

JESUS AND CULTURE

LESSON 4: The Call To Holiness

What we want students to learn: That Jesus wants His followers to interact with culture through lives that are Christ-like: holy and set apart for God's purpose.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To understand the purpose Jesus calls them to, and to seek to embrace this purpose as they engage and interact with their culture.

Scripture Focus: John 17:13-19

Supporting Scripture: Psalm 119:105

Overview: There is a saying that many of your students have probably heard before: "In the world, but not of the world." These exact words don't appear in Scripture. But they probably originate as a summary of the teachings in this passage. In this prayer, Jesus says something that sheds a great deal of light on how He sees us. Jesus does not ask God to take His followers out of this world. To the contrary, He asks God to keep us here. But look at what Jesus said when it came to what our lives should look like as we live and dwell in this world: Jesus asked God to sanctify His people, purifying us and setting us apart for His purpose. Jesus wants us to be in this world, but living holy lives on mission for God. This is the purpose Jesus desires for us to fill as we interact with and engage culture. And this is the challenge you'll leave your students with in this your final lesson of Jesus and Culture.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The *Jesus And Culture* 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 Culture* Lesson 4 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-culture-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

John 17 comes near the end 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 on without Him.

John 15-17 falls on the heels of Jesus and His disciples having finished the Last Supper. They were preparing to walk from the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where Jesus would ultimately be arrested. Jesus was teaching them as they were going, or at least preparing to go. This passage comes in the midst of a prayer Jesus is praying to God the Father. At the end of chapter 17, John depicts Jesus and His disciples walking from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives where Jesus is promptly arrested.

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus makes two very interesting points here as far as our study of culture goes, and they serve as fitting bookends for the last lesson in this series. First, Jesus once again acknowledges that the world will be opposed to His followers simply because they are His followers. But the Jesus does something interesting. He doesn't ask God to remove His followers from the hostile world, He asks for protection. God's plan is for the Church to be His mouthpiece, His hands, and His feet in this world. Jesus knew that this only gets accomplished if we are left in this world.

Second, Jesus affirms the mission of His followers, and places their "sanctification" through God's Word at the center of this mission, almost as if this sanctification is a pre-requisite for our being on mission with God. Of course we know that to be sanctified is to be made holy, and to be set apart to be used to accomplish God's purpose. The cool thing is that Jesus talks about this happening through God's Word. In our context that means the Bible. So, it's a powerful message to your students: God wants them in this world to be part of His mission, but to be prepared for the mission they have to be actively engaged in knowing God through His Word. Very cool stuff!

This lesson is a great way to send your students off on a challenge to make a major impact on culture for the sake of Christ.

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 visualize what it means to be a part of their world, but not a part of it.
- **Set-Up:** Arrange to display the "Lesson 4 Lead In Activity Sheet," contained in your lesson 4 folder, either by printing the PDF or by presenting it digitally.

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FIRST, explain to students that this is the last lesson in your study of Jesus and culture. Explain that this last lesson contains a great challenge for them, one they are hopefully going to really enjoy. But first, you're going to play a game where you look at a group of four objects or people, and try to figure out which one is different than the rest, and why. Explain that the first one is easy, but they get harder as they go.

NEXT, using the "Lesson 4 Lead In Activity Sheet," look at the first group of objects. Then, ask:

- **Which one is different than the rest and why?**
 - o Answer: The box is different than the balls because it is not round.

Do the same for the second group of objects. Ask:

- **Which one is different and why?**
 - o Answer: The watermelon is the object that is different because it has a thicker peel, or "skin" than the other fruits.

Finally, ask the same question for the third image, the group of girls. Ask:

- **Which one is different and why?**
 - o The truth of the matter is that the difference is one they would never be able to tell. [NOTE: We normally stay away from trick question activities, but this one we couldn't resist.] Allow students to guess and then reveal to them the answer.
 - o Answer: The nationality of the girl in the lower left hand corner is Eastern European, while the other three girls are American.

More than likely your students will pitch a fit, complaining that there is no way they could have known this. Have fun with this part of the activity. Then, when they've settled down, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Why was it easy on the first one to tell which object was different from the others?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **The second one was a little trickier. Why?**
 - o Answer: It simply wasn't as obvious at first glance. But once you knew, it made sense.
- **What made the third set so difficult?**
 - o Answer: There was virtually no way to tell what was different about the girl. There was no discernable difference, and the differences your students might have come up with most likely were not the correct ones.

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

- **While this activity was a little rigged to trick you on the last one, the point I was hoping to make was this: Some things obviously stand out from the crowd. Some things don't. What does that have to do with today's lesson? Simple: You are a part of the culture in which you live your life. But Jesus wants you to stand out. Unlike the girl, Jesus wants the difference in you and the world to be clear. We've already talked about this some in the past few weeks. The difference in this final lesson is that Jesus defines what this difference should be. Let's find out exactly what Jesus said.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that Jesus wants His followers to interact with culture through lives that are Christ-like: holy and set apart for God's purposes.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, take a moment and see if anyone can recall what you've covered in the other three lessons in this series. Use the following bullet points to help guide your review.

- **Following Christ faithfully means oftentimes we won't fit in with the rest of the world around us.**
- **Jesus wants us to be countercultural in our humility, living in the world as servants of others.**

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- **As Christ-followers committed to the Gospel, we must be willing to bravely impact culture, especially those who the world has cast aside as having little or no value.**

You may see if any student is willing to share anything he or she has learned during this study, or anything they have been particularly convicted by. If anyone has been moved, or otherwise gotten something out of a previous lesson, this is a great time to share.

THEN, explain that you're going to kick off your time of Bible study by looking at what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of John. Instruct students to turn to John 17. 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 17:13-19. When you have finished, explain to students that you are going to go back through the passage and discuss the verses in greater detail. Lead students in the following discussion. Ask something like:

- **Verse 13 can seem a little hard to figure out at first. Jesus is talking about joining God the Father once He dies, rises from the dead, and ascends into heaven. But what is Jesus saying about His joy here? Can you figure it out?**
 - o Answer: Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly mission. He was joyful in the face of suffering, because He knew His mission was almost complete. He knew the disciples would be full of fear and turmoil in the coming days. He was hoping to pass along some of His joy to the disciples in this, one of their final moments.
- **What does it say about how Jesus viewed the importance of completing His mission that He would be happy in the face of what He knew was about to happen to Him?**
 - o Answers will vary. But it seems to point to the grandeur of Jesus' mission that He would be rejoicing in the nearness of its completion.
- **Just so we're on the same page, how would you define Jesus' mission? What did He come to earth to do?**
 - o Answers will vary. Lead students to see that Jesus' mission was one of redemption, and of salvation. He came to make possible once-and-for-all peace between God and humankind through His atoning death on the cross.

THEN, have students look back at verses 14-16. Remind students that these verses are a lot similar to the ones they studied from John 15 in Lesson 1. However, there is an interesting difference in verse 15. Lead students to discuss this verse using something similar to the following questions. Ask:

- **Jesus acknowledges that the world pretty much hates all of His followers, and that it's a pretty tough gig being in the world at all. So, He asks God to whisk all of His followers away to heaven so that they won't have to put up with it, right? Right? (Wrong.) What does Jesus really ask God to do?**
 - o Answer: To leave His followers in this world, but to offer them protection.
- **Knowing the road would sometimes be tough for His followers, why do you think Jesus insisted on leaving us in the world? Think about this one in light of His overall mission.**
 - o Answer: Help your students understand that the Church, which means them, is God's primary means of sharing His rescue mission with the world. We are to represent Him to the world. And we can't do this if we're not here.
- **How does this change the idea of the hardship you have or will experience at times because you identify yourself as a Christ-follower?**
 - o Answers will vary. But help students see that it's all worth it because of their role. Jesus has given them a role to play in spreading the Gospel. The hatred that culture sometimes shows them is worth it because of the impact they stand to make by living their lives for Christ.

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Make sure students grasp this point. Say something like:

- **This is a really big point as we wrap up our discussion of what it means to be a Christ-follower engaging with our culture. God's plan included you. It didn't have to. It just as easily could have not included you. But God thought of His mission to reach the world and He decided He wanted you on board. As we've talked the past few weeks about being set apart for God, this is exactly what we were talking about. You have a mission. You are in this world because Jesus wants you to be a resource for Him. But you can't be on mission for God if you live your life like the rest of the world. You have to identify yourself with God and His ways, even though it might make things tough for you at times.**

NEXT, when you feel like students have grasped this point, move on to what Jesus said in verse 17. Lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **This is the next major point of this passage, but it's easy to miss. First, does anyone know what it means to be sanctified?**
 - o Answer: It means to be made holy. More specifically in this instance, it's to be made holy by being set apart and assigned a purpose, or a task.
- **So, Jesus is saying that He wants His followers to be sanctified. This falls in line with what we've been studying so far, right? (Right) But what is the means by which Jesus asks God to sanctify us?**
 - o Answer: Through the truth, which is God's Word.
- **Now, this had a shade different meaning to the disciples in this specific moment. But as we are making the application to our lives, what does this mean exactly? How do we talk about God's Word today?**
 - o Answer: The Bible. The Scriptures.
- **OK, let's put all this together: You are part of Jesus' mission. To be on mission with Jesus is to be set apart for this task. And the means by which you're set apart and prepared to be on mission for Jesus is by the truth of God's Word. Does this make sense? What does your being in God's Word have to do with your mission of sharing the Gospel with the lost?**
 - o Answer: To be on mission for God, you have to know God. You can't represent Him or His ways without knowing Him. The Bible is the primary way God has chosen to make Himself known to us. So, to be effective at our mission, to be truly set apart, we have to make it a priority to continually meet God in the pages of His Word.

FINALLY, begin to transition to the Last Word by reading aloud Psalm 119:105. Explain to your students that this is the attitude you should all strive to have in regards to God's Word. Ask:

- **In your own words, how does this pertain to Jesus' words we just looked at? How does this support the idea that to be on mission for God in this world, we have to be motivated by seeking Him in the Bible?**
 - o Answers will vary. But there is a great parallel in our mission Jesus has given us, and the path referred to in the psalm. Just like a lamp lights a path, God's Word illuminates our purpose and mission. We can't truly be set apart in this world if we are detached from knowing God.

If no one has any questions, transition to the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students understand the purpose Jesus calls them to, and to seek to embrace this purpose as they engage and interact with their culture.
- **Set-Up:** You have two choices on how to set-up this activity. One is fairly simple. You'll download the "Lesson 4 Last Word Activity Sheet" found in your Lesson 4 folder, and cut out the cards on the

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sheet, enough for each student to have one. (For best results, print the card in color on cardstock, though printing in grayscale will work.) If you really want to make an impression, secure enough small stones or pebbles so that each one of your students can have one. Spray paint the stones red before you meet, allowing enough time for them to dry. Then, distribute the cards AND the stones as a more vivid reminder of the call to be set apart.

FIRST, explain that as this is the last lesson in the series on culture, you want to send students off with a reminder of Jesus' call to live on mission for Him, set apart from the culture surrounding them. But first explain that you want students to have a chance to articulate in their own words exactly the mission Jesus has called them to.

Ask for students to define how they see God wanting to use them. This can be very loosely defined--much more of a big-picture look--or this can be very personal. Be prepared to answer this question yourself to allow time for students to articulate their answers. When students have shared their responses, explain that their goal should be to live each day, as much as possible, with this mission in the forefront of their mind. Say:

- **The challenge is to be set apart from the culture around you, focused on the task God has called you to. To help you remember this challenge, I'm going to give you a reminder.**

NEXT, distribute the cards you have cut out. If you have provided stones, distribute these as well. Explain that the cards help visualize the idea of being different than the culture surrounding us. Encourage them to place this card in a prominent spot to remind them of God's call on their life. (If you've also given them stones, encourage them to carry the stone in their pocket or backpack to remind them during their days.) Encourage students that you are here to support them as they seek to live their lives fulfilling the task God has set before them.

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 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.