

Lesson 3: God's Plan and You

Objective: The point of the lesson is that students would understand the right attitude and approach to communicating the Gospel to others, and that they would begin to identify--and address--some of the hang-ups that keep them from being more active messengers of the Gospel.

Scripture Focus: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Acts 13:13-33, Acts 17:16-31, 1 Peter 3:13-16

Overview: In the last lesson, your students were reminded that Jesus emphatically calls all Christ-followers to be people who are actively pointing other people toward God. Your students were reminded that for Jesus, this was a heart issue: He saw people who were hurt and broken, lost apart from God, and His heart broke for them. This lesson will help your students see what a right attitude and outlook looks like when it comes to approaching others with the hope of the Gospel. Paul and Peter's words ring true today as they did two thousand years ago: there should be nothing that keeps us from telling people about the new life that awaits them in Christ. We should do whatever it takes to communicate this hope. Your students will be challenged to consider what keeps them from having this attitude and to make some changes in their lives to be more active in spreading God's story.

Teacher Prep Video

The *elements 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 "Evangelism Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/evangelism-teacher-prep>

Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* gives you background info for each Book, while *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passages are all 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. *But don't feel like you have to read everything written in the Bible Background for each Book.*

The Details

1 Corinthians

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the Church in Corinth.
- **Time frame:** Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus in the spring shortly before Pentecost. We are unsure of what year, but it was likely between 53 AD and 55 AD.

- **Purpose:** Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written to a divided church to call them to become united for the sake of the Gospel. He was calling the church to lay down the things that divided them in order to fully embrace the one thing that is strong enough to unite them: Christ crucified!

Acts

- **Author:** Acts has long been held to be a letter from Luke, a Gentile physician, to a man named Theophilus, possibly a benefactor of some sort.
- **Time frame:** There is some debate over when Acts was written. The suggested dates are between 70 AD and 80 AD.
- **Purpose:** The Book of Acts is a second letter to Theophilus that tells the story of the early Church following Jesus' resurrection. The book begins with Jesus' ascension and His command of His followers to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The rest of the book traces this journey as the early church leaders proclaim the Gospel and plant churches.

1 Peter

- **Author:** 1 Peter was written by Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples and one of the key leaders of the growing movement of Christ-followers.
- **Time frame:** 1 Peter was likely written between 54-68 AD.
- **Purpose:** 1 Peter was written to a people under persecution, likely under the reign of Nero. Peter calls the Church to persevere under trials because eternal life awaits them. He encourages them that God's promises to His people will endure and should be the basis of their hope.

The Main Point

The main point of this lesson is to explore the attitude and approach we should have when engaging the people in our lives that do not yet know Jesus. We will see how having Good News is one thing, finding ways to communicate it in ways that make sense to people is another. Over the course of this lesson we will look at some passages of Scripture that reveal to us ways to be effective in any context. When we realize that we are called to serve and love others, then we can begin to look outside ourselves to find unique and creative ways to connect with any and everyone. While our attitude should be one of service and love toward others, we should have the "A, B, C approach" to being messengers of the Gospel: **Authenticity, Being Prepared, Caring for the other person.**

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 realize that not everyone in the world is like them and that in order to share the Good News, you have to start with finding ways to understand and connect with people in a way that is unique to them.
- **Set-Up:** A smart phone or computer with Internet access.

FIRST start by asking students to use one of their phones to Google "HIV infection rate in Africa." Look for a link that says: "List of countries by HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate." Then read the first two paragraphs. (If you don't want to do this "real time" for fear of what may pop-up in an Internet search, or for fear of losing the

attention of your group, simply prepare the search ahead of time and let a student read the results from your phone or tablet.) Depending on the link you click, you'll see that out of the top 20 countries, Africa has 19 of the most infected countries in the world where up to 60% of the adult population is infected with HIV/AIDS. (At the time of the publication of this curriculum.) Explain that when you look at the global map, you see that HIV/AIDS is still a huge worldwide epidemic with catastrophic impact.

THEN, Google the phrase "Cure for HIV/AIDS." (Again, conduct this part of the activity in a manner you're most comfortable with.) What you will see is that there are some researchers making some huge breakthroughs in the area of (hopefully) developing a cure for HIV. Explain to students that if a cure is ever discovered, the world will rejoice with happiness.

NEXT, explain to students why you set this little scenario up. Say:

- **Lets pretend that you in fact found the cure for HIV and because of your heart for the world and others you wanted to get it into the hands of these 19 countries as soon as possible. I am not talking about your organization, your agency, your foundation, but you, a teenager living where you live, with your resources. How would you do it? Let's brainstorm some things we would have to do in order for us, the people here in this room, to get this good news of our cure to the actual people in cities and tribes in sub-Saharan Africa.**

Engage in a few minutes of brainstorming about what you might do to get the good news of a cure out. Don't spend too much time here, just long enough that they get the point. Some things for them to consider might be:

- **How would you get there?**
- **What are some cultural hurdles you would have to overcome?**
- **What would you wear and why?**
- **How would you pay for this trip?**
- **How would you communicate with them?**
- **Why should they believe you?**
- **How do you prove that you're telling the truth?**

FINALLY, explain to students that what you would be trying to do in this example is a version of evangelism, sharing the good news to people who are desperately in need of it. Explain that in a similar way all of us have been given the cure for sin, brokenness, and alienation. It's the Gospel story, the Good News of Jesus. And remind them that this cure is effective in every person in the entire world no matter of race, ethnicity, age, class, nationality, social status, or intellect. Say something like:

- **Now we have to begin to unpack how we're going to go about sharing this Good News to our friends and family and to the whole world. To do this we could begin to ask the exact same questions as above: How will we get there? What are some cultural hurdles we will have to overcome? How will we communicate with them? How do you prove that you're telling the truth? Get the idea?**

Explain to students that this lesson, the last lesson in your look at evangelism, is all about shining some light on the answers to these questions. Explain that by the end of your time together, they should be able to have a handle on an approach to evangelism that has the correct attitude, a clear approach, and application steps that they can begin to implement to be messengers of the Gospel in their contexts.

The Main Event

- **Goal:** The idea is to reveal through Scripture the right attitude and the correct approach, as you help students share Jesus' love and grace with their friends.
- **Set Up:** You will need a dry-erase board and some pens to do brainstorming.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. As they are finding it, provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Ask a student to read this passage. Then lead the class in a short discussion. Ask:

- **When we read this passage, right away we see Paul's attitude toward people who don't yet know Jesus. Re-read verse 19, what is it? What attitude does Paul adopt?**
 - *Answer:* The attitude of a servant.
- **What do you think that means to be a slave to others?**
 - *Answer:* It doesn't mean being a punching bag, or a pushover. It's an attitude of putting other's spiritual needs so high above yours.
- **When you think of serving others, who is the focus in the relationship, you or them?**
- **Why do you think that matters in evangelism?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Re-read verse 22, what is another aspect of Paul's attitude?**
 - *Answer:* He's willing to do whatever it takes so that some might be saved.
- **In this passage, what did Paul do to prove that he did whatever it takes?**
 - Help students work through the list of ways Paul shows us that he gave himself over to the cause of doing whatever it takes to reach people with the message of the Gospel.
- **Imagine one friend that you want to share Jesus' story with. What would it look like for you to do whatever it takes to communicate God's love and grace with him or her?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, tell students that their attitudes are the foundation of their evangelism strategy. Explain that they must see sharing the Gospel not as something good Christians do, or some way to win points with God. Explain that they have to begin to see sharing their faith as something that is motivated by a genuine love and care for others. Say something like:

- **We know Paul got this. How? Because only love would compel someone to intentionally lower himself and serve others for the sake of the Gospel. To do whatever it takes is something that you do motivated by love. When we think about evangelism, it's our love that compels us so that by whatever means necessary we might save some.**

NEXT, look more closely at the approach Paul used in sharing the Gospel. We see that his attitude was one of service and total abandon motivated by love. Explain that because of this, he was able to look outside himself and see what others needed in order to find a way to connect the Gospel story to their story. His approach was one of contextualization. Ask your students what they think this big word means:

- **Can anyone define contextualization?**
 - *Answer:* It means taking an idea or concept that makes sense in one setting and finding a way to communicate that same idea into a setting that is different.
- **How does this relate to how we should be messengers of the Gospel?**
 - *Answer:* The Gospel has been contextualized for people all over the world in every culture, in every time, and in every people group. It has been contextualized for us, and we need to find ways to contextualize it for our friends.

Say something like:

- **We need to find ways to take the essence of the story of the Gospel and find the place where it makes sense and is relevant to our friends. We begin this process by asking how is the Gospel good news to this person or people group.**

THEN, ask your students how Paul contextualized the Gospel in this passage of Scripture. (This is a challenging question and will be a little cloudy. It's OK for them to wrestle with this concept a little. It will be made clearer in a minute.)

- **Ask a clarifying question like, "What did Paul do in every context he found himself?"**
 - *Answer:* He became like them in order to identify with them.
- **Did Paul leave the Gospel behind to become like the people he engaged with? Did he water down the message? Did he act in ways that went against God's will for His life in order to "relate" to the people with whom he was sharing?**
 - *Answer:* As best we can tell, no. It would certainly seem out of character for him if he did.

Explain that you do know that Paul said he became all things to all people. Explain that you're going to take a closer look at what this means.

NEXT, have half your students turn to Acts 13:13-33, and the other half turn to Acts 17:16-31. Explain that in these two passages of Scripture, Paul does exactly what we are talking about. He takes the changeless message of the Gospel, but finds a way to contextualize it so that the people Paul communicates it with can hear it in a way that makes sense to them. For this next exercise, see if you can answer the following questions:

- **What was the context in which Paul was speaking?**
- **When and where did Paul speak to his gathering?**
- **What opening stories did Paul use before he got to Jesus and His resurrection?**

NEXT, have the two groups come together and compare and contrast the differences between these two different approaches. You should be able to see that Paul contextualized the Gospel. He told the same gospel in different ways. Ways that each group of people could understand and resonate with. Explain that he used the story of Israel in the context of the synagogue teaching to talk with the Jews about the resurrection of Jesus. Remind them that Paul used the open air market, common for debate in the Greek context, beginning with an idol and a non-Christian poet to contextualize the Gospel story to people who have zero touch points with Israel. Say:

- **In both places, Paul told the Gospel story. His attitude was of love and therefore was able to see people's needs. He served them with truth. And his approach was to work hard to identify with them and their concerns. He contextualized his lifestyle and his message in a way that the people could hear. Paul did this because he would use any strategy so that some may come to know Jesus.**

FINALLY, challenge students to see that their approach should be motivated by their love for people. They should be willing to serve others, keeping in mind this idea of contextualization, where they strive to identify with others and find the places where the good news of Jesus really is good news. Explain that you're going to finish this last lesson on evangelism by leaving them with a nice way of remembering how to apply the things you've learned.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** The idea is for students to consider the task that God has invited them into and whether or not they are prepared and equipped for the challenge.
- **Set Up:** Dry-erase board and three different colored pens

FIRST, instruct your students open their Bibles to 1 Peter 3:13-16 and have one of your students read it. But write it like this:

- At the top of the white board: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord”
- In the middle of the white board: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”
- Near the bottom (with room to write under it): “But do this with gentleness and respect.

THEN, say something like this:

- **It’s often scary to think about how we are going to share our faith with our friends and family. This fear paralyzes us and then we don’t make any move in attempting to reach our friends. This passage of Scripture is so great because Peter actually gives us a really simple three-step application in our effort to reach people for the Gospel. We are going to see how each step is rather simple to understand, but involves some serious effort on our part.**

NEXT, tell students that they are going to look at the **A, B, C’s** of evangelism. As you look at each point you need to brainstorm how to actually accomplish that step. Encourage them to be honest with each other with why it is difficult for you to pull it off.

Go to the dry-erase board and with a different color pen write this under “But in your hearts . . . “

- **A is for AUTHENTICITY: The faith we share has to be real in us first.**
 - Ask students how they can accomplish this step. Encourage them to be honest where they are not being authentic in their own faith.
 - With a different colored pen, write down their responses in the space below.
 - Some issues you might want to prod them toward are:
 - **It is impossible to share a faith that isn’t yours to begin with.**
 - **How would an authentic faith lead to natural conversation with your friends?**
 - **Why do you think these natural conversations don’t happen?**
 - **Are you doing the hard work of setting Christ as Lord in your life?**

NEXT, go back to the dry-erase board and write under “Always be prepared”

- **B is for BE PREPARED: When asked, have a good answer.**
 - Then ask your students how they can accomplish this step. Encourage them to be honest.
 - With a different colored pen, write down their responses.
 - Some issues you might want to prod them toward are:
 - **Can they articulate the Gospel?**
 - **Can they articulate their own testimony?**
 - **Do they have answers or at least resources to point people to for hard questions about Christianity?**
 - Being prepared takes hard work and this may open up a can of worms that will need to be addressed. If we’re going to take evangelism seriously, then we have to help our students be prepared. Consider making space in your curriculum schedule to help them answer these questions.

Finally, go back to the dry-erase board and write under “But do this with”

- **C is for CARING: Our attitude in is one of gentleness and respect.**
 - Then ask your students how they can accomplish this step. Encourage them to be honest where they aren’t actually caring for the well being and heart of the person they’re sharing with.
 - With a different colored pen, write down their responses.

- Some issues you might want to prod them toward are:
 - **Are you motivated by love?**
 - **What does it look like to share with gentleness and respect? What is the opposite?**
 - **Why does it get sideways sometime?**

FINALLY, remind your students that in the task of sharing their faith with their friends, that the result is not their responsibility. We plant, others water, but it is God who makes faith grow. Say:

- **God loves their friends and wants to invite many people into the Kingdom of God. His heart is for the world and He wants us to share His heart in that. We are invited to be partners with God in this task, but we must be clear on our task. We have to make sure our faith is authentic, that we're prepared, and that we do it in a caring way.**

Spend a little bit of time in prayer with your group. Pray for each other and pray for the friends and family that God has put on your heart over the course of this series. After everyone is done with prayer, and you have asked them to hold on to their lists and be praying for the people on it, close your time by distributing the element devotions to your students. Consider texting your students throughout the week reminding them to be praying for their friends on the birthday list.

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.

