



LESSON 1: CREATED TO STAND OUT

WHAT WE WANT OUR STUDENTS TO LEARN: God intends to use their lives to get the attention of the world around them, all for God's glory.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To step back and evaluate exactly what impact their lives are having on the people they encounter on a day-to-day basis.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 5:13-16

Supporting Scripture: 1 Peter 2:12

OVERVIEW: This passage in Matthew speaks to our identity. We were created by God to be difference-makers in this world. Like salt in a bland meal, we are to liven up the world around us for the sake of Christ. Like light, our lives are supposed to dispel the darkness of the fallen world we live in. As Jesus says, our lives are literally to be lived in such a way that people observe us and are left to offer praise to God. And yet, so many students (and adults, too) fail to live up to their God-given identity. This lesson will help your students grasp Jesus' expectations for their life, and will challenge them to really examine how effective they are at making an impact on the world.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Identity 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 Identity Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-identity-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

This passage is a part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and comes at the end of what has traditionally been called “the beatitudes,” the series of couplets that start in Matthew 5: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek . . .” and so on. The Sermon on the Mount serves as a sort of in-depth picture of the moral expectations of God’s children. Jesus spent the Sermon on the Mount contrasting the current, religious understanding of faith practiced by the Jews of His day, with God’s definition of what it means to be a child of God. It would have been revolutionary teaching to His first-century audience.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point we want to make is that in Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus cuts to the chase about what it means to live as a Christ-follower. Our lives are meant to matter. They are to be lived as powerful, impactful forces that transform the world around us, all in the name of Christ. This lesson will help your students understand exactly what this means, while also challenging them to take an honest look at the level of impact their life is actually having.

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 of their lives as “attention-getters.”
- **Set-Up:** Print enough copies of the “Lesson 1 Lead In Activity Sheet” (located in your Lesson 1 folder) so that each group of three to four students can have a copy. (TIP: If you’re using some sort of presentation software, you could convert the PDF to a JPG and drop the file in your presentation software. This way you could show the slide so that all the groups can see it at once.)

FIRST, divide students into groups of three or four and distribute the “Lesson 1 Lead In Activity Sheet” to each group. Explain to groups that you’re going to read them a fictitious scenario where a teenager named Jack finds himself in a tricky spot and must get the attention of his friend, Tyler. Explain that at the right moment, each group will have the opportunity to choose a unique object from their activity sheet and brainstorm a creative way in which Jack can use the object to get the attention of Tyler. The group with the most creative use of the most creative object will be the winner.

NEXT, read the following scenario to your students:

• **Jack and Tyler stopped by their lockers to grab their stuff after lunch. Jack was closing his locker when he looked up and saw Tricia coming down the hall. Jack knew that Tyler had a huge crush on Tricia. So, Jack thought he’d be a good friend and try and get Tricia and Tyler talking. As Tricia approached, Jack said, “Hey, Tricia. Come here for a second. I need to ask you something.” Jack looked over at Tyler to see if he had picked up on what was about to happen, when he noticed that Tyler had a huge glob of ketchup in the corner of his mouth. Jack tried to give Tyler the heads up, but it was too late. Tyler had seen Tricia and was walking over to talk to her. Thinking quickly, Jack reached in his backpack grabbed his _____ and then _____.**

At this point, instruct each group to take 60 seconds to look at their sheets and choose the object that Jack took out of his backpack. Then, brainstorm something funny Jack did with the object to get Tyler’s attention, thus saving him from blowing his chance to impress Tricia.

THEN, when the minute is up, have each group share what object they picked and what they had Jack do to get Tyler’s attention. Inform the group with the best response that they have won. (If your students had fun with this, give them 60 more seconds to do it again, choosing another object and action.)

FINALLY, explain to students that this was a fun way to get them thinking about the idea of getting someone’s attention. Explain that this lesson is all about getting the attention of people around us, but with a purpose in mind that might surprise them. **Say something like:**

• **This is the first in a four-week study on what Jesus has to say about our identity. In this lesson, we’re going to be looking at how Jesus wants our lives to be attention-getters to the world around us. As you may have guessed, though, it’s not to gain attention for us, but for Him. We’re going to see today what this concept of attention-getting has to do with our identities as Christ-followers. Let’s take a closer look.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students define the idea of identity, and to see how God intends to use their lives to get the attention of the world around them, all for His glory.
- **Set-Up:** You'll benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they can look along with a friend.

FIRST, lead students to brainstorm a definition for the word "identity." Write the word on a dry erase board, and record their definitions. When they've slowed down supplying answers, or if they get stumped, write the following answer on the board:

- Identity: the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.

Explain that our identity is the combination of elements such as our personality, our talents, our experiences, and so on, that make us who we are. And as Christ-followers, there's an added element: our identity as it is found in Christ. Say something similar to the following:

- **In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he described what happens when we come to a saving relationship with Jesus. Paul says that our old identity disappears. It dies. And in its place, a new identity is born. In his letter to the Colossians, he goes deeper in explaining this new identity. He says in Colossians 3:3 that our new identity is "hidden with Christ in God." This is cool and kind of mysterious, isn't it? Well, don't worry. We're going to spend the next four weeks learning what Jesus had to say about our identities as His followers.**

THEN, explain that you're going to start by looking at what Jesus had to say in the book of Matthew. Instruct students to turn to Matthew 5. 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 5:13-16. When students have finished, lead them in a short discussion. Instruct them to look back at verse 13. **Ask something like:**

- **What do you think of when you think of salt?**
Answer: Something along the lines of flavoring, or adding flavor.
- **When is salt used? In other words, what is its essential purpose?**
Answer: To add flavor or distinction to bland or otherwise flavorless food.
- **When Jesus mentions that un-salty salt should be thrown out, what is He trying to say about the nature and purpose of salt?**
Answer: When salt ceases to function as it is intended, it doesn't really have any other purpose. It doesn't have a secondary function. When it is no longer salty, it is no longer useful.

Instruct students to keep this discussion in mind as they re-read verses 14-15. Lead them in a discussion of these verses. **Ask:**

- **What effect does light have on darkness?**
Answer: It drives it away. It's literally impossible for light and darkness to co-exist. Where there is light, there is no darkness.
- **If it were pitch black dark, especially in a time before electricity, how easy do you think a city on a hill would be to see?**
Answer: Pretty easy.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students step back and evaluate exactly what impact their lives are having on the people they encounter on a day-to-day basis.
- **Set-Up:** You'll want to use a dry erase board or some other means to help students visualize the people in their lives they have an opportunity to impact. You'll want to draw a circle and divide it up into four equal parts. Inside or out beside each part, write the following groups, one in each part: Family, Friends, Acquaintances, and Strangers.

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to give them an opportunity to evaluate their lives and how effectively they are using them to make a difference for Jesus.

NEXT, draw the circle diagram as described in the set-up instructions above. Inform students that these represent the various people who could potentially be led closer to Christ through the way your students live their daily lives. Say something like:

Some of us have family members who don't have a saving relationship with Christ, and almost all of us have friends who fall in this category. Acquaintances are those people whom you know but aren't great friends with. Strangers are people you come into contact with but really don't know at all. Each of these people represents an individual that God will lead to come into contact with you. And you can influence each of them for God's glory.

THEN, have students look at the list and identify the group where they would say they are making the most impact at this moment. Remind them that this doesn't mean they are perfect or that there isn't room to improve. Ask students to call out their respective categories. **Then ask:**

- **Can anyone identify any reasons or examples of how you've impacted this specific group?**
Answers will vary. Encourage students and challenge them to think about how they can continue to impact this group of people.

NEXT, have students look back at the categories of people and identify which category they have the most work to do in making more of an impact for Christ. Help them see that this isn't necessarily a negative thing. This simply represents the area of greatest opportunity. Have students share their groups. **Then ask:**

- **Why is this group particularly challenging for you?**
Answers will vary.
- **If you thought about it a while, do you think you could come up with some practical ways to influence this group? Are there things you could pinpoint that would give you the opportunity to use your life to draw their focus to God? What might some of these things be?**
Answers will vary, but challenge students to think of simple, yet practical ways to live as difference-makers for Christ.

FINALLY, ask if students feel the weight of this responsibility. Help them understand that it's OK if they do. When they truly begin to see the potential in their lives, and the way Jesus relies on them to live for Him, it can really change the way they view their lives. **Say something like:**

This idea of living your life in such a way that you stand out in the world for Jesus' sake isn't a suggestion. It's not an advanced plan for only the most spiritually mature among you. It's very literally an essential part of your identities as Christ-followers. And that's according to Jesus Himself. Don't miss the chance to use your life to grow God's Kingdom by pointing people to Jesus.

- **So, what do you think Jesus meant when He said that we are supposed to light up the world like a city on a hill?**

Answers will vary. But lead students to see that Jesus was talking about our ability to impact the world through the way we live our everyday lives. The darkness of the world is in the places where sin is evident. Our lives shine with the light of Christ, driving away and exposing sin.

THEN, bring these two discussions together. Remind them that they just said that salt brought flavor to flavorless food. And they just talked about how light drives away the darkness. **Ask:**

- **What does it mean that the way you live your life in this world is supposed to have the same impact that salt has on bland food? Or the same impact that light has on darkness?**

Answers will vary. Let students answer as they will, without correcting or redirecting. You're about to tie it all together.

Explain to students that the answer is in verse 16 (if they don't already make the connection). Look back at 16. **Then ask something like:**

- **Here, Jesus gives us the reason why our life is supposed to stand out. We're supposed to live like salt and light so that our lives get people's attention. But what is the goal of this attention?**

Answer: The goal is that people see our lives, realize there is something different about us, and attribute that difference to God's presence in our lives.

- **What are some practical ways we can show people our "good deeds"?**

Answers will vary. Encourage students to be practical, and help them see that this goes beyond just their actions. Their words and even their attitudes draw people to God.

NEXT, explain to students that this isn't just a sentiment expressed by Jesus. Peter backs up this concept as well, writing something like 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. Read or have a student read 1 Peter 2:12. Explain that Peter is echoing the words of Jesus, further affirming that this is a real part of our identities as Christ-followers. Remind students that when Peter used the word "pagan," he is simply talking about those who do not believe in Christ. Then ask:

- **How is what Peter says here similar to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:16?**

Answer: Both of them see the way we live our lives as having the potential to draw people to a relationship with God.

- **In both Jesus' and Peter's statements, what is the ultimate goal in people acknowledging the source behind our remarkable lives?**

Answer: Help students see that the goal is for people to come to a saving relationship with Jesus. The idea is a powerful one: our lives can be one of the ways Jesus calls people to Him to experience His salvation. Help students see what an amazing truth this is.

FINALLY, explain to students that as Christ-followers, their identities are wrapped up in how they live their lives on mission for God. Seeing their day-to-day lives as rich opportunities to shine for Jesus is a huge part of realizing their identities in Christ. Say something like:

- It's hard to realize sometimes, but you really are a huge part of Jesus' plan to make His name known in the world. As one of His children, Jesus will work through your life to show Himself to other people. Your call as a follower of Christ is to embrace your identity and to truly commit yourself to seizing the opportunities to make a difference in the world for God's glory.

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into the Last Word.

Encourage them that their lives are making a difference. Challenge them to keep living on mission for Jesus.

Make sure there are no remaining questions, and then close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute devotions 1-3 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.