

JESUS AND YOUR FUTURE

Lesson 3: Giving In Order To Gain

A 4-LESSON BIBLE STUDY

What we want students to learn: That we have to see our future as belonging to God to use as He sees fit.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To understand that Jesus may very well call them to make sacrifices for His sake, but that these sacrifices are part of the full life Christ promises.

Scripture Focus: John 12:20-26

Overview: Our teenagers (and us) are coming of age in a culture where sacrifice isn't exactly a value. They are expected to achieve all that they can to better themselves. As long as they aren't hurting someone else in the process, anything goes. So much of their world caters to what they want. But Jesus says that this kind of value system goes against what God values. Jesus articulates the value of sacrifice. And using His life as an example, we can see that God will use our sacrifice to grow His Kingdom. The more we hold on to this present life, the more we inhibit ourselves of experiencing the richness of God's will worked through us. This lesson will challenge students to be open handed with their lives, seeing them as tools to be used by God for His pleasure.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Your Future* 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 Future* Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-your-future-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:** The Gospel of John was written by John, son of Zebedee, a fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus. John also penned the book of Revelation as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

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The Setting

One theologian writes that chapter 12 is a pivotal point in John's gospel because it is the bridge between the public ministry of Jesus and the "Farewell Cycle," which includes Jesus' final words to His disciples as He prepares to go to the cross. The main passage for today's lesson takes place just after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and just before His trial and crucifixion.

The Main Point

The Old Testament is filled with passages about the sacrifices people had to make to God including animal sacrifices as well as sacrifices of their possessions better known as tithes and offerings. All these sacrifices were made so man could have a relationship with God. Jesus came to Earth to become the ultimate sacrifice and His death would forever take care of the need for man to take care of his own sin problem. The only sacrifice left for man was the giving of his life to serve others and to spread the Gospel. Jesus said that "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." That is the main point of today's lesson, to help students understand the importance living their lives sacrificially for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

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 think about sacrifice by examining how the game of chess is played.
- **Set-Up:** Arrange to display the "Lesson 3 Lead In Activity Sheet" contained in your lesson 3 folder, either by printing the PDF (which you'll want to do if you're doing the activity in groups) or by presenting it digitally. If you do the activity in small groups, you'll want to make sure students have a copy of the activity sheet and something to write with.

FIRST, ask if any of your students have ever played a game of chess. After allowing the students some time to respond give each student a copy of the Lesson 3 Lead In Activity Sheet along with a pen or pencil.

LEADER NOTE: You can be as detailed or as simple as you would like as you explain how the game of chess is played, based on your knowledge of the game. The object of the game is to capture the opponent's king and you can go into as much extra detail as you choose.

NEXT, tell students that the Activity Sheet has a picture of a chessboard at the beginning of a game. Ask them to look at the bottom of the picture of the game board and tell them the pieces have the following names:

- **FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Castle, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King, Bishop, Knight, Castle and all the pieces on the row in front are called pawns. (You can add how each piece can move across the board if you know a little about the game.)**

Ask them to locate the piece with the crown with five points on top and tell them that this is the most important piece in the game, the king. Explain that the object of the game of chess is to capture the opponent's king. Tell them that the game of chess requires great concentration and most great chess players are thinking about and anticipating moves two, three, and even four plays ahead as they plan their strategy.

THEN, ask if anyone knows the most important thing to remember when playing the game of chess. After

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listening to some responses tell them:

- **The king is the most important piece on the board and every other piece can be sacrificed to save the king.**

Tell students that the game of chess is about strategy, but it is also about learning to sacrifice pieces to win the game. Explain that this is different from most games they play today which involve simply thinking about and responding to the moment. Ask students to name some popular video games teenagers play today and ask them if any of them involve the strategy of sacrifice.

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by telling them that today's lesson is about sacrifice when it comes to living the life of a disciple. Say something like:

- **Your future is tied up in the future of the Kingdom of God here on earth. Today you are going to discover that God and the message of salvation are “the King chess piece” so to speak here on earth and our calling as believers is to make sacrifices so that message can go into the world.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help your students continue to examine God's call to make sacrifices in life in order to spread the Gospel in their world.
- **Set Up:** If you can, bring a small bag of inexpensive seeds with enough for each student to have one.

BEGIN the Bible study portion of the lesson by reminding the students that this is the third lesson in the series “Jesus and Your Future.” Take a few minutes to ask the students if any of them can recall some of the key points in the other two lessons then give a brief review from your own perspective. You can use the following bullet points for help:

- **Lesson 1: They learned that a forever-future with God is found through faith in Christ.**
- **Lesson 2: They learned that Jesus came so that we may have a future that is abundantly awesome.**
- **Lesson 2: They were challenged to identify ways they are living a full life, and to consider how they might embrace an even fuller future.**

THEN, begin the Bible study by telling your students that the passage for today's lesson is from John chapter twelve. Explain that this chapter is what is known as a pivotal point in John's gospel because it comes in the middle of two main sections. Tell them the first section is from John 1-11 and covers Jesus' ministry on earth and the second section is all about the few days before Jesus' death and resurrection. Continue to add a little context to the Bible passage by reminding the students that what they will read today takes place right after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and right before His trial and crucifixion.

NEXT, read or have a student read John 12:20-22. In order to give your students a good picture of what is going on here you will want to point out the following:

- **There were two people groups in Jesus day and those were the Jews and the non-Jews or Gentiles. The people mentioned here are Greek Gentiles who were allowed to participate in Jewish festivals because they were perhaps in the process of converting to Judaism.**
- **The festival in this passage is Passover, a main celebration in the life of the Jews. It marked when the death angel passed over the homes of the Jewish people while they were in captivity in Egypt during the time of Moses.**
- **The people asked Philip if they could see Jesus. Some people think that since Philip's name has a history among the Greek's he could be a distant relative to some of the Greeks but we do not know that for sure.**
- **One commentator believes the way the request was passed from Philip to Andrew and then to Jesus is to prepare the reader that something important is about to be said.**

THEN, read or have a student read John 12:23-24. Then, ask:

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- **Who knows what Jesus meant when He said He was about to be glorified?**
 - Answer: Some responses might include: He was going to die on the cross for the sins of man, He was about to fulfill God's plan, He was getting ready to ascend to Heaven, His body would change, etc.

Explain that Jesus had been preparing for the day He would die for mankind and that day was now very close. You may also want to point out that it is not by accident that Jesus said what He did in front of the Greek people because His death would mean that a relationship with God would now be possible for all people, both Jew and Gentile.

NEXT, spend a little time on verse 24. If you brought a packet of seeds take one out and show it to the students. Tell them that the seed will always remain just a seed as long as it stays anywhere but in the ground. Point out that within the seed is the potential for a beautiful plant or some other type of growth but for that to emerge the seed must be put in the ground so the outer shell can actually die. Say something like:

- **When that death takes place the new life of the plant emerges. In this simple illustration Jesus was helping the people see what He was about to do. His death on the cross would be like the death of a seed and open the door for every person who lives or would live on the earth to gain salvation or eternal life.**

Ask the students if this reminds them of the word they learned in the Lead In activity and if anyone can remember that concept (sacrifice).

THEN, read or have a student read John 12:25. Then read the following verses as well:

- **For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. Matthew 16:25**
- **Then he (Jesus) said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23**

Ask the students if they notice any similarities in the three verses. All three center on the idea of sacrifice. Tell your students that Jesus' teaching was very clear on this point: If we live only for ourselves and put our wants and desires as the most important thing then our lives will produce NO FRUIT in the Kingdom of God. But if we learn to sacrifice our lives and die to ourselves then God can use us to carry out His message of salvation in the world. Take a few minutes to allow the students to think about the important truth in verse 25 and allow them to ask any questions they have. This would also be a great time to share an experience of a time in your life when you practiced sacrificial living for Christ either in your finances or in daily life. This is where you really want to emphasize that without Christians making sacrifices in their lives the future of the message of Christ being taken into the world will be in serious jeopardy.

THEN read or have a student read John 12:26. Engage your students by asking for their responses to the following questions based on this verse:

- **What do you think Jesus meant here when He said to follow Him?**
 - Answer: To be willing to do as He did which was to live His life and sacrifice His life for others.
- **When Jesus said that we would be where He is, where is that talking about?**
 - Answer: In Heaven or experiencing eternal life with Him.
- **Jesus said if we serve Him then God will honor us. So what do you think that means?**
 - Answer: Actually the idea here is that God will honor His promise to allow us to be His children, have a real relationship with Him, and live with Him forever.
- **Have you ever thought about how awesome it is to be able to join with God in carrying out His work on earth? What do you think is the most important thing we can do to make that happen?**
 - Answer: Learn to live a sacrificial life.

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

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- **The verses we studied today are so powerful. Jesus gives us a perfectly clear vision of what our future will look like as His followers. If we choose to be self-centered and live life with no regard for others then our future will be a life that makes no impact on the world for God. We will be like a seed that never gets planted. But if we learn to give our lives completely to God and sacrifice ourselves by living an unselfish life then we will be able to produce much for the Kingdom of God. It all begins by learning to live out God's principle of sacrificial living.**

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

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help students think of some ways they can begin to make sacrifices in their lives so God's will can take place in the world.
- **Set-Up:** You will need the Lead In Activity Sheet and a seed for each student.

FIRST, ask the students to take out the Lead In Activity Sheet from earlier in the lesson. As they look at the sheet have them think about the chessboard representing their individual lives with the students being the king. Ask them to take their pen or pencil and write their name under the king piece. Then have them think about all their best friends and other friends and write their names on the board with maybe the best friends being the queen, bishops, knights, and castles and other friends being the pawns. Then ask them to look at the chess board they have created and make the following comment:

- **As long as you are the most important person in your world you will always think of everyone else as being expendable. You may not think so now but every person represented on your board will always be someone you can "throw under the bus" to protect your interests and your ego. Now that sounds a little cruel but that is always the way the game of life turns out for the person interested only in self.**

NEXT have the students write the name God above the king piece on the chessboard. Ask them on this board where they would put their name. Many of them, because of the lesson, will probably opt for the pawn piece. Then ask where everyone put their name on the board and allow a few minutes for responses. This will be a great time to make the following observation:

- **Since the lesson is about sacrifice many of you probably saw yourself as a pawn and that is okay. The truth is most of us will simply live life as most Christians and affect a small but important part of God's Kingdom. But there may be some here today who will do tremendous things for God. You may be more like a knight, or a bishop, or a queen and have many talents and spiritual gifts along with the ability to make some huge moves for Christ. Paul said the Kingdom of God is like a body and made up of small parts and big parts. Always keep in mind no matter where you fit in God's work on earth we all should think of the word sacrifice in our service to God.**

FINALLY close by giving each student a seed from your seed packet. Remind them what Jesus said about a seed of wheat falling into the ground and dying. Ask them to take the seed home and place it somewhere visible in their room. Explain that when they look at the seed each day to remember today's lesson and that as the seed sits in their room it represents possibilities that will never be realized. Challenge them to always look at their seed and think about ways they can "die to self" so God can produce fruit from their lives. Help them see that they are filled with potential and possibilities that will only be realized when they learn to live a life of sacrifice for God and His will on earth.

Wrap up by encouraging a few of the students to pray for your group.

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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**.