

LESSON 4: WHY JESUS WITHDREW

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Whether we're extroverted or introverted, we all need time alone. Daily demands on our time and energy can drain us dry, and we need a chance to refuel and refocus. Jesus was no different. He was in the habit of withdrawing. In fact, the Gospels reveal that he did it often—it was a regular practice. But why did Jesus withdraw? Students will explore some of those reasons in this lesson and consider how to pursue this habit in their own lives.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1. WHAT:** We all need to withdraw from people, demands, and outside distractions—a habit that Jesus practiced in his own life.
- 2. WHY:** Teenagers can be inspired and encouraged by Jesus' example of withdrawing to refuel and refocus with God as the center.
- 3. HOW:** Students will spend time in quiet reflection, considering how to pursue this habit of Jesus and learn to withdraw in positive and applicable ways.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Luke 5:16

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 14:23; Mark 7:17; 14:39

TEACHING PREP

**LEADER
TIP**

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

Read Luke 5:16.

It's such a simple yet powerful declaration: "But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer."

Withdrew. By himself. Often. When we think of Jesus, we often picture him spending time with his disciples, teaching crowds of people who were listening to his every word, or speaking to someone in a one-on-one conversation. Rarely do we think of Jesus by himself. Isn't that an unproductive use of time? Or maybe boring?

This passage follows yet another miracle performed by Jesus. He healed a man with an advanced case of leprosy. The man was as good as dead, but not to Jesus. Jesus took the time to change the man's life and heal him. Jesus asked the man not to tell anyone. Because the man was so overjoyed, the report of Jesus' power spread even faster. Vast crowds came to Jesus to listen to him and to be healed by him. But Jesus still took time to withdraw to the wilderness for prayer, solitude, and time with God the Father.

It doesn't make sense, really. Jesus could have healed even more people if he stayed with the crowds. He could have spoken more. He could have made an even bigger difference, right? No. Jesus was fully God but also fully human. He experienced what we experience today. He knew that to maintain his strength, he needed to take time to refuel and refocus.

Jesus valued his relationship with God the Father. He wanted to learn from him, to be led by him. Jesus needed the time away to pray and grow closer to God—no self-help books or counseling sessions here. Jesus grew in his understanding of God and himself by withdrawing—and he did it often.

Jesus withdrew because he was tired, he needed a break, and he needed to refocus. These are all needs we have today. Real needs met by a real God.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What do you do for “you time”? Bring your answers tonight.
- Do you ever feel like just getting away to refocus and refuel? We'll talk more this week.

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

This week we wrapped up our series on the habits of Jesus. It has been an incredible time diving into the life of Jesus and discovering how his regular habits connect to our own lives. But instead of just looking at the habits themselves, we've explored *why* Jesus practiced each habit.

In this final lesson, we looked at Luke 5:16, where “Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.” It was a powerful lesson seeing how Jesus needed to get away from people and the demands of life—just like we need to do. Jesus withdrew because he was tired, he needed a break, and he needed to refocus.

This week, I encourage you to withdraw with your teenager and talk. This could be withdrawing to the mountains, the ocean, a park—or withdrawing to the coffee shop. Consider building your conversation around these questions:

- When do you like to get away?
- What do you do when you take a break from people?
- Even if it isn't me, do you have someone with whom you can share about these times away?

Thanks for supporting your teenager and this ministry. Have a blessed week!

LESSON 4: WHY JESUS WITHDREW**2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]****LEADER
TIP**

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead students in this opening activity.

Ask the students to sit by themselves, each facing a different direction and having enough space for a reflective activity. Dim the lights slightly, if possible.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We're going to start today by doing a reflective activity. Just listen to what I'm going to read, and think about it on your own. There's no right way or wrong way. I just ask that we all remain quiet and close our eyes out of respect for each other. This time is between you and God.*

I'm going to read a passage—Psalm 139:23-24—three times. Just relax and reflect on the words. Pray the words and listen to what Jesus is saying: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."

Read the passage three times, and take your time with each reading.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Begin by letting Jesus know what you're worried or anxious about. [Pause for about a minute.] What has Jesus pointed out that offends him? Talk with him about those things. [Pause for about a minute.] Thank him for leading you along the path of everlasting life. [Pause for about a minute.]*

You can open your eyes. This is something each of you experienced individually, separate from the rest of the group. It's OK to withdraw sometimes—it's essential and beneficial. Jesus is ready to help you refuel and refocus on what's really important in life. When we look at Jesus' life, we see that he took time to withdraw from all the busyness around him.

TEACHING POINTS**LEADER
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Luke 5:16 together as a group. Because this passage is so brief, consider having students read the verse several times, from different translations of the Bible.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This short passage of Scripture—just one verse—tells us a great deal about Jesus’ habit of withdrawing. Let’s see what we can learn about why Jesus withdrew.*

1. JESUS WITHDREW BECAUSE HE WAS TIRED

ASK:

- *Do you get energized more from being around people or being by yourself?*
- *Think about all the specific things that fill your day. Which of those things make you the most tired and weary—and why?*
- *What do you do to refuel?*
- *What does it mean to withdraw?*
- *How has withdrawing helped you in a real-life situation? Tell us about a specific time.*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *After Jesus fed thousands of people, Matthew 14:23 says “he went up to the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.” Jesus had just performed a miracle, had an incredibly long day, was tired, and withdrew for a long time. It’s healthy to take some time alone to refuel—especially after a big event or something you’ve been working on for a long time.*

2. JESUS WITHDREW BECAUSE HE NEEDED A BREAK

ASK:

- *Describe the last time you were in a large crowd of people. How did you feel?*
- *I know we love our friends, but when is it OK to take a break from them?*
- *How does it feel to rejoin your friends after you’ve been away—maybe because you’ve been sick or on a vacation?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Even Jesus needed a break from people. Mark 7:17 tells us about a time when “Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd.” We all need a break from people. Our classmates or teammates can be negative. Adults can be demanding. Younger siblings can be whiny. All of these people can create stress and confusion. Take time to withdraw, be by yourself, and refocus on what Jesus is revealing to you.*

3. JESUS WITHDREW BECAUSE HE NEEDED TO REFOCUS

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Again in Mark 14:39, we see how Jesus withdrew. This time he left to spend some time in prayer. This is the ultimate refocus. Jesus was removing all distractions—people, demands, and expectations—and focusing on his relationship with God. Jesus talked with God, thanked him for the good things, and pleaded with him to change other things. Jesus recognized that withdrawing was vital to maintaining his deep relationship with God the Father.*

ASK:

- *Do you feel comfortable talking with Jesus about everything? Why or why not?*
- *How does spending time with Jesus help you to refocus? Be as specific as you can.*
- *Describe a time Jesus answered your prayer about a situation.*
- *When can withdrawing be an unhealthy thing—and how is that different from what we've been discussing today?*

EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form three groups. Assign each group one of the secondary Scriptures (Matthew 14:23, Mark 7:17, and Mark 14:39) to read and to then answer these questions.



ASK:

- *What is the significance of the events that happened before and after Jesus withdrew?*
- *Focus on what Jesus did when he withdrew. Why is this important?*
- *How do Jesus' actions in this Scripture inspire you to withdraw in a positive, healthy way?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- *Where can you go to withdraw? Be specific and creative.*
- *What are some items worth taking along when you withdraw? What items would be best to leave at home?*
- *Would you prefer to be spontaneous in your time of getting away, or would you be more likely to plan an afternoon on a regular basis? Why?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It's important to withdraw from time to time. It's OK to take a break from people and demands. Just be sure that, like Jesus, you're withdrawing for the right reasons: to refuel and to refocus. As you come back from withdrawing, take time to reconnect with a friend or adult and share what Jesus is doing in your life.*

Ask students to each find a quiet spot in your meeting area for a few minutes of prayer and reflection. Consider praying together as a group or asking if any students would like prayer from the rest of the group.

SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

"But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer" (Luke 5:16).