



LESSON 2: PLAYING PEACEMAKER

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: Understanding and grace are keys to Christ-centered relationships.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To identify ways they can be more understanding and gracious in their relationships

Scripture Focus: Matthew 5:21-24

OVERVIEW: One might say that Jesus' entire mission was about making peace between God and us. And so it's no surprise that Jesus is concerned with us being people of peace, as well. There is no room for anger or hatred in a Christ-centered relationship. As Christ-followers, we have to model the peace of Christ to others. This lesson will help remind your students of this and challenge them to look at their relationships with this lens.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Relationships 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 Relationships Lesson 2 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-relationship-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 5:21-24 is part of the Sermon on the Mount, which is Jesus’ most famous teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is expounding upon the Law in order to teach His listeners the true meaning of the Law. He is not teaching a new Law. In fact, Jesus says “I have not come to abolish the law” (Matthew 5:17). Instead, Jesus is correcting Jewish tradition’s misinterpretation of the Law. Jewish tradition demanded external righteousness, while almost completely ignoring the importance of internal character.

Jesus’ purpose in the Sermon on the Mount is two-fold. First, Jesus exposes the sins of people’s hearts, showing their need for salvation apart from the Law. Second, Jesus is establishing a way of life for His followers to embrace. This new way of life strives for right hearts which then, drive right behavior.

The audience is primarily His disciples, but there is also a great crowd listening to Jesus as well (Matthew 5:1).

THE MAIN POINT

The Sermon on the Mount is ultimately about reversing the way in which we see the world around us. It’s about embracing a Kingdom mindset. One key in embracing a Kingdom mindset is to have a proper evaluation of yourself, especially in light of your relationships with other people. The passage demands we evaluate our attitudes, not only our outward actions, while also encouraging us to maintain healthy heart attitudes toward other people. Our attitude should be free from anger and hostility.

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:** For students to begin thinking about the importance of what is on the inside, not just how things appear on the outside.
- **Set-Up:** You will need four pieces of bread, peanut butter, jelly, and toothpaste. Make one regular peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Make a second sandwich, but instead of jelly use toothpaste. You may want to make the sandwiches prior to class. *Please be mindful of allergies.

FIRST, show the two sandwiches to your class. Don't allow them to eat, touch, or even look closely at the sandwiches just yet. Ask:

- **From where you are right now can you tell any difference between these two sandwiches?**
Answer: They shouldn't.
- **If you wanted to know if there is a difference between these two sandwiches, what would you have to do?**
Answer: Look closer. Perhaps take a bite.
- **Would anyone like to find out if the sandwiches are different by trying them?**
Answer: Your students are smart. They are going to know something is up at this point. Make sure that no one with peanut allergies tries the sandwich.

NEXT, explain to your students that you made both of these sandwiches. One is a typical PB & J. The other, if they haven't figured it out yet, is your own special creation a peanut butter and toothpaste sandwich. **Then, ask:**

- **Does what is on the inside of a sandwich make a difference?**
Answer: Absolutely. In fact, it is what is on the inside that defines a sandwich. A roast beef sandwich has roast beef on the inside, a turkey sandwich as turkey on the inside, and a toothpaste sandwich has toothpaste on the inside.

Help students see that what is on the inside of a sandwich makes a massive difference. A sandwich made with jelly is delicious. A sandwich made with toothpaste is disgusting. Likewise, what is on the inside of us makes a difference. Even if we look good on the outside, even if we seem to do everything right, our inward character makes a massive difference.

FINALLY, explain that today you're going to be looking at your second Bible study on what Jesus had to say about relationships. In this lesson, you'll be discussing the topic of anger. **Say:**

- **Let's define anger. As you are going to see in the coming lesson, we are separating anger and frustration. Although they may feel VERY similar, they are a little different. Often anger is an inward attitude towards another person that impacts ALL of our interactions with them. While we might not violently attack other people, if we are harboring anger and hostility in our hearts, it will significantly affect our lives and our relationships. Think of it this way: if you are carrying a bowl of popcorn to the couch, and happen to spill it all over the cushions, you will probably be upset. A parent might see you do this and say "Come on, really?" And you may even grit your teeth a little while you pick it all up. This is frustration. It happens all the time in our lives, and odds are, you and your parent won't think of it anymore once it's cleaned up. But when**

Jesus is talking about anger, he is talking more about grudge-holding and continually disliking someone. It would be like if you spilled that same bowl of popcorn ON someone, and they later went home and made an 18 step plan on how to get revenge on you. Suddenly, you are avoiding them in the hallway because they give you a death glare every chance they get. That's anger.

- **With that in mind, today we're going to see how there is no room for uncontrolled anger in Christ-centered relationships.**

Then, transition to the Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** For students to understand that there is no room for uncontrolled anger or hostility in Christ-centered relationships
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, see if anyone can remember what you discussed in your last lesson. Use the following bullet points to help if needed:

- You learned that understanding and grace are keys to Christ-centered relationships.
- You challenged students to identify ways they could be more understanding and gracious in their relationships

NEXT, instruct your students to go to Matthew 5:21-24. As they find the passage, review the Setting with them using your Bible Background. It's important for them to understand this teaching is a part of the Sermon on the Mount and the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount. If any of your students have questions regarding the difference between the Sermon on the Mount (found in Matthew) and the Sermon on the Plain (found in Luke), you can find a quick explanation in The Setting section of Lesson 1.

THEN, after everyone has found the passage read or ask a student to read Matthew 5:21-22 and lead students in a brief discussion of the verses. Explain that when Jesus said the phrases "You have heard it said to those of old...But I say to you," He was not casting aside the Old Testament Law. In fact, just a few verses earlier he affirms the Old Testament Law (Matthew 5:17). Instead, Jesus is correcting the long-held religious traditions that had emerged from the Law. This tradition emphasized outward obedience to the neglect of inward purity.

Then ask:

- **Can you summarize Jesus' main point in these two verses?**

Answer: Jesus says that our inward thoughts, feelings, and intentions are just as important as our outward actions. He equates harboring anger toward someone with murder.

- **If you heard this teaching for the first time, what would be shocking about it?**

Answers could vary, but the shocking part is that according to Jesus' moral standard, long-standing anger, insulting language, and slander deserve judgment just like murder.

- **In what way does Jesus challenge our understanding of murder?**

Answer: We, like the Jewish religious leaders of the day, often focus on outward behavior. How many times have we heard, "Hey it's not like I murdered anyone"? Yet, we don't evaluate the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. Jesus challenges us to look deeper.

NEXT, instruct your students to examine verse 22 and **ask:**

- **What three specific actions does Jesus mention in this passage?**

Answer: Anger toward a brother, insulting a brother, and calling a brother "fool." Explain that in this passage, anger carries the idea of longing to harm or hurt another person. We are not talking about the fleeting feelings of frustration.

- **What are some specific ways that teenagers your age struggle with anger?**

Answers will obviously vary, but you are looking for examples to make sure they understand what it means to desire or wish harm on someone else. If your class dynamic allows you might also want to push for examples from their own lives.

- **What ways do students your age express their anger toward others?**

Answers will probably include insults, profanity, sub-tweeting, bullying, etc.

- **What are some consequences of expressing our anger by insulting others?**

Answers could include saying things you regret, hurting others, developing a bad reputation, and more. Expressing anger in the form of insult always hurts relationships. The point is that you want them to give you examples to illustrate the concept.

Make sure they understand the idea of what Jesus was saying when He said, "anyone who says 'You fool.'" Explain that Jesus is referring to an attack on someone's character or reputation. In other words, it is 'murdering' their reputation. This would include what you say to a person and what you might say about a person, like gossip. **Ask:**

- **What are some ways that you could attack the character of others?**

Answer: Spreading rumors, gossiping, betraying someone's trust. Magnifying someone's faults in order to make yourself look better, and so on.

- **What are some consequences of attacking someone's character?**

Answer: It could cost the other person friendships, opportunities, or even his or her reputation. The attacker is placing himself or herself under judgment. It's sin and sin affects our relationship with God and our relationships with others.

- **Do you agree with Jesus that your inward attitude and thoughts are as important as your outward behavior? Why or why not?**

THEN, wrap up this line of questioning by **saying something similar to the following:**

• We often justify ourselves by the fact that we've "never murdered anyone." We can't be that bad... I mean it's not like we've killed anyone. The problem is, that according to Jesus' teaching, we may as well be guilty of murder because of how our inward anger seeks to harm others. With that in mind, I know that I've killed at least a few people in my heart! How about everyone else?

Make sure students understand that Jesus wasn't literally saying that they are guilty of murder in God's eyes. Explain that the first purpose of Jesus' teaching is to help us see and understand that we are guilty before God, just as guilty as if we had murdered someone. The anger we harbor toward others is sin, just as murder is sin.

But there is a second purpose in Jesus' teaching, which is to give us a new way to live. Help students see that Jesus wants us to realize that there's no room for uncontrolled anger or hostility in Christ-centered relationships. We, like the religious leaders of Jesus' time, often emphasize the outward "seen behavior" over the inward, hidden attitude. The problem is that unresolved anger affects our relationships with others, our relationship with God, and us. **Ask:**

- **How did Jesus set an example of having a heart free from anger?**

Answer: There are many examples, but here are a few. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, but He still called Judas "friend." Jesus was insulted by others while He was on the cross, but did not insult them back. Jesus even asked God to forgive the men who condemned Him to die on the cross.

- **Can holding on to anger bring you satisfaction?**

Answer: The answer is no. While it might feel good for a time, ultimately it will do more to harm you than help you. Anger and bitterness can crush your heart and destroy relationships. It distances you from other people. It separates you from God. And it dominates your thoughts, leading you to lash out in anger at people for no reason.

- **How would your life be different if you were rightly concerned with your inward attitude?**

Answer: You would probably let go of anger quicker. Not gossip or spread rumors. You take seriously insulting or slandering other people.

- **What specific behaviors would you eliminate?**

Answers will vary.

FINALLY, read or ask a student to read verses 23-24. Then, **ask:**

- **According to these verses, how important is it to God that we maintain healthy relationships with others?**

Answer: Extremely important. Jesus commands His listeners to cease an act of worship in order to make things right with a brother.

- **In what way do our relationships with other people affect our worship of God?**

Answer: They are directly related. If our relationships with other people are not right, then our relationship with God is going to be hindered.

- **Notice the phrase, "your brother has something against you." Who do you think should take initiative in restoring a relationship?**

Answer: You should. If you have something against your brother, then you need to seek reconciliation. If your brother has something against you, then, likewise, you need to seek reconciliation.

FINALLY, wrap up your time of study and transition to the Last Word by **saying something like:**

• **Jesus' point is that our relationships should be a priority. If we are holding onto anger toward another person, then we need to make it right with him or her. If not, we not only hurt our relationship with that person, but we're also hurting our relationship with God.**

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** For students to honestly evaluate whether or not they have lost their temper with someone recently, and if so, to commit to making amends.
- **Set-Up:** Paper and pens for each student in your group.

FIRST, pass out paper and pens to all the students in your class. Instruct them to draw lines that divide their paper into four equal columns. Then, in the first column ask them to make a list of things that cause them to lose their tempers. Perhaps it's everyday frustrations, like road rage, bad grades, striking out, not being in control, among other things.

NEXT, after giving them a few minutes to write, instruct them to look over their list in column one. As they look over the list ask them to think about the last time something from their list made them lose their temper. Direct them to write in the second column the person to whom their anger was directed. For example, if they write "bad driving" in column one, then next to it in column two they should write the name of the "bad driver" who made them angry.

THEN, ask them to describe how they responded to the person that angered them in the third column. For example, if they lashed out at a friend who had ruffled their feathers, they might write down what they said.

FINALLY, direct the students to think about their inner thoughts during this response. Ask them to think about if they wished harm on that other person. Tell them to think about if they insulted them in some way. Ask them to think about if they murdered someone's character or reputation.

In the fourth column, tell them to write how they wish they had responded. Direct them to respond now, if they need to ask someone for forgiveness then encourage them to do it. Invite them to put their desired response into practice today. Challenge them to start by praying right now for God to forgive them of their sin and to give them the courage to resolve the situation. Tell them that might need to call someone right now to restore the relationship.

Close your class by allowing the students time to pray. Then, pray for them to pursue Christ-centered relationships free from anger and hostility.

- 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.