

JESUS *and Your* FAITH

LESSON 1: *The Answer*

What we want students to learn: That our faith in Jesus is the means by which we find forgiveness and eternal relationship with Christ.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To really consider the significance of life through faith in Christ and death in separation from Him.

Scripture Focus: John 3:16-18

Supporting Scripture: John 5:24

Overview: Repetition can cause us to become immune to the very thing we encounter over and over again. This is true with Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3. It's such a familiar passage we miss the power of it. And yet, what discussion of faith is complete without it? It is the Gospel, encapsulated. And these words hold the key to life and purpose in Christ. As you kick off a four-week study of faith, it's only fitting that it starts with a definition of saving faith, and a challenge to consider the amazing impact a relationship with Christ, through faith, has made in your students' lives.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

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

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-your-faith-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, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Gospel of 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.

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- **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

As you can guess from its nearness to the beginning of John's Gospel, the encounter with Nicodemus in John chapter 3 is near the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus is encountering Nicodemus in Jerusalem, where Jesus had traveled with His disciples to observe the Passover. By the time Nicodemus sneaks out to meet Jesus, Jesus has already made quite the stir in Jerusalem. He had flipped the moneylender's tables and run the cattle out of the Temple, leading to a tense interaction with the Pharisees. Nicodemus was one of these Pharisees, but apparently, Jesus had made an impression on him. He had sought out Jesus at night to learn more about Jesus' identity and mission.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point of John 3:16 is about as clear-cut as you can get. As we talk about what Jesus said about faith, this passage is at the forefront. It is a succinct explanation of both the Gospel and of Jesus' purpose for coming to earth. Your students will see that their faith is the key that unlocks all that Christ has purchased for them through His life, death, and resurrection.

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 thinking about the right way and the wrong way to do things.
- **Set-Up:** It would be great to accompany this lesson with images from any of the various "fail" blogs or websites. If you feel brave, you can search the Internet for images that denote specific "fails," i.e., people riding bikes where the front wheel has come off, people overloading a car and all the tires puncture, and so on. The problem is that there seems to be a lot of relatively objectionable, or off-color material associated with these types of image searches. So, if you decide to try and locate and print images that show examples of how not to do something, exercise good judgment. Don't do the search with your students present, just in case.

FIRST, introduce students to the idea of the right way and the wrong way of going about things. Explain that there are usually more than one way to go about doing a task. But, there are still some ways that are better than others. There are still right ways and wrong ways.

(NOTE: If you ended up finding some images of people doing things the wrong way, show them as examples of the wrong way to go about a specific activity.)

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THEN, lead students in a discussion using the following scenarios and questions. Have fun with this and encourage students to be creative. Ask:

- **Let's say you're going to (unfortunately) break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend. What's an example of the right way to do this? What are some examples of the wrong way?**
 - Answers will vary.

Encourage students to be fun and creative in their responses. After students have shared, go on to the following scenarios asking the same questions after each one:

- **You have to tell your parents you got a D on your report card. Right way? Wrong way?**
- **You tell your best friend that you just got a new car for your birthday. Right way? Wrong way?**
- **You have to inform your neighbor that you lost their dog while you were taking it for a walk. Right way? Wrong way?**
- **You are on a fancy dinner date when you realize you have to go to the bathroom immediately. Right way to excuse yourself from the table? Wrong way?**
- **You're giving a report on George Washington for your history class. Right way to end your presentation? Wrong way?**

FINALLY, after you've had some fun with this, transition to the Main Event by saying something similar to the following:

- **This is the first lesson in a four-week study on what Jesus has to say about our faith. We're going to cover our faith from quite a few different angles. But in this first lesson, we're going to start with the basics. You know, people try and find salvation and purpose through a lot of different ways. But only one way is the right way. Let's see what Jesus had to say about the right way to salvation.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that their faith in Jesus is the means by which they find forgiveness and eternal relationship with Christ.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, explain to students that you want to get on the same page regarding what you mean when you mention the concept of "faith." Ask:

- **When we talk about our faith in general, what are we talking about?**
 - Answer: It could be that the word faith describes our overall belief system, as in the way we might describe Christianity as a whole.
- **But when we personalize it, when I talk about my faith in Christ, or you talk about your faith in Christ, what are we really saying?**
 - Answer: We're talking about our personal belief in God.

Explain that though you might spend some time talking about the big-picture understanding of our faith as a whole, what you're going to be focused on most is the intimate, personal faith we have in Christ. And you're going to be talking a lot over the next few weeks about the quality and qualities of this faith. But for today, you're going to start with the basics using a pretty familiar passage.

THEN, explain that you're going to start by looking at what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of John. Instruct

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students to turn to John 3. While students are looking, make sure you take a few moments to provide the context for the passage using the Bible Background. Pay close attention to the Setting. Summarize it for your students so that they grasp exactly when this passage of Scripture occurs in Jesus' ministry.

NEXT, read or have a student read John 3:16-18. When you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion using questions similar to the following:

- **This is one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. What do you think it is about this passage that makes it widely read and quoted?**
 - Answers will vary. But the idea is that it contains a very simple, yet powerful summary of the Gospel. It's "short, but sweet" as the cliché goes.
- **As we think about our faith, our personal belief in God, these verses have a lot to say about it. Let's start with the beginning. What reason does Jesus give for God sending Him to the world? What was the motivating factor?**
 - Answer: Love. Because God loved us, He sent His Son.
- **Think for a second about this love God had. What is remarkable about it? What strikes you as significant about Him loving our world?**
 - Answers may vary. But lead students to see that at least one of the main reasons this is significant is that the world wasn't and isn't a very lovable place. People are sinful. And while the world is full of God's beauty, it's also full of brokenness. That's why God's love as a motivating factor is amazing. We certainly didn't deserve it.
- **In this verse, we see the means by which we can gain something pretty awesome. What do we gain, and what is the means by which we gain it?**
 - Answer: Jesus said we gain eternal life instead of death, and He said we gain it through believing in Him.
- **What's another word for belief?**
 - Answer: Faith
- **So, as we talk about what Jesus has to say about our faith, this is an excellent place to start. We gain eternal life with God simply through our faith in Christ. But let's ask one more question about verse 16. Why is gaining eternal life a big deal? What is the other alternative and why?**
 - Answer: As many of your students probably know, sin is rebellion against God and it earns for us death. This is a big deal because we are unable to make up for the debt our sin generates. We are incapable on our own of saving ourselves.
- **Verse 17 has something interesting to say about Jesus' role in purchasing eternal life for us. What does it say?**
 - Answer: It says God saves us through Jesus.
- **How does God save us through Jesus? What did Jesus do to purchase our salvation?**
 - Answer: Jesus served as the perfect sacrifice in our place. Rebellion against God calls for death. Only the death of something pure can absolve us from our sins. Jesus, the most perfect, pure sacrifice possible, died so all people who would come to faith in Him could be saved from their sins.

Explain that, as everyone can see, this is the Gospel. This is the simple yet amazing message of the good news in Christ. That is why these verses are so meaningful to so many.

THEN, take a moment to drill down and make sure students grasp what this has to do with their faith. Ask something like:

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- **Our faith in Christ primarily saves us from the penalty of our sins. But it does other things as well. What does our salvation in Christ open up for us?**
 - o Answers will vary. But lead students to see that it's not just eternal life after we die that is made available. We have our entire life's purpose and mission unlocked for us too. We are made free to live and experience this amazing life that God has made possible for us. It's about the here and now as much as it is about the afterlife.

FINALLY, stop a moment and read or have a student read John 5:24. When you have finished, explain that this is exactly what Jesus is talking about. Say something like:

- **Through faith, not through works or through any other means that comes out of our own efforts, Jesus makes life possible for us. We were condemned in our sins, looked at as guilty by God. But through Christ's sacrifice, we are made pure and innocent in God's eyes. Jesus unlocks peace and harmony with God for us. As we spend the next few weeks examining our faith, this is an important truth to remember.**

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

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students really consider the significance of life through faith in Christ and death in separation from Him.
- **Set-Up:** You can get as elaborate or as simple with this as you want. On the elaborate end, you can provide butcher paper with paint or markers, or a chalkboard wall, or different color construction paper, etc. On the simple end, you could have slips of paper, pens, and tape. The goal is to help students create a visual reminder of their expression of thanks to God for making a way to save them from the penalty of their sins.

FIRST, explain to students that just as the powerful truth of John 3:16 can sometimes be overlooked because it's so familiar to us, we can also get so used to our salvation that we forget what it truly means. Explain that you're going to provide students with a chance to express their thanks to God for making a way for them to be saved from their sins.

Direct students to use whatever means you have pre-determined to allow them to visually express their praise and thanks to God. If it's pen and paper, distribute it to students. If it's markers, chalk, paint, etc., instruct them with how you want it done. Give students the following guidance for expressing their thanks and praise to God:

- **It can be easy for us to forget what Jesus saved us from. When we think of what our sin rightfully earns for us, when we consider that the Bible talks about how Jesus absorbed God's wrath that was intended for us, when we grasp that we would spend eternity separated from God if it weren't for Jesus . . . when we stop and think about it, we should overflow with praise and thankfulness to God. So, using the materials we have today, we're going to take a few minutes and create a means of expressing our thanks to God for who He is.**

Explain to students that they can write a short sentence of praise. They can draw a picture that expresses their emotions. They can simply write a single word of praise to God. They can write down their favorite verse,

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or the lyrics to their favorite Christian song. Basically, they can say “Thank you” to God however they want. What matters most is that they consider what is in their hearts and express it to God.

FINALLY, wrap up this activity as you see fit. Allow students to look at all the praise that was expressed to God. Encourage them to see this wall as a reminder of God’s faithfulness to them, and as a way to continue to strengthen their personal faith in God.

Close in prayer.

- Don’t forget to distribute the “Lesson 1” 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 Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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.