

LESSON 1: FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

This includes:

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

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Sometimes this world feels like our home, but Jesus reminds us that our real home as his followers is in him. Our purpose, our hope, and our salvation can be found only in Jesus' presence, not in our surrounding culture. This lesson will help teenagers stay connected to Jesus despite pressures from society. Teenagers can find spiritual renewal and hope in Jesus, who desires to impact society and love others through them.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1. WHAT:** Amid cultural challenges and pressures, Jesus offers protection, love, and peace.
- 2. WHY:** Teenagers discover a transformative truth when they understand how much Jesus loves the world and wants to impact it through us.
- 3. HOW:** By embracing Jesus' protection and praying for his love to be revealed through them, students can experience spiritual freedom and growth.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

John 17:13-19

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

John 3:16

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 John 17:13-19.

Jesus' "high priestly prayer" in John 17 connects us directly to the center of God's heart. Because God so loved the world, he sent his Son, Jesus. And because Jesus loved the world, he not only became a holy sacrifice but also sent his disciples to every corner of the world to extend his love to all who would receive it.

Jesus knew firsthand what it meant to be sent into the world—and what it was like to live under constant threat and attack by Satan. So he prayed that God would protect his disciples. Jesus also knew the importance of offering hope and love to a worldly culture, as well as the importance of having ambassadors for his kingdom remain on earth after he returned to heaven.

Verses 15-16 are key to understanding that we are partners with Jesus. He didn't ask God to take us out of the world but to protect us while we're in it. It's critical for us to stay engaged with society as Jesus' representatives, loving this world as he does.

Being in the world doesn't mean we have to be swept away by its influence. Jesus is ready to reveal his truth to us, make us holy, and fill us with joy as we seek him and love the world around us.

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.

- How tough is it to be a follower of Jesus in today's society? Let's talk about it tonight!
- What type of influence are you having on the world around you? Get ready for some interesting conversation 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,

We've launched a new series on the topic of culture—lessons that focus on engaging society without being swept away by it. Each week students are diving into conversation and Scripture to unravel wisdom, truth, and encouragement for living a Jesus-centered life in a self-centered world.

In our first lesson, we read Jesus' prayer from John 17:13-19, which focuses on protection, wisdom, and purpose. He prayed not that God would take us out of the world but that God would protect us from the evil one. With God's protection and love, we can be a shining light in our society.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking with your teenager about our lesson. Consider building your conversation around these questions:

- Jesus prayed that God would protect us from the evil one. What's it like to know that God is actively protecting you from evil?
- Why do you suppose Jesus would pray that we "not be taken out of the world"?
- How do people become so comfortable within our culture that Jesus is no longer their top priority? What can we do if we realize that's happening to us?

Thank you for your commitment to our ministry, as well as your prayers. Have an outstanding week!

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

LEADER
TIP

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

We live in what some people call a post-Christian society; in other words, Christianity is no longer a major theme. Politics, pop culture, and even religion commonly embrace messages that don't have Jesus at the center. As followers of Christ, we can't hide or run away from our culture. Jesus calls us to live in it—and to love it. Loving it doesn't mean following it, though. We still must follow Jesus, and we can do this only if we're fully engaged in Jesus-centered living.

God loved the world so much that he sent Jesus into it. And Jesus fully loved the world he lived in so people could experience the full impact of his love. He sat with Pharisees, associated with tax collectors, and was friends with prostitutes and other outcasts. To a worldly society, Jesus brought truth and love, yet remained one with God the Father and didn't sin.

ASK:

- *What evidence have you seen to confirm that our society is post-Christian?*
- *What does that mean for you as a follower of Jesus? Are you frightened by it? Are you challenged by it? Or do you have some other response to it? Why?*
- *What do you think it would take for faith in Jesus to thrive in our society?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *People your age are connected to culture in ways that people in other age groups aren't. Today you'll have the opportunity to encourage one another to engage in society without being swept away by it or losing your zeal for Jesus.*

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 John 17:13-19 together as a group. Because this passage is so brief, consider having students read the verses several times, from different translations of the Bible.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend a few minutes working through this Scripture passage, where Jesus says a special prayer to God the Father for us.*

1. WE'RE JUST VISITORS HERE

ASK:

- *What's your reaction to hearing that we "do not belong to this world," just as Jesus didn't belong to this world?*
- *Think about a time you've visited someone else's home—or had a visitor in your home. How does a good visitor treat a host?*
- *In what ways do you consider earth your home? In what ways do you consider it a temporary dwelling?*
- *As he did with the disciples, Jesus sends us into this world to share his love; that makes us "visitors" here. How do you think you've been doing in this role, and why?*
- *What can we do to become more loving, Jesus-honoring visitors of this world?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *In our circles, sometimes we might feel there's no point being a Christ-follower. But we are Jesus' plan to love the world. Every act of love, whether it's something you say or do, matters.*

2. WE'RE SAFE IN GOD'S ARMS

ASK:

- *In verse 15, Jesus asks God to keep us safe. What are some ways we choose to walk away from the safety of God's protection? How does it feel to know he always welcomes us back?*
- *Describe a time when you've experienced God's protection. How would you explain that to someone who doesn't yet know God?*
- *How can feeling the safety of God's protection give us more freedom as Christ-followers in our society?*
- *Verse 17 says God makes us holy through his truth and his Word. What are some ways you can pursue and receive this truth and wisdom?*
- *Describe a situation where you've experienced God's truth and wisdom making you holy. How would you explain that to someone who doesn't yet follow Jesus?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The hope of the world is found in Jesus. Because we're in the world and Jesus works through us, we're partners with him to bring hope to other people. Living a Jesus-centered life means we offer our society his hope, love, and peace through a relationship with him.*

3. GOD SENT HIS ONLY SON, WHO SENDS US

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *In verse 18, Jesus prays, “Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.” He sends us as agents of his love to a world plagued with hatred, as agents of healing to a world that’s hurting, and as agents of peace to a world filled with strife.*

ASK:

- *How does it feel to be such an important part of God’s plan to reach the world?*
- *When the responsibility feels overwhelming, where can you find reassurance and support?*
- *What are some practical ways we can partner with Jesus as agents of love, healing, and peace?*
- *In what settings does being this type of agent seem easiest? In what settings does it seem most difficult? Explain.*

EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.



ASK:

- *Read John 3:16. Why is it so important to understand why God sent Jesus, his only Son, into a broken world? What words in this verse stand out to you the most, and why?*
- *Why is it significant that Jesus chose to send his followers into the world, just as God sent him? What does it say about Jesus’ attitude toward us?*

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

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- *God didn’t just send his Son for everyone else; he sent Jesus specifically for you. In the past week, how have you been reminded of Jesus’ love and sacrifice for you?*
- *How willing are you to be sent out as an agent of Jesus’ love to the world? To whom can you express his love today?*
- *What are some ways you plan to continue seeking God’s truth and wisdom?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *If you feel as if you aren’t strong enough or worthy enough to be an agent of Jesus’ love because you’ve made mistakes or shown poor judgment, remember that he loves you and wants to restore you. Jesus isn’t looking for perfect followers; he’s looking for faithful followers. We’re made perfect only by his love, not through our own deeds or strength.*



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



LEADER
TIP

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.

"Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth" (John 17:18-19).