

JESUS *and Your* FAITH

LESSON 4: *Rock Solid*

What we want students to learn: That our faith is designed to be an active faith that guides their everyday lives.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To think about how their faith really impacts their day-to-day decisions, thoughts, and attitude.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 7:24-27

Supporting Scripture: James 1:22

Overview: As we teach our students about their faith, one of the most important things we can do is bring their faith out of the realm of head-knowledge or something that only happens on Sundays at church, and show them that it should permeate their lives. It should be an active faith, a faith that drives their decisions, thoughts, and attitudes. The first man Jesus describes in Matthew 7 was this kind of man. This man had put his faith in God and His Word, to the point where it served as the foundation for his life. When things got hard, he prevailed because of his faith. You'll have the opportunity in this lesson to challenge your students to embrace a similar brand of faith in their own 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 4 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:** 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.

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THE SETTING

This narrative occurs near the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. This is a part of what is called the Sermon on the Mount, the occasion where Jesus sat down and more or less spelled out the Kingdom criteria for God's children. This parable of the man who built his house on a rock serves as a fitting endnote for the Sermon on the Mount. It is as if Jesus is saying, If you'll build your on the Kingdom principles I just laid out, you'll be able to weather life's storms.

THE MAIN POINT

The key here, as it pertains to faith, is captured in the very first line in the passage: "whoever hears these words and puts them into practice." It is one thing to hear and to agree, or to hear and to like. This is the kind of "rocky soil" faith that Jesus described in the parable of the sower and the seed. It is another thing entirely to hear and believe. To hear and act! That is the kind of faith we want in our students. We want to see a faith that is action-oriented, that serves as a foundation for a life well-lived. This is the challenge for your students, and this lesson will equip you to challenge them accordingly.

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 difference between having a faith that is fully integrated in their lives verses a faith that is more compartmentalized.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to go to <http://us.playstation.com/ps4/index.htm> and print the home page. Bring the printed page to class, but don't reveal it until the lesson plan calls for it. (If you REALLY want to sell the gimmick, display a box in a prominent location, such as a table or desk. The box should be empty except for the printed description of the Play station 4 that is included below.)

FIRST, tell your students that you have been thinking about them and their experience at church. Inform them that you want them to be able to have fun while they're at church and enjoy hanging out with their friends. In light of this, explain to them that you decided to get them a Playstation 4.

THEN, once they are done flipping out, ask if they want to see it now. When they say yes, display the picture you have printed from the Playstation 4 website. Say something like:

- **Here she is! Isn't this awesome? Check it out. (Really sell this. Look at the sheet of paper admiringly.) I am seriously excited to give it to you. Would anyone want to hold it? (Hand the picture to a student.) I hear the graphics are killer. And you won't believe the features. Did you know that you can actually start playing games while they are downloading? And that the new PS4 app lets your phone become a second screen for the game you're playing? I am so pumped we got this. Where should we put it?**

Go on like this until someone catches on. When someone asks if you really got one, say, "No. But aren't all the features really cool?"

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THEN, whenever it's the right time, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask something similar to the following:

- **OK, OK. I didn't actually get you a PS4. But, I've got some of the features on this sheet of paper. We could just read about them. That would be just as fun, right?**
 - Answer: Obviously not.
- **Why isn't it just as fun reading about the PS4? Why is it more fun to play it?**
 - Answers will vary. But the idea is that playing a game on the PS4 is how it was meant to be experienced.

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

- **So, what you're saying is that it's not enough just to know about the PS4 and all the awesome things it does. You would want to actually play it, right? Wow! What an interesting idea?! But seriously, of course this is how it works. Having knowledge of something is nothing compared to experiencing it. Would you rather read a magazine article about the 2014 Corvette or would you rather drive one? It's a no brainer, right? And yet, we treat our faith a lot like this. As we wrap up our last lesson on what Jesus had to say about our faith, it's important to realize that for many of us, we treat our faith as if it were just head-knowledge, not something that we truly live out each day of our lives. And yet, that's not what Jesus commands us to do. Let's see exactly what He said about this.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that our faith is designed to be an active faith that guides our everyday lives.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, remind students that this is the last lesson in your four-week look at what Jesus had to say about their faith. See if anyone has a particular truth they remember from one of the lessons, or an application point that was particularly meaningful. The hope is that something you've said over the last few weeks has challenged them to see their faith differently. Use the following bullet points to help you review:

- **Lesson 1: Our faith in Jesus is the means by which we find forgiveness and eternal relationship with Christ.**
- **Lesson 2: A faith in Christ that is pure and persevering goes hand-in-hand with an acceptance and love of God's Word.**
- **Lesson 3: Because of our faith, we trust in God to meet our needs according to His plan and timing, not necessarily ours.**

THEN, explain that you're going to start by looking at what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of Matthew. Instruct students to turn to Matthew 7. 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 Matthew 7:24-27, then lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Let's make sure we grasp what Jesus is doing here. It's another metaphor, right? What are the two main characters in this metaphor?**
 - Answer: Two men who are building houses. One is wise and one is maybe not-so-wise.
- **Describe the two different foundations the houses are built on.**
 - Answer: One is rock. It's solid, a good foundation to build on. The other is sand, a not-so-good foundation.

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- **And what happens to the two houses when the storms come?**
 - Answer: One stands strong, and one blows away.
- **Now that we're all on the same page, let's go a little deeper here. Jesus actually tells us why the wise man is wise. What did He say?**
 - Answer: The wise man was wise because he heard Jesus' words and put them into practice.
- **How do we encounter God's Word today?**
 - Answer: While there are multiple ways to encounter God's Word, the primary way is through reading and interacting with the Bible.
- **So, if we are to be wise like the man Jesus extols in this parable, what does that look like? What is the modern day equivalent of putting down a strong foundation of God's Word in our life?**
 - Answers will vary. But lead students to see that our faith in Christ must be an active faith. It must be a faith that goes beyond head-knowledge. We must incorporate our faith into every aspect of our lives. This happens primarily when we study God's teachings and, under the power of the Spirit, seek to and put it to use in our lives.

THEN, explain to students that this is one of the more vital aspects of our faith. Say:

- **Just like in the parable, life deals us plenty of storms. If we have an active faith that seeks to grow in the knowledge of God, applying God's ways and teachings in our lives, and seeking to become more like Christ, we will ultimately deal with the tough times of life in a godly way. The opposite of this is to deal with it like the man who built his house on a sandy foundation.**

Ask:

- **What is the modern day equivalent of the person who hears Jesus' words and doesn't put them into practice? Describe how that happens?**
 - Answer: Help students see that this is when we compartmentalize our faith, when we see God as just someone we really only engage with on Sundays or maybe Wednesday nights. We see this when we sit through small group time, or a lesson and don't try to engage with God's Word. We see it when we go through the motions of reading a verse here or there in our personal devotion time, not really seeking to grow in the knowledge of God and His ways.

FINALLY, close by reminding students of James words in James 1:22. Say:

- **James urges his readers not to only listen to God's Word, but to put it to work in their lives. When we hear the Word and don't do the Word, James says we fool ourselves. We fool ourselves into thinking this watered down kind of faith is what God expects, when in reality, Jesus desires that we have a rock solid faith that can weather any storm. This is the kind of faith we should aim for.**

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

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students think about how their faith really impacts their day-to-day decisions, thoughts, and attitude.
- **Set-Up:** You'll benefit from a dry-erase board or something similar where you can make a list where students can see it.

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to help them think about how their faith impacts their day-to-day lives. Remind them, to make sure they grasp the point, that the worst way to interact with their faith is to compartmentalize it, to act one way when they have their "faith face" on

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and another when they don't. So, explain that the point of this activity is to let them paint a picture of all the places their faith impacts their daily lives.

THEN, inform students that you want them to help you define the different ways faith comes into play in their lives each day. Draw a line down the center of the board.

- First, get them to think in terms of categories of people. Ask them to brainstorm the different categories of people they interact with on a daily basis. Write these answers on the left side of the line on the board, with plenty of room to write underneath each category.
- Then have them think of some the different ways that their faith comes up in their interactions with these people. (Examples may include how they engage in conversations, specific decisions they have to make, whether or not they develop close relationships with certain people, and so on.)
- Next, on the right side of the line, have them list some of the responsibilities they have on a daily or weekly basis, where their faith might come into play. (Examples might include a job, or a sport, or a club, and so on.)
- Again, have them brainstorm some ways their commitment to their faith crops up as they go about their responsibilities in these areas. Write their answers down on the board.

NEXT, ask students the following questions:

- **Why is it hard to always stay consistent with our faith in how we live our lives? Why is it tempting to have some areas where our faith doesn't guide us as closely as others?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What do you think it takes to make sure you're not compartmentalizing your faith? In other words, what can you do to be more consistent in all areas of your life?**
 - Answers will vary, but lead them to see it won't happen by accident. It takes awareness, commitment, and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

FINALLY, encourage students that this is an area that we all can grow in, but it's one that's important to really focus on. Remind them that people watch their lives to see if God really makes a difference. We don't do God any favors when we live two different lives. Our goal should be to live a strong faith, in any situation, at all times.

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the "Lesson 4" 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.