

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 4: The Gospel At Work

Lesson 47: A Letter from Peter



Session Snapshot

Narrative Passage: 1 Peter 2:4-12

Gospel Focus: Matthew 5:13-16

Student Takeaways:

- Students will understand that they are part of a family of believers, called by God, and set apart to testify to the world about the power of the Gospel.
- Students will accept that their lives have the potential to point people toward Christ.
- Students will honestly evaluate whether their lifestyle points people to Christ, or leads them away from Him.



Overview

God miraculously rescues every person who places his or her faith in Jesus. Then He, through His grace, gives them a place to belong in a family called the church. But why? Is there a purpose behind our belonging? Yes! We will see clearly in our study that the purpose of God's people is for them to tell others about Jesus, and to demonstrate to others the love of Jesus. In this way the church points other people toward Jesus, helping them to see who He really is, and to understand the importance of His death and resurrection. The problem is that we often forget about this purpose, and end up pointing other people toward other stuff; stuff that ultimately will not and can not save them or satisfy them.



Teacher Prep Video

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Thread* lesson 47 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 47, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.



Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson we encourage teachers to help students know who wrote a particular book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **Why teach context?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

1 Peter

Author: 1 Peter was written by Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples and one of the key leaders of the growing movement of Christ-followers.

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Time frame: 1 Peter was likely written between 54-68 AD.

Purpose: 1 Peter was written to a people under persecution, likely under the reign of Nero. Peter calls the Church to persevere under trials because eternal life awaits them. He encourages them that God's promises to His people will endure and should be the basis of their hope.

Matthew

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.



Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- An introductory activity called Getting Started designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- A section entitled The Story featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- A special emphasis entitled The Thread where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- An application-focused segment called Wrapping Up helping teenagers ask the question, "How am I impacted by what I learned today"?

Getting Started

- **Goal:** For students to begin to think about how their lives point other people in a certain direction.
- **Set-Up:** You may want to bring a magnetic compass.

FIRST, explain to your class how a magnetic compass works. If you've brought a compass, show them how it works and (unless you have 7th grade boys who are prone to breaking things) pass the compass around and let them try it out. Explain the compass like this:

- **A magnetic compass is a useful tool for determining direction. It is constructed of a lightweight magnet and a frictionless bearing. No matter how you hold the compass, the magnet (sometimes called the needle) will always point north.**
- **But how does it work? Does anyone know?**
 - o Answer: The earth has a magnetic pull. You can think of it as if there is a huge magnet bar that

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runs from the North Pole to the South Pole. The north end of the magnet is always drawn to the North Pole end of the earth's magnetic pull. So, no matter where you are on earth, a compass will always point north.

- **Why could a compass be a useful tool?**

- o Answer: You can use a compass to determine direction, and you can always know which way is north.

THEN, explain to your students that a compass always points north, unless it's broken. If the magnet is faulty or the bearing breaks, then the compass might no longer point to the north. Ask:

- **What could happen if you were using a broken compass?**
- **Would a compass that did not point north help you get to your destination?**
- **What if you were using a broken compass, but you didn't know it?**

FINALLY, tell your students that in our lesson today we're going to see how we are called by God to point people in a certain direction. Say:

- **First, we'll examine who we are and what God has called us to do. Then, we'll evaluate what direction our lives are pointing people in. Let's jump in.**

Transition to The Story.

The Story

- **Goal:** Students will understand that they are part of a family of believers, called by God, and set apart to testify to the world about the power of the Gospel.
- **Set-Up:** Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find a dry-erase board is helpful to jot down some notes, but it's not essential.

FIRST, instruct your students to go to 1 Peter 2:4-12 in their Bibles or on their Bible App. While they are finding the passage, use the Connecting the Dots section below to help your students understand the context of Peter's letter to the churches in Asia Minor. Help them see how this letter ties into the bigger story of the church that began in Acts.

Connecting The Dots

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it as a way to review and/or to connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- **1 Peter is a letter written by Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, to several churches scattered across Asia Minor.**
- **The last time we saw Peter he was leading the early church. Now, approximately 30 years later, he is writing to churches that have formed in Asia Minor to encourage them in the face of suffering and persecution.**
- **Remember our lesson last month about Stephen? After Stephen was martyred, the believers in Jerusalem fled due to persecution and settled in different places. After they relocated, the believers established churches in their new towns and shared the Gospel with the residence of those towns, some of**

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whom then became believers as well.

- **At the time Peter is writing this letter, the churches in Asia Minor are made up of mostly Gentile believers (which means they came from a pagan background, not a Jewish one). They were living under the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire and facing discrimination in their towns.**

THEN, read or ask a student to read 1 Peter 2:4-8. Ask:

- **Peter makes two distinct references to living stones. Who is he talking about in verse 4? How does he describe the “living stone?”**
 - o Answer: He is referring to Jesus. He says Jesus was rejected by men, but chosen by God.
- **In your opinion, which is better: to be chosen by men, but rejected by God, or to be rejected by men, but chosen by God? How could this affect your life on a daily basis?**
 - o Answer: Hopefully, your students will want to be chosen by God. The rejection of man, while painful, is a small price to pay when you have been chosen by the God of the universe.
- **How is Jesus a living stone? How does the rest of the passage help us understand what Peter means?**
 - o Answer: First, Jesus is alive. This is a reference to Jesus’ resurrection. Second, Jesus is the cornerstone, the foundation of the church. Amazingly, God uses Jesus, who was not accepted by the religious leaders of this time, to be the key piece or the foundation, of His people.
- **Who does the term “living stones” refer to in verse 5?**
 - o Answer: It refers to the church, the people of God.
- **Peter uses the same term to describe Jesus and His church. What does it say about the church? What can we learn about who the church is supposed to be?**
 - o Answer: The church should be like Jesus. Our actions and attitudes should mimic Jesus’.
- **How does this passage describe what God uses to build His church? How might it be different than how we usually think of a church?**
 - o Answer: A church is a collection of believers. It is built out of people. Often, when we think about building a church, we think about a physical building.

Say something like:

- **Here is the point: The church is people, not a building. God is building a church made up His people with Jesus as the foundation of the church. Everything should be built on Him, which means that the church should accurately reflect who Jesus is and what He is like. In other words, the church should be pointing people to Jesus, and accurately showing them what Jesus is like.**

NEXT, read or ask a student to read 1 Peter 2:9-10.

- **How does Peter describe the identity of the church?**
 - o Answer: He says the church is “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.” Help students see that it’s important to understand that these terms are terms that the Old Testament used to describe the people of Israel. This, then, is Peter’s way of making it clear that believers in Jesus are God’s people. They belong to God.
- **What phrases from verse 9 resonate with you? Why?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **How does it make you feel to know that you are a part of God’s people?**

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- o Again the answer will vary. The goal is to help the students see how these words actually describe their identity as a believer.
- **Why did God make us His people? What is the purpose? What are we called to accomplish?**
 - o Answer: God made us a people so that we could tell of His greatness. Help students see that this is crucial. God made them a part of His family for a purpose. They have a purpose. The purpose is that they would proclaim or tell people about who God is and what He has done.
- **What story do we have to tell? How has knowing Jesus impacted our lives?**
 - o Answer: Our story is that we have been rescued from darkness and brought into God's light. Every person who trusts in Jesus as their Savior has a miraculous story to tell. Your personal story is one way that you can point people to Jesus.
- **Would anyone like to share your story with our group? How Jesus personally changed your life?**
 - o Answers will vary. Encourage at least one of your students to share his personal testimony.

THEN, read or ask a student to read 1 Peter 2:11-12. Remind your students that Peter is writing to churches that are facing persecution. Ask:

- **How does Peter encourage the church to live in verse 11?**
 - o Answer: He tells them to "abstain from the passions of the flesh" (2:11, ESV). In other words, to no longer be ruled by our desires. Living this way is distinctly different from the world.
- **How does verse 12 say believers should relate to unbelievers?**
 - o Answer: It says they should live honorable lives, even if unbelievers say evil things to them.
- **What is the goal of living honorably among unbelievers? What are we hoping will happen?**
 - o Answer: That they will see our good deeds and give God glory. The goal is that they will come to know Jesus.

Begin transitioning to the Thread by saying something like the following:

- **The way we live affects the way that other people view Jesus. Peter is encouraging the church to demonstrate the love of Christ to people, especially people who are hostile toward them. The big idea of this entire passage is that God has assembled a people who are to proclaim the story of Jesus and demonstrate the love of Jesus to people who are far from Jesus. Why? So we would point people to Jesus. So they would see and hear an accurate description Jesus and chose to follow Him.**

Transition to The Thread, where you will develop this principle more.

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FIRST, tell students that Jesus also taught that our purpose is to point people to God. Ask students to go to Matthew 5:13-16 in their Bibles or Bible Apps. Read or have a student read verses 13-16. Then, ask:

- **What two metaphors does Jesus use to describe His disciples?**
 - o Answer: He says they are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

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- **What does it mean to be “salt of the earth?”**
 - o Answer: Salt works as a preservative and to add flavor. Simply put it makes stuff better... either by adding taste or helping it last longer. The “salt of the earth” make the world better.
- **What does it mean to be “the light of the world?”**
 - o Answer: Light illuminates the dark. It makes paths clear, it shows the way, and it helps people see. If we are to be the light of the world, then we’re showing the people the truth so they can see the truth. People are drawn to light.
- **What are some ways that we can “let (our) light shine before others?” How can we point others toward Christ?**
 - o Your students will have a variety of answers. They could include following Jesus, telling people about Jesus, serving others, having a Christ-like attitude, etc.
- **What are some ways that we hide the light? What happens to other people when they don’t see our light?**
 - o Your students will have a variety of answers. They could include following the world, living selfishly, putting others down, having a me-centered attitude, etc.
- **What is the goal of demonstrating the love of Jesus to others?**
 - o Answer: That other people will see our lives and worship God because of it. Our actions have the power to point people to Jesus.

FINALLY, wrap up The Thread by explaining to your students that it is important for us to evaluate if our lives are pointing people to Jesus. Then, transition to Wrapping Up.

Wrapping Up

- **Goal:** Students will honestly evaluate whether their lifestyle points people to Christ, or leads them away from Him.
- **Set-Up:** A whiteboard, chalkboard, or poster board.

FIRST, remind your students of the compass. If you brought it with you, then show it to them again. Draw a picture of a compass on the board. Ask your students to recall ways that we can point people to Jesus. As they call out examples write each example down above north on the compass you’ve drawn.

THEN, ask your students to think of ways that we can point people away from Jesus. As they answer write their responses around the compass any direction but north. Explain to them that we have been called to point people to Jesus with our words and actions, much like a compass is designed to point north. Say:

- **When a compass is broken it still points a direction, just not the right direction. The same is true for us. When we are not operating the way God has called us to operate, we are still pointing people in a direction, just not toward Jesus. What are some ways that we can point people away from Jesus?**
- **When a compass doesn’t point north does that indicate a problem with the North Pole or the compass?**
 - o Answer: Obviously, the compass.

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- **If we see ways that we are pointing people away from Jesus, what can we do to correct it? How can we “fix our compass?”**
- **Are there some specific ways that you feel like you are struggling to point toward Jesus?**

NEXT, tell your students that you’re going to close today in prayer. Instruct your students to look at the compass on the board and honestly evaluate if their lives are pointing people toward Jesus or away from them. Remind them that their lives, like a compass, are always pointing in a direction. Say:

- **We’re not going to pray out loud today, but we’ll each pray quietly and ask God to help us point others to Jesus. That might mean that you need to ask God to forgive you of something. It might mean you need to ask God to help you change something. Maybe you will want to pray for someone specific. Take a minute, look at the board, and then we’ll pray silently.**

FINALLY, conclude class by encouraging your students to point to Jesus this week. Encourage them to read the daily devotions, which will help them as they follow Jesus this week.

- **If you’ve purchased the *Tracing The Thread* devotional journal, remind students that they’ll be working through Week 47 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions, and to give memorizing this week’s verse their best shot.**
- **If you’ll be utilizing the digital devotions included in the *Thread* curriculum, remind students how you’ll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.**
- **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.