

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 WALK THE PLANK: Dying to Self Means Life to The Full

The ironic call of God is that to ultimately find our life, we must lose it first. Not only does this sound a little wild, but it begs the question "How do we *die to ourselves*" or "*walk the plank*", practically? In this series, we'll explore real-life, examples of men and women throughout the pages of Scripture who "Died to Themselves" and explore their "Death Moment" which will give us clues into what areas in our own lives we need to lay down at the feet of Jesus.

## **"WALK THE PLANK" COVERS THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES AND PASSAGES:**

- Session 1 – He Must Increase, I Must Decrease (John 3:22-30) | John the Baptist was the forerunner to Jesus in the wilderness. John had his own ministry with his own disciples. Not to mention, he and Jesus were cousins! But when the time came for him to lay down his pride, he did so, and he did masterfully! Paving the way, not only for this series but for the life of Christ, we can look to the example of John the Baptist that he utters in John 3:30.
- Session 2 – What Do You Need to Offer Up? (Genesis 17:1-19; Genesis 22:1-5) | Abraham and his wife Sarah were childless. They may have been content with that reality, but God swoops in and offers them a promise to be the father (and mother) of many nations. Only one problem. They don't have kids. So when God finally blesses Abraham with a son, Isaac, God, who gave the son in the first place, asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. In this session, we'll explore the heart-wrenching story and ask you the question: What do you need to offer up to God?
- Session 3 – What Road Will You Choose? (Ruth 1:16-22) | The Story of Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah is super interesting. Ruth chooses to stay with her mother-in-law, who she has no ties to, and return to Naomi's homeland and her obedience pays off in the long run. Because of Ruth's selfless decision, she ultimately becomes a member of the genealogy of Jesus. In this session, we'll ask you to explore your life through an eternal perspective and ask: Is the path I'm on leading to where I want to go?
- Session 4 – Our Greatest Example (Matthew 26:38-39) | The fourth and final example of someone who "walks the plank" comes from the ultimate example in all of Scripture. Jesus Himself. Jesus' life was marked by multiple decisions to say no to Himself, none of these decisions was more powerful than the moment in the Garden when He chose suffering over comfort. Now how do we, in light of the ultimate example and sacrifice, turn our attention to doing that for other people? And what does that mean and look like for each of us?

## **"WALK THE PLANK" 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

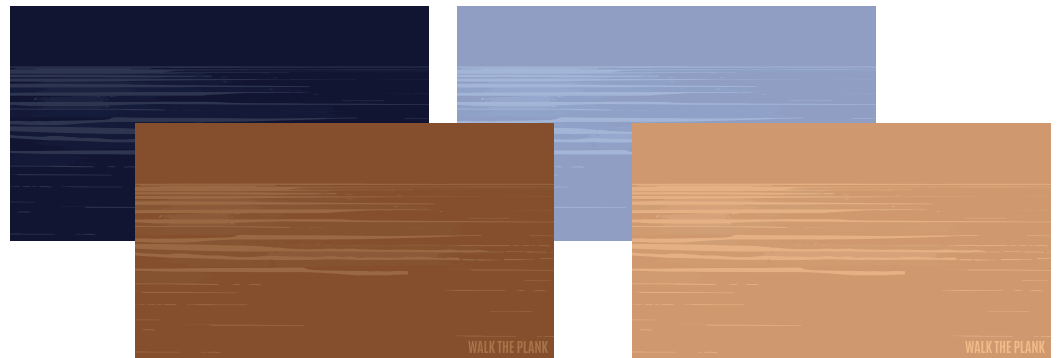
# BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

## 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**

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**



**INSTAGRAM  
IMAGES**



**LOGO  
TREATMENT**

**WALK THE PLANK**

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.

## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

**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 ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry as 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** | Lord Jesus, I thank you for the privilege it is to teach this series to students. I pray that as I teach it, the truths that are in these pages are not lost on me. And Lord, as I attempt to teach students the value of laying down their life for the sake of the gospel, if there is any idolatry in my heart or anything that I'm not fully surrendered to you on, help me find the conviction needed to obey these messages for myself first, before I turn around and teach it to students.

Thank you Jesus for your invitation to spread the message of the gospel to those around me. Help me never to take that lightly.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen

## ***Walk the Plank Teaching Guide | A One-Page Glimpse Of Everything You Need To Prepare***

---

**Series Snapshot** | The ironic call of God is that to ultimately find our life, we must lose it first. Not only does this sound a little wild, but it begs the question “How do we *die to ourselves*” or “*walk the plank*”, practically? In this series, we’ll explore real-life, examples of men and women throughout the pages of Scripture who “Died to Themselves” and explore their “Death Moment” which will give us clues into what areas in our own lives we need to lay down at the feet of Jesus.

**Series Overview** | This series will introduce students to men and women in the Bible who lived a life fully surrendered to God and decided to “die to themselves”. Because of their obedience and surrender, they discovered the fullness of the abundant life that God has on offer! In these incredible examples is an invitation to us all, to die to ourselves to truly live.

- **Session 1 – He Must Increase, I Must Decrease (John 3:22-30)** | John the Baptist was the forerunner to Jesus in the wilderness. John had his own ministry with his own disciples. Not to mention, he and Jesus were cousins! But when the time came for him to lay down his pride, he did so, and he did masterfully! Paving the way, not only for this series but for the life of Christ, we can look to the example of John the Baptist that he utters in John 3:30.
- **Session 2 – What Do You Need to Offer Up? (Genesis 17:1-19; Genesis 22:1-5)** | Abraham and his wife Sarah were childless. They may have been content with that reality, but God swoops in and offers them a promise to be the father (and mother) of many nations. Only one problem. They don’t have kids. So when God finally blesses Abraham with a son, Isaac, God, who gave the son in the first place, asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. In this session, we’ll explore the heart-wrenching story and ask you the question: What do you need to offer up to God?
- **Session 3 – What Road Will You Choose? (Ruth 1:16-22)** | The Story of Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah is super interesting. Ruth chooses to stay with her mother-in-law, who she has no ties to, and return to Naomi’s homeland and her obedience pays off in the long run. Because of Ruth’s selfless decision, she ultimately becomes a member of the genealogy of Jesus. In this session, we’ll ask you to explore your life through an eternal perspective and ask: Is the path I’m on leading to where I want to go?
- **Session 4 – Our Greatest Example (Matthew 26:38-39)** | The fourth and final example of someone who “walks the plank” comes from the ultimate example in all of Scripture. Jesus Himself. Jesus’ life was marked by multiple decisions to say no to Himself, none of these decisions was more powerful than the moment in the Garden when He chose suffering over comfort. Now how do we, in light of the ultimate example and sacrifice, turn our attention to doing that for other people? And what does that mean and look like for each of us?

### **Walk The Plank Series | Session 1**

---

**Large Group Teaching Summary** | John the Baptist was the forerunner to Jesus in the wilderness. John had his own ministry with his own disciples. Not to mention, he and Jesus were cousins! But when the time came for him to lay down his pride, he did so, and he did masterfully! Paving the way, not only for this series but for the life of Christ, we can look to the example of John the Baptist that he utters in John 3:30.

**Key Takeaway** | This life isn’t meant to be all about me.

**Scripture Focus** | John 3:22-30

**What You May Need**

## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

### I. Introduction:

#### A. IRONY OF DEATH TO SELF

1. I find our relationship with God and especially church a bit ironic at times. Here's why I say that. You have no doubt heard promises like:
  - a) *"Bring your difficulties and cares to God"*
  - b) *"God is the God of all hope and comfort"*
  - c) *"Bring your burdens to Jesus"*
2. *But then we read a verse like this: Galatians 2:20*
  - a) *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*
3. Those first few statements give me the warm fuzzies, then we get to this verse in Galatians and all of the sudden, it feels like we're asked to die. That feels like a hard left turn that I wasn't ready for.
4. And so the confusing messaging can be
  - a) Are we supposed to be hopeful and bring our hard things to God?
  - b) Or are we supposed to die? And what does that even mean??

### II. Tension:

#### A. WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN LIFE SEEMS TOO HARD?

1. Based on what I just shared it seems like we have two choices and they seem to be opposites in some ways. Find comfort in God or die to yourself... Let's explore the second option
2. What is death to self and what does that look like in my every day life? But that's the end of the questions connected to this idea.
  - a) Are we even supposed to die to ourselves when life is hard?
  - b) Are we supposed to do that when we don't feel like it?
  - c) And how will that do anything for me?
3. At times, one of the gifts of the Bible is the characters we meet within its pages. Through their stories we get examples, often imperfect ones, about what it looks like to walk with God. They're relatable for that reason, we're all on a faith journey and usually, our journey is filled with questions, doubts, missteps, and stumbles, and through it all God is present with us, teaching and tending to us. The same is true of the characters throughout the Bible.
4. We might be able to learn a few things from one interesting character from the Bible for this session. You've probably heard of him before, his name is John the Baptist.

### III. Truth:

#### A. TURN TO JOHN 3

1. Before we jump into the reading for today, I want to give a little context to the story and to the life of John the Baptist, just to be sure we're on the same page.
2. John the Baptist was actually related to Jesus, they were cousins and really were linked from before they were born. There were prophecies about both of them while they were still in the womb. Prophecies about Jesus being the Messiah

## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

and about John being the prophet who prepare the world for the coming of Jesus.

3. What you might not know is that he was the last prophet in the Bible to proclaim the coming of the Messiah
  - a) People you may have heard of like:
    - (1) Jeremiah
    - (2) Elijah
    - (3) Isaiah
    - (4) John was the last in that group of people who spoke to people about the work and will of God. In this case, John's specific message was about the person of Jesus.
4. John's Father, Zechariah, was a priest in the temple. The priests in John's day were responsible for representing the people before God. They would offer sacrifices for the sins of the people and pray for them.
5. You could almost simply the roles like this: a prophet represented God to the people and a priest represented the people to God.
6. Because John's dad was a priest that likely means John was being raised up to become a priest himself, but instead the Spirit of God led John out into the wilderness to live as a wild man who learned to live and eat off the land.
  - a) The Bible claims that John ate locust and wild honey as a part of his daily diet and that he wore camel clothes.
  - b) So John sort of gets this reputation as a bit of a Wildman.
  - c) Quite a turn of events here. Priests were well-respected, "clean" leaders of sorts among the Jews. John was headed that way and ended up eating bugs and dressing in camel hair hoodies. Not exactly the clean-cut "leader" he was raised up to be. But John still had incredible work to do!
7. John's out here, in all his Wildman getup, preaching this message of the coming of Jesus and the need for repentance.
8. **Repentance is a big, and sometimes old-school, Christian word.**
9. The dictionary definitions of repentance or to repent are:
  - a) *To turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life*
  - b) *To feel regret or contrition; to change one's mind.*
10. Right? This is a very real example of a very bad thing happening.

### B. Read John 3:22-26 ESV

1. *"After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized (for John had not yet been put in prison). Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."*
2. **JOHN'S DISCIPLES ARE GETTING JEALOUS**
  - a) *"And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."*
3. Try for just a second here to put yourself in John's shoes or sandals...



## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

- a) Your younger cousin is now getting all the attention. And he's baptizing people.
  - b) I mean heck, your entire name is "John the BAPTIST" That's what you do!
  - c) How would you feel if you were John? Be honest, do you think you'd be a little upset?
4. Before I share with you John's response I'm going to take a quick detour and talk to you guys about a wedding party. A wedding party is the group of people who stand up on stage at a wedding, you can probably name them...
- a) Bride
  - b) Groom
  - c) Maid/Matron of Honor
  - d) Best Man
- (1) But in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism, the groom would have a slightly different name, he would be called the "BrideGroom".
  - (2) Ok, so now that you've had a trip down wedding lane and got a little history lesson on wedding party titles in the 1st century, let's get back to our text.

### C. Read John 3:27-30 ESV

1. "John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease."
2. **JOHN'S RESPONSE IS A GAME-CHANGER**
  - a) *Vs 30* – He must increase, but I must decrease."
  - b) John is content to be the Best Man at the wedding. He knows that it's not all about him and that his role is to make a big deal about the groom and celebrate Him!
  - c) A Wedding Day is about the bride and groom.
  - d) *He must increase, but I must decrease*

- D. I don't know how many of you have watched or heard of the show "*The Office*", but there's a main character in this show named Michael Scott and he's known for many things but one of them is being kind of a selfish person.
1. One scene in particular happens at a wedding, not his wedding but Phyllis's wedding, she's someone who works for him. As Phyllis is getting married she wants her father to walk her down the aisle but her dad is in a wheelchair.
  2. Michael is eventually chosen to push the dad's wheelchair while he moves alongside Phyllis and Michael is all about this moment, or maybe I should say he's all about his moment, at least as he sees it.
  3. Michael is so hyped about his role at this wedding that he's making this moment about him so much so that when Phyllis's dad surprises everyone by getting up from his wheelchair halfway down the aisle to continue on by walking alongside his daughter, Michael is pretty upset that he no longer has a place in the "spotlight".

## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

4. This day is primarily about Phyllis and then this brief moment is a celebration of the fact that her dad could live out the dream of walking her down the aisle. But Michael made it about himself.
5. John the Baptist and Michael Scott have very different responses to “losing the spotlight” While Michael throws a fit, John knows his role and responds emphatically: “He must increase and I must decrease”

### IV. Application:

#### A. THIS WAS JOHN’S DEATH-TO-SELF MOMENT

1. Sometimes, as we talked about earlier, following God and living life doesn’t feel very good.
2. Here is what I wonder: I wonder if it’s because deep down, we’re more like Michael Scott and not like John the Baptist?
3. Nobody ever wants to be compared to Michael Scott.
4. But our culture promotes the idea of self-focus, self-absorption, and self-indulgence.
5. When instead of all of that, we should actually be choosing to **DIE TO SELF**
6. Being more like John the Baptist challenges us to take on the ultimate attitude of humility, and let Jesus take center stage in our life.
7. **How about you? Could you make John 3:30 your life verse?**

### V. Gospel:

- A. If you’ve grown up in church, you’ve no doubt heard some of these verses
  1. **John 10:10**
    - a) *“... I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”*
  2. **Matthew 20:16**
    - a) *“So the last will be first, and the first last.”*
  3. **Matthew 10:38-39**
    - a) *“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*
- B. The ultimate example of decreasing and letting Jesus increase is to submit your life to Him and to live in daily surrender to His will for your life over your own. The beautiful reality of this decision to die to self is that it’s in this choice that true life is actually found!
  1. Ask Him to forgive you for your sins, forgive you for the times you’ve put yourself ahead of Him
  2. And commit by His grace to follow Jesus with your whole life.
- C. Just like it says in **Galatians 2:20**
  1. *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*
- D. **LEADER NOTE:** *[Lead them through the sinner’s prayer]*

### VI. Conclusion:

## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

- A. But what I wonder, is if a daily submission, making the choice to be like John the Baptist- to decrease, so that Jesus can increase, I wonder if that's the key to life.
1. I wonder if that's the ultimate key to happiness and fullness of joy in our lives?
  2. While Jesus promises this is the key to an abundant life for you, don't you think taking on a mindset like this would also benefit the whole of humanity as well? What would the world be like if everyone chose to live like?
- B. Consider some of these examples:
1. JORDAN RICE
    - a) *13-year-old Jordan Rice was in a car with his mother and 10-year-old brother that became engulfed by floodwater. A would-be rescuer managed to reach the car, and Jordan insisted that his 10-year-old brother be saved first. As his little brother was brought to safety by the rescuer, the rope that the rescuer was clinging to snapped, making it impossible to reach Jordan and his mother, who were still trapped in the car. Jordan's selfless act of courage ended up saving his little brother's life.*
  2. ALFRED VANDERBILT
    - a) *1915, he was traveling on the RMS Lusitania, the passenger ship that was infamously torpedoed by a German U-boat. Vanderbilt sprang into action as soon as the torpedo hit, handing out lifebelts to passengers and guiding them to nearby lifeboats. He gave his own lifebelt to a mother carrying a baby despite not knowing how to swim, so he went down with the ship.*
  3. CORRIE TEN BOOM
    - a) *Who willingly and illegally housed Jews against the Nazis during WWII because she knew it was the right thing to do.*
- C. These are obviously incredibly powerful and heroic stories of people who willingly chose to walk the plank so to speak, dying to their own desires, happiness, and ambitions. My question to you, is would you live your life like this? How would making this choice affect the world around you? What if it's in choices like these, what if walking the plank and choosing to lay aside your own pleasure, comfort and desire was the key to unlocking life to the full?
1. ***He must increase and I must decrease.***

**Series Overview** | This series will introduce students to men and women in the Bible who lived a life fully surrendered to God and decided to "die to themselves". Because of their obedience and surrender, they discovered the fullness of the abundant life that God has on offer! In these incredible examples is an invitation to us all, to die to ourselves to truly live.

## Walk the Plank Sermon Series | Session 1: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

---

**Large Group Teaching Summary** | John the Baptist was the forerunner to Jesus in the wilderness. John had his own ministry with his own disciples. Not to mention, he and Jesus were cousins! But when the time came for him to lay down his pride, he did so, and he did masterfully! Paving the way, not only for this series but for the life of Christ, we can look to the example of John the Baptist that he utters in John 3:30.

**Key Takeaway** | This life isn't meant to be all about me.

**Scripture Focus** | John 3:22-30

### Walk The Plank | Session 1 Discussion Questions

---

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. 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.

#### Get Them Talking | An Optional Opening Question to Get Students Talking

1. What is your example of a perfect Saturday?

#### Discussion Questions

1. Read John 3:22-30: What does this teach you about God? What does it teach you about yourself?
2. Have you ever faced incredible disappointment or broken dreams before?
3. How do you make sense of the claim of Jesus to come to him all who are weary, but also then the fact that we're asked to "be crucified with Christ." It feels like those two things can't go together, doesn't it?
4. Do John the Baptist's disciples have reason to be frustrated with Jesus?
5. READ JOHN 3:30
  - a. What does this response mean to you?
  - b. How do you feel it might play out in your own life?
6. READ JOHN 10:10; Matthew 20:16; Matthew 10:38-39
  - a. Do you want these things?
7. What barriers are there in your life to you living this way?
8. How can you lay down your selfish desires to be more like John?
9. Let's pray together.