

JESUS & RELATIONSHIPS

Lesson 4: Relationship Number 1

What we want students to learn: That their relationship with Jesus must be the number one relationship in their lives.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate their relationship priorities and make any necessary changes.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 10:34-39, Luke 14:26-27, 1 John 4:20-21, John 13:35

Overview: There's no doubt about it: this is a passage that is hard for our modern ears. Jesus was shooting pretty straight here. Why? Because He knew two things: First, He knew that He must be the most important relationship in His follower's lives. Anything less would be a pale version of faith. Second, Jesus knew that this level of priority goes against our sin natures. We allow relationships with family, friends, and even love interests to take precedence over our relationship with Jesus. Here we see Jesus using strong language to make a point. Jesus knew that for many people, loving Him would drive a wedge between the meaningful relationships in their lives. That may or may not be the case for your students. But Jesus' words here are still true: our relationship with Him must take priority over every other relationship in our lives.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Relationships* 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 Relationships Lesson 4 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-relationship-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:** 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

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Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

The Setting

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus is commissioning His 12 disciples for the mission ahead of them. He is speaking to them to prepare them for what is to come and informing them of some things they may expect to encounter. While following Jesus may have seemed exciting at first, He is preparing them for a rude welcome and changes in relationships that they may not expect.

The Main Point

Ultimately, Jesus is instructing them that He is to be their priority and most important relationship. Following Him means dying to selfish desires and pleasures, as well as complete obedience and abandon to Him alone. While it is in our nature to seek approval from other humans or fulfill our own desires, a Christ follower determines to trust and obey Christ first and foremost.

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 lead students to begin thinking about what it means to make Jesus the priority in their lives.
- **Set-Up:** Computer and screen for playing America's Favorite Foods power point game.

FIRST, play the America's Favorite Foods power point game with your group. The game asks questions about foods that Americans claim as their favorites and is meant to get them thinking about naming something as a favorite or a priority.

THEN, after you have played the game, have a group discussion about some of the students' favorite things using the following questions (all answers will vary): What is your favorite sport/hobby? What is the best book you've ever read? What is the best place you've ever visited? What is one thing you want more than anything else?

FINALLY, transition to The Main Event by saying something like: There are many people, things, and interests in this world that we value and hold important. While these things are different from one person to another, we all have things we would consider to be a priority...something we want more than anything else. While there are many things we value, as followers of Christ, we should keep Jesus as our priority. Scripture tells us we are to love Him more than anyone or anything else.

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that their relationship with Jesus must be the number one relationship in their lives.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, make sure students get caught up on what you've studied so far. See if anyone can recall what you learned the last three weeks. Use the following bullet points to help if needed:

- **Lesson 1: You learned that understanding and grace are keys to Christ-centered relationships.**
- **Lesson 2: Students learned that there is no room for anger or hostility in Christ-centered relationships.**

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- **Lesson 3: Students learned that Jesus laid out the right way to deal with conflict in a relationship.**

NEXT, have students open their Bibles to Matthew 10. While they are doing this, use the Bible Background to give them some information about the passage. Then, once they have found the passage, read or have a student read Matthew 10:34-36. After reading, ask students:

- **Is there anything in this passage that seems a little off or wrong to you?**
 - o Answer: Considering one of Jesus' names is Prince of Peace, it seems strange that He would say He has not come to bring peace. He commands us to love one another (the second greatest commandment) yet He says He has come to set families against each other.

THEN, before reconciling this, say something like:

- **Let's check out some more passages. Maybe they will help us to figure it out.**

Have one student find Luke 14:26-27, another find 1 John 4:20-21, and a third student find John 13:35. Have the first read the passage from Luke. Say something like:

- **This seems to say something very similar but it uses a harsher word. In this passage, what does Christ say someone who wants to follow Him should do in regards to their family?**
 - o Answer: Hate his/her family, including parents, siblings, and children but also hate his/her own life.
- **If we read only these passages and take them 100% literally, what do we learn about the relationships a Christ follower has?**
 - o Answer: If a follower is acting against their family and acts as those they hate those closest to them, they probably wouldn't have any relationships! They would likely not be the kind of person others would want to be around.

Explain that at this point, this kind of behavior seems to go against much of what Jesus' teaching and life represented. There must be something more to this.

NEXT, instruct the second student to read 1 John 4:20-21. Ask students:

- **What are your thoughts after hearing this?**
 - o Answer: Answers will vary. Point out that these verses seem to be in direct contradiction to the others that you just read.

Have the third student read John 13:35. Say something like:

- **Ok, here's another passage that where Jesus seems to contradict Himself! Is anyone else feeling a little confused?! Jesus' contradicting Himself, or talking out of both sides of His mouth, goes against what we believe about the Bible and Jesus' character. As God, Jesus is literally incapable of deceit or dishonesty. So, what does it all mean? Let's check it out.**

THEN, have students return to the key passage, Matthew 10:34-39. Read verses 34-36 aloud again. Say something like:

- **The idea of a sword typically brings about the image or idea of war and violence. However, in this passage, the sword that separates two sides in a "battle" is a metaphor for the separation that is inevitable between those who follow Christ and those who don't. It is a symbol for the conflict and division that are likely to come our way.**

Ask:

- **Can you think why there may be conflict between these two groups of people, even within a family?**
 - o Answer: Following Christ leads a person to hold different beliefs, convictions, and ideas. It also leads to a different behavior. These things will not align with what someone who doesn't follow Christ values.

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- **So when Jesus tells us He didn't come to bring peace and we must hate those closest to us, is He giving us permission to treat them poorly? Can we use our beliefs and love for Christ to belittle or insult them?**
 - o Answer: Absolutely not! We are still to display His character that includes humility, love, and compassion for others.

NEXT, explain that you're going to clear this all up now. What are they really to learn from this passage? Read or have a student read the remaining verses in the passage, verses 37-39.

- **How does verse 37 clarify what we have read previously?**
 - o Answer: Jesus did not say we are not to love our families. However, He makes it very clear that we are to love Him more than any other.

Say something like:

- **Jesus doesn't simply want to be important to His followers. He requires a commitment from His followers that places Him in a position of top priority. When He says we must hate our mother and father, as well as all other family members, He is making a comparison. Jesus is saying that the love we have for Him should be so strong and hold such weight that the love we have for others should not even come close. He wants our total and unqualified allegiance to Him.**

THEN, focus on verses 38-39 (reread if necessary). Ask students:

- **What do these last two verses say about the love we have for our own lives?**
 - o Answer: Taking up one's cross is a picture of death. It implies leaving behind one's own desires, preferences, and goals for the sake of following after Christ.
- **If someone wants to follow Christ like this, what are some areas of their life that may be affected?**
 - o Answers will vary. But they may include making decisions that please Christ rather than others, having the character of Christ even if it isn't popular, choosing a career that allows for sharing the Gospel versus one that makes a lot of money.

Explain to students that following Christ is going to affect our relationships. It will force us to end some, it may cause tension in others, but ultimately, it will make our relationship with Christ stronger. His Word is clear that we can't please both man and God. Each of us must make the decision of who we will follow.

NEXT, direct students to think about how following Christ may impact their relationships with their parents. Remind students that one of God's earliest commands was that children must honor their parents. Ask:

- **How can you show love, respect, and honor to your parents while also keeping Christ as the number one relationship in your life?**
 - o Answers may vary but should include the point that when we love Christ and He is "number one" we will imitate Him, leading us to love others more than we love ourselves and serve them in humility. This attitude of humility will lead to an attitude of honor and respect. THIS pleases God.

FINALLY, transition to The Last Word by saying something like:

- **Keeping Christ as the number one relationship in our lives isn't going to guarantee that all of our relationships will be perfect. There will still be conflict. We will still have disagreements. However, there are two things we must remember. First is that Christ has been very clear that we are to love Him most. He is to be the number one relationship in our lives. This means that He is the first we seek to please, regardless of whether other people agree with us or not. Second, when we love and follow Christ, we love others like we love ourselves. This will require that we die to ourselves and our own desires. It will mean showing kindness when we want to retaliate. It will mean putting the needs of others first when we are tempted to be selfish.**

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The Last Word

- **Goal:** To have students evaluate their relationship priorities and make any necessary changes.
- **Set-Up:** Have a handout for each student with a copy of the hymn lyrics below on one side and a blank page on the back, along with a pen or pencil for each student.

FIRST, ask students to name what they think are some of the songs people in your church enjoy singing most. Say something like:

- **While there are many great hymns that have been sung for many, many years, there is one that is particularly good for this lesson. Rhea Miller wrote the old hymn “I’d Rather Have Jesus” in 1922. The lyrics are:**

*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land;
I'd rather be led by His nail pierced hand.*

*I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame;
I'd rather be true to His holy name.*

Say something like:

- **The writer of this hymn identified exactly what we've talked about today. There is a choice that must be made. Do you want to please humans? Do you want man's applause? Do you want to be popular? Or would you rather have Jesus? While it seems like the answer is easy, acting on that answer usually isn't.**

THEN, have students turn their paper over to the blank side. Instruct them to think about the relationships in their lives and start a list, leaving some space between each. This list may contain anything from the distant relationship they may have with a teacher or other acquaintance to those as close as their best friend or family. Say something like:

- **All of these relationships are important in your life for one reason or another. But none of them can be the most important.**

THEN, have students consider how they may need to make some adjustments in order to place the priority on their relationship with Christ over these. Next to each relationship, instruct them to make some notes on what adjustments and changes they have identified that need to be made.

FINALLY, close by giving students time to pray over their list and with a time of you praying for them to intentionally place Christ as the number one priority in their lives.

- **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.**

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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.