

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

SERMON SERIES

TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students to proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, and biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series are exactly what you're looking for!

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete detailed sermon outlines, discussion questions, and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

SERIES OVERVIEW FOR FOUR-LETTER WORDS

We live in a world and within a culture that teaches us to put ourselves first. We are told often and loudly that it is our wants, desires, truth, and happiness that should take priority over everything else. The Bible, however, teaches a very different worldview, one that is entirely counter-cultural to this type of thinking. According to the Bible, it's Jesus who should be our focus and priority. The writers of the New Testament and early disciples understood this. Their time with Jesus helped see their lives as a small piece in a much larger work of God. What about us as Jesus followers today? What could our world look like if we, as Christians, shifted our perspective and we all began actively placing Jesus as our most important priority? What could our own lives look like if we listened to Jesus more and listened to ourselves less? In this series, we will spend four sessions looking into God's Word and what it has to teach us about making more of Jesus and less of ourselves.

"FOUR-LETER WORDS" COVERS THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES AND PASSAGES:

- **Session 1 – A View On Worldview From John (John 3:22-30)** | John was preparing the way for Jesus when Jesus Himself showed up on the scene. Instead of becoming upset about losing the spotlight and his followers, John's view was grounded in his worldview that Jesus is always the priority.

- **Session 2 – Making More Of Jesus (Luke 19:1-10) |** A small biblical narrative about a small tax collector that provides us with a BIG example of our need for a change in perspective. Zacchaeus had everything in life. But when Jesus rolls through town, Zacchaeus realizes there's more to this life. And through his next steps, he shows us what it looks like to make more of Jesus in our lives.
- **Session 3 – Less Of Me (Matthew 16:24-27) |** The cost of following Jesus is denying ourselves. Jesus tells us in order to be His disciples, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. For us to make more of Jesus, we have to make less of ourselves.
- **Session 4 – Hope is a 4 Letter Word (Romans 14:7-9) |** Talking so much about our wants and desires coming second to God's can often leave us feeling like God doesn't care about us. But that's the opposite of the truth. God has already given us all the hope and peace we need through His Son, Jesus.

"FOUR-LETTER WORDS" IS PART OF YM360'S SERMON SERIES LINE OF RESOURCES AND IS IDEAL FOR:

- Any large group setting
- Mid-week youth service
- "Master teacher" format

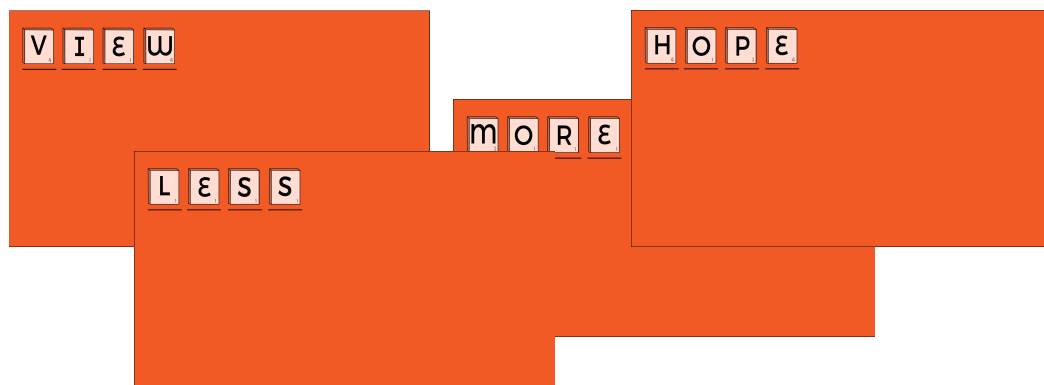
EVERY SERMON SERIES FROM YM360 COMES WITH:

- **Detailed Sermon Outlines** – Every Sermon Series comes with detailed sermon outlines. Teach them "as is" or adapt them to suit your specific ministry context.
- **Discussion questions** – Questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives. You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go.
- **Title and Background slides** – These are designed to be dropped into your favorite presentation software to help you build a creative environment around your sermon. Use them as a backdrop for song lyrics, Scripture passages, teaching points, and any illustrations you choose to display.
- **Artwork for promo and social media** – Social media images, web banners, and a printable poster file are included. Perfect for newsletters, websites, social media platforms, or print them off for posters and bulletin inserts.
- **Logo (including native logo design files)** – We include a logo file and the native design files to allow you to use the logo in ways you see fit.
- **100% downloadable and adaptable**

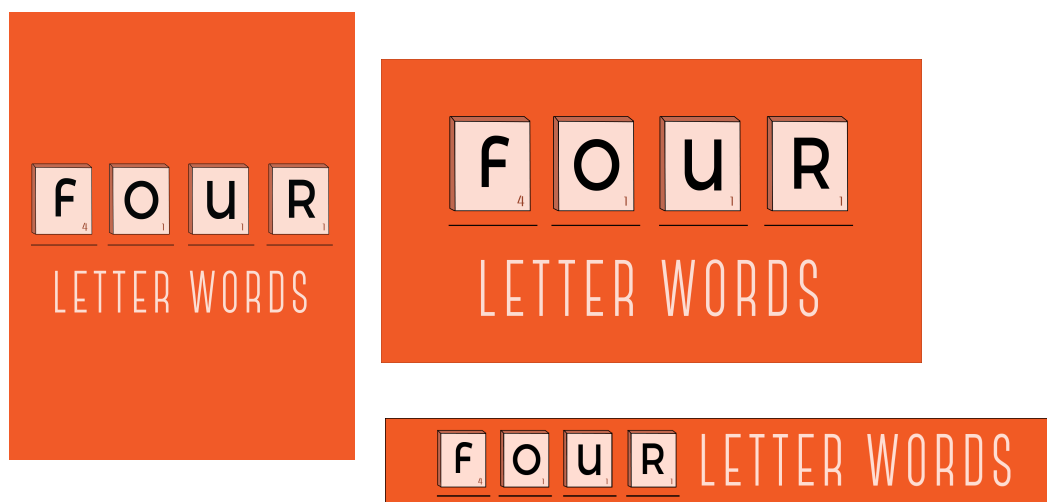
BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE. . .

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

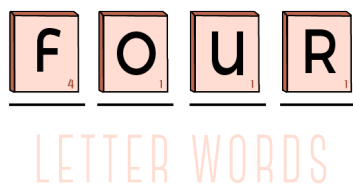
BACKGROUND AND TITLE SLIDES



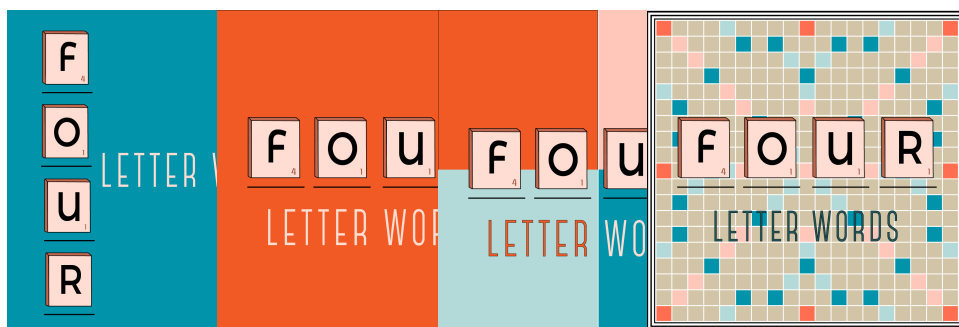
PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK



LOGO TREATMENT



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.



How To Use A YM360 Sermon Series | YM360 Sermon Series are designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. Each series download provides various elements such as a detailed sermon outline, suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you can use to craft a message that speaks to your students in your specific context.

This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

Make sure to leverage the series logo, title slide, background slides, and social media artwork this YM360 Sermon Series provides for promotion and message support. We've even included the native design files to allow you the freedom to use the logo in any way that meets your needs.

This YM360 Sermon Series was created to be suitable for all types of churches and ministry environments. It was intentionally designed to provide you with everything you need while also allowing you the freedom to make it fit your particular ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry like you do. Therefore, we encourage you to make any adjustments to this series you feel are necessary to best fit the needs of your students, church, or ministry context.

A Prayer Before You Prepare | God, I come to you humbled and so thankful for you. I am humbled that you have called me out as your own. And I am thankful that you show me new mercies each and every day. Make my focus and my priority you and you alone. Help me see that your will is far greater than my own. Give me wisdom and insight into how great your love truly is. As I study your Word and prepare, may your voice be clear. May your truth be the only knowledge I profess. And may I not leave this time in preparation with you the same as before I began, but closer to you in every way. Thank you for being my hope and my salvation. Thank you for being my good shepherd. Guide me in this time, my Lord, with You and Your Word. Reveal your truth and speak through me as I share that truth with the students who you've entrusted under my care. In Jesus' awesome name, I pray, AMEN!

Series Snapshot | *Four-Letter Words*, a four-session sermon series, will challenge your students to shift their perspective on the priorities in their life and ask the questions: What could our faith look like if we actively put Jesus in the number one spot in our life? What could God do in us and through us if we began placing everything we want secondary to everything God wants for us?

Series Overview | We live in a world and within a culture that teaches us to put ourselves first. We are told often and loudly that it is our wants, desires, truth, and happiness that should take priority over everything else. The Bible, however, teaches a very different worldview, one that is entirely counter-cultural to this type of thinking. According to the Bible, it's Jesus who should be our focus and priority. The writers of the New Testament and early disciples understood this. Their time with Jesus helped see their lives as a small piece in a much larger work of God. What about us as Jesus followers today? What could our world look like if we, as Christians, shifted our perspective and we all began actively placing Jesus as our most important priority? What could our own lives look like if we listened to Jesus more and listened to ourselves less? In this series, we will spend four sessions looking into God's Word and what it has to teach us about making more of Jesus and less of ourselves.

- **Session 1 - A View On Worldview From John (John 3:22-30)** | John was preparing the way for Jesus when Jesus Himself showed up on the scene. Instead of becoming upset about losing the spotlight and his followers, John's view was grounded in his worldview that Jesus is always the priority.
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Four-Letter Words Series | Session 1

Large Group Teaching Summary | In a world and within a culture that teaches us to make our wants, happiness, and desires the top priorities of life, what room is there for Jesus? The Bible teaches that Jesus should be our top priority in life. God's Word tells us that Jesus must become greater, and we must become less. His will and desires for us should always be the most important things to us. This was true for John as he prepared the way for Jesus. Even when others tell him the opposite, John continues to point to Jesus over himself. This is because John's view was grounded in his worldview that Jesus is always the priority.

Key Takeaway | Jesus is always the priority.

Scripture Focus | John 3:22-30

What You May Need | *Optional Illustration: A Song With The Wrong Message (Personal Story)*

I. Introduction

- A. We are starting a new series this week called *“Four-Letter Words.”*
 - 1. How many of you have heard the phrase “four-letter words” used before? Do you know what is typically meant by that phrase?
 - 2. If that’s a new phrase for you, a four-letter word is usually a reference to an expletive, curse word, or swear word. Yes, THOSE words. The no-no words.
 - 3. The use of those kinds of four-letter words is often what takes movies from G to PG, PG-13, or even R. The use of those kinds of four-letter words is often what causes music tracks or video games to get the little “e” for explicit label. Using those kinds of four-letter words can get you in trouble at school with your teachers or at home with your parents. Using those kinds of four-letter words toward an authority figure can get you fined, penalized, or even tossed out of a game. Just ask Ralphie from the movie *A Christmas Story*; using of those kinds of four-letter words might even get your mouth washed out by a bar of soap.
 - 4. Let me be clear from the start; this series is NOT about THOSE kinds of four-letter words. In fact, I highly recommend that we stay away from using those kinds of four-letter words altogether, even though our world and our current culture encourage and even celebrate the use of them.

- B. Speaking of culture, are you noticing the ever-widening gap between the things our culture promotes, celebrates, or says are true versus what God’s Word promotes, celebrates, and says is true? And it’s not just about the use of four-letter words.
 - 1. Think about the negative reactions, strange looks, or eye rolls you get from friends or family members when your Christian worldview causes you to bump up against what our culture says is the way to think, act, believe, or speak. It’s almost as if God’s Word, God’s best, God’s instruction, God’s commands, and God’s truth are seen as foul language (four-letter words) to the ears of our culture.
 - 2. We live in a world and within a culture that teaches us to put ourselves first. We are told often and loudly that it is OUR wants, OUR desires, OUR truth, and OUR happiness in the moment that should be our focus and should take priority over everything else.
 - 3. You can think Jesus is a great role model or a good dude. You can wear cross jewelry, pray before meals, or even lift up a hail-Mary prayer right before that big test you’re about to take, but when it comes to living (and especially controlling) your life, Jesus needs to hop in the back seat and let you drive.

- C. ***Optional Illustration: Tell a story about a time when you’ve seen people of this world put Jesus or their faith in the backseat. This could be a song that shares falsehoods about God. This could be a book that attempts to rewrite how God loves. This could be a conversation with a friend who doesn’t believe what you believe. The goal is to communicate the thought process of the worldview that we should come first (along with our wants, happiness, and desires), and that Jesus should come second, if on the list at all.***
 - 1. *Example:* I tell a story about when my wife and I attended a concert. At that concert, one of the songs from the headliner had this line in it: “Everyone is

nature. Everyone is god. Everyone is love and light and vibration.” My heart sank as I watched the entire crowd singing along with the lyrics without a second thought as to the untruth of those words. Everyone is not God. There is only one God who calls the shots. And His will should always take priority over my own.

- D. I get it; the drumbeat of it’s all about YOUR wants, YOUR desires, YOUR truth, and YOUR happiness in the moment is loud, and it’s coming at you from all sides, both day and night.
- E. The Bible, however, teaches a very different way of living life, one that is entirely counter-cultural to this type of thinking.
 - 1. According to the Bible, it is Jesus who should be our focus and priority.
 - 2. The writers of the New Testament and early disciples understood this. Their time with Jesus helped them to grab hold of this Biblical truth; OUR LIVES ARE A SMALL PIECE IN A MUCH LARGER WORK OF GOD.
- F. But what about us as Jesus followers today?
 - 1. Are we speaking and living out God’s truth in love as we live within and engage with a culture that often finds that way of living as offensive as using four-letter words?
 - 2. Or are we living in fear of the disapproving looks, the eye rolls, and the pushback that comes with believing and living out a different view because of a different worldview than what our culture says is acceptable?
 - 3. It makes you wonder; what could our world look like if we, as Christians, shifted our perspective and we all began actively placing Jesus as our most important priority? What could our own lives look like if we listened to Jesus more and listened to ourselves less?
- G. I’ve already told you what this *Four-Letter Words* series is NOT going to be about. So now, let me tell you what it IS going to be about.
 - 1. In this series, we are going to spend four sessions looking into God's Word and what it has to teach us about making more of Jesus and less of ourselves.
 - 2. To do that, we are going to be digging into four different four-letter words that are viewed as counter-cultural when seen through the lens of a biblical worldview.
 - 3. These four words that we are going to be talking about over the course of this series are crucial to our faith, our view, and our worldview. These words are VIEW, MORE, LESS, and HOPE. And yes, each of those words is a four-letter word, just not THOSE type of four-letter words.

II. The Problem:

- A. MY VIEW IS BASED UPON MY WORLDVIEW, WHICH COLORS HOW I SEE EVERYTHING.
1. Stop me if you've heard these sayings before: "Live your truth," "It's my life," "My happiness is the most important thing," "Do whatever makes you happy," "Live your best life now," "You do you," or even "Be true to yourself."
 2. These views are so common in our world today and saturate our culture, music, movies, television shows, social media videos, etc. because they reinforce the idea that it's all about us. These views are all based upon a worldview that is as old as time itself which says YOU matter most.
 3. We've used the term "worldview" a few times already. So, let me define it for you because it's important to understand.
- B. A WORLDVIEW IS A FRAMEWORK (LENS) FROM WHICH WE VIEW REALITY AND MAKE SENSE OF LIFE AND THE WORLD.
1. Our culture says that YOU are the lens. YOU and your happiness are the framework from which you should view reality and make sense of life and the world.
 2. This is an extremely tempting worldview, and it's very easy for us to buy into it because who doesn't want to be happy? Who doesn't want to have their wants, needs, and heart's desires met? Add on top of that how often we hear the message that "God wants us to be happy." That sounds good in our ears, and something about it feels right, especially to our sinful and selfish nature.
 3. But, if this worldview is true, then YOU are always the most important person in the room. Because, after all, it's all about YOU.
- C. AN 'IT'S ALL ABOUT ME AND MY HAPPINESS' WORLDVIEW MEANS THAT I VIEW MYSELF, MY NEEDS, MY WANTS, AND MY DESIRES AS THE MOST IMPORTANT. THEREFORE I AM ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE ROOM.
1. Think about it; we are bombarded with messages trying to sell us on this view (not that it's that hard to do so) that it is all about us. We matter most. Our happiness is at the top of the list. We have to look out for number one so obviously, our wants, our desires, our happiness, or our needs being met are the most important things.
 2. But God's Word is clear, and it lays out a very different way to view everything in life. Scripture provides us with a different lens through which to look at everything and everyone around us. This is called a biblical worldview.
- D. A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW MEANS THAT THE FRAMEWORK (LENSE) WE USE TO VIEW REALITY AND MAKE SENSE OF LIFE AND THE WORLD IS GOD'S WORD.
1. In a biblical worldview, we view everything and everyone through the lens of Scripture; not through the lens of ourselves.
 2. This different view turns everything we are being told upside down. The Bible teaches that Jesus should be our focus; not ourselves. The Bible teaches that following Jesus is our top priority in life; not our happiness. The Bible teaches that we are to consider anything other than knowing and following Jesus rubbish or trash (Philippians 7-9) (The Greek word here for rubbish is skubala which means trash, rubbish, or dung.)
 3. God's Word tells us that following Jesus means that He must become greater, and we must become less.

- E. WE ARE ACTUALLY NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE ROOM; JESUS IS.
 - 1. If that statement is true (and it is), then what we want doesn't come first; seeking what Jesus wants for us does. What we desire doesn't come first; running after what Jesus desires for us does. Our needs, our wants, and our desires, even our dreams of the future all come second to following Jesus.
 - 2. This willingness to say no to ourselves and instead say yes to God's view of everything is counter-cultural and will more often than not sound like four-letter words to our culture.
 - 3. It's a completely different focus. It comes with completely different priorities. It's a completely different view that is driven by and founded upon a different worldview!

- F. Changing our worldview and focusing on following Jesus can be difficult at times because it requires that we have to not only seek to eliminate that "all about me" worldview that is so easy for us to get caught up in, but it's also difficult because we have to learn to view almost everything counter-culturally. Doing that means we have to change our focus and adjust our priorities to fall in line with what God's priorities are.

- G. In the book of John, we see what our priorities should look like. We are a part of a big mission, story, and work of God. The Creator God lets us into His mission here on Earth. And we need to be sure we are aligning our priorities by putting our focus where it should be; on Him.

III. Words To Live By:

- A. Scripture Background
 - 1. We are now going to look at a portion of Scripture that comes right after everyone's go-to memory verse. Don't just stop at John 3:16; keep reading! Keep reading because what happens next shows us how we are to prioritize our wants to line up with God's.
 - 2. As Jesus was just starting out in His public ministry, He and His disciples traveled to a body of water located in the Judean countryside and started to baptize some new followers there. Not far off was a man named John (John the Baptizer), who also had quite the following and a reputation for reaching people for God and baptizing them as they became followers.
 - 3. A discussion broke out between John's followers and a Jewish man about baptism. It was mostly about John's followers being concerned that people were leaving and going to Jesus to be baptized instead of John.
 - 4. Now, it would have been really easy for John to get upset about losing both followers and the spotlight and, in doing so, for this story to go in completely the opposite direction. But John's view of everything and his priorities were driven by and grounded in his worldview. John's worldview was rooted in God and His Word. So when those around him began telling him that he should come first, John took the opportunity to make it clear that it is always Jesus who comes first.

- B. JOHN 3:22-30
 - 1. Jesus is fully present on the scene now. He is out with his disciples preaching and teaching, sharing the Gospel, and proclaiming to everyone that they can have direct access to God through this Good News that He offers. As He is

traveling around, John the Baptist is also traveling around and preaching about God's salvation through His promised Savior.

2. Now remember, John went out first. He went ahead of Jesus to preach a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and the coming of God's promised Savior. People had been flocking to John in large numbers to see this man they had heard so much about who wore camel skins, ate locusts and wild honey, called out the religious leaders for their hypocrisy, boldly rebuked King Herod about his marriage to his sister-in-law, was preaching repentance, baptizing people, and preparing their hearts for how the Gospel would work in their lives.
 3. And now you have Jesus, God's promised One, here in the flesh doing the same things; teaching and baptizing His new followers. While both John and Jesus are working and doing ministry, an argument pops up between some people coming to be baptized and some of John's buddies who are helping him baptize people. They come up to John and basically say, "John, look! That Jesus guy is over there is taking your followers away and baptizing them! Isn't that your job? He's taking your job and your people away! They should come over to us for that."
- C. JOHN'S RESPONSE IS GROUNDED IN HIS WORLDVIEW. HIS VIEW OF EVERYTHING, INCLUDING HIS OWN IMPORTANCE, IS BASED ON HIS UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS.
1. John doesn't get jealous. John doesn't worry about his reputation or give in to the temptation to put himself first. Instead, John calmly responds to them and says something like, "Hey look, don't worry about that. I've come to tell people about the coming Savior. That's Him! I'm here so that others will know Him and follow Him, not me. It's not about me. It's about Him! I am not the Savior, He is. I'm not God come to earth to save people's souls. I'm just a part of this incredible story of redemption that God is telling. The whole reason we are even out here doing all of this is to point people to Him, not us. So stop getting all in a funk and causing a stir about Jesus and His disciples taking the spotlight and baptizing people who were over here with us. That's exactly what we want to happen!"
 2. John then uses this illustration of a wedding of a bride and groom. He says a bride belongs only to her groom. They are meant for each other. No one else can stand up at a wedding and say, "Hey! She's supposed to be my bride!! She should pay attention to me instead!!!" At least you hope that doesn't happen. The friends of the groom are there to get people excited, to point to the bride and groom, and to announce the joyous occasion that the bride and groom are about to go through.
 3. According to John, that's what he and his follower are, and that's what you and I are as well. Jesus is the groom. The bride is anyone who has trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and has received His free gift of eternal life. We are the friends of the groom who announce the groom's coming.
 4. We are to be in the business of making a big deal about who Jesus is, how much He loves His bride, and how all of creation needs a relationship with Him. We get to share His message and share His love so that everyone who hears it or sees it has the opportunity to accept His free gift of salvation and come to know Him fully.
 5. John is making it clear to his buddies in this moment (and is making it clear to us today) that we aren't the groom. We aren't the most important person in the room. It's not all about us. It's about us telling people about how awesome He is!

6. And because of that, He must become greater. He must become more of what I talk about. He must become the foundation of my worldview, and the lens through which I view everything and everyone. He must become the basis of how I live my life, what I focus on, what I show other people, and what I build my priorities around.

IV. Application:

- A. John gives us such great insight on what it looks like to make Jesus our priority in life. And through our passage, two questions come up that we should take a quick look at before we end this first session together.
 1. IS JESUS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN MY LIFE?
 - a) How often do we elevate ourselves or our wants or our happiness in the moment over that of Jesus? If we're totally honest with ourselves, the answer is probably a lot. We put Jesus in the back seat and drive more often than we should.
 - b) If it's all about us: OUR wants, OUR desires, OUR truth, and OUR happiness in the moment, then we are the most important person in the room. And when we are the most important person in the room, we are our own god.
 2. HOW CAN I TAKE THE FOCUS OFF MYSELF?
 - a) What is something you can do this week, very practically, to take the spotlight off of you and your wants? What could your life look like; what could your faith look like in the coming weeks or months if you were to begin to give Jesus priority in your daily life this week?
 - b) Churchy answers are ok here. Reading your Bible more, praying every day, taking time out to praise God for His blessings, or praying on behalf of others' needs. Sharing your faith with a friend or inviting them to church puts Jesus at the front of your mind. There are so many ways you can put your focus on Jesus. And it's important to remember, not all of them have to be some massive life-changing effort. Even the smallest of details in growing your faith can lead to major life change. Taking one step at a time is good walking!

V. Optional Gospel Call:

- A. We can't make Jesus our number one priority if we don't know Him. The first step we can take to make Him a priority is to start a relationship with Him.

Teacher's Note: Take a moment here to walk students through the Gospel.

1. If you've never made that decision for your own life, this session may have been difficult to understand. This is because we have to choose to live for Jesus first if we are going to make Him our first priority. Then, as we grow in our faith and our becoming more like Him, we can continue to give Jesus our focus every day.

VI. Conclusion:

- A. It's easy to listen to the noise of our culture that is constantly and loudly telling us that it's all about you. It's easy to give in to the narrative that we are the most important one in the room. It's easy to fall into the trap of basing our view of everything and everyone around the worldview of looking out for number one. When we develop an 'It's all about me and my happiness' worldview obviously, our wants, our desires, our happiness, or our needs being met quickly become the most important things.

Four-Letter Words Sermon Series | Session 1: A View On Worldview From John

- B. It takes knowing and following Jesus to live for something beyond ourselves. And that is what God calls us to. John understood this. John's view was grounded in his worldview that Jesus is always the priority.
- C. When we begin to view everything through the lens of God's worldview (the Bible), our own worldview begins to change. Our priorities begin to align with God's priorities. We begin to see everything and everyone through a Godly lens. And in doing so, we begin to grow to become more like Jesus.

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Key Takeaway | Jesus is always the priority.

Scripture Focus | John 3:22-30

Four-Letter Words | Session 1 Discussion Questions

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Get Them Talking | An Optional Opening Question To Get Students Talking

What is the most important position on a sports team, or who the most important person at a company like Amazon? Why? Examples: A quarterback is the most important person in football because they hold the football the most. A coach is the most important because they call the plays. A CEO is the most important because they are in charge. The mail delivery guy is important because they deliver important info/packages where they need to go.

Discussion Questions

1. Read John 3:22-30. What are some of your first observations? What really sticks out to you?
2. In what areas are you noticing about the ever-widening gap between the things our culture promotes, celebrates, or says are true versus what God's Word promotes, celebrates, and says is true? List some out.
3. In what specific ways do you struggle with your wants, desires, truth, or your happiness in the moment, being your focus and taking priority over everything else? Why do you think you struggle with it as much as you do?
4. Is it hard for you to make Jesus your primary focus every day? Why do you think that's the case for you? What gets in the way of considering everything other than knowing and following Jesus rubbish or trash?
5. If you were 100% honest, what are some words that would describe what your worldview is based on today?
6. What would it look like for you to change your worldview to align more with God's? What would you have to change? What would you need to give up? What would you need to add? What accountability would you need?
7. What are one or two practical ways this week you could take the focus off of you and put it on Jesus?