



LESSON 1: DEFINING INFLUENCE

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: Jesus desires to use our influence to positively impact the world for God.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED: To look at their lives and define the areas in which they have influence, and to begin thinking about how they use their influence to point others to Christ.

Scripture Focus: Mark 1:16-20

OVERVIEW: As Jesus called His first disciples, He made a profound statement about how He would take their influence and use it for His glory. Jesus said that He would make His disciples “fishers of men,” thus redefining both their vocation and the way in which they would be using their lives. No longer would they merely be influential in their families and communities, they would be using their lives to influence their wider world for the sake of Christ. This is the same call Jesus puts on our lives today. In this lesson your students will begin to contemplate where they have influence and begin thinking about how they might use this influence to help others encounter Christ.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Influence 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 Influence Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-influence-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:** 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

Have you heard of any of the Executive Book Summary services that are offered? These are quick two or three page summaries of various books for people who want to get the gist of the book but don’t want a long, drawn-out version. This is kind of how Mark’s Gospel functions. It’s the most “to the point,” most succinct of all the Gospels. So it’s no surprise that by verse 16 of chapter 1, Mark already has dealt with John the Baptist’s ministry, Jesus’ baptism, Jesus’ temptation, and Jesus’ beginning of His public ministry. All of this sets up the calling of the disciples in verse 16.

THE MAIN POINT

Influence is something that can be really hard to understand, especially as a student. Young people look around their world and, in their insecurity, don’t feel like they have much influence at all. There is a lot of speculation as to how old Peter, Andrew, James, and John were when Jesus found them out fishing that day. But the belief is that they were probably in their late teens to mid-twenties. Not much older than your students!

Jesus tells them their influence will have a much broader reach than anything they have known before. They are going to leave their tiny boats, where each day they merely fish for a living, and will instead affect the world. Can you imagine being a young adult in today’s world when Jesus comes along and says, “You have more influence for me than you realize; follow me and see what happens”? This is what you’re trying to help your students understand. The influence God gives them goes way beyond everyday activities including things like school, sports, or even youth group.

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 understand that they can use the influence God has given them to make a positive impact.
- **Set-Up:** You will need a pen and paper for every student. Take the time to do a little research on the “Top Ten Inventions of Our Time.” Pick a list and print it out for yourself. You will need to talk about this during the lead-in.

FIRST, set up the time with students by asking students what they think of when they hear the word influence. Then **say something like:**

- **Today we’re going to start talking about this idea of “influence” and what it means for you. To have influence means having an impact or an effect on someone or something. It means doing something that changes someone else. Did you realize we all have influence whether we realize it or not? Let’s talk about influence for a few moments.**

THEN, lead students in a discussion (or you could break students into small groups of three to five students and have them generate lists themselves and then share them with the group). Explain that when we think of the idea of influence, we may never even realize the way we’ve been influenced by others. **Say:**

- **Let’s take five minutes and do some brainstorming. Let’s make a “Top Ten List” of the most influential inventions of all time. These are things that were invented and changed the way we live our lives.**

Record students’ list on a dry-erase board.

NEXT, once you’ve led students to create their “Top Ten” list, read the example of the top ten list you downloaded from the Internet. **Say something like:**

- **I did some research on what the “experts” thought were the top ten inventions of all time. There were things like the wheel, the plow, the printing press, and the Internet. (Read the list you found.) Can you imagine a life without these things?**

Answers will vary.

- **What do you see in common with all of these influential inventions?**

Answers will vary.

Then say something like:

- **Each of these inventions changed the way we think about our every day lives. If there were no computer or Internet we wouldn’t have smart phones. If there were no wheel, transportation over all would be drastically different. Some of these inventions seem so subtle, yet they have affected so much. Behind each invention is a person. Some of them are well known; others are names that we may have never heard of. Yet, each carried an influence that shaped the way each of us go about life. Think about your own lists for a second. What is one thing on there that you can’t imagine living without?**

THEN, explain to students that you're going to begin a four week look at what Jesus had to say about influence. Today you'll look at how Jesus took four guys who were out fishing and empowered them to have an influence that has lasted literally centuries. Often, we think that we are supposed to wait until we "grow up" to make a difference.

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

- **Today we're going to talk about ways we can be influential for the Lord. It's so easy to use the excuse of "when we grow up." However, what if those inventors we talked about had kept putting off inventing? You may not realize this, but most inventors try and fail often before they finally do something that sticks. We all have influence right where we are today, and we are going to take a look at what that means for each of us.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students that Jesus desires to use their influence to positively impact the world for God.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, ask students if they have ever thought about the idea that God wants them to have influence for Him now? Ask how that makes them feel. Then **say something like**:

- **We talked about the type of influence that can last through generations. Sometimes the influence is so powerful it keeps affecting everything around it, while we barely notice, like some of the inventions we talked about. What are some other ways influence can be powerful like this?**

Answers will vary. You want students to begin seeing the ways that influence may not be obvious at the moment. As we start to look at Jesus calling these fishermen to leave their nets and be His disciples, it may not have been obvious that they were going to have the influence they would have. They may not have even really understood the reach their influence would one day have.

THEN, read out loud or ask a student to read, Mark 1:16-20. When you've finished, **say something like**:

- **We have here four guys who had only ever fished for a living. Let's look at the for a second. There is a lot of debate as to how old they were, but most believe they were somewhere between teens and young adults. They thought their lives would only ever be on a fishing boat. James and John probably figured they would one day take over their father's business.**

NEXT, lead students in a discussion. **Ask**:

- **What do you think the disciples' influence was like before Jesus called out to them?**
Answer: They were just being guys who fished. Their influence didn't reach much past providing fish for the people in their town. There were other fishermen who also brought fish. They were just ordinary people.
- **When Jesus said, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people," do you think they had any idea what that meant?**
Answer: We know that Peter and Andrew had met Jesus before. In John 1:35-54, we know that Andrew had been with John the Baptist when he called out and said, "Look there is the Lamb of God." He went home and told his brother that they had found the Messiah. Andrew and Peter went to talk to Jesus. (This is actually when Jesus tells "Simon" he will now be called, "Peter.") This had a lot to do with what Peter's influence would become. So when Jesus came and said, "Follow me" there was probably a part of them that had been hoping for this. We don't think they had any idea what it meant to "fish for men," but they had an idea of what fishing was and that it meant bringing people close. They understood fishing.

- **Do you think they understood what it was going to be like to “fish for people?”**

Answer: Jesus tells them He will “show them how” to fish for people. They had to learn how to be fishermen in the earthly sense, and it was clear Jesus was going to show them what this meant. They understood that it was something special.

Then say something like:

- **Can you imagine being one of these four men? You have heard of Jesus, you may even have met Him. You have heard He is the Savior, Messiah everyone has been waiting for. One day while you are doing what you do every day He comes and tells you to follow Him. Would you have followed Jesus that day if He came and told you that He wanted you to?**

THEN, say something like:

- **Jesus comes into our lives and asks the same things as us. We may have heard about Him, we have met Him before in our lives. Then He comes and asks us to be His. Will we follow Him? It is uncomfortable to leave what we know and trade it in for something that might now make total sense to us. The question we have to ask ourselves is if we believe that He will take what we know and make it better.**

As you help students unpack this and what it means for their lives, lead them in a brief, kind of open-ended discussion where they can really think about and respond to these questions:

- **Let’s talk about the influence you have today, where you are. Whom do you influence every day? What is your influence like? The fisherman influenced their family and even their town. What do you do today?**

Answers will vary.

Finally transition to the Last Word by **saying something similar to the following:**

- **The idea behind Jesus’ call on His disciples and on you is that we all have the ability to impact the world around us. We all have an influence of some sort. The real question for us is, “How do we exercise our influence? And for what end?” Let’s take a closer look as we wrap up our time of Bible study.**

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To look at their lives and define the areas in which they have influence, and to begin thinking about how they use their influence to influence others for Christ.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll need paper and pens for each student.

FIRST, say something like:

- **We have been talking about influence. In our opening time, we talked about inventions and the influence they have had on our world. The things that have the most influence on the way we think about life seem the least assuming at the time. When Jesus was alive people barely understood really who He was. They certainly didn’t fully understand the influence Jesus would have for all time. Many Jews who had been waiting for a Savior thought He was coming to “save” them from the Roman government that ruled them. They were looking for a military “king” to rule their nation, not someone who would come to save their souls. They didn’t realize the influence He would have forever. I doubt those fishermen understood the way their influence would change with Him in their life. Let’s take a minute and think about what your influence is right where you are. Make a list of everything you do, and all of the places you know people right now. It could be class, sports teams, clubs, or friends. Where do you know people? That is where you have an influence.**

Give them a few minutes to make a list. **Then say something like:**

- **We all have some form of influence in the lives we live and the things we are involved in. It's our choice what kind of influence it is. Are we not doing anything? Are we helping influence for the good? Are we a bad influence on those around us?**

THEN, instruct students to take a minute to think about the kind of influence they have in all of those places on their lists. If they really don't influence the people or situation at all write an X next to it. If they feel like they have a good influence in that place, like they are a servant to the people, or perhaps even lead people, make a smiley face. If they create a negative influence (like are disrespectful to a teacher, don't listen to your coaches or even are always fooling around) make a frown.

NEXT, explain that no one else has to see this list so they can be honest. Look at your list. Count the X's, Frowns and Smiles. Where do most of your influences lie? Think about it for a moment. Explain that now we can look at the smiley faces. We can have a "good" influence, but that doesn't mean it's an influence for Christ. Look at those influences are they for Christ or not?

Ask:

- **How do you think your list would change at all if you let Christ be the one who influenced you most?**

Answers will vary.

- **How would your list change if you let Christ influence others through you?**

Answers will vary.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **Take a moment to think about your life ahead and your list in front of you. What do you think your life could be like, what kind of influence would you have if you let God make you a "fisher of people?" Your influence starts today right where you are. Now just circle two things on your list that you will ask God to influence today. This week we are going to spend time in your devotionals talking about that.**

If you have no more questions, wrap it up 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@yothministry360.com.