

What we want students to learn: That the ultimate use of their influence is leading others to Christ.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To identify opportunities they have to use their influence to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus and to commit to doing something about it.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 28:16-20

Overview: The Great Commission serves as a great send-off in your study of Jesus and influence. There is no greater use of our influence than to use it to lead others to know Christ in a saving relationship. The first lesson had your students considering where they have influence. This final lesson will challenge them to use their influence to lead others to Christ. Your challenge will be to help them consider what this looks like practically and then to challenge them to follow through with being influential for Christ's sake.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Your Influence* 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 Influence* Lesson 4 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

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

The Setting

Matthew recounts in chapter 28 the events surrounding Jesus' resurrection. There are two surprising events in this chapter. The first is the fact that Jesus is alive. It is easy to read the account of Jesus' resurrection

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without any anticipation if we have read it or heard it many times before. The last thing the women expected to find was a living Jesus. They had gone to the tomb to mourn, to carry out the Jewish rituals of caring for their friend and Master's body that would somehow help them move on after Jesus' tragic and sudden death. Matthew 28 is the surprise twist that no one expected.

The second surprising event in this chapter is how Jesus interacts with His disciples (at least the eleven who are still alive). It should not be overlooked that this scene not only comes after Jesus' death, but after the disciples' failure as well. The significance of Jesus' instructions lay not just in the fact that He was asking His human followers to carry on this movement after He left the Earth, but in the fact that the movement would be carried on by His human followers who had utterly failed Him. Jesus was putting this movement into the hands of people who by all human accounts should have been "fired" on the spot from their roles. However, Jesus still commissioned them. The reason why the disciples are up to the "job" is not because of their abilities, but rather because of Jesus' promise: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Main Point

Jesus' followers were anything but qualified for the task He gives them in Matthew 28:16-20 by human standards. They were not trained religious leaders, and they had only recently abandoned (and worse, in some cases) the leader they had pledged to remain loyal to until death. By all accounts, Jesus' expectation of His followers to make disciples of all the nations was very unreasonable, and perhaps impossible. Yet your youth group or Bible study likely meets thousands of miles from the dirt Jesus walked upon during His earthly ministry. Through Jesus' power and presence, His followers utilized their influence to accomplish the impossible.

We are not given influence, nor should we seek it, for our own benefit. The mission Jesus has given His followers is singular and very, very clear: to make disciples of all the nations. If we have any influence (and we all do), we should use it to point others to Jesus and lead them into a saving relationship with Him.

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 introduce the idea that we all have influence to "spend" and that we get to choose how to spend it.
- **Set-Up:** Have the Lesson 4 "Lead In" PowerPoint slideshow, located in your Lesson 4 folder, ready to go (or print a copy of the Lesson 4 Lead In PDF to read if you don't have access to a projector).

FIRST, introduce the activity by explaining that the group has been given the power to change the world. However, there are a few limitations to their power. Say something like,

- **I will give you a list of five things you can change in the world. For each of those scenarios, you have three options you need to choose from, and you can only choose one. Ready? Let's go.**

THEN, show (or say) each way they can change the world by referencing the scenarios on the PowerPoint slides or PDF, having a discussion about each scenario. Depending on the size of your group, you can simply ask people to share which option they would choose for each scenario, or you can have the group vote. To encourage discussion, ask questions such as:

- **Why would you choose that one?**
- **What makes it more "worthy" of your powers than the other options?**

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Have fun with the ones that are fun, allowing students to really defend their choices against others.

FINALLY, when you've walked through all five scenarios, transition to the Main Event by saying:

- **So, maybe we don't have that exact kind of power, and yeah, some of the examples were more serious than others. But the reality is, we all have the ability to influence others, and we choose every day how to "spend" that influence. At the end of our study last week, we talked a little about how even if we don't hold "official" leadership positions, everyone has the ability to influence someone else, whether it's a friend, a younger sibling, or a basketball team. And though the choices may not be laid out for us every day like they were in our exercise, we still have the ability to use that influence however we want. Today, we're going to talk about what Jesus might have to say about how we use our influence.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To inspire students to use their influence to point others to Jesus.
- **Set Up:** None Needed.

FIRST, see what your students can recall from your study of Jesus and Influence. Use the following bullet points to help you:

- **Lesson 1: They learned that Jesus desires to use their influence to positively impact the world for God.**
- **Lesson 2: They learned that their influence is impacted by how their lives do or don't match up with their faith.**
- **Lesson 3: They learned that real influence comes when they put others' needs before their own.**

FIRST, set the stage by leading a discussion about how the disciples had failed at being followers of Jesus by abandoning Him before His death:

- **What can you tell me about the events leading up to Jesus' death?**
 - The question is intentionally open-ended. Allow students to answer, making sure that important points such as the entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper (with foot washing included), Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His trial.
- **Explain what the disciples were doing during those events.**
 - Answer: They were with Jesus at the last supper and up to the garden scene (except for Judas), where they abandoned Jesus when the guards came to take Him away. Peter followed at a distance until he denied Jesus a few times, and only John was present at Jesus' crucifixion. The bottom line is this: none of them stood by their friend and leader as they had promised at the Last Supper, all of them abandoned Jesus at some point.

NEXT, tell your group that as you walk through this last session, you want them to keep in mind the fact that Jesus' disciples had abandoned and failed Him in some way before he died. Have a student read Matthew 28:16-17. Ask:

- **What sticks out to you in these two verses, especially verse 17?**
 - Allow students to share their thoughts. Make sure someone notes the fact that some "doubted" (NIV) when they saw Jesus.
- **This word "doubted" has the sense of hesitating, kind of going back and forth. In a sense, some weren't really sure that what they were experiencing was real. Why do you think Jesus doesn't address their hesitations and doubts or say something like, "Hey, I'm here! Why can't you just believe already?"**
 - Possible answers: Jesus knew they would eventually get there, or he was just used to them not quite being perfect.

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- **The incredible thing about this is that having doubts or hesitating about who Jesus is doesn't seem to disqualify His disciples from what Jesus about to ask them to do. In fact, Jesus isn't even phased by their doubts. Let's see what He asks them to do.**

THEN, ask student read Matthew 28:18-20. As you lead the following discussion, your goal is to help students start to grasp what Jesus was asking His followers to do. Ask:

- **Jesus says that He wants His followers to “make disciples.” What does that even mean?**
 - o Allow room for answers, but try to land here: the word disciple simply means “one who learns.” However, this kind of learning is more than just learning from a book; it's about submitting to a teacher and committing yourself to following Him. Jesus' disciples have spent around three years following Him and learning from Him, and despite their failings, they truly are committed to Him. To make disciples simply means helping others do the same thing.
- **Of all nations? Seriously? That's a big goal. Do you think Jesus really expected His original followers to accomplish that?**
 - o The idea is to help your group begin to grasp the fact that those original followers set off a movement that has impacted more people than they could ever imagine.

Make sure your students grasp how interesting it is that here you are, sitting in a room worlds away from the relatively small area in the Middle East Jesus spent all of His life on Earth, thousands of years after His death and resurrection. His followers helped to set something off that would go further than they ever could have dreamed!

NEXT, hone in on the fact that the Church is to be defined more by its mission than by a building, or set of buildings. Ask:

- **Now, most historians—whether they believe that Jesus was God or not—would say that the Church began shortly after Jesus' death. What do you think pops into most people's minds when someone says the word church?**
 - o Possible answers: worship services, a building with a cross, Christians, possibly some negative ideas about church as well.
- **By and large, in our culture a “church” is a building, just a piece of real estate. Some people might have negative things to say about church if they've had a bad church experience. But what if the only thing we knew about what the Church was supposed to be like was from these five verses? How would we describe the church, or what is it supposed to be like?**
 - o Allow for a good discussion here. This is a higher-level question, so it may take some prodding to get the discussion going, depending on your group. Some possible answers might include: to teach people about Jesus, to baptize them, to love people (because that's what Jesus taught). Once your group has wrestled with the idea for a while, make sure you land here:

Help student see that if we take what Jesus says here seriously, then the whole purpose of the Church is to help people become followers of Jesus. Say something like:

- **We think of Church as a building, but Jesus said that the Church is really a mission, a mission to help people be rescued through a relationship with Jesus. And to be honest, this is really hard for a lot of Christians to grasp. We often believe that church exists for us, to have a great youth group, experience God, or just live a better life. But if the Church really is a mission, then maybe it doesn't exist for us. Maybe we are the Church, and our purpose is to help people experience a saving relationship with Jesus.**

THEN, help students start to connect the dots between their influence and the mission Jesus has given us. Ask:

- **Do you remember the activity about changing the world we did to start this study? Most of those scenarios were kind of goofy, so let me bring the topic of changing the world to a more serious level. Do you think it's really possible for someone to change the world? If so, how can that even happen?**

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- o As students share their views, encourage them to respond to one another. Why do some say someone can change the world, and why do others say they can't? Ask students for real life examples if they get stuck. Throughout the discussion, look for things students say about someone influencing others, even if they don't use that term.
- **What's interesting is that those of you who said it was possible to change the world kind of said this, even if you didn't use the same words: the way we can change the world is by influencing others. Who are the people you influence in your life?**
 - o If your group has trouble coming up with answers, remind them of the worksheet they filled out at the end of the Bible study last week.
- **The bottom line is this: we all have the ability to influence others in some way. And if our mission as followers of Jesus is to point others to Him and begin a relationship with Him, then the ultimate use of our influence is to point people to Jesus.**

NEXT, wind down the Main Event by helping your group understand that Jesus expects all of His followers to be a part of making disciples, even though we sometimes we don't feel qualified to do it.

- **At the beginning of this study, we talked about the fact that all of Jesus' disciples He was talking to in this passage failed Him in some way. But He still entrusts this mission to them. Let's recap the ways that they weren't exactly qualified for the job. What did they have going against them?**
 - o Possible answers: They were not educated like other religious leaders; they doubted; they had abandoned Jesus.
- **Since Jesus tells His disciples that they are to also make disciples and point people to Jesus, we have the same mission, too. And just like those first disciples, no one in here is perfect, either. What are ways that might not feel qualified to point people to Jesus and use our influence to help them begin a relationship with Him?**
 - o As the leader, you might consider answering first to encourage others to be vulnerable. Share ways that you feel like you aren't exactly the best candidate to tell people about Jesus, both in terms of your talents and in terms of personal failings. Then, encourage others to do the same.
- **We're a mess! But Jesus' disciples were, too, and God used them to begin a movement that has reached even to here in our town. The really cool thing is that the reason Jesus can use imperfect people to point other people toward Him is not because we're so great, but because of what we see in Matthew 28:18 and at the end of 28:20. What do you see there that makes it possible for us to be able to use our influence to point others to Jesus?**
 - o Answer: Jesus' authority (and by extension, power), and his presence with us, even today.
- **The great news is that we aren't doing this by our own power, but that it's really Jesus doing it through us. All he asks us to do is to choose to use our influence to help people learn to follow Jesus.**

FINALLY, transition into the Last Word by saying something similar to the following:

- **As we finish up, think about this: the only reason any of us here follows Jesus is because someone told us about Him, and used his or her influence in our lives to point us toward Jesus. And because of that, we not only have a relationship with Jesus in this life, but in Heaven with Him forever. That's a big deal. The really cool thing is that God wants to use you to influence someone else to follow Jesus. And since we get to choose to spend our influence in any way we want, the choice is yours: to spend your influence in ways that helps you just get what you want, or to spend it in a way that points people to Jesus.**
 - o Note: if there are students in your group who have not yet made a commitment to follow Jesus (and given what we just studied, hopefully there are!), don't be shy about communicating that your hope is that those who don't yet follow Jesus would one day make the decision to follow Him.

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

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The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help students identify at least one way God is asking them to use their influence to point someone to Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a white board and a dry erase marker to write with, as well as a 3 x 5 card and writing utensil for everyone.

FIRST, explain that you want to finish the Jesus and Your Influence series by making a commitment to using the influence God has given each of us in a way that really matters:

- **Pointing others toward Jesus is one of those things that, when we hear what Jesus said today, we know we should do. But how to do it is another thing. What are some things that make pointing others to Jesus difficult or hard?**
 - Possible answers: Some people really don't want to hear about Jesus; we're worried about what people might think; we're worried we won't have all the answers.
- **In Jesus' instructions to His disciples, He didn't exactly leave a detailed "how to" list. However, in this series, we've learned a lot about what it means to influence others. Do you remember what those things were?**
 - Again, you can use the bullet points at the beginning of the Main Event to help you here. Make sure you write those answers along the top of the board.
- **So in many ways, you know what to do, right? I mean, none of this is easy stuff. And usually, we don't influence people overnight. But what Jesus is asking us to do is to invest in people—which usually means a long period of time—and to use our influence to point them to Jesus. We're going to finish this series with each of us identifying one person (or group of people) that we believe God is asking us to use our influence to point them to Jesus.**
 - Have each person share whom they believe God is asking them to invest in and write those on the board. Specific people make the best goals, so if students want to name a group of people, help them narrow down their answers from things like "my school" to "the kids I skate with after school" or "the other freshmen on my soccer team."

NEXT, commend your group for wanting to use their influence to point people to Jesus. Say something like,

- **This is a big deal, because a lot of people are represented on this board here. And remember, we aren't doing this alone, which is a good thing, because we're all messed up, imperfect followers of Jesus. So it's important that we start off this huge goal of influencing people to consider a relationship with Jesus by asking God for help.**

FINALLY, have each student write down the people they named on their 3 x 5 card, and explain that they are to keep that card in a place where they will see it every day, so they remember to pray for the person or people they hope to influence.

If there are no more thoughts or questions, close in prayer for the names your group wrote down, perhaps asking some students to pray for a few names each.

- **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 and with being mindful of the choices they make during the week.**

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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.

