying in John 15?**

Answers will vary. But help students see that when John was saying that we shouldn't love the world, he was talking about this concept of being called out from the world, living in it, but being separated from the world by our actions and attitudes.

- **Define what it means in your own words to "love the world"? What does that look like to you?**

Answers will vary. Allow students a chance to think through this.

- **Do you feel tension here? Why is it so easy to fall into a habit of "loving the world"? Why do we sometimes want to go with the flow and just live like everyone else around us?**

Answer: It's our sin nature. It's the part of us that wants to fit in and to not call attention to ourselves. But because of our identity as Christ-followers, we're called to struggle with our sin nature and to live differently from the world around us, no matter how challenging.

FINALLY, transition into the Last Word by *saying something similar to the following*:

• Just like we talked about in the first activity, there is a desire in all of us to fit in and to go along with the crowd. But, this desire isn't one we need to make a habit of giving into. Jesus called us to new life in Him through faith. And He desires that we would live a life worthy of being His children. It's a matter of embracing the awesome privilege of being in God's family. Out of our love for God and our thankfulness for all He has given us, we should desire to live our lives in this world as He would, even though this will often put us at odds with the culture around us.

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students honestly evaluate their relationship with culture, and who their choices say they more strongly identify with: Christ or the world.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry erase board, or some other way to represent a few categories for students to consider.

FIRST, explain to students that you want to finish the lesson with a time where everyone, you included, can step back and think about how they interact with culture. Explain that you want this to be a chance for students to consider how their choices reflect their identities: do their choices show more of a closeness with culture? Or with Christ? *Say something like:*

• The point of this isn't to make you feel guilty, or to shame you. The goal for each of us here is that we would grow to be more like Christ every day of our lives. This is simply a way that we can all be reminded of areas in our lives in which we need to grow. Yes, it might be a little convicting. But it's a healthy thing. It's good to see parts of our lives that need to come more in line with what it means to be a Christ-follower. This group is a safe place. We can be honest about which areas are the toughest for us. And our honesty will help others in the group.

THEN, recreate the following diagram on the board:

Movies/TV	Internet
Music	Relationships

Explain to students that you're going to think about the choices they make in regards to these four different aspects of culture. First, start by asking students which one of these areas is the hardest for them to consistently make choices that reflect their identities as Christ-followers. You can do so by first telling them which one is the hardest for you. You might even go through the categories asking students to raise their hands for which one is their particular struggle.

NEXT, see if you can get students to articulate why the specific category is so tricky for them. (Example: Some students love to dance, and while a lot of pop music is great to dance to it contains messages and lyrics that don't line up with Christ's character and teachings.) Allow openness and encourage students to share.

THEN, encourage students to define what it would mean in their lives to take a step toward identifying more strongly with Christ in their choices. For some, this might mean there are certain websites they need to stop visiting, or some behaviors with friends they know they need to stop. Again, make sure they grasp the motivation behind this: it's not about legalism, it's about being obedient to Jesus' call to be set apart from culture because of their identity as God's children. Encourage students to vocalize their thoughts, sharing as much as they feel comfortable with the group.

FINALLY, encourage students to do what it takes to follow through on their thoughts, but to also be more aware of the choices they're faced with each day. Encourage them to listen to the Holy Spirit as He shows them opportunities they have to more closely identify with Him as they interact with culture.

If there are no more thoughts or questions, close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Social Media, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

- ♦ *Do you have questions about a lesson?*
- ♦ *Something that worked particularly well you want to share?*
- ♦ *Something that didn't work you want to bring up?*

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.



LESSON 2: DIFFERENT THAN THE REST

WHAT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO LEARN: Jesus wants His followers to be countercultural in their humility, living in the world as servants of others.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To identify any actions or attitudes in their lives that represent seeking culture's definition of success through selfishness, and to commit to embracing Jesus' idea of success through serving others.

Scripture Focus: Mark 10:35-45

Supporting Scripture: Ephesians 4:2

OVERVIEW: The culture most of our students engage with is one of full-fledged "me-ism." And though adults shoulder our share of the blame for enabling and allowing much of self-centered behavior the truth remains: culture sends quite loudly the message that our own interests are greater than the interests of others. To get ahead is to self-promote. Image is everything. Teenagers are their own brand. And getting ahead often means putting others behind themselves. The only problem is that this is the opposite of how Jesus urges His followers to interact with the world. In this lesson, your students will hear what Jesus had to say about humility and service, and how these attributes are to be hallmarks of the Christ-follower's engagement with the culture.

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THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Gospel of Mark was written by its namesake. Mark, also known as John Mark, is believed to have received most of his information for his Gospel from Peter’s firsthand accounts.
- **Time frame:** Mark is thought to have written his Gospel in the mid 50’s AD.
- **Purpose:** Mark was writing primarily for a non-Jewish audience. His Gospel explains Jewish customs to non-Jews in an effort to get them to see the big picture of Jesus’ identity.

THE SETTING

This passage comes in the heart of Jesus’ public ministry. He has already called and sent the 12. John the Baptist has already been murdered. Jesus has already fed the 4,000 and the 5,000, walked on water, performed many healings and miracles, and maybe most notably, has already experienced His transfiguration. All this to say, Jesus’ identity and mission were becoming more and more clear to His followers and enemies alike.

The immediate setting of this passage finds Jesus doing what He so often did: traveling through ancient Palestine, teaching and healing as He went. Mark 10 is a long passage that contains many of Jesus’ teachings. The encounter with James and John falls right into line with the theme of the rest of the chapter.

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus makes a point here that was countercultural in His time. It is equally, if not more, countercultural today. Jesus is talking to His disciples about two contrasts: the world’s definition of greatness versus God’s definition of greatness. Then, as now, our culture defines greatness as arriving at the top. Great people excel. They rise. And this is often done through a me-centered, self-focused ambition. While the resulting success may not always be a negative thing, the process to get there is often in contrast to God’s definition of greatness.

Greatness in God’s Kingdom is defined by humility and service. To be first is to be last. Jesus makes this clear. And as you help students think about their interactions in and with the world, this teaching is radically countercultural. If students adapt this mindset, if they can grow into this area of Christ-likeness, they will have a powerful effect on culture, simply because of how unique this characteristic is. The goal is to live as Christ commands so that they draw others to God. Humble, sacrificial service of their peers is a powerful way to make this happen.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin to think about how culture values talent and success.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to access the "Lesson 2 Lead In Activity Sheet" contained in your lesson 2 folder and arrange to display the images in the medium of your choice.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to be having a discussion around the concept of what makes someone successful.

THEN, using the "Lesson 2 Lead In Activity" sheet, display the first image of the female business person. Instruct them to imagine that this is a picture of the CEO of a large, traditional company. Maybe it's some type of health insurance, or retail company. Lead students in a discussion to brainstorm what qualities they think this person should have to be a successful leader of her company. **Consider asking questions like:**

- What would be the three most important qualities this individual would need to be successful in running her business?
- What skills would she need?
- What would you imagine her personality might be like?
- How would you imagine her leadership style to be?

NEXT, after you've had a chance to flesh out what qualities students think might make this CEO successful, show the second picture from the activity sheet, the young, trendy looking male. Instruct students to imagine this man is the CEO of a technology start-up company. They might be a company that makes apps, or something similar. **Ask them something like the following:**

- What about this guy? Are there different qualities that he might need to run his business?
- Or do you think the qualities and skills he would need to be successful would generally be the same?

FINALLY, remind students that you're in the middle of a four-lesson look at what Jesus had to say about how we are to interact with our culture. Explain that in today's lesson you'll look at what Jesus had to say about one of the main qualities needed to be "successful" in this world. **Transition to the Main Event by saying something like:**

- We listed quite a few qualities. And you answered more or less in the way we might expect to answer them if we were answering from the world's perspective. But (unless your group is really sharp and actually listed the quality of "servanthood" or "humility") the one quality Jesus mentioned is one we didn't list in our little opening activity. Let's jump in and take a closer look at exactly what Jesus said.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** Help your students understand that Jesus wants His followers to be countercultural in their humility, living in the world as servants of others.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, take a moment and see if anyone can recall any aspects of engaging with culture as a Christ-follower that you talked about in the last lesson. Use the following bullet points to help remind students.

- **Following Christ faithfully will oftentimes mean that we won't fit in with the rest of the world around us.**
- **We are called by Jesus to be in the world, but to live as if we were separate.**
- **That it's helpful to honestly evaluate our relationship with culture, and who our choices say we more strongly identify with: Christ or the world.**

THEN, explain that you're going to start today's look at what Jesus had to say about our identity by looking at the Gospel of Mark. Instruct students to turn to Mark 10. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Pay close attention to the Setting. Summarize it for your students so that they grasp exactly when this passage of Scripture occurs in Jesus' ministry.

NEXT, read or have a student read Mark 10:35-45. When you have finished reading the passage, explain to students that you're going to jump back in and discuss this passage a few verses at a time. Start by looking at verse 35 and 36. **Ask something similar to the following:**

- **So, out of the gate, do you remember anything about James and John? Who were they?**
Answers will vary. Remind them that James and John were brothers who, along with Peter, made up Jesus' inner circle of disciples. This is the same John that wrote the Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3, John, and Revelation.
- **Does anything jump out at you about the question James and John asked?**
Answer: Even though Jesus had an especially close relationship with James and John, this is a pretty forward question to be asking. While we probably can't read too much into it, it does leave room to wonder if at this point, they truly understood who Jesus was.

THEN, have students look back at verses 37 and 38. **Ask something like:**

- **While you may not know exactly what they were asking because of the differences in ancient Jewish culture and our culture today, you can probably guess the meaning of what they were asking Jesus. What do you think they meant?**
Answer: Help students see that James and John were asking for the two places of highest honor when Jesus came into His kingdom. It would be similar to sitting with a king next to his throne. Many Jews expected the Messiah to be a political or military ruler. So the brothers may have very well been asking to be co-rulers with Jesus in His kingdom.
- **What is your initial reaction to this question? How does it make you feel?**
Answers will vary. Some students might feel it sheds a negative light on James and John, others might feel it's a reasonable question to ask.
- **What does it say about how the brothers viewed themselves?**
Answers will vary. But the brothers obviously felt that they were at least somewhat moderately deserving of this honor. Based on their relationship with Jesus, they may not have seen this as unreasonable as we see it today.
- **How about Jesus' response to them? Do you understand what He was saying?**
Answer: Jesus knew what was coming. He knew that His rule would not be as a military or political leader, but as a suffering servant, allowing Himself to be murdered for the sake of all humanity. Jesus knew this. James and John did not. Jesus knew they could not handle the "cup" of suffering He would soon be drinking from.

NEXT, ask if students have any questions or anything to add. Then, move on to verses 42-44. Consider re-reading them aloud. **Then, ask students questions similar to the following:**

- **Summarize what Jesus is saying in verse 42. What contrast is He making?**

Answer: Jesus is contrasting the way that Gentiles rule, or exert their authority, versus the way God's children should rule. This is a really good parallel as we consider how we should interact with culture. The Gentiles represented "the world."

- **Verses 43-44 get to the heart of the matter. What does Jesus say should be the quality His followers should be recognized for as they engage with the world?**

Answer: Servanthood. We are to serve others, putting their needs before our own.

- **Let's make this super practical: What are some ways in your life that you can put this to practice? After all, you're not literally going to become a slave to someone, right? How do you apply this truth to your life today?**

Answer: Being a servant in the 21st century world of a teenager simply means putting other's interests above their own. It means looking first what they can do for someone else, not what they can do for themselves. It's all about humility and compassion.

- **What has to happen before you can put someone else's needs above your own?**

Answers will vary. But help students see that they first have to acknowledge the needs of others. They have to actually be looking for how other people are hurting or what they need, and then have to follow through to do something about it.

- **Why is this so hard to do in our culture?**

Answer: So much about our culture is geared toward "self." It's a me-first world we live in. Having the Kingdom value of selfless servanthood is highly countercultural.

- **So, what effect would you truly demonstrating Christ-like humility to those around you have on your culture?**

Answers will vary. But help students see that this type of lifestyle is so countercultural it will have an immediate and positive impact on those they serve.

FINALLY, read the last verse in the passage, verse 45 aloud. After doing so, ask a student to turn to Ephesians 4:2 and read the verse aloud. **Then, begin to transition to the Last Word by saying something like:**

- **These words from Paul shed some light on the motivation behind seeking to identify with Christ through serving others. What does Paul say is the key? Our service and compassion come from loving others. Again, this is pretty opposite of the way the world can often communicate how we're supposed to get by. But as Christ-followers, we are to look for how we can serve others because of the love, in Christ, we have for them.**

Make sure students don't have anything to add or any questions, then move to the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students identify any actions or attitudes in their lives that represent seeking culture's definition of success through selfishness, and to commit to embracing Jesus' idea of success through serving others.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to print the "Lesson 2 Last Word Activity Sheet" available in your Lesson 2 folder. Each page contains 4 ladder icons. You'll want to cut the ladders out and print enough copies for each of your students to have their own ladder. You'll need to provide something for each student to write with as well.

FIRST, explain that similar to last lesson, the idea here is to step back and evaluate their actions and attitudes as it pertains to how they've been seeking "success" in certain areas of their life. While you're passing out the "ladder cards" to each student, instruct students to

think of one or two areas in their lives where they would say that they spend a great deal of time and energy trying to excel. This could be something like academics, sports, band, an after school job, a club or organization, even certain relationships. Have students visualize a few of the things they are involved in that fit this bill.

THEN, instruct them to look at the ladder they see on their card. **Say something like:**

• **Often in our world we use the metaphor of a ladder to talk about success. We “climb the ladder” in business, or on a team, going from the bottom to the top. That’s the goal anyway. And while there is nothing wrong with wanting to excel and achieve competence in school, or sports, or any other pursuit, it’s important to ask how we’re going about it. Today, we’re going to do that.**

NEXT, explain to students that you’re going to read off a list of statements. The statements will describe how we can sometimes seek to get ahead by looking out for ourselves rather than looking out for others. For each statement you read that a student would admit describes his or her actions in the past, have them color in a step of the ladder, starting with the first one.

Read the following list of statements aloud:

- **When I have finished ahead of others, I made them feel badly about it.**
- **I sometimes hold back information that would help a teammate or friend because I want to have an advantage over them.**
- **I sometimes struggle with pride because of my success in a given area.**
- **I can work so hard at something that I can neglect family and friends.**
- **I would rather not work in groups because I want the credit I deserve.**
- **I have resisted helping someone whom I knew needed it because I worried it would give them an advantage, or lessen my advantage.**
- **I am motivated more by finishing ahead of others than I am by simply giving it my best.**
- **I have sometimes had to apologize after a competition because of the way I treated people during it.**

THEN, when you’ve finished, ask how this exercise felt. Ask if anyone’s ladder presented a bit of a wake-up call for how their actions and attitude have been lately. Remind students that this exercise has nothing to do about shaming them, or pointing out their flaws. The goal is for them to grow in their faith, becoming more like Christ in how they interact with the world. To do this can sometimes be uncomfortable. But it’s 100% worth it every time.

FINALLY, encourage students that this activity was simply intended to help them shed light on their actions and attitudes. Challenge them to use this time to commit to embracing Jesus’ call to serve others. **Close by saying something like:**

• **It’s not easy. And it won’t happen overnight. But accepting Jesus’ call to engage with your culture as someone who humbly serves others is a must for anyone who follows Christ. It’s such a powerful statement to the world about who you are and where your priorities lie. Remember as you go throughout the week to look for opportunities to serve others. These acts can be big or small. Either way, it will have a major impact on those you serve.**

Make sure there are no closing thoughts and then close in prayer.

• Don’t forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you’re printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you’re texting a link, posting them on Social Media, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

- ♦ *Do you have questions about a lesson?*
- ♦ *Something that worked particularly well you want to share?*
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LESSON 3: MAKING AN IMPACT

WHAT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO LEARN: That as Christ-followers committed to the Gospel, they must be willing to bravely impact culture, especially those who the world has cast aside as having little or no value.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To identify the “outcasts” in their world who are most in need of Christ, and to commit to engaging with them with the purpose of sharing the Gospel.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 9:9-13

Supporting Scripture: James 1:27

OVERVIEW: As we think about students’ influence in culture, there are a few traps they can fall into that prevent them from truly making an impact. One of these traps is to steer clear of people who because of their lifestyle, or socio-economic status, or any other number of variables, have been marginalized by the misplaced values of the world. Yet, Jesus expects His followers to engage the spiritually needy, the outcasts, and the lost in the hopes of bringing them to Him. This lesson will challenge your students to do just that. Through looking at Jesus’ example, students will see that they are called to impact their world, especially as it pertains to those in most need of the compassion and salvation Jesus offers.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Culture Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your “Jesus And Culture Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-culture-teacher-prep>

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you’ll be studying. The Details give you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what’s happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What’s The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew’s Gospel being written in the late 50’s or 60’s AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

In this point of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is in the early part of His earthly ministry. He is just a chapter or so removed from the Sermon on the Mount. And in the passages surrounding this passage, Matthew is showing us a mix of Jesus’ early miracles, teachings, and healings. In the midst of this, we get to watch as Jesus calls a disciple and gives us an inside look at who and what God values.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point has to do with the type of people that Jesus interacted with in the passage. Matthew was a tax collector and the Jews despised tax collectors. Keep in mind the Romans had occupied the region that includes what is now present-day Israel. In the regions of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, many tax collectors would have been Jews who took up taxes on behalf of the Roman government, almost always taking extra to pad their own pockets. They were largely viewed as the lowest form of traitors and were despised by their fellow Jews.

This is why Jesus’ calling of Matthew as a disciple is profound. Not only did Jesus show kindness to Matthew, He made the man one of His students and closest companions. Furthermore, in the scene you’ll witness in this lesson, Jesus made it a point to openly interact with Matthew’s peers, described as other tax collectors and “sinners.” The religious elite couldn’t believe Jesus was doing this. But Jesus promptly set them in their place, informing them that these were exactly the kind of people He came to save.

This lesson will help students follow Jesus’ example of seeking out those who need Him the most, especially those whom culture says have little value.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** Help students begin to think about what it means to seek out those who most need to feel God's love.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to read the narrative listed below of the story of a remarkable teenager, Zach Bonner. If you choose to supplement your narrative of Zach Bonner's story with the movie trailer available on YouTube, you can do so by clicking this link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY3rh_TlWYM. (You'll want to make sure you have the means to show the video to your students.) Additionally, if you want to show a picture of Zach, you can go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zach_Bonner_head_shot_2008.jpg.

FIRST, explain to your students that you're going to share with them the story of a teenager who started doing remarkable things when he was only a small boy. Using the text below, share the story of Zach Bonner. **Read the following aloud:**

- **Zach Bonner was like a lot of six-year-olds. He knew that the hurricane approaching his city, Hurricane Charley, would cause lots of damage. But, unlike other kids his age, when the hurricane had passed through, Zach actually did something to help those affected by the storm. Taking his little red wagon, Zach went door-to-door and collected water bottles for those who had no drinking water due to the storm. He collected a lot of water bottles. 27 truck loads full! And that was the start of what has so far been an amazing commitment to helping others.**

Between his escapades at age 6 and today, the now 17-year-old teamed up with a non-profit and provided 10,000 backpacks full of goods for homeless children, organized Christmas presents for Hurricane Katrina victims, routinely hosted parties for people living in homeless shelters, launched a campaign to end childhood homelessness that included walking across the country and walking from Florida to the White House, has received dozens of awards including the Presidential Service Award, and spoke at countless seminars and conferences across the country. Needless to say, Zach Bonner has devoted his life to making an impact, almost exclusively with the poor and the needy in our society.

NEXT, when you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **In your opinion, what makes stories like Zach's so special?**
Answers will vary.
- **Have you ever been a part of an organization or a ministry that helped those suffering from poverty? What was it like? How did it make you feel?**
Answers will vary.
- **Have you ever felt an urge to play a role in helping others but didn't know exactly how to start? How can Zach's example be an encouragement to you?**
Answers will vary.

FINALLY, transition into the Main Event by saying something like:

- **Zach's story is meaningful on several levels. But one thing that makes it particularly special is that he focuses almost all of his efforts on helping those who are affected by poverty and homelessness. In essence, Zach helps those who need help the most. Zach's story serves as a perfect introduction for this lesson. As we continue our look at what Jesus had to say about how we engage with culture, in today's lesson we'll see that Jesus picked the most unlikely people to invest in. We can learn from His example. Let's take a closer look.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** Help your students understand that as Christ-followers committed to the Gospel, they must be willing to bravely impact culture, especially those who the world has cast aside as having little or no value.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, take a moment and see if anyone can recall what you've covered in the first two lessons in this series. Use the following bullet points to help guide your review.

- Following Christ faithfully means oftentimes we won't fit in with the rest of the world around us.
- We are called by Jesus to be in the world, but to live as if we were separate.
- That Jesus wants us to be countercultural in our humility, living in the world as servants of others.

THEN, explain that you're going to kick off your time of Bible study by looking at what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of Matthew. Instruct students to turn to Matthew 9. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Pay close attention to the Setting. Summarize it for your students so that they grasp exactly when this passage of Scripture occurs in Jesus' ministry.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 9:9-13. When you have finished, explain to students that you are going to go back through the passage and discuss the verses in greater detail. Lead students in the following discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **Before we dig in, let's take a big picture look at this account. Who did Jesus call to be His disciple? (Matthew) And who is the author of this Gospel? (Matthew) So, what observations might we make about this particular story? Answers will vary.** Lead students to consider that this must be a very personal story for Matthew. This was more or less the story of a huge identity shift. It had to be a very meaningful, and humbling story to include in his Gospel.

THEN, direct students' attention to verse 9. **Ask:**

- **Do any of you ever remember hearing about the tax collectors in Jesus' time? What do you know about them? Answer:** Their fellow countrymen despised them because they took up taxes for the occupying Roman government. They were seen as major traitors to other Jews.
- **Describe in your own words how you feel about Jesus' disciples, Peter, John, James, the whole gang. What thoughts or emotions come to mind when you think about these guys? Answers will vary.** Some students might choose to talk about their humble origins. But lead students to see that the disciples were a remarkable group of men. They turned out to be the fathers of the early Church. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, along with the Apostle Paul, they were largely responsible for the spread of Christianity.
- **So, it's safe to say that the disciples were a pretty select group of guys. Why would it have been so surprising for Jesus to choose Matthew, the tax collector?**

Answer: If you were looking for a qualified student, none of the disciples would have really been high on your list. But, of all of them, Matthew may have been the most unlikely.

NEXT, direct students' attention to verses 10 and 11. **Ask something like:**

- **What do we see happening here that would confirm what we just said about what an unlikely disciple Matthew was?**

Answer: The Pharisees couldn't believe Jesus would associate with tax collectors and "sinners."

- **What is the great irony about the Pharisees turning their noses up at the "sinners" Jesus was interacting with?**

Answer: First, the Pharisees were sinners as well. As the Jewish religious leaders, they should know better than anyone that all people are sinners. But they made it a habit to be judgmental of their society's outcasts. Second, they should know that God's mission was to draw people to Him, and to see them live according to His ways. Instead of playing a part in this, they turned their back on those who weren't following God.

- **Jesus pretty much puts the Pharisees in their places in verses 12 and 13. Summarize what Jesus said here.**

Answers will vary. Lead students to see that Jesus sought out those who most needed Him, not those who thought they were above needing a Savior. Jesus gave the Pharisees chance after chance to truly hear His message and follow Him. Some more than likely did. But time after time, they ignored His message. Jesus often found listening ears in those who most vividly recognized their need for Him.

THEN, transition into the last part of your Bible study time by leading students in a brief discussion where you concentrate on beginning to consider how to apply this passage in their lives today. **Ask something like the following:**

- **Jesus modeled for us how we are to view the kind of people the world has wrongly said have little or no value. Describe in your own words the value Jesus places on these kinds of people.**

Answer: Jesus made it clear that the lost, the needy, and the outcast were the aim of His mission in this world.

- **Our culture often overlooks those who are truly in need. If you follow Jesus' example, how might you find yourself going against culture's values and embracing God's values?**

Answer: Jesus showed that we are to seek out those most in need of God's love and show them the love of Christ, whatever that may look like in any given context. If we do this, we'll find ourselves in places that may be uncomfortable, but places where we are most needed.

NEXT, read or have a student read James 1:27. When the passage has been read, explain that James was actually one of Jesus' brothers and was the leader of the church in Jerusalem in the years after Jesus' death. Remind your students that in James' time, widows and orphans were the most helpless members of society, except for maybe the diseased or the disabled. They relied totally on the generosity of others for their day-to-day living. **Ask:**

- **In your own words, how does what James wrote support what Jesus was saying in Matthew 9?**

Answer: James understood the countercultural call to seek out those who most needed Christian compassion.

- **Why do think James mentioned being polluted by the world in the same sentence as taking care of the widows and orphans? (Hint: In other words, how might the world influence a person in a negative way as it pertains to the needy?)**

Answer: Explain to students that this is exactly what had happened to the Pharisees Jesus addresses in Matthew 9. They had become polluted by the world's definition of who was valuable and who wasn't. They had stopped caring for the outcasts, choosing instead to see them as undesirables far away from God's love.

FINALLY, wrap up your time in Bible study by **saying something similar to the following**:

- **God loves and values all people, from the richest to the poorest. But Scripture is clear: God hears the cries of the poor, the needy, and the outcast. Over and over again in the Bible, we see God urging His people to care for those who are most needy. As a Christ-follower, we can be confident that Jesus expects us to go against the values our culture holds about who is valuable, and to seek out those who are the least valuable in the world's eyes. God has chosen us to be His hands and feet to the needy in this world. The question is whether or not we'll obey His calling.**

Make sure students don't have any questions and then transition into the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students identify the “outcasts” in their world who are most in need of Christ, and to commit to engaging with them with the purpose of sharing the Gospel.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board or some other means of drawing a simple diagram and recording students' responses.

(NOTE: The goal for this activity is to help your students apply the truth of this passage to their lives. To do this, you're going to help students visualize who the “outcasts” are in their world. This can be tricky. Obviously the goal is to think in general terms. You don't need to be told that this is no place to name names. The “outcasts” in your students' world may very well be different from those in a community across your city, or across the country. Use discernment in guiding your students to consider those who are most in need of Christ-like compassion.)

FIRST, explain to students that you are going to do a closing activity where you begin to visualize the people in their world who are like the tax collectors, those people whom the world would say are “outcasts,” but whom God would see as worthy of His love like anyone else. You're going to do this by drawing two circles, one larger circle and a smaller circle inside of it. Explain to students that the larger circle represents your community, and the smaller circle represents their school.

NEXT, work with students to brainstorm those people in your community who culture says are outcasts. Be as specific as possible while still being compassionate and respectful. (For example, it's easy to simply write “the homeless,” and be done with it. Of course, those who are homeless are as valuable in God's eyes as anyone. But a more specific answer might also include a community of displaced refugees, or even immigrants or migrant workers. Again, you know your community. Guide students to paint an accurate picture here of the those who find themselves on the fringes of your community.)

THEN, when you have finished here, delicately guide students to consider people in their schools that the world would consider the “outcasts.” (Again, this is definitely supposed to be done on a “category” level. Answers might include students from lower income families, students who struggle with addiction or mental illness, and so on. It's VERY important to make sure you're not saying that YOU place little value on these people, or that you are in any way choosing to see these people as outcasts. Your simply echoing what the world has said about these individuals.) You know your group best; if they are not mature enough to talk about this out loud without disparaging certain groups of people, or naming individuals, have students silently contemplate these individuals.

NEXT, carve out space to remind students that the world has wrongly looked at these people much like the Pharisees looked at the tax collectors. Looking through the lens of what culture says is valuable, the world has pushed these people to the fringes. But as Christ-followers, encourage your students that they are to be the ones who seek out these people and show them the love of God. Close by **saying something like**:

- This week, I want to challenge you to identify someone in your school who is valuable to God but whom the world has cast off to the side. If you look, you'll find these people. I want to challenge you to follow Jesus' example and make it a point to reach out to these people. If it's a small interaction at first, that's fine. In fact it's awesome. But I want to challenge you to go above and beyond that. I want to challenge you to build to the point where you form a relationship with these people, showing them the love you and Christ has for them. Are you brave enough to accept this challenge?

FINALLY, make it a point to follow up with students mid-week. The second of the three devotions that support this lesson will also be a reminder to students to follow up on this. Encourage students to act on what they learned today and follow through with applying this truth to their lives.

Make sure there are no closing thoughts and then close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Social Media, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

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LESSON 4: THE CALL TO HOLINESS

WHAT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO LEARN: That Jesus wants His followers to interact with culture through lives that are Christ-like: holy and set apart for God's purpose.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To understand the purpose Jesus calls them to, and to seek to embrace this purpose as they engage and interact with their culture.

Scripture Focus: John 17:13-19

Supporting Scripture: Psalm 119:105

OVERVIEW: There is a saying that many of your students have probably heard before: "In the world, but not of the world." These exact words don't appear in Scripture. But they probably originate as a summary of the teachings in this passage. In this prayer, Jesus says something that sheds a great deal of light on how He sees us. Jesus does not ask God to take His followers out of this world. To the contrary, He asks God to keep us here. But look at what Jesus said when it came to what our lives should look like as we live and dwell in this world: Jesus asked God to sanctify His people, purifying us and setting us apart for His purpose. Jesus wants us to be in this world, but living holy lives on mission for God. This is the purpose Jesus desires for us to fill as we interact with and engage culture. And this is the challenge you'll leave your students with in this your final lesson of Jesus and Culture.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Culture Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

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BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What’s The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John, son of Zebedee, a fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus. John also penned the book of Revelation as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John’s stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John’s goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

THE SETTING

John 17 comes near the end of what the ESV Study Bible calls, “the farewell discourse.” This is a great term describing exactly what Jesus is doing in chapters 13-20. Jesus is at the end of His earthly ministry and is preparing His disciples to carry on without Him.

John 15-17 falls on the heels of Jesus and His disciples having finished the Last Supper. They were preparing to walk from the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where Jesus would ultimately be arrested. Jesus was teaching them as they were going, or at least preparing to go. This passage comes in the midst of a prayer Jesus is praying to God the Father. At the end of chapter 17, John depicts Jesus and His disciples walking from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where Jesus is promptly arrested.

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus makes two very interesting points here as far as our study of culture goes, and they serve as fitting bookends for the last lesson in this series. First, Jesus once again acknowledges that the world will be opposed to His followers simply because they are His followers. But the Jesus does something interesting. He doesn’t ask God to remove His followers from the hostile world, He asks for protection. God’s plan is for the Church to be His mouthpiece, His hands, and His feet in this world. Jesus knew that this only gets accomplished if we are left in this world.

SECOND, Jesus affirms the mission of His followers, and places their “sanctification” through God’s Word at the center of this mission, almost as if this sanctification is a pre-requisite for our being on mission with God. Of course we know that to be sanctified is to be made holy, and to be set apart to be used to accomplish God’s purpose. The cool thing is that Jesus talks about this happening through God’s Word. In our context that means the Bible. So, it’s a powerful message to your students: God wants them in this world to be part of His mission, but to be prepared for the mission they have to be actively engaged in knowing God through His Word. Very cool stuff!

This lesson is a great way to send your students off on a challenge to make a major impact on culture for the sake of Christ.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students visualize what it means to be a part of their world, but not a part of it.
- **Set-Up:** Arrange to display the “Lesson 4 Lead In Activity Sheet,” contained in your lesson 4 folder, either by printing the PDF or by presenting it digitally.

FIRST, explain to students that this is the last lesson in your study of Jesus and culture. Explain that this last lesson contains a great challenge for them, one they are hopefully going to really enjoy. But first, you’re going to play a game where you look at a group of four objects or people, and try to figure out which one is different from the rest, and why. Explain that the first one is easy, but they get harder as they go.

NEXT, using the “Lesson 4 Lead In Activity Sheet,” look at the first group of objects. **Then, ask:**

- **Which one is different from the rest and why?**

Answer: The box is different from the balls because it is not round.

Do the same for the second group of objects. **Ask:**

- **Which one is different and why?**

Answer: The watermelon is the different object because it has a thicker peel, or “skin” than the other fruits.

Finally, ask the same question for the third image, the group of girls. **Ask:**

- **Which one is different and why?**

• The truth of the matter is that the difference is one they would never be able to tell. [NOTE: We normally stay away from trick question activities, but this one we couldn’t resist.] Allow students to guess and then reveal to them the answer.

Answer: The nationality of the girl in the lower left-hand corner is Eastern European, while the other three girls are American.

More than likely your students will pitch a fit, complaining that there is no way they could have known this. Have fun with this part of the activity. Then, when they’ve settled down, lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask:**

- **Why was it easy on the first one to tell which object was different from the others?**

Answers will vary.

- **The second one was a little trickier. Why?**

Answer: It simply wasn’t as obvious at first glance. But once you knew, it made sense.

- **What made the third set so difficult?**

Answer: There was virtually no way to tell what was different about the girl. There was no discernable difference, and the differences your students might have come up with most likely were not the correct ones.

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by **saying something like the following:**

- **While this activity attempted to trick you on the last one, the point I was hoping to make was this: Some things obviously stand out from the crowd. Some things don't. What does that have to do with today's lesson? Simple: You are a part of the culture in which you live your life. But Jesus wants you to stand out. Unlike the girl, Jesus wants the difference in you and the world to be clear. We've already talked about this some in the past few weeks. The difference in this final lesson is that Jesus defines what this difference should be. Let's find out exactly what Jesus said.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that Jesus wants His followers to interact with culture through lives that are Christ-like: holy and set apart for God's purposes.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, take a moment and see if anyone can recall what you've covered in the other three lessons in this series. Use the following bullet points to help guide your review.

- Following Christ faithfully means oftentimes we won't fit in with the rest of the world around us.
- Jesus wants us to be countercultural in our humility, living in the world as servants of others.
- As Christ-followers committed to the Gospel, we must be willing to bravely impact culture, especially those whom the world has cast aside as having little or no value.

You may see if any student is willing to share anything he or she has learned during this study, or anything they have been particularly convicted by. If anyone has been moved, or otherwise gotten something out of a previous lesson, this is a great time to share.

THEN, explain that you're going to kick off your time of Bible study by looking at what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of John. Instruct students to turn to John 17. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Pay close attention to the Setting. Summarize it for your students so that they grasp exactly when this passage of Scripture occurs in Jesus' ministry.

NEXT, read or have a student read John 17:13-19. When you have finished, explain to students that you are going to go back through the passage and discuss the verses in greater detail. Lead students in the following discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **Verse 13 can seem a little hard to figure out at first. Jesus is talking about joining God the Father once He dies, rises from the dead, and ascends into heaven. But what is Jesus saying about His joy here? Can you figure it out?**

Answer: Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly mission. He was joyful in the face of suffering, because He knew His mission was almost complete. He knew the disciples would be full of fear and turmoil in the coming days. He was hoping to pass along some of His joy to the disciples in this, one of their final moments.

- **What does it say about how Jesus viewed the importance of completing His mission that He would be happy in the face of what He knew was about to happen to Him?**

Answers will vary. But it seems to point to the grandeur of Jesus' mission that He would be rejoicing in the nearness of its completion.

- **Just so we're on the same page, how would you define Jesus' mission? What did He come to earth to do?**

Answers will vary. Lead students to see that Jesus' mission was one of redemption, and of salvation. He came to make possible once-and-for-all peace between God and humankind through His atoning death on the cross.

THEN, have students look back at verses 14-16. Remind students that these verses are a lot similar to the ones they studied from John 15 in Lesson 1. However, there is an interesting difference in verse 15. Lead students to discuss this verse using something similar to the following questions. **Ask:**

- **Jesus acknowledges that the world pretty much hates all of His followers, and that it's a pretty tough gig being in the world at all. So, He asks God to whisk all of His followers away to heaven so that they won't have to put up with it, right? Right? (Wrong.) What does Jesus really ask God to do?**

Answer: To leave His followers in this world, but to offer them protection.

- **Knowing the road would sometimes be tough for His followers, why do you think Jesus insisted on leaving us in the world? Think about this one in light of His overall mission.**

Answer: Help your students understand that the Church, which means them, is God's primary means of sharing His rescue mission with the world. We are to represent Him to the world. And we can't do this if we're not here.

- **How does this change the idea of the hardship you have or will experience at times because you identify yourself as a Christ-follower?**

Answers will vary. But help students see that it's all worth it because of their role. Jesus has given them a role to play in spreading the Gospel. The hatred that culture sometimes shows them is worth it because of the impact they stand to make by living their lives for Christ.

Make sure students grasp this point. **Say something like:**

- **This is a really big point as we wrap up our discussion of what it means to be a Christ-follower engaging with our culture. God's plan included you. It didn't have to. It just as easily could have not included you. But God thought of His mission to reach the world and He decided He wanted you on board. As we've talked the past few weeks about being set apart for God, this is exactly what we were talking about. You have a mission. You are in this world because Jesus wants you to be a resource for Him. But you can't be on mission for God if you live your life like the rest of the world. You have to identify yourself with God and His ways, even though it might make things tough for you at times.**

NEXT, when you feel like students have grasped this point, move on to what Jesus said in verse 17. Lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask:**

- **This is the next major point of this passage, but it's easy to miss. First, does anyone know what it means to be sanctified?**

Answer: It means to be made holy. More specifically in this instance, it's to be made holy by being set apart and assigned a purpose, or a task.

- **So, Jesus is saying that He wants His followers to be sanctified. This falls in line with what we've been studying so far, right? (Right) But what is the means by which Jesus asks God to sanctify us?**

Answer: Through the truth, which is God's Word.

- **Now, this had a shade different meaning to the disciples in this specific moment. But as we are making the application to our lives, what does this mean exactly? How do we talk about God's Word today?**

Answer: The Bible. The Scriptures.

- **OK, let's put all this together: You are part of Jesus' mission. To be on mission with Jesus is to be set apart for this task. And the means by which you're set apart and prepared to be on mission for Jesus is by the truth of God's Word. Does this make sense? What does your being in God's Word have to do with your mission of sharing the Gospel with the lost?**

Answer: To be on mission for God, you have to know God. You can't represent Him or His ways without knowing Him. The Bible is the primary way God has chosen to make Himself known to us. So, to be effective at our mission, to be truly set apart, we have to make it a priority to continually meet God in the pages of His Word.

FINALLY, begin to transition to the Last Word by reading aloud Psalm 119:105. Explain to your students that this is the attitude you should all strive to have in regards to God's Word. **Ask:**

- **In your own words, how does this pertain to Jesus' words we just looked at? How does this support the idea that to be on mission for God in this world, we have to be motivated by seeking Him in the Bible?**

Answers will vary. But there is a great parallel in our mission Jesus has given us, and the path referred to in the psalm. Just like a lamp lights a path, God's Word illuminates our purpose and mission. We can't truly be set apart in this world if we are detached from knowing God.

If no one has any questions, transition to the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students understand the purpose Jesus calls them to, and to seek to embrace this purpose as they engage and interact with their culture.
- **Set-Up:** You have two choices on how to set-up this activity. One is fairly simple. You'll download the "Lesson 4 Last Word Activity Sheet" found in your Lesson 4 folder, and cut out the cards on the sheet, enough for each student to have one. (For best results, print the card in color on cardstock, though printing in grayscale will work.) If you really want to make an impression, secure enough small stones or pebbles so that each one of your students can have one. Spray paint the stones red before you meet, allowing enough time for them to dry. Then, distribute the cards AND the stones as a more vivid reminder of the call to be set apart.

FIRST, explain that as this is the last lesson in the series on culture, you want to send students off with a reminder of Jesus' call to live on mission for Him, set apart from the culture surrounding them. But first explain that you want students to have a chance to articulate in their own words exactly the mission Jesus has called them to.

Ask for students to define how they see God wanting to use them. This can be very loosely defined--much more of a big-picture look--or this can be very personal. Be prepared to answer this question yourself to allow time for students to articulate their answers. When students have shared their responses, explain that their goal should be to live each day, as much as possible, with this mission in the forefront of their mind. **Say:**

- **The challenge is to be set apart from the culture around you, focused on the task God has called you to. To help you remember this challenge, I'm going to give you a reminder.**

NEXT, distribute the cards you have cut out. If you have provided stones, distribute these as well. Explain that the cards help visualize the idea of being different than the culture surrounding us. Encourage them to place this card in a prominent spot to remind them of God's call on their life. (If you've also given them stones, encourage them to carry the stone in their pocket or backpack to remind them during their days.) Encourage students that you are here to support them as they seek to live their lives fulfilling the task God has set before them.

If there are no more thoughts or questions, close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Social, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

- ♦ *Do you have questions about a lesson?*
- ♦ *Something that worked particularly well you want to share?*
- ♦ *Something that didn't work you want to bring up?*

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.