



LESSON 1: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That according to Jesus, loving others is second only to loving God. It's a crucial part of being who God wants us to be.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Evaluate their own attitudes toward loving others, especially in light of what it says about how they love God.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 22:34-40

Supporting Scripture: 1 John 3:10

OVERVIEW: Your students live in a world of lists like honor roll lists, who made cheerleader lists, and lists of things to learn for tests. They're also bombarded by the media with lists of greatest things like sports moments, funny videos, and current fashion fads. Many lists are based on personal preference or opinion, and may vary from person to person. But when Jesus speaks, especially when He is asked to list the most important commands, He speaks truth. Jesus gave a list when He was asked by the Pharisees and Sadducees to name the greatest commandment. In this lesson your students will see what Jesus' response was and what this means in the context of their daily life. When Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God and love others His list immediately became our list. The lesson on The Greatest Commandment will guide your students to see that loving others is not only a good thing but, along with loving God, the most important thing.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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To access your "Jesus And Your Image Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-your-image-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

Matthew 22 takes place after Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and not long before His trial and crucifixion. Toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Pharisees and Sadducees were looking for ways to trap Jesus into saying something for which they could have Him arrested.

Matthew 22 includes three key questions the religious leaders used to try and trap Jesus:

- ***Should we pay taxes?***
- ***Will there be marriage in Heaven?***
- ***What is the greatest commandment?***

As you'll see in this lesson, not only were the religious leaders unable to trap Jesus, they were consistently reminded of how powerful His teachings were.

THE MAIN POINT

Teenagers today live in a “summation world” where thoughts are expressed in a short social media post or even a short video. With that in mind, your students should love the idea that Jesus took hundreds of Jewish laws and summed them up in six words – love God, love others, love yourself... in that order! Today's lesson will help your students understand that the best place to start in a study of loving others is to see what Jesus had to say about the subject. We'll see that Jesus summed up perfect fulfillment of the Law through the commands, “love God and love others.” Loving God is primary, of course. But it's notable that loving others was second on Jesus' list. You'll help students grasp why this is so important and help set the stage for a great discussion on what this looks like in their lives.



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 identify some of the greatest things in their lives in order to transition to the study of the Greatest Commandment.
- **Set-Up:** Print out the “Lesson 1 Lead In Activity Sheet” (contained in your lesson 1 folder) so that each student has one. Also, provide a pen or pencil for each student. Or if you would rather do the activity as a group discussion, arrange to display the categories either on a dry-erase board, or by showing the PDF on tablet or projector. You can also display the sheet digitally to help in the discussion.

FIRST, ask if anyone has ever seen a sign in a restaurant declaring that the eating establishment was voted “Best Restaurant In Town” or “Best Ribs In The City” or something similar. Inform students that it’s pretty common for newspapers, magazines, or websites to run contests each year letting readers choose “the greatest” in many different categories. Explain that in this activity, you’re going to let them come up with their own “greatest list” of things that are important to them.

NEXT, make sure each student has a copy of the Lesson 1 Lead-In activity sheet. Allow students to do them individually, in groups, or work through the list as a class. It’s up to you. However you facilitate it, make sure you have a moment where students can share their answers and engage in a little lively debate about whether or not they agree or disagree with their friends’ choices.

THEN, lead students in a brief discussion by asking questions similar to the following:

- **Why do you think there was disagreement about some of the greatest topics?**
- **Why do you think the list should have been titled “my greatest list” instead of “the greatest list”?**
- **Do you think most of the things on each person’s list are opinion or fact? How do you know?**

Point out that the media loves to publish lists of things they think are the greatest, from cars and cell phones to movies and songs. A recent Google search of “The Ten Best” resulted in over 25 million results. Explain that it seems everybody has an opinion about the greatest things in our world. Sometimes there will be agreement, but many times people will not see eye to eye because the lists are usually based on opinion instead of fact.

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

- **This activity helps us see that there are a lot of opinions about what things are the greatest, and much of it is personal preference. But what about when fact and truth override opinion? Today you are going to discover that Jesus was presented a chance to create a “greatest” list. But His list goes beyond opinion. Let’s dig in and find out about Jesus’ list.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that according to Jesus, loving others is second only to loving God. It’s a crucial part of being who God wants us to be.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, tell your students that this is the first of four Bible studies on the subject of Jesus and loving others. Explain that you're going to help lead them to look at what the Bible says about loving others and more specifically what Jesus had to say about it. Tell them that over the next few weeks they will discover some great truths about loving others like why it is hard to love some people, who Jesus identified as "the least of these", and why God chose to make loving others a priority. Then say that the journey of discovering what it means to really love others begins with this lesson on what is commonly referred to as the greatest commandment.

NEXT, give some context to the passage in Matthew chapter 22 telling them that a group of Jewish religious leaders called the Pharisees and the Sadducees despised Jesus. These men were comfortable with their system of laws and standards and hated the fact that Jesus was preaching a new message that challenged their authority and that threatened their political standing in the community. Tell the students that this confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders took place toward the end of His earthly ministry. Explain that these men wanted to try and trap Jesus into saying something they could accuse Him of in hopes of getting rid of Jesus. This entrapment took the form of three questions in chapter 22:

- **Is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government?**
- **Will there be marriage in heaven?**
- **What is the greatest commandment?**

THEN, begin the Bible study portion of the lesson by reading or having a student read Matthew 22:34-36 and point out the following to your students:

- **The two groups mentioned here were similar but had some major differences when it came to the law. The Pharisees believed the interpretation of the laws given by Moses was more important than the actual laws while the Sadducees did not trust interpretations of the law. Both groups were very influential and both hated Jesus.**
- **When the Sadducees could not trap Jesus with questions, the Pharisees gave it a try. Ask if anyone can tell you the question they asked Jesus. (Answer: What is the greatest commandment?)**
- **There were over 600 commands or laws Jews were to follow and a list of the greatest might have been a good question since there was always a difference of opinion on which laws were the most important. The intent here was certainly to get Jesus to say something they could use against Him instead of seeking out an honest answer.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 22:37-39. Begin the discussion here by asking the following questions:

- **Why might the command to love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind be familiar to the Pharisees? Does it sound familiar to you?**
Answer: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is part of what orthodox Jews call the "Shema" (from the Hebrew word "hear"). The Shema includes this passage and is kind of a daily statement of faith for observant Jews. Certainly, Jesus' audience would have recognized God's words originally spoken through Moses. You may want to read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
- **What did Jesus say about these verses?**
Answer: He said it was the first and greatest commandment.
- **What was the next commandment on Jesus' list?**
Answer: Love your neighbor as yourself.
- **Why was this addition significant?**
Answer: Jesus summed up God's heart for people in these words.

Help your students see that loving God would have always been at the top of the GREATEST COMMANDS list for any law-abiding Jew. What Jesus did was also put the importance of loving others as equally important. Tell them that you now want to help them see why Jesus put such a premium on loving others.

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 22:40. This one verse really brings the entire passage together in an exciting way so to get the students to understand the meaning here **say the following**:

• **Jesus said to love God and others is the greatest commandment because first, all the other commandments are based on those two things. Some theologians believe this to mean that the Old Testament law is founded on a person's love for God and love for others. So if you love God and others you will fulfill the law. Next, Jesus said that the demands of the prophets are based on loving God and loving others. Since the prophets in the Old Testament used the law to point out sin and wrongdoing at different times in history, Jesus' great commandment covered the words of the prophets as well. We might even say that loving God and loving others sums up just about all of the Bible's ethical and moral teachings.**

NEXT, help students see that since love summed up all the laws and since love was what would help a person keep the law, then love must be the fulfillment of the law. Explain once again that keeping the law was what made a person right with God in the Old Testament. Now **ask this question**:

- **What changed when it came to being right with God in the New Testament?**
Answer: Jesus' death on the cross forever paid the penalty for our sin nature so the need to constantly keep the old sacrificial law was done away with.
- **What does John 3:16 say was the motivating factor behind God sending His only Son to die for our sins?**
Answer: God so LOVED the world. The love of God perfectly fulfilled the old law requirement of a sacrifice once and for all.

THEN, help the students see that Jesus said loving God and loving others was the most important commandment. He demonstrated love for others through His death and resurrection which brought loving God to a personal and intimate level. In this way, Jesus took the concept of loving God and perfected it. He did the same thing for our ability to love others. **Say something like**:

• **In Christ, our ability to love God and love others has been made real. Not only do we see Christ's perfect model as an example, but we are also empowered by the Spirit to love others as Christ did.**

NEXT, read or have a student read 1 John 3:10 and ask if anyone sees a connection between this Scripture and the passage from Matthew. **Ask**:

- **Sum up what John is saying here.**
- **How does John equate loving others as an essential aspect of who God's children are?**
Answer: John puts this idea of loving others on the same level as "doing right." John basically states that being a righteous person is also being a loving person. John simply reinforces this by saying if a person doesn't love others they must not love God.

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

• **We opened this study with an activity where we listed great things. We found out that many times something that is labeled great is merely someone's opinion. When Jesus talked about great things He spoke from more than just opinion. He was teaching about both earthly and eternal truth. Loving others is the greatest commandment along with loving God. It is more than just a good idea. Loving others is a way of thinking and a way of living that expresses our love for God by loving His people. Now let's see what love for others should look like if we really live it out each day.**

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 evaluate their own attitudes toward loving others, especially in light of what it says about how they love God.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board, or some other way to list some ways to express the command to love others.

FIRST, write the words "Love God" and "Love others" on a dry-erase board in a way that will allow you to write under each word. Explain to students that you want them to think first of some ways they can live out the great commandment by expressing their love to God. Allow the students some time to call out some answers which may include the following:

- **Read the Bible, pray, attend church, worship, praise God, tell others what God has done in your life, follow God's calling in your life, obey Him, trust Him, etc.**

Take some time to talk over all the answers and discuss how that helps express love for God.

NEXT, turn their attention to the "others" side of the board and ask them to think of ways they can live out the great commandment by loving others. Write their responses on the board which may include the following:

- Go on mission trips, help with local ministry projects, sponsor a child through Compassion International or World Vision, encourage teenagers at school, help out at a soup kitchen, etc.

Again take a few minutes to discuss the answers on the board and how those things help in obeying the great commandment to love others.

THEN, tell them you want to add one more thing to the "Love God" side of the board and write the words: Loving Others. Explain that the neat thing about the great commandment is that when we love others it is a way of showing our love for God. Ask if anyone can tell you why that statement is true. Answers may include the following:

- **People see the love of God when we minister to their needs.**
- **Since God created all people when we love His creation we are expressing love to Him.**
- **If God impresses us to show love to someone we are obeying Him which is a way we love God.**

NEXT, allow the students to think of a way the group can work together to show love to others through some type of ministry action. Here are some ideas to get the ball rolling:

- **WINTER:** Participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring on the first Sunday of February. See www.souperbowl.org for more information.
- **SPRING:** Plan a cleanup day to help older people in your church get their yards ready for the summer.
- **SUMMER:** Collect backpacks and school supplies and distribute them to needy children before the new school year.
- **FALL:** Encourage each student to pack a shoebox for Operation Christian Child. For more information go to the website www.samaritanspurse.org.

Be sure to have some follow-up time after the ministry event and allow students to talk about their experiences in loving others. Keep in mind that many times students will say that the ministry experience was actually an incredible experience with God, which reinforces the point of this activity.

FINALLY, remind the students that loving God/loving others is what Jesus identified as the greatest commandment. Tell them when they show love to others they not only are ministering to the needs of people but expressing a deep and intimate love for God.

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: LOVE ISN'T ALWAYS EASY

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That it's easy to love people who love us back, but it takes a heart after Christ's to love those who don't like us.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Identify some examples of what it practically looks like to love their "enemies," and to commit to living out their responses.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 5:43-48

Supporting Scripture: Romans 13:8-10

OVERVIEW: The technological world we live in offers many ways to brand someone an enemy. A vicious post over social media, posting of an unflattering picture, or even texting gossip can quickly make us aware of who our friends are and who our enemies are. Unlovable people have been around since God created the world. When Jesus came to Earth 2,000 years ago He ushered in a new way of relating to God by accepting the love gift of His Son. In teaching this new type of believer about God's love, Jesus wanted to show people what real love really looked like. With that in mind, He started teaching about a new way of expressing God's love and that was by loving enemies. Loving those who love back is easy. Jesus was preparing His disciples and all believers to realize that following Him may be difficult at times and one of those hard things to do would be to love the "unlovable."

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THE DETAILS

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- **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.
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THE SETTING

The main passage in this lesson comes from Matthew 5 which is part of a discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount. The name comes from the fact that Jesus preached this sermon from the side of a mountain. His audience included His disciples, people who had already started following Him, as well as interested bystanders.

Jesus preached The Sermon on the Mount, which covers Matthew 5-7, at the beginning of his three year ministry on earth. Jesus more than likely sat and taught, as was the style of rabbis in Jesus' day, while His disciples and others gathered to listen. People passing by this spot would either move in closer to find out what was being said, listen and keep on walking, or not listen at all.

THE MAIN POINT

Talk to any teenager and they can quickly come up with a list of those people who are friends and those who could be labeled as enemies. Society's answer to handling an enemy is to put these people in their place, retaliate by slamming them with words or deeds, or to simply ignore them. Jesus' teaching is a stark contrast to the way the world says to handle people. Jesus said to love our enemies and that is a message today's Christian teenager needs to hear.

Your students may consider this a hard teaching but that's okay because they need to know that living the Christian life is filled with doing difficult things. Even on the cross Jesus did the difficult thing and that was to show love to and forgive those who had Him crucified. In this lesson you will teach your students not only what the Bible says about loving enemies but some practical ways to apply that truth to daily life.



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 identify some of the greatest things in their lives in order to transition to the study of the Greatest Commandment.
- **Set-Up:** Print out the “Lesson 1 Lead In Activity Sheet” (contained in your lesson 1 folder) so that each student has one. Also, provide a pen or pencil for each student. Or if you would rather do the activity as a group discussion, arrange to display the categories either on a dry-erase board, or by showing the PDF on tablet or projector. You can also display the sheet digitally to help in the discussion.

FIRST, tell your students that you know there are some people that are just difficult to even like much less outright love. Pass out a copy of the Activity Sheet to each student along with a pen or pencil. Tell them you want them to rank the types of people on a “difficult to love” scale with 1 being the most difficult to 10 being the least difficult. Remind them there are no right or wrong answers and more than likely no one will come up with the same rankings.

After a few minutes ask if anyone would like to share their most difficult type of person to love then their least difficult type of person to love. Allow time for students to share their thoughts and respond to other people’s rankings.

NEXT, ask if was hard to come up with their individual rankings. Comment by saying that some types of people are harder to love than others. But, explain to students that this poses a little bit of a problem. Why? In Jesus’ teachings, that you’re going to study today, He encourages us to love all people, especially those who are hard to love. Explain that this can be especially tricky in our current culture. Lead students in a short discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **How do all the social media options add to tensions between you and your friends?**
- **Have you ever lost a friendship over something that was posted on social media?**
- **What personality traits make a person difficult to love?**
- **Are there people who might consider you unlovable?**
- **Can you think of any other teachings in the Bible that may be difficult to follow? (Turn the other cheek, take up your cross daily, lay down your life for another, etc.)**

THEN, when you’ve finished the discussion lead into the Main Event by **saying something like the following:**

- **This is the second lesson in the Jesus and Loving Others series. Last week we talked about the Great Commandment and this week we are going to look at why genuine, Christ-centered love must include loving others, especially the unlovable. Jesus’ words were sometimes considered radical because they tended to contradict the life of living the law so many Jews had gotten accustomed to. In the Great Commandment Jesus commanded His followers to love God and to love others. Today we are going specifically look at what it means to love others who are difficult to love.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students see that it's easy to love people who love us back, but it takes a heart after Christ's to love those who don't like us.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, briefly remind your students that this is the second lesson in a four-part Bible study called "Jesus and Loving Others." Ask if anyone can remember what you talked about in the previous lesson, or any high-points that stood out for them. Use the following bullet points to guide your review:

- According to Jesus, loving others is second only to loving God. It's a crucial part of being the person God wants us to be.
- Because of this, we have to evaluate our own attitudes toward loving others, especially in light of what it says about how we love God.

Explain that this week, you're going to build on this idea by helping them discover what Jesus says about loving difficult people.

NEXT, instruct students to turn to the Gospel of Matthew. While they are doing so, ask if anyone knows anything about the Book's author. Provide details of the context of the Book and the passage by using the Bible Background, specifically the Details and Setting sections. Then, read or have a student read Matthew 5:43-45. When you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **When Jesus says, "You've heard it said . . .", can anyone guess what He was referring to?**

Answer: This is a tricky question, but it's an important one. Jesus was talking to His Jewish audience who lived by the Law that God gave His people thousands of years before Jesus' time. But the Jewish leaders throughout the years had added laws to God's Law. Jesus was basically addressing His day's cultural understanding of what it meant to follow God. He was basically saying, "The religious leaders have been telling you X, but I'm telling you that in God's eyes, X isn't exactly the way to be going about it."

- **Just to be clear, what had the religious leaders apparently been teaching God's people?**

Answer: That it's OK to love your neighbors, but to hate your enemies.

- **Knowing what you know about God and His heart for all people, does this teaching line up with God's character?**

Answer: No. This is why Jesus was looking to set it right.

- **In verse 44, Jesus gave a new commandment which was to not only love an enemy but to also pray for persecutors or, as some versions say, those who curse you. What's the difference between the law and Jesus' new commandment?**

Answer: The word hate is replaced with the word love. The people were told to even pray for people who cursed or persecuted them.

- **The first part of verse 45 sheds light on how God views the love we have for others, especially our enemies. What does Jesus say about this?**

Answer: Our willingness to love those who are hardest to love is a sign that we are God's people, His children. Our love for our enemies identifies us with God and His character.

- **The word enemy can trip us up a bit. Most of us probably don't have true enemies. Let's make this teaching relevant to the 21st century. In your context, describe that person or people whom today's teenager might see as equivalent to an "enemy." What's an example of what someone might do to make your life miserable?**

Answers will vary.

- **Persecution looks different around the world. In some parts of the world, Christ-followers lose their lives for their faith. What kind of persecution do you face?**

Answers will vary.

- **What is the challenge in praying for the people who persecute you?**

Answers will vary.

- **Jesus equates loving others with God providing sun and rain for both the righteous and the unrighteous. What parallel is Jesus trying to make here?**

Answer: Sun and rain represents provision or sustenance. The idea is that God gives sun and rain to help crops grow and thus feed people. The cool thing is that God doesn't just grow the crops for believers. He provides for those who do not believe in Him, as well.

Say something like:

- **So, if God shows love and compassion to those people who don't believe in Him, as Christ-followers, we're supposed to imitate God in this way. It's easy to love those people who love us back, or who bring joy or happiness to our lives. But it's a lot harder to love those who only bring us down. However, as Christ-followers, God has set the example for us to follow. If it's good enough for God it should be good enough for us, right?**

THEN, move on and read or have a student read verses 46-48. Tell them that Jesus was a master teacher. He loved to offer stark contrasts when He gave examples to make a point. Explain that if loving only those who love you was such a big religious deal then why did one of the groups of people Jews hated the most, tax collectors, have little difficulty in abiding by that principle? (You may want to point out that tax collectors were hated because they collected taxes for the oppressive Roman government, and the amount of tax collected was not a set figure so the tax collector would often "squeeze" as much as possible out of each person.) **Ask something similar to the following:**

- **Summarize verses 46-47 in your own words. What point is Jesus trying to get across?**

Answers will vary.

- **In verse 48, Jesus uses a word that scares us a bit. What is that word? (Perfect) We know that we will never be perfect this side of heaven, but Jesus wants us to strive toward perfection in how we show our love to others. Describe why you think this is such an important thing to strive for?**

Answers will vary.

Remind students that the world around them is very comfortable with the idea that you love your friends and family, but that you don't really have to go out of your way to love those people who are kind of jerky to us. However, when we as Christ-followers go out of our way to show love to those who are the hardest to love, we make a profound statement about the difference Jesus makes in the lives of His followers. We show people how life-changing a relationship with Jesus can be.

NEXT, begin to close the Bible study portion of the lesson by reading or having a student read Romans 13:8-10. Tell the students that Paul begins by stating that the debt of loving others should never be paid off. **Ask:**

- **What do you think this phrase means?**

Answer: Point out that loving others is not to be treated as a check off list item or something that can be done once and forgotten about. Paul stressed that love should be something a Christian does daily and consistently.

Go to the end of the passage and use the opportunity to once again bring home the point that loving God and others fulfilled all the requirements of the law and the Ten Commandments.

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

- **The Jewish people in Jesus' day, especially the religious leaders, knew a lot about trying to keep the Law but seemed to forget about the purpose of the Law. The Law's purpose was to teach people to live like God, loving God and loving others. Jesus began His ministry by emphasizing that loving God and others was the greatest commandment. Even with that said, the Jews loved only those like them or people who were easy to love. For the Gospel to be spread into the world, God's love would have to be spread into the world. We are not to be selfish with His love and we are not to take the easy approach with God's love. Loving others means loving all people, even our enemies and those who may be hard to love.**

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 identify some examples of what it practically looks like to love their “enemies,” and to commit to living out their responses.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, explain to students that today you have spent a lot of time teaching them about loving difficult people and now you want them to hear a story where that kind of love is expressed. **Say:**

- **In 2003 Gary Ridgway confessed to being the Green River Strangler, killing at least 49 women over a time period of 20 years, making him the deadliest serial killer in US history. At his sentencing the families of victims called him a monster and said that nothing short of hell would be enough for what he had done. Ridgway sat emotionless as family member after family member spoke their minds. Then, something powerful happened. Robert Rule, the father of victim Linda Rule, stunned the courtroom with his comments.**

Explain that this is a good example of the kind of love Jesus was talking about in today's lesson. Remind students that being a devoted follower of Christ is sometimes a difficult calling. But also help them see that when the standard is set high it helps us see that we are not perfect. Living the Christian life is not something that can be done outside the power of the Holy Spirit.

NEXT, explain that the vast majority of us will (thankfully) never have to show love to someone who caused the kind of pain the Green River Killer caused. But, we will have to deal with people who hurt us. Have students brainstorm a list of ways that teenagers hurt each other. Help them identify specific as well as general ways this happens. Some ideas to help you get started may include:

- *A friend steals your date for the prom.*
- *Someone starts gossiping about you.*
- *You see some people picking on another person in the lunchroom.*
- *Friends are laughing at a poor student at school who has bad body odor.*
- *Your dad, who lives in another city, forgets to call you on your birthday for the 6th year in a row.*

THEN, remind your students that love is an action word. Tell them it is easy to say we love somebody who is hard to love but expressing that kind of love is a totally different thing. Encourage them to start thinking about people who are hard to love and to ask God to give the strength to love these people. Challenge them to come up with ways to love these people that are practical and tangible. Remind them to look for opportunities to put their love into action. Explain that their gesture of love may be met with resistance from the other person, or maybe even hostility, but they are not responsible for the actions of others. Tell your students their responsibility is to be obedient to words in the Bible and to leave the results up to God.

FINALLY, remind students that it's only by the power of the Holy Spirit, God living in them, that they can love people with genuine and perfect love.

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.

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LESSON 3: LOVING THE LEAST

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: Jesus desires for His people to actively show love to the poor and needy, those who Jesus called “the least of these.”

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED: To identify practical ways they can demonstrate the love of Christ to the poor and needy in their community.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 25:31-46

Supporting Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:7-8

OVERVIEW: Jesus’ teaching on loving the “least of these” is certainly a topic that should be covered in a Bible study on loving others. Jesus’ command to show love to those who are most in need of love echoes similar commands throughout the Old Testament. It’s obvious that God’s heart is especially tuned to the needs of the poor. The question for your students is who are the “least of these” in their 21st century context, and how can they live out Jesus’ commandment to show love to them. This lesson will help you unpack this verse and its implications, as well as identify ways your students can show love to the needy in your community and around the world.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Loving Others 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 Loving Others Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-loving-others-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

Matthew chapters 24 and 25 include the last words of Christ before His arrest and crucifixion. Matthew places the time of this passage at two days before the Passover celebration, a high and holy day in the life of a Jew. Jesus spoke these words to His disciples while sitting on the Mount of Olives, a mountain ridge near Jerusalem. The entire message centers on the last days and judgment and includes some parables. That’s why some view this specific teaching on the least of these as a parable while others see it as prophecy.

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus told a story to demonstrate to His disciples that they are to love the poor and needy, people whom Jesus called the “least of these.” This message is different from the message to love the unlovable because the love for the least of these is intertwined with a teaching on the final judgment. While actually showing love is the main part of the lesson, you cannot avoid the questions that may come up about works and salvation. (You’ll be equipped in the lesson to deal with these questions.)

You will guide your students as they discover the command to love the poor goes back to Old Testament days. They will learn that loving others is not a binding or restrictive law but a natural expression of love that only a true child of God can give.



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 discover some frightening statistics on “the least of these” both in America and around the world.
- **Set-Up:** Arrange to display the “Lesson 3 Lead In Activity Sheet” contained in your lesson 3 folder.

FIRST, tell your students you have some interesting facts to share with them. If possible show the statistics on the Activity Sheet using a PowerPoint presentation, or other means that allows you to present them visually. However you manage to do it, go over the stats as a class. As you do, ask them to note the ones that shock them the most.

THEN, when you’ve finished, have the students share which facts stood out to them and take a few minutes to discuss them. **Ask questions similar to the following:**

- **Why did this question stand out to you?**
- **Did you think it would be lower or higher?**
- **What impact do you think this has on these individuals?**
- **How does this fact make you feel?**
- **How does this impact our society?**

Be sure to allow plenty of time to allow the magnitude of what is on the fact sheet to sink in.

NEXT, ask if they have ever come across someone in their town who does not have access to clean water or who is homeless. Then ask if they have ever driven near the county jail or a prison in your area. Finally, ask if they think anyone in town goes to bed hungry at night. Explain that while some of the situations on the fact sheet are things they may never encounter, other things like poverty and people in jail are realities in every community.

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

• **Jesus had a name for the people we have been talking about in this opening activity. He called them “the least of these.” Believe it or not there were hungry and thirsty people along with those sick, homeless, and in prison even when Jesus was living on the earth 2,000 years ago. In today’s lesson we are going to look at “the least of these” and what Jesus said should be our response to these people. Then we’re going to talk about some ways we can reach out in love by ministering to those in our society who are down and out.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that Jesus desires for His people to actively show love to the poor and needy, those He called “the least of these.”
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, remind your students that this is the third lesson in a four-part Bible study on Jesus and Loving Others. See if your students can review what you’ve covered in the first two lessons so far. Use the following bullet points to help guide the discussion, if need be:

- **Lesson 1:** According to Jesus, loving others is second only to loving God. It's a crucial part of being who God wants us to be.
- **Lesson 2:** It's easy to love people who love us back, but it takes a heart after Christ's to love those who don't like us.

NEXT, remind students that you're going to be looking at what Jesus said about loving others. But, you want to start this lesson out a little differently. Encourage students to turn to Deuteronomy chapter 15. Briefly explain that Moses wrote this book as the Hebrew people were preparing to enter the Promised Land, better known as Israel. Moses was reminding the Israelites of the laws God had given them. The fifteenth chapter includes laws on the treatment of slaves and the poor.

THEN, read or have a student read Deuteronomy 15:7-8. When you've finished, **say**:

I wanted to use this Scripture to help us see that God's idea of the right treatment of the poor and needy goes all the way back to the Old Testament. Taking care of people in need was a requirement in the Law. And God's people were bound to live by that Law. This is the simple foundational truth we need to take from these verses. When you factor in that there are literally hundreds more verses in Scripture that have a similar meaning, it's clear that taking care of those in need is a big part of who God is. Now let's see how Jesus addressed this.

NEXT, instruct students to find Matthew 25 in their Bibles or Bible apps. While they are looking, have volunteers tell you as much as they can about Matthew and his Gospel. Fill in any details and set the passage's context by using the Bible Background. Then, read or have students read Matthew 25:31-34. When you've finished, lead students in a short discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **What event is Jesus presenting here? What situation?**

Answer: A picture of the final judgment of humankind.

- **What two animals are mentioned in verses 31-34?**

Answer: Sheep and goats

- **What was the difference in the fate of these two animals?**

Answer: Sheep and goats were chosen to represent those who would inherit the Kingdom of God and those who would suffer eternal separation from God.

Explain to students that Jesus probably used these animals in His illustration because they were sometimes hard to tell apart as it is also sometimes hard to distinguish believers from non-believers. Remind students that only God knows the true heart of a person. We can only see what is on the outside of people and that is why it would be impossible to judge someone especially when it comes to those who are saved and not saved.

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 25:34-36. Tell the students that the things mentioned in the opening activity are the ways those inheriting the Kingdom of God ministered to Jesus. Point out that being hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison represents man's three basic needs – food, shelter, and companionship. The "sheep" had helped take care of all the basic human needs.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 25:37-40. **Ask the following questions:**

- **Why do you think the people in this passage seemed so surprised?**

Answer: They could not remember ministering to Jesus directly in these situations.

- **Why did Jesus say that they had done those things for Him?**

Answer: Because to minister to those in need is in a way like ministering directly to Christ.

Remind students that Jesus is painting a beautiful picture of people who minister to others with no motive other than pure love. Things done with the love of Christ are like things done for Christ. Continue by reading or having a student read Matthew 25:41-45. You'll want to bring out the contrast in the way the righteous judge addresses the goats or the people on the left by **asking the following**:

- **What words are used when addressing the goats or the people on the left?**

Answer: The cursed or cursed ones. He called the other group on the right blessed ones. The people on the left are cursed because of their own actions, namely not taking the time to have a personal relationship with God. Take some time to explain that these people were not facing damnation because of their actions, but that their actions were a sign they never had a saving relationship with God through Jesus.

- **What fate do these people face?**

Answer: Eternal separation from God.

Point out that the same criterion is used with both groups of people and that is ministering to the least of these. **Say:**

- **God is always fair and just, especially when He is acting as a judge. The second group of people did not minister to the needy. Why? Maybe it was because the sacrificial love of Christ wasn't in them at all. We don't know. But we do know this was a symptom of a heart problem, a heart that had no connection to Jesus.**

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 25:46. The final verse in today's study reveals that the righteous will go to an eternal relationship with God and the others will go to eternal separation from God. Explain that this passage teaches that our actions bear witness to the change Christ has made in our lives. **Say something like:**

- **Loving others is a litmus test. Our good actions are the result of a life transformed by Christ. Our love is proof of God in us. Showing love to the "least of these" doesn't make us a Christian. But when Christ saves us, our actions are what display the inner transformation.**

FINALLY, before transitioning into the Last Word take some time to allow the students to digest what you have taught them. Be sure to let the students ask as many questions as they need to, then **say something like:**

- **Loving others is not always easy. In last week's lesson, we found out how hard it is to love those who are unlovable and those who hate us. Last week the lesson was about the attitude of love. This week it is about the cost of showing love. It is inconvenient to love "the least of these" and many times their problems are not quick fixes because their lives can be messy. This requires an even higher level of love for others. Loving those in dire need requires an investment of a good bit of our most valuable resource: time. Again, it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can love people the way Jesus taught us to love. Now, let's look at some ways we can actually show the love of God to "the least of these" in our world today.**

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

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To identify practical ways they can demonstrate the love of Christ to the poor and needy in their community.
- **Set-Up:** You will need some 3x5 index cards, one for each student. Ahead of time take each index card and write one of these on each card: HUNGRY, THIRSTY, HOMELESS, NEEDS CLOTHES, and SICK. You will also need a dry-erase board or some other way of displaying the list of words for the students to see.

FIRST, take the 3x5 cards you made up ahead of time and place them in your hand with the blank side up so that students can't see the word written on the back. Let each student take one card from the group. After all cards have been given out ask the students to group up with all the other people with the same card. (If your group is small you may only have one or two people with the same card and that is okay.) Tell each group you want them to imagine that they've either encountered a person facing the situation on their card, or found out about a need that exists in the world as it relates to what's on their card. Explain that you want them to come up with two action plans:

- One to meet the immediate needs of the person and,
- One to meet the long term needs of the person.

Here are some suggestions to guide you if any of your groups need help.

- **HUNGRY: IMMEDIATE** – provide money for a meal; **LONG TERM** – look for food assistance programs in your area.
- **THIRSTY: IMMEDIATE** – passing out water, helping identify a source of clean water. **LONG TERM** – Partner with one of the many groups helping provide not only clean water but projects to dig wells around the world.
- **HOMELESS: IMMEDIATE** – see if your church has resources to house people overnight, or familiarize yourself with the local shelters. **LONG TERM** – help identify what is keeping them from being in a home. Help find them assistance!
- **NEEDS CLOTHES: IMMEDIATE** – get your youth group to take on a family as a service project. Get sizes for all family members and go purchase clothing. **LONG TERM** – adopt a local family and check with them four times a year for clothing needs.
- **SICK: IMMEDIATE** – provide food for the family or transportation to a doctor. **LONG TERM** – make a prayer list and as a group pray for the person each day and each time your group meets.

NEXT, give each group some time to think through their ideas for possible ministry actions to “the least of these” in your area. Use the suggestions above to stir your student's creative thinking. After 5 to 10 minutes bring the group back together and allow them time to express their ideas for showing the love of Christ to hurting people where they live. Write the list of “the least of these” on a marker board or poster board so the students can see the list. Continue the discussion by **asking the following questions:**

- **Of the people listed on the board, what hurting people group are you most likely to encounter on a regular basis?**
- **What group do you think you are least likely to encounter?**
- **Why do you think we seldom come face to face with hurting people? Is there anything we can do to change that?**

THEN, ask the students what they can do to help increase awareness of the needs of “the least of these” both in their community and around the world. Help them see that by living the Great Commandment and having a real desire to love others, this will create within them a heart to reach out in love to hurting people.

FINALLY, encourage students to be prepared to follow through with any ministry ideas they came up with during today's lesson. Remind them that ministering to “the least of these” is not a requirement for salvation but rather an outpouring of the love that comes from having a real relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

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.

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LESSON 4: KNOWN BY THEIR LOVE

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: As Christ-followers, they are to be defined by their love for others.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED: To define what it means to demonstrate Christ’s love for others and to identify a few practical ways they can act in a loving way toward others.

Scripture Focus: John 13:31-35

Supporting Scripture: John 15:12-13; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

OVERVIEW: It has been said that when people realize they are coming to the end of life, there is a sense of urgency in what they want to say to family members and friends. In the passages for today’s lesson Jesus is reaching the end of His time for ministry and teaching on earth. Jesus knew He would soon be arrested and face death at Calvary. You can almost feel the sense of urgency in the words of Jesus in the last part of the Book of John. Jesus showed love when He washed the feet of His disciples. Then He reminded them, not once but twice, of His new commandment to love others. The command to love others still holds true today and your students need to see the importance of continuing in the steps of Jesus and His original followers by not only loving others, but being known for loving others.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-loving-others-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 13 and 15 both come 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 the message of salvation throughout the entire world.

The passages in John 13 and John 15 come after Jesus washes the feet of His disciples and then predicts that He will be betrayed. Jesus and the disciples were preparing to walk from the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where Christ would eventually be arrested. Jesus was teaching them as they were going, or at least preparing to go. John 15:12-13 comes immediately after Jesus’ teachings on the vine and the branches.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point of this lesson is to help teenagers see that loving others is not just some good moral thing to do but rather part of God’s plan to help the world come to know Him. Anyone can do nice things for other people but when we show love for others in the name of Jesus, that is a powerful and life changing action.

Over the last three weeks you have led your students to discover that loving others is at the very heart of what defines a Christian. Today you will close this series of lessons by encouraging your students to let love be so much a part of their nature that they will actually be known for their love not only for God but for people as well.

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 being known for a specific trait or skill.
- **Set-Up:** Before your meeting, come up with a list of maybe 8 or 10 celebrities, famous business or political leaders, athletes, musicians, etc. Find people your students would know and be interested in. If you want to have a little fun, include people from your church, or community. (For an added bonus, do a Google Image search of these people and arrange to display their images.)

FIRST, tell your students there are some people who are very well known for either what they do now or what they did at one time in history. Explain that you are going to see if they can identify some famous people by identifying what they are known for. Go through the list you have compiled, showing any images you might have found, and asking students who each person was and what he or she is primarily known for. Engage in discussion, especially if there is any disagreement among students as to what people are known for (Example: Bill Gates may be known for founding Microsoft, or maybe for his philanthropic work.)

THEN, lead students in a brief discussion **asking questions similar to the following:**

- **What do you think it's like to be these people, being known by everyone for one aspect of your life?**
- **Is it hard to become known for a specific trait or skill? Or is it easy? Support your answer.**

NEXT, ask students to consider one more person. Write the word "You" on a dry-erase board, or somehow display it to your class. Ask if anyone can come up with something they are known for, such as being a good athlete, or achieving success in school, or belonging to some group or club. Tell them that even now they are starting to be known in some circles at school or around town because of what they do.

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

- **Being known for something may or may not be a big deal to you. But Jesus said He wanted His followers to be known for something specific. What was it? Their love for others. We have talked a lot about loving others over the past four weeks and now we're going to discover why Jesus left His disciples with these marching orders. Let's take a closer look.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that as Christ-followers, they are to be defined by their love for others.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

BEGIN the Bible study portion of the lesson by reminding the students that this is the final lesson in the series Jesus and Loving Others. Do a quick review of the previous lessons by pointing out the following to your students:

- **Lesson 1:** According to Jesus, loving others is second only to loving God. It's a crucial part of being the person God wants us to be.
- **Lesson 2:** It's easy to love people who love us back, but it takes a heart after Christ's to love those who don't like us.
- **Lesson 3:** Jesus desires for His people to actively show love to the poor and needy, those whom Jesus called "the least of these."

THEN, turn the attention of your group to the final lesson in the series by telling the students that you're going to be looking at passages from John chapters 13 and 15. Explain to the students that if you were going to plot the focal passages on a timeline it would look something like this:

- Jesus washes the feet of His disciples → The Last Supper → Jesus' predicts His betrayal → John 13:31-35 → Jesus predicts Peter's betrayal → Jesus teaches on the True Vine → John 15:12-13.

Remind them that the passages you will be teaching them today come at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and almost right before His arrest and crucifixion.

BEGIN the Bible study by reading or having a student read John 13:31-32. Point out that Jesus spoke these words right after revealing that one of His disciples, Judas, would betray Him. It's the beginning of one of Jesus' most intimate and revealing conversations with His disciples about His approaching death. **Say something like:**

- **Jesus was saying that His ultimate glory would soon be revealed and that would take place at the cross and at the empty tomb. Jesus continues this picture in verse 32 when He says that God will be glorified in what would soon happen.**

NEXT, read or have a student read John 13:33-35. Lead students in a brief discussion asking questions similar to the following:

- **Summarize what Jesus was saying in verse 33.**

Answer: Jesus was referring to the fact that He would not be with them much longer. Jesus was preparing His disciples for a time when they would have to live out their faith without Him physically being with them.

- **Share a time when you had to take on a task for the first time without the help of a parent, coach, teacher, etc. (Allow students to share the task.) Were you given a lot of instructions right before tackling the task alone?**

Answers will vary. Relate this to what Jesus was doing in these passages, giving a lot of instructions to the disciples to help prepare them to further the kingdom of God without Him being with them.

- **Have you heard the phrase "love others" during one of our previous lessons?**

Answer: Yes. In lesson 1 we learned that Jesus taught His followers the Great Commandment, to love God, to love others, and to love self.

- **What is different about the wording in verse 34?**

Answer: Jesus mentions just loving others. Also Jesus adds that they should love in the way He showed love to them.

- **Can you think of some words or phrases that describe the way Jesus showed His love to others?**

Answer: Without partiality, genuine, with compassion, without ulterior motives, perfect, to point others to His Father, etc.

- **What is the connection between the examples of the way Jesus loved others and the command to the disciples to be known by their love?**

Answer: The kind of life changing love Jesus was talking about would only be achieved if they followed the ultimate example of love, and that was His life while on earth.

- **According to verse 35, what is one thing the disciples could do to create an atmosphere where they would be known for their love?**

Answer: Jesus told them to love each other.

Remind students that Jesus made it very clear that talking about love and preaching love were great, but the lasting impact on love would be felt when they just loved each other. Point out that it goes back to what Jesus said about the Great Commandment: our love for God will save us and change us, but our love for others could possibly change the world.

NEXT, move on to the next passage and explain that from the end of John 13 to the middle of chapter 15 Jesus has said some amazing things:

- He declared that He alone was the way to God in John 14:6.
- Jesus promised that after He was gone God the Father would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to guide them.
- He declared that He was the true vine, and if they abided in Him they would bear much fruit.

Then read or have a student read John 15:12-13. Tell the students that again Jesus tells His disciples to love each other as He loved them. **Ask:**

- **Did anyone notice a new type of love Jesus mentioned in verse 13? What was it?**

Answer: Jesus said the greatest love was laying down one's life for others.

- **What was Jesus was referring to?**

Answer: He was referring to His own life, which would soon be sacrificed for all people at the cross.

Help your students grasp this important connection. **Say something like:**

- **Jesus' ultimate act of love on the cross would finally connect us to God in a permanent way. This connection to God would open up a way for us to love Him as never before. Our love for God and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is what gives us the capacity to love others. The pure love of God living in and through us is one of the greatest ways to lead people to see their need for a relationship with God.**

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

- **Can you now understand why Jesus' commandment to love others was and is so important? Love is what our faith in Christ is all about and showing that love to others is what makes the Gospel and Christianity different from all other beliefs in the world. Since love is that important, being known for our love is both the distinguishing mark of our faith and the means by which the Gospel is spread throughout the world. Now let's look at some particular characteristics of love in the day-to-day life of a believer.**

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

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To define what it means to demonstrate Christ's love for others and to identify a few practical ways they can act in a loving way toward others.
- **Set-Up:** Provide scratch paper or encourage students to take notes on a notes app on their phones or tablets.

FIRST, explain to students that if they're to be known for their love it might be helpful to discover some of the characteristics of godly love. Tell them that in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, there's a chapter that outlines quite a list of attributes of love that is Christ-centered. Ask students to listen as you read the verses, writing down some of the descriptive words and phrases that stand out to them. Then, read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

For your benefit, here's a list of each word or phrase along with a brief description of each one. Use this list to engage your students in a discussion about what real love should look like.

- Love is **patient**. (Some versions say endures, or “puts up with good and bad times”)
- Love is **kind**. (Does good things, is gentle, treats people with respect)
- Love is **not jealous**. (Is content, does not hate others because of things, is happy when good things happen to others)
- Love is **not boastful**. (Boasting about self can diminish others instead of encouraging them)
- Love is **not proud**. (Does not look down on others, is not a snob)
- Love is **not rude**. (Includes both saying and doing rude things)
- Love is **not selfish**. (This word has in it the idea of always putting the sake of the Gospel first instead of our own interests and motives)
- Love is not **irritable**. (Or provoked to do evil things to others or be tempted to sin)
- Love **does not keep a record of wrongs**. (Follows the example of Christ to live forgiveness each day)
- Love does **not rejoice in injustice but in rather in truth**. (Think of being moved when seeing inequality in the world, those who are mistreated, the poor used for slave labor)
- Love **never gives up**. (Again some versions use bears all things here, never gives up showing grace and mercy to others)
- Love **never loses faith**. (Especially in God. Believes in God's view of others, not willing to listen to negative reports of others)
- Love is **always hopeful**. (Living out the hope of Christ, showing love in hopes of people finding Christ)
- Love **endures in all situations**. (Whatever may happen to us we endure in hope that the love of Christ will be known through because of the way we handle the circumstances of life)

NEXT, give the students some time to sort through all the love attributes listed above and ask the following questions:

- **Which attributes do you think you have a pretty good handle on?**
- **Which ones do you struggle with?**
- **What does it take to get more comfortable with living out more of the attributes in your life?**

THEN, instruct students to choose one attribute they struggle with and come up with an action plan to let that type of love be more characteristic of the way they live their lives. Help them identify realistic ways they can implement this attribute.

FINALLY, close by reminding students that Jesus commanded us to be known for our love. That happens when we become more like Jesus and less like the world. Explain that the love attributes list is just a way to help us to a little self-check to look for ways to be more loving toward others. Also help them see the power to live a life of loving others can only come through a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Close the lesson with a prayer of commitment for your students to not only love others in Jesus' name but to be known by their love.

- 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.