

JESUS AND MEAN PEOPLE



Lesson 2: Love Those Who Are Mean To You

What we want students to learn: That they're called to treat mean people with grace, and in so doing, identify themselves with God.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate their own actions and attitudes toward any "mean people" in their lives.

Scripture Focus: Luke 6:27-36

Overview: Loving people who are mean to us is one of the absolute hardest things to do. It goes against every urge and emotion within us. But, Jesus doesn't give us much choice. This lesson will help your students see what Jesus expects of them in this regard. But it will also challenge them to focus on Luke 6:31 (better known as the Golden Rule) and consider how a commitment to living out this teaching will impact their relationships, with both "mean people" and "not-so-mean people."

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Mean People* 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 Mean People Lesson 2 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-mean-people-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:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

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The Setting

In Luke 6, Jesus is still in the early parts of His earthly ministry. Luke 4 shows Jesus being tempted by Satan, reading Scripture in the synagogue, healing the sick, teaching, and driving out demons. Luke 5 sees Jesus, among other things, calling His disciples. Luke 6 is basically a chapter consisting almost entirely of Jesus' teaching. This passage on treating mean people with grace is another large block of Jesus' teachings.

The Main Point

This lesson will focus on two key points: Luke 6:31 and Luke 6:35-36. In Luke 6:31, we get a treatment of the Golden Rule. As you discuss with students their attitudes toward mean people, this is an important place in which to camp out. As much as they might want to, students can't repay meanness with meanness. Jesus encourages us to treat the mean people in our lives as we ourselves would want to be treated. This is significant.

The second important point is what Jesus says in Luke 6:35-36. Here we see Jesus urging us to be merciful to those people who are set against us simply because doing so identifies us with God. As Christ-followers, identifying with God's person and character is what we are called to do. It's how we live out our new identities in Christ. This is the ultimate goal in how we approach those people who are mean to us: treating them with mercy because that's how our Father would treat them.

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 how they're affiliated with different groups by the things they wear, their hobbies, and so on.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to provide a way to show the Lesson 2 "Lead In" Activity Sheet (located in your Lesson 2 Folder). If you want to personalize this lesson a bit, arrange to show three pictures of yourself that show you doing something that says something about your identity. (Example: dressed in your favorite team's gear, doing a hobby you love, playing with your children, etc.)

FIRST, explain to students that we can learn a lot about who people are simply by observing them in their every day activities. Explain that we project a lot about our identities through the clothes we wear, the activities we do, the people we hang out with, and so on. To demonstrate this, display the Lesson 2 "Lead In" Activity Sheet. For each image, ask what can we learn about this person's identity just by looking at the image. Have some fun with this.

THEN, if you have collected any pictures of yourself, show the pictures and ask the same thing. Ask what the pictures say about your identity. (If you have time and want to open this up a bit, ask if a few volunteers can pull up a picture on their phones that says something about their identities. Have them show or describe the picture, and tell what it says about who they are.)

NEXT, lead students in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Can you list a few ways in which this can be a positive thing? In other words, when is it helpful to**

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be able to make some observations about people based on the way they dress, or the activities they are engaged in?

- o Answers will vary, but some examples may include: knowing what team someone pulls for if you're looking for a seat at a game; if you want to play a pick-up game of basketball, you would look for people shooting in the gym; if you need help at the mall, recognizing a security guard by his or her uniform, and so on.
- **Are there times where having someone make an assumption about your identity based on appearance or actions is a negative thing? Give some examples.**
 - o Answers will vary.

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

- **As we kick off our second lesson in our look at what Jesus had to say about mean people, we're going to be thinking about what our response to mean people says about our identities. And just like we noticed that we could tell a lot about someone's identity by his or her appearance or actions, we're going to learn that our response to mean people says a lot about our identities in Christ. Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about this.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help students understand that they're called to treat mean people with grace, and in so doing, identify themselves with God.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, take a moment and see if anyone can remember what you discussed in Lesson 1. Use the following bullet points to help fill in the gaps:

- **Jesus said that when we're living as Christ-followers and people are mean to us, we should count it as a blessing.**
- **We have to learn to look for how God is working for good through our interactions with mean people.**

THEN, instruct students to turn to Luke 6 in their Bibles. While they're doing so, help provide some of the context for the passage using the Details and Setting sections of your Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read Luke 6:27-36. When you've finished, say something like:

- **In this passage, Jesus is talking about how to treat our enemies. "Enemies" is kind of a big word for us, isn't it? Most of us wouldn't say that we have enemies. So, for our purposes, when Jesus says "enemies," let's think instead of mean people, those who can make our lives miserable by the way they treat us.**

Help students see that it's easy for us to hear Jesus' words here and pass over just how radical they are. If we go back and look more closely, we'll realize that much of what He says here goes against everything in our nature. But, explain that that's why it's even more important to focus on these words and exactly what Jesus is trying to teach us.

NEXT, have students look at verses 27-28. Lead them in a short discussion asking something similar to the following:

- **Jesus says, "I tell you who hear me," and then He gives a sentence made of four clauses or statements. Each of these starts with an action word. What are the four action words Jesus uses?**
 - o Answer: Love, do good, bless, pray (or pray for).

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- **Look at these words. Considering whom Jesus is talking about, what is so unusual about the actions these words represent?**
 - Answer: Jesus is talking about how we are to treat those people who are our “enemies.” These actions aren’t normally associated with people who are our enemies.
- **If we wanted to try and think of the opposite of these actions, what action words might we come up with?**
 - Answer: Something like “hate”; “treat poorly”; “curse” or wish for them to experience negative consequences; and maybe something like “ignore them,” or even pray against them (as opposed to praying for them).
- **Let’s imagine for a moment that you weren’t a Christ-follower, and you treated mean people in the ways we just listed. Imagine that you thought ill of them, or that you wished that they would get what they deserved, or that you just ignored them all together. Would this be acceptable behavior? Why or why not?**
 - Answers will vary. But help students see that for many people without Christ in their lives, this type of behavior would be “normal.”

Read aloud verses 29-30. Then say something like:

- **When we take verses 27-30 together, we see that Jesus is describing a totally unique way of dealing with mean people. There really isn’t anywhere else in our culture where we find anyone saying that we should treat mean people in such a generous, gracious, and loving way. In fact, Jesus gives a very powerful sort of “catch all” instruction in verse 31.**

THEN, have a student read verse 31 aloud again, and ask the following:

- **We’ve probably all heard this before. Of course it’s the Golden Rule, and even those people who don’t believe in God know the concept behind this verse. When it comes to how we treat mean people, why is this verse so amazing?**
 - Answer: Because it puts other’s interests on the same level as ours. It puts their well being as equal to ours.
- **Do you really live this out? Seriously. Think about it. How close are you to truly treating mean people the EXACT way you want to be treated? Why is this so hard?**
 - Answers will vary. Encourage students to really think about this and open up. Explain that this IS a difficult thing to do. In fact, without God it’s pretty near impossible. But, explain that Jesus gives a little more insight into what it means to live out the Golden Rule.

NEXT, have a volunteer or volunteers summarize verses 32-34. Then, begin to wrap up your Bible study time by looking more closely at verses 35-36. Lead students in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Jesus repeats the phrase “love your enemies.” He really wants to make sure His audience gets it! But Jesus takes a different angle here. In verse 35, He makes a statement that ties our actions to our identities as children of God. What does He say?**
 - Answer: Jesus says that God is merciful and kind to the wicked. And if we treat mean people with the same mercy and kindness that God does, we will be associated with God as His children. People will be able to identify us as Christ-followers because of our actions.
- **Jesus does this same thing again in verse 36. How does Jesus tie our actions to our identities as Christ-follower?**
 - Answer: He says that as children of God, we are to mimic the character of our Father.
- **Here’s a big question: We just talked about how hard it is to live out the Golden Rule. How does Jesus’ teaching about our identity help us see the Golden Rule in a different light?**
 - Answer: There can be no other motivation for treating our enemies kindly other than living out our identity as children of God. Left to our own desires, we’ll never treat mean people

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with grace and mercy. It's just not in us. But if we live out our faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we'll identify with God by treating people as He treats people.

FINALLY, remind students of your opening activity and how people make observations about our identity based on our outward appearance and/or actions. Explain that how we treat mean people speaks volumes to others about who we are. Say something like:

- **When we treat mean people with grace, forgiveness, and love, we act in a way that is completely different from how the world expects us to treat mean people. And in doing so, we make a huge statement for the power God has to transform our lives. Is it difficult to treat mean people with love? You better believe it is. But it's a mark of God's impact on our lives. As Christ-followers, it's an attitude we have to embrace.**

If there are no further questions or comments, transition to the Last Word.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help students evaluate their own actions and attitudes toward any “mean people” in their lives.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board or some way to display the four action words from Luke 6:27-28.

BEGIN by explaining to students that you want them to end your time today by evaluating their attitudes and behavior toward people in their lives who have a habit of treating them meanly. Remind them that Jesus gives us four really good words to help us think about how we treat people in our lives who are mean to us.

THEN, direct their attention back to Luke 6:27-28 as you write the four action words/phrases on the board. Write: Love, Do Good, Bless, Pray For. Then, work with students to brainstorm a list of ways they might put this teaching to use in their lives today. Ask something like:

- **Let's make this application relevant to where we are today. For each of these, let's come up with a few examples of what it might look like if you lived these out when it comes to the mean people in your life. What are some practical examples of what it looks like to love the mean people in our lives?**
- **What about a few examples of how we might do good to the mean people we know?**
- **Blessing those people who treat us meanly is a little trickier. What might that look like? Praying for mean people is easier said than done. What are some examples of what kinds of prayers we might pray for those people who are mean to us?**

NEXT, when you've finished making your list, have students choose the one area of the four they struggle with the most. Encourage them to write this word down on a note-taking app or something similar.

FINALLY, challenge students to remember this word as a way of becoming more Christ-like in how they deal with mean people. Encourage them to lean on the Holy Spirit, trusting that God will give them the strength to follow through. Remind them that the motivation for this is to be identified with God and to show the world the difference Christ makes in their lives.

Wrap up by closing in prayer.

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- **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.**

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.