

**Thank you for previewing a *youthministry360* Leader/Student Guide. We're pumped you're considering purchasing a ym360 Bible Study resource.**

**We put a lot of intentionality into the content and the layout of our lesson plans. This short intro will help you know what to look for as you evaluate this preview.**

### *Looking At Your ym360 Leader Guide*

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This Leader Guide combines deep, meaningful Bible study with relevant, creative activities. You'll find all our lessons plans both easy to follow and easy to teach.

**Each ym360 Leader Guide is broken down into the following sections:**

- **Teacher Prep Videos**—Short, straightforward videos designed to help you prepare to teach the lesson
- **Bible Background**—A one page, easy to digest snapshot of the specific passage's context and main biblical truth. Use this to help prepare to teach your lesson.
- **The Lead In**—An interactive, thematic intro to the lesson
- **The Main Event**—An intense, deep time of Biblical study designed to drive home the lesson's truth
- **Bonus Round**—An optional activity that goes deeper into the lesson's biblical theme
- **The Last Word**—A final activity allowing you to really hone-in on the lesson's application

**Additionally, every ym360 Bible Study resource features a student component.** This lesson features a Student Guide that corresponds with an activity in the Leaders Guide.

**If you have any questions about your Leader Guide/Student Guide preview PDF, please do not hesitate to email ([feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com)) or call us (888.96.ym360).**

# Vivid Lesson 1: The Fight Within

**Objective:** The point of the lesson is to help your students identify their internal struggle with sin and commit to fight against it.

**Scripture Focus:** James 1:12-17

**Overview:** If only we didn't have the weight of our sin nature to struggle with. Life would be so much easier, wouldn't it? But as we all know, we do have a sinful nature and it does affect us. Dramatically. God calls all Christ-followers to grow in our faith. A major way this growth happens is through a realization that we're our own worst enemies. In this life, we'll always be contending with the sin that lives in us. But it's more than just that. It's important for you to help your students grasp that one of the measures of a Christ-follower's life is in this very struggle. Giving in to sin is not an option. Your students must accept the challenge to keep up the fight. After all, it's through the fight itself that their faith in Christ will deepen and mature.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Vivid Lesson One Teacher Prep Video*, click on the URL below and view the video entitled "*Vivid Lesson 1: The Fight Within*."

- [www.youthministry360.com/vivid-prep-videos](http://www.youthministry360.com/vivid-prep-videos)

## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### The Details

#### Who wrote James?

James, who was Jesus' brother and the leader of the Jerusalem Church.

#### When was it written?

Most people believe the date was sometime in the mid-40s A.D.

#### What was the purpose of its writing?

James was seemingly writing to a Jewish audience. His message was pretty straightforward throughout the book: don't let your faith be one of words only, and live your faith powerfully. It's a message that James hammered home in direct, easy-to-grasp language. It's what makes James such a practical book for all believers.

### The Main Point

#### JAMES 1:14-15

The main point of this lesson is found in verses 14-15. Here we see that James described the way sin works. It's an important passage for all Christ-followers, but especially those who are young in their faith, to understand.

James made a very important point; namely, that God does not lead anyone into temptation. The truth that God is perfectly good is an important theological point.

- Psalm 25:8 calls God "good and upright."
- Psalm 52:9 says God's "name is good."
- Psalm 100:5 says, "The LORD is good and his love endures forever."
- Psalm 119:68 says, "You are good, and what you do is good."

God cannot act in any way that goes against His goodness. Therefore, He can't lead anyone into temptation, as that would be leading people to be enticed to do evil. So how do we explain how we're tempted? James cleared this up in verse 14.

## VIVID : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THE FIGHT WITHIN

James wrote that we're tempted by the evil desires that live within us. Our sin nature is our spiritual heritage from Adam and Eve. Once they sinned, sin became a part of all people after them. It's this evil desire inside of each of us that leads us to temptation. When we accept the salvation that Jesus offers to all who believe in Him, we're saved from the punishment of our sins through Jesus' atoning death on the cross. But we still have a sin nature, and we still sin.

James described this process in verses 14 and 15. Our evil desires "drag" us away. Away from what? Away from our desire to lead a godly life. When an evil desire "conceives," it gives birth to sin. The conception that James referred to hints at a process—one that's deliberate, one that takes time, and one that's entered into with planning and intentionality. Our evil desires don't always lead to sin. But when we allow them to find fertile ground in our hearts and minds, those desires give birth to sin.

In verse 15, James summed up the result of sin: spiritual death. This echoed the words of Paul in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Sin equals death. Always has, always will. Only through God's grace and our acceptance of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross can we ever defeat the penalty of sin.

**Wrap Up**

Only God is good. Only He is able to save us from our sins. However, we must contend with our evil desires. We must fight against temptation and strive to live holy lives. This was Peter's call in 1 Peter 1:15-16 when he wrote, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" Your students have to understand that this internal struggle is literally what following Christ is all about. The Spirit will help them. And through this struggle, they will grow in their spiritual maturity.

**Lesson Plan**

The **Lesson Plan** contains four elements: *The Lead In*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Main Event*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; *The Bonus Round*, which is simply an additional Bible Study activity that supports the main thrust of the lesson, and *The Last Word*, which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson's biblical truth.

**The Lead In**

**Title:** Life is Like a Basketball

**Goal:** The idea is to get students thinking about their lives as Christ-followers and how they're supposed to live as a result.

**Set Up:** You'll need the *Vivid Media Disc* and a way to show the Lesson One Video, such as a DVD player. Or if you would prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the Media Disc on your computer, download the .MOV or .MPEG file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST** >> explain that you're beginning a six-lesson study on the Book of James. Explain to your students that you're going to watch a video that both introduces this particular lesson and also casts a little light on what the next six lessons of study will be about.

**NEXT** >> show the video.

**THEN** >> engage your students in a short discussion using the following questions:

- **What does it mean to be a hypocrite?**
- **Why do you think that one of the most common critiques aimed at followers of Christ is that they're hypocrites?**
- **When people say they're followers of Christ and then act in ways that go against the teachings of the Bible, what effect do you think this has on people who are not followers of Christ?**
- **What about people who may be curious about following Christ?**

**FINALLY** >> explain that today's lesson is all about the struggle we all face between wanting to be Christlike and living holy lives and our own sinful desires that lead us astray.

## VIVID : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THE FIGHT WITHIN

**The Main Event****Title:** The Fight Within**Goal:** The idea is to teach students that the struggle to sin comes from within them, and that they're called to resist this temptation with God's help.**Set-Up:** If you have a projector, you'll need the "The Fight Within" presentation for use with PowerPoint file. If you don't have a projector, consider using the "The Fight Within" PDF file to conduct the activity. Choose to either walk through the diagram using the PDF or to replicate it on a dry erase board. You'll also need the Student Guide and something for your students to write with.**FIRST** >> take a moment to set the stage for your students. Using the Bible Background, share with them the vital stats behind the Book of James.**THEN** >> read the passage aloud, or have a few students volunteer to read it. Draw students' attention to verse 12. Start the study by asking what comes to mind when they hear words and phrases such as persevere and stood the test. Help them to flesh out the idea that these words hint at a struggle of some sort; they convey some sort of resistance by an individual.

Explain to students that this passage in James paints a pretty vivid picture of the internal struggle with temptation and sin that all Christ-followers face. Read verse 13 aloud again. Explain to students that because God is perfectly holy and righteous, He could never lead anyone to sin. The sin we're guilty of comes from our own sin nature.

**NEXT** >> display the blank pyramid and direct your students' attention to their Student Guide. Explain that in verses 14-15, James showed us the process that gives birth to sin in our lives.

Read or have a student read verse 14. Then ask the following questions:

- **What does this verse say is at the core of our temptation?**
  - o Answer: Evil desires
- **Describe the nature of these desires. How are they depicted in the passage? What do we see them doing?**
  - o Answer: The desires aren't passive; they're active! They're aggressive and ugly. They "drag us away."
- **The word entice means to attract someone by arousing their desire. Give a couple of examples where a person might convince themselves that sin is attractive.**
  - o Answer: Sex outside of marriage feels good, so why not do it? Putting someone else down makes me look better. Lying achieves a desired end that's better than telling the truth.

**THEN** >> show the slide where "Evil Desires" is written in the pyramid, or if you're replicating the pyramid on a dry erase board, write the words Evil Desires in the bottom of the pyramid. Encourage your students to write the words Evil Desires on the pyramid in their Student Guide. Explain that the sinful, evil desires inside all people lead us into temptation. Explain that we're the source of our own inclination to do wrong. Show the slide where "Temptation" is written in the pyramid. (Or write it on the board.) Lead your students to write the word Temptation on their Student Guide.**NEXT** >> draw your students' attention to verse 15. Read it again, or have a student do so. Ask the following questions:

- **Desire leads to temptation. When temptation and desire get out of control, what's the result?**
  - o Answer: Sin

(Show the slide where "Sin" is written in the pyramid. [Or write it on the board.] Lead your students to write the word Sin on their Student Guide.)

- **The word conceive means to give birth or to cause to originate. What has to happen for temptation to become sin?**
  - o Answer: Temptation has to be acted upon. Temptation itself is not sin. But when temptation conceives (when it gives birth to actions), it brings sin into an individual's life.

## VIVID : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THE FIGHT WITHIN

- **What happens when sin is given room to grow in our lives? What's the result?**

- o *Answer:* Death

(Show the slide where “Death” is written in the pyramid. [Or write it on the board.] Lead your students to write the word Death on their Student Guide.)

- **When James uses the word death, what does he mean?**

- o *Answer:* A life of unchecked and unrepentant sin always leads to spiritual death. When people profess faith in Christ, His sacrifice on the cross counts for payment of their sin. Part of being a new creation in Christ is the death of our old love of sin and a new life in the Spirit dedicated to seeking righteousness. A true Christ-follower will no longer seek sin. Because of Christ, His followers have life. Apart from Him, there's only death (Rom. 6:23).

**FINALLY** >> encourage students by reading verse 16 again. Remind them that God is not capable of leading them into sin or causing them to sin. Just the opposite is true. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 aloud to your students: “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” Ask:

- **What does this mean to you personally?**
  - **What kind of hope does it provide for your ability to overcome temptation?**

Remind students that God's desire is for us to live righteously, to be lights in a dark world. With the Holy Spirit's help, and with Scripture as our guide, we can strive to fight against our sinful nature and live holy lives.

### Bonus Round (Optional Activity)

**Title:** Everyone a Sinner

**Goal:** The idea is to teach students that all people struggle with their internal sin nature, even the main characters in Scripture.

**Set Up:** None

Encourage students with the idea that struggling with our internal sin nature is not something unique to them. Explain that you're about to look at the lives of three real heroes of our faith, each of whom struggled with their desires to sin.

**FIRST** >> call on three volunteers who wouldn't mind reading aloud. Instruct the three volunteers to each take one of the following passages: Romans 7:21-25, Psalm 51:1-6, or Daniel 9:4-6.

**THEN** >> give some context for the first passage. Explain that Paul was one of the most powerful forces for following Christ that the world has ever seen. He wrote more books of the Bible than any other person. Yet, he still struggled with sin. Have the volunteer read Romans 7:21-25. Then ask the following questions:

- **Can you relate to Paul here? Why is it so frustrating when we want to do good but our “evil” desires are right there with us?**
  - **What did Paul point to as the only way out of this conflicting situation and the death that it leads to?**

**NEXT** >> provide some of the background for the second passage. Explain that David was the greatest ruler Israel ever knew. He was a godly man, even referred to as a man after God's own heart. Yet his sinful nature led him to commit adultery. He gave into his sinful desires. In this passage, David was asking forgiveness for sleeping with another man's wife. Have the volunteer read Psalm 51:1-6. Then ask the following questions:

- **What do verses 3 and 5 have in common with what we've been talking about so far?**
    - o *Answer:* They point to the idea that our sin nature is something we're saddled with. It's a real part of who we are that, on our own, we cannot do away with.
  - **David wrote that his personal sin is a sin against God. How does this change the way you think about sin—knowing that a sin you commit might not hurt anyone else but is still a major affront to God?**

**THEN** >> set the stage for the final passage. Explain that Daniel was as faithful a follower of God as you could find. He had been taken captive and held in a foreign land, but had never once turned his back on God. Yet hear how he talked about his people—God's people! Have the volunteer read Daniel 9:4-6. Then ask the following questions:

- **Daniel used the word rebelled. Can you define what it means to rebel?**
    - o *Answer:* To disobey one in authority; to act or show disobedience
  - **How is our sin rebellion against God?**

## VIVID : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THE FIGHT WITHIN

**FINALLY** >> close by reminding students that sin is a struggle that every Christ-follower faces. Encourage them with the truth that the real measure of a Christ-follower is not whether that individual sins or doesn't sin; it's whether or not that person is repentant and intentional about striving to live free from sin.

**The Last Word**

**Title:** Worth Fighting For

**Goal:** The idea is to teach students that the struggle to sin comes from within them, and that they're called to resist this temptation with God's help.

**Set Up:** Go to [www.teenslivingwithcancer.org](http://www.teenslivingwithcancer.org). Browse under the Community tab and select a few posts from teenagers about living with cancer. You'll also need to refer back to the pyramid from the previous activity one last time.

**FIRST** >> ask students if they think fighting sin in their lives is worth it. Isn't it pointless? After all, we all have a sin nature. We'll never be perfect. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross. Why go through the struggle?

**NEXT** >> inform students that you're going to read a couple of posts from a website devoted to teenagers suffering with cancer. Read the posts you've selected from [teenslivingwithcancer.org](http://teenslivingwithcancer.org). When you've finished, ask why these teenagers keep fighting. Ask why they don't simply give up. After all, they have cancer. Help your students to see that for these teens, life is worth the struggle. Struggling with cancer is the choice these teenagers make because the alternative simply won't cut it.

Explain to students that our struggle with sin is similar. If a person has truly had their life renewed through a saving relationship with Christ, to continue to walk in sin is simply not an option.

**THEN** >> refer back one last time to the pyramid from the previous activity. Point to the section labeled "Temptation." Ask the following question:

- **What happens if you keep trying not to give in to temptation? What happens if you fight the fight inside of you and don't give in to the pull that leads you to fall away from God?**
  - o *Answer:* Temptation dies. Sin is not conceived. You persevere, just as James called you to.
- **Does God love you any more for not giving in to temptation? Are you any more saved than when you do give in?**
  - o *Answer:* No. God sees us through the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross. If we profess faith in Christ, we're made righteous in God's eyes because of what Christ has done.
- **Then why does it matter? Why is it so important for us to resist giving in to temptation?**
  - o *Answer:* Simply put, the Bible calls us to be righteous and holy. We're called to live the way that Christ lived (1 Pet. 1:14-16). Why? So that through our lives, we may point others to a relationship with God (Matt. 5:16) that they might in turn be saved from the death of their life of sin.

**FINALLY** >> finish the lesson by encouraging your students with the truth that the struggle they face is one all people face. They don't have to face it alone. (That's what their Christ-following friends, youth workers, and parents are for.) And the Holy Spirit actually gives them the power to stay strong.

Challenge your students to be aware of the common temptations they face this week and to strive to resist them when they arise.

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 conceive. (2010). In Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Retrieved June 21, 2010, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conceive>  
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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?

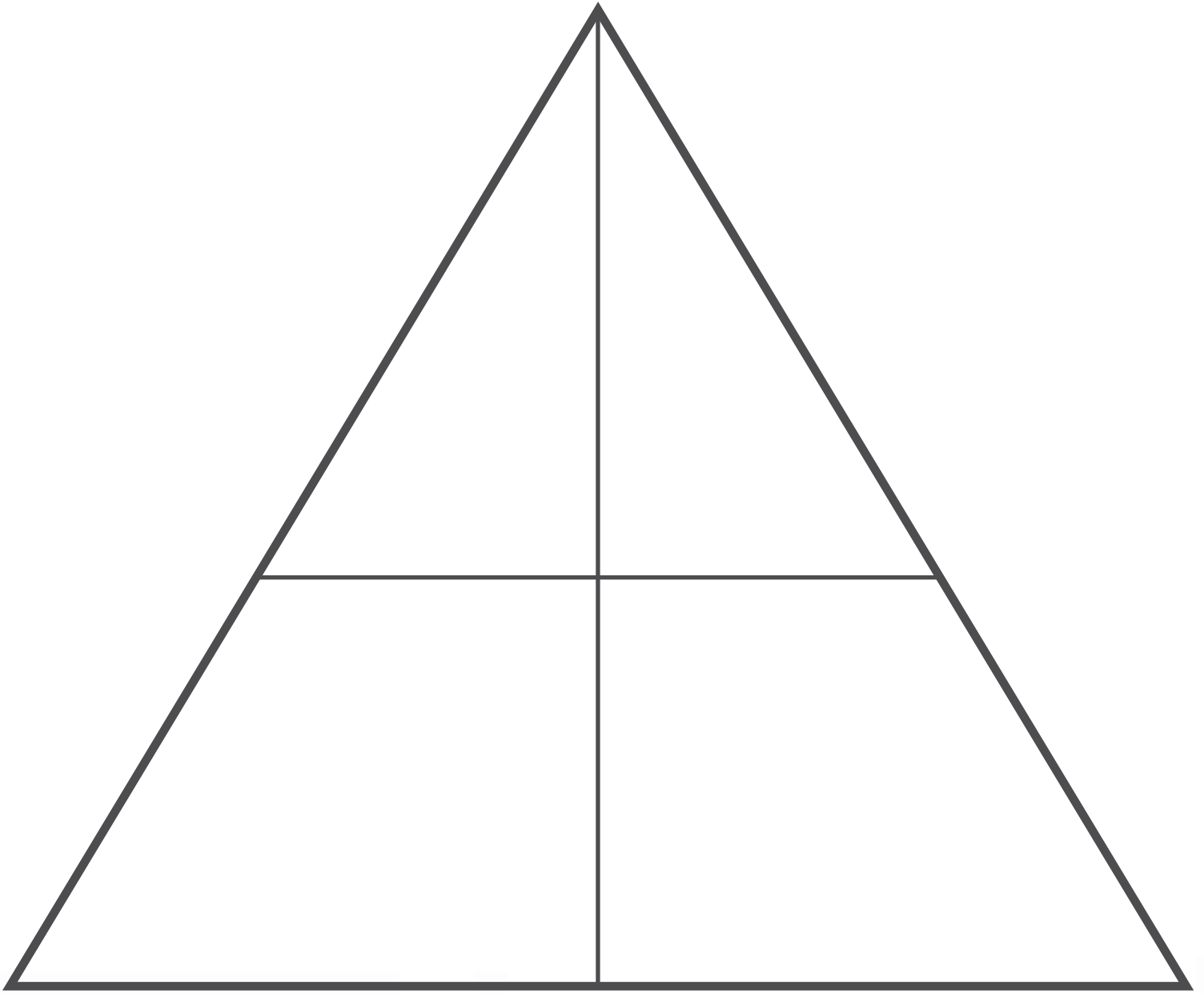
Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

**We value your feedback!** Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

# >> THE FIGHT WITHIN

SCRIPTURE FOCUS // James 1:12-17

youthministry360



# REACH Lesson 1: We Reach

**Objective:** The point of the lesson is that your students would understand that God created us to reach out to Him in honest communication.

**Focus Scripture:** Psalm 86:1-10

**Overview:** Here's a powerful truth: We can know God. Seriously, how amazing is that? The God who set the mountains on their foundation and hung the stars in the sky chose to make Himself known to us. And not known in a hands off, "studied from a distance" sort of way. Nope. We can know God intimately, in a real relationship! And our communication with Him is supposed to reflect this. As you begin a study of the Book of Psalms, this passage from Psalm 86 helps set the tone for the next six weeks. In this lesson, your students will learn that God desires for us to turn to Him in relationship, to reach out to Him consistently, and to do so with honesty and transparency. Our needs, our praises, our emotions . . . all are welcomed by God! In fact, verse 7 confirms it: God is in the business of hearing us when we reach out to Him.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Reach* Lesson One Teacher Prep Video, click on the URL below and view the video entitled "Reach Lesson 1: We Reach."

Teacher Prep Videos are unlocked once you purchase Reach.

## ***Bible Background***

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### **The Details**

#### **Who wrote Psalm 86?**

Many of the psalms include the name of the author, as is the case with the 86th psalm. The writer is clearly identified as David, the second king of Israel, who wrote 73 of the 150 psalms.

#### **When was it written?**

The psalm was written sometime during David's lifetime, which most scholars believe was between 1030 BC and 962 BC.

#### **What was the purpose for its writing?**

Psalm 86 is one of only five psalms titled as a prayer. David was reaching out to God with words that express the absolute Lordship of God, as well as His divine might and authority. Even though the words written by David reflect an attitude of prayer, this passage would have also been put to music and sung as an expression of worship.

In this prayer David expressed two important aspects of communication with God. The first is the need to be completely open and honest when we talk with Him. The second is to realize that the one we're talking to is the only one truly worthy of our complete devotion.

### **The Main Point**

Psalm 86 is a prayer by David written specifically about a time when he either had been rescued from a difficult situation, or was about to face one. Be sure to read the entire psalm. But for this lesson we'll focus on just the first ten verses. In verses 1-6, David expressed his honest feelings and attitudes to God. David talked with God about:

1. **His need for God's protection**—There were many times when David feared for his life, such as when King Saul tried to kill him, and when his son Absalom tried to overtake his throne.
2. **His need for God's mercy**—In his time of trouble, David may not have received mercy from those around him, but he knew God would treat him fairly and mercifully.



# REACH : Lesson 1

## >> WE REACH

3. **His desire to be happy**—The word *happy* here means to be glad and peaceful, and to live each day with joy. David desired to serve God with gladness.

In the rest of the passage (7-10), David acknowledged some very important attributes of God that describe some of God's nature. In his prayer David acknowledges the goodness of God, the forgiving nature of God, the fact that God is and demonstrates love, and the greatness of God. David closes by declaring that the Lord, alone, is God, a powerful statement in a world where people worshipped so many different gods.

### Wrap Up

*REACH* is a six-part Bible study on the Book of the Psalms. You can imagine the challenge of trying to capture 150 chapters in just six lessons. So while this isn't a comprehensive look at the Book of Psalms, this study *will* help you lead your students in looking at the different types of psalms as *models* we can use to communicate with God. This opening lesson will help you prepare students to appreciate this wonderful book of praise and worship, and hopefully set the tone for the entire series.

The focus of this passage and this lesson is on the way we reach out to God through communication. David honestly expressed his fears and his needs to God, while also proclaiming the greatness and majesty of the Lord. David was confident that God would answer his prayers. Through this lesson your students will understand the need to be honest in their approach to God, humble in their acknowledgment of His greatness, and confident in their belief that God will hear and answer them when they pray.

## Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains four elements: *The Lead In*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Main Event*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; *The Bonus Round*, which is simply an additional Bible Study activity that supports the main thrust of the lesson, and *The Last Word*, which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson's biblical truth.

### The Lead In

**Title:** *Reach* Lesson 1 Video

**Goal:** The idea is for students to be introduced to the basic theme of *Reach* through a video.

**Set Up:** You'll need the *Reach Media Disc* and a way to show the video, such as a DVD player or your laptop. Or if you would prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the media disc on your computer, download the MOV or MPEG file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST** >> explain to students that you're beginning a six-lesson study on the Book of Psalms, and that you'll be learning all about prayer and our communication with God. Explain that over the next six-lessons, students will be challenged to view their relationship with God through the lens of real, vibrant communication. Then, explain to your students that they're going to watch a video introducing the series. (The video gives a little glimpse into the theme they will be immersed in over the next six lessons.)

**NEXT** >> show the video. When the video is over, ask students to share any reflections they have. (If you want, you might even choose to engage them in a discussion about their attitudes toward prayer, asking them to honestly share how the thought of prayer makes them feel.) After students have shared, draw their attention to the line the actor said toward the end of the video. Say:

**Near the end, the actor said these lines: "If the concept of prayer doesn't excite you, it's not because prayer isn't exciting. It's because we're missing out on what God designed prayer to be." At some point in our lives, we've all probably found that our prayer life was lacking, or maybe even missing. But as the young man said, if we're finding prayer hard to engage with, it's not prayer. It's us.**

**FINALLY** >> encourage students that the next six weeks are going to be all about discovering what a powerful communication-life with God looks like. Challenge them to let the words from Scripture impact their lives, drawing them closer to God, and into a more vibrant life of prayer and conversation with God.

# REACH : Lesson 1

## >> WE REACH

### The Main Event

**Title:** We Reach

**Goal:** To help students learn that communication with God involves an honest expression of who we are, a clear understanding of who God is, and confident assurance that God not only hears us but will answer us.

**Set Up:** You'll need copies of the Student Guide and pencils or pens for the students to write with. If you wish, arrange to show the *Lesson 1 PowerPoint* slideshow. The slideshow corresponds with some of the questions, but it's **intentionally sparse** so that you can customize it based on how you choose to teach the lesson.

**FIRST** >> help students understand the context of what they're going to be studying. Give them a brief overview of what the Book of Psalms is about by pointing out the following:

- **The Greek translation of the original Hebrew word for *psalms* means "songs of praises" or "praise songs." The songs in the Book of Psalms represent the expressions of people as they poured out their emotions, their joys, and their praises to God.**
- **Many of these psalms were sung as corporate hymns when they were first written, and have been used in worship ever since.**
- **Psalms is one the five Old Testament books classified as poetry (the other four being Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon).**
- **King David wrote almost half of the 150 psalms. Asaph, the sons of Korah, Moses, and Solomon also authored some of the psalms. Anonymous authors wrote the remaining psalms.**

**THEN** >> explain that the purpose of this specific lesson is to serve as an introduction to the different models of interactions with God represented in the psalms. Explain that the idea is not to see these psalms as patterns to be followed step-by-step, but more as models of the variety, depth, and richness that is possible in our prayer lives.

**NEXT** >> give each student a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen or pencil to write with. Tell them to go to Psalm 86 while you give a little overview of this psalm. Explain that David is the author of Psalm 86, and that it's a wonderful example of open and honest communication with God. Explain that you're going to see that David doesn't sugarcoat anything. Through reading the passage together, you'll better understand what it looks like to have an honest conversation with God.

Read or have a student read Psalm 86:1-4. Then, say something like: **There are two very distinct things David does in this prayer that serve as really good ways for us to think about our prayer life with God. That's why we're looking at this prayer as the first in this series.**

Explain that you're going to come back to these verses in just a second. But first, ask students to consider the following scenario:

- **Let's say, you were driving home from an out of town football game. You're by yourself. Suddenly a dog runs out in front of your car. You swerve off the road and crash. Thankfully, you're OK, but the car is definitely stuck. And no one saw you crash. So, you'll have to use your phone to call for help. Now, take a moment and think about the process of getting help.**
- **Ask: What would you say are the two most basic elements of resolving this situation?**
  - o *Answer:* The two most basic elements of getting help are 1) accurately and fully explaining your predicament, and 2) calling someone who is in a position to do something about it.

Allow students to answer until someone guesses correctly, or until they've guessed incorrectly long enough. Reveal the answers. Explain to students that it doesn't help to call someone and tell them your situation if that person can't help you. Likewise, calling the right person but not painting an accurate picture of your situation won't work either. Say something like: **When you're in real need, the best way to get help is to reach out to a person uniquely suited to help you, and to tell them exactly what you need. We can see both of these elements at play in this lesson's Bible passage.**

**THEN** >> direct students' attention to the Student Guide and/or the PowerPoint slideshow. Instruct them to write the word "honesty" in the oval at the top portion of the page. Then, instruct students to re-read Psalm 86:1-4. In the blank area underneath the upper oval, instruct students to take a second and write down different words or phrases that demonstrate David's honest and open words in his prayer to God. Allow students a moment to write. Then, have students share their answers.

- *Answers may include:* "I am poor and needy"; "Guard my life"; "I am devoted to you"; "save your servant"; "I call to you all day long"; "I lift up my soul"

# REACH : Lesson 1

## >> WE REACH

After students have shared their responses, engage students in a brief discussion. Consider asking the following questions:

- **In the first two verses, David says two things that speak to his situation and to his faith. What are they?**
  - o *Answer:* David says he is poor and needy, and that he is devoted to God.
- **Looking at this prayer as an example of how we can go to God in conversation, what do these two statements by David teach us about how we might approach God when we are needy?**
  - o *Answer:* There's something to be said about having an accurate knowledge of who we are and where we stand with God, as well as reaffirming our love, service, and devotion to God. It may very well be the kind of attitude adjustment we need to undergo before we go to God in prayer.
- **In your own words, what does it mean to lift up your soul? Can you think of a time in your life where you lifted up your soul to God? Without giving away details, can you share what it felt like to go to God in such a vulnerable way?**
  - o *Answers will vary.*

**NEXT** >> direct students' attention back to their Student Guide, and/or the PowerPoint slideshow, instructing them to look at the oval at the bottom of the page. Have students write "Who God Is." Then, instruct students to read Psalm 86:5-10. Just as you did under the top oval, instruct students to write down different words or phrases that demonstrate who God is, or tell us something about His nature or characteristics. Allow students a moment to write. Then, have students share their answers.

o *Answers may include:* forgiving and good; abounding in love; merciful; a God who hears; incomparable; greatness; glory; worthy of praise

After students have shared their responses, lead students in a brief discussion using questions similar to the following:

- **Think about it for a second: How did David know God was all of these things?**
  - o *Answer:* He had a track record with God, i.e., God had shown these characteristics in David's past dealings with Him. Plus, David had no doubt heard stories of God's faithfulness to Israel and to David's ancestors.
- **What's the lesson here for us? How do we truly get to know God and His ways?**
  - o *Answer:* Through encountering God in the Bible; through falling back on our own personal track record with God.

**THEN** >> explain to students that it's easy to sometimes forget that we're talking with the completely holy, most awesome, almighty God of the Universe. We see the awe and respect David had for God. Encourage students to understand that powerful communication with God is possible when we can see God for who He is.

Begin wrapping up this part of the lesson by allowing students to begin to process what they've just learned. Consider asking the following questions:

- **If you look closely, David listed something like five attributes of God: good, forgiving, loving, great, and supreme ("the only God"). Think about these for a second. When you have needed help in a time of trouble, which attribute of God were you drawn to the most?**
- **Why did you choose the one you did?**
- **How does your communication with God stack up to the example we see here? Are you close to sharing the same emotions as David? Or are you far away?**
- **What's the relationship between how well you know God and the vibrancy of your prayer life?**

**FINALLY** >> encourage students to be thinking about the nature of their communication with God. Challenge them to think of their prayer lives in terms of how honest they are with God. And challenge them to take stock of how well they really know God. Explain that these two practices will not only deepen their prayer life with God, but they more or less form the foundation of the next five weeks of this study.

### Bonus Round (Optional Activity)

**Title:** The Names of God

**Goal:** Students will gain a better understanding of the nature of God by looking at some of the names of God found in the Old Testament, and creatively expressing some aspect of this name.

**Set Up:** This is a pretty involved activity, as far as set-up and execution goes, but it's one your students will love. (If you don't want to facilitate this activity as an art activity, an alternate idea would be to have students choose one of God's names that means the most to them, and have them take turns sharing why this is the case.) You'll need sheets of paper and art supplies, enough for each student to have their own sheet of paper. There's a slide in the *Lesson 1 PowerPoint* slideshow featuring a list of some of God's names. If you don't want to use the PowerPoint, simply write the names on a dry-erase board.

# REACH : Lesson 1

## >> WE REACH

**FIRST** explain that during the Main Event your group looked at a few of the characteristics of God. Remind them that God is referred to by many different names in the Old Testament, each name speaking to an aspect of His character. Explain that this is how the Israelites reflected the richness of God's nature when addressing or referring to Him. Each name helps paint a beautiful picture of who God is.

**NEXT** direct students' attention to the names of God and the Scripture references (either on the PowerPoint slide, or on a dry-erase board). Explain to students that they are going to choose one name of God from the list that is particularly meaningful to them.

- **El Shaddai** – God Almighty (Psalm 91:1,2)
- **El Eyon** – The Most High God (Psalm 9:2)
- **Jehovah Jireh** – The Lord will provide (Genesis 22:14)
- **Jehovah Nissi** – The Lord our banner, or will provide victory (Exodus 17:15)
- **Jehovah Shalom** – The Lord our peace (Judges 6:24)
- **Jehovah Ro'I** – The Lord our shepherd (Psalm 23)
- **Adonai** – The Lord our master and our provider (Joshua 5:14)
- **Abba, Father** – A personal and familiar, though reverential, word for Father (James 1:17)

It can be because of how God has acted in their lives in the past, or how God is acting in a situation right now. Instruct them to read the passage where the name is used. Then, using the paper and art supplies you've provided, instruct them to take a few minutes to create something that represents this aspect of God's character.

Explain to students that this can simply be the name written out, it can be a drawing, it can be a prayer . . . it can be anything they want it to be as long as it somehow expresses this aspect of God's character. Allow students time to complete this assignment. Then, have students share what they created.

**FINALLY** when all the students have shared, take a moment to reflect on how wonderfully complex and deep God's nature is. Remind them that as awesome as this concept is, the reality is that God is exceedingly greater and more awesome than even these few names suggest! Remind them what a cool thing it is to be able to have a relationship with a God this amazing.

### The Last Word

**Title:** What Did You Expect?

**Goal:** To help students begin to embrace the idea that God expects them to come to Him in communication, and that they should expect Him to hear their prayers.

**Set Up:** On the *Lesson 1 PowerPoint* slideshow, there are some images provided that you'll use in this activity. If you don't have the means to show a slideshow but would still like to show the images, you can print off the "What Did You Expect?" PDF located in your Lesson 1 folder.

**FIRST** explain to students that the takeaway, or application, of this lesson is more "big picture" than anything else. Explain that ultimately, you want them to begin thinking about the idea that God expects and desires for them to be in communication with Him. Explain that this closing activity will help them remember this concept.

**NEXT** explain that you're going to show them three objects. For each object, instruct students to identify the object's purpose(s) or function(s). Then, for each of the objects, ask students: **Put yourself in the place where you're going to put one of these objects to use. For each of these objects, what are your expectations? What do you expect from the object when you go to use it?**

Let students come up with more than one answer for each, especially for the cell phone. The answers for each object are probably something similar to the following:

- **Lawn mower**—When you crank it, the expectation is that it will start, to actually cut the grass, maybe you expect it to roll on its own when you flip a lever or put it in gear, you might expect it to catch and hold the grass clippings, and so on.
- **Cell phone**—You expect it to make and receive phone calls, to send texts, to take photos, to keep the time, to pick up a cellular or wireless network, to browse the internet, to download and operate apps, and so on.
- **Hair dryer**—You expect it to dry your hair, to not burn your hair, to turn on and off when you push the button, and so on.

# REACH : Lesson 1

## >> WE REACH

**THEN** >> when students have finished, engage them in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Think of these objects. What would happen if your phone, for example, failed to meet your expectations? What would happen if you consistently were unable to make phone calls? Or make and receive texts? How would this make you feel?**
  - o *Answer:* Allow students to express how this would make them feel.
- **How are these feelings related the connection between your phone's purpose and your expectations of your phone?**
  - o *Answer:* Because your phone has a definite purpose, you have definite expectations. And when your phone doesn't meet your expectations, it's really about not meeting its purpose.
- **Why would it be silly for you to be frustrated that your phone can't send you back in time to ride dinosaurs or play checkers with Abraham Lincoln?**
  - o *Answer:* Because that's an expectation that wouldn't be in line with the phone's purpose.

**NEXT** >> explain to your students that God created them with a variety of purposes in mind. One of the chief purposes was for them to exist in relationship with God. Explain that out of this purpose, God has an expectation that they would reach out to Him in conversation. Prayer is the language of this relationship with God. And while God doesn't grow frustrated in the same way we get frustrated when our phone doesn't work, it's God's desire that we embrace this purpose and seek Him out in authentic, meaningful communication.

**FINALLY** >> Close by saying something similar to this: **Verse 7 of the passage we studied today says it best: "In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me." God is always there, uniquely positioned to hear and answer. As we journey through the next six weeks together, my challenge to you is to begin to let this simple truth transform your prayer life. God made you to know Him. He hears you. He will answer you. Simple as that.**

- Remind the students that you'll be posting two of the **Reach E-votions** to encourage conversation between lessons. Decide ahead of time how you will post these, whether through email, Facebook message, Facebook group page, or through your youth group's website. Challenge students to check in, read and think about the content, and to interact (if there's a method for interaction such as a Facebook wall, comment section on a blog, and so on).

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

Do you have questions about a lesson?

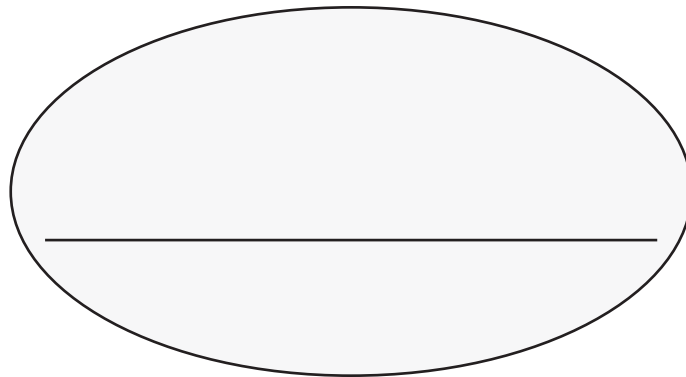
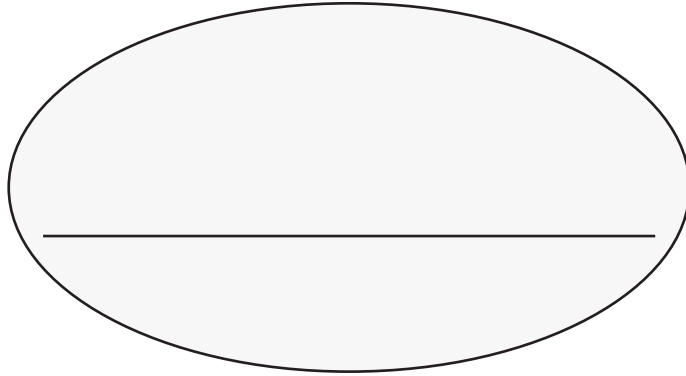
Something that worked particularly well you want to share?

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](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

# >> WE REACH

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: PSALM 86:1-10



# FOCUS Lesson 1: Knowledge Is Power

**Objective:** The point of the lesson is that your students understand that they cannot live powerful lives of faith without a knowledge of God that leads to action.

**Focus Scripture:** Colossians 1:9-14

**Overview:** Colossians is a book that reminds its audience to keep the main thing the main thing (to borrow a cliché). This is incredibly important to today's teenagers who are constantly bombarded with messages and values from their culture. They're tempted to pick and choose whatever values suit their personal preferences. Paul's letter reminds us that there's a right way to live and prayerfully asks God to fill His people with spiritual wisdom—the key to a meaningful life. For your students, a right understanding of Christ's supremacy in their lives empowers them to grow healthy and productive—finding identity, strength, purpose, and joy in Christ. If students have any desire to honor God with their lives, they must first know Him.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your Focus Lesson One Teacher Prep Video, click on the URL below and view the video entitled "Focus Lesson 1: Knowledge Is Power."

- [www.youthministry360.com/focus-prep-videos](http://www.youthministry360.com/focus-prep-videos)

## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### The Details

#### Who wrote Colossians?

The Apostle Paul identified himself as the author. His companion, Timothy, probably served as his scribe (1:1). Tychicus probably delivered the letter to Colossae (4:7).

#### When was it written?

Most people believe the date was sometime between A.D. 61 and 63, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:17-31).

#### What was the purpose for the writing of these books?

Paul was writing to combat the spread of false teachings among the church at Colossae. The exact heresy being refuted is not certain and may have been a blend of multiple influences. The legalism, mysticism, and asceticism corrupting the pure faith in Colossae were moving attention away from Christ, placing it instead on self-discipline and the awe of other spiritual things.

Ultimately, this letter's purpose is to emphasize the supremacy of Christ over everything. Any teaching, philosophy, ritual, or lifestyle that distracts from Jesus as the sole focal point of one's life is dangerous and should be avoided. Everything about a believer's new life should be focused on the one and only begotten Son of God, the uniquely divine yet fully human Jesus Christ.

### The Main Point

#### COLOSSIANS 1:9

This passage was Paul's opening prayer for his audience of Christ-followers, originally the church in Colossae. But it's also a prayer that applies to us today. This prayer sets the stage for the book. And so it will introduce Focus, our study of Colossians.

Paul's letter opened by cutting straight to the heart of the matter: if Christ-followers desire to live a life that glorifies God in every way, they obviously have to know His will. So while the entire passage is meaningful, the focus of the lesson comes from verse 9.

**FOCUS : Lesson 1****>> KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

Paul asked God for two things on behalf of the Colossians. (We'll walk through these in depth during "The Main Event" portion of this lesson.)

1. **Growth in knowledge** – A misunderstanding of the things of God was the primary problem plaguing the church at Colossae. The knowledge Paul prayed for was not a general awareness of God, it was an intense focus on and embracing of God's will—a knowledge that led to action, affecting every part of a person's life.
2. **Living worthy of Christ** – Right action springs from a right knowledge. This also foreshadowed another issue in Colossae – ritualistic activity motivated by false teaching and personal experience. When a person understands God's will and experiences fullness and satisfaction in submitting to Christ as Lord, they will desire to live obediently and proactively (anticipating what is pleasing), honoring Him in all things.

For the rest of our passage (10-14), Paul outlined a life that pleases God, describing it in the following four categories:

1. **Bearing fruit** – Actively, continually doing all kinds of good works (a common theme in Paul's letters). This does not earn a person salvation, but is instead the result of a relationship with Christ—it grows out of a true knowledge.
2. **Growing in knowledge** – This is also an ongoing attribute of the Christ-centered life. We are to continually grow in and by the knowledge of God. It's only in His will and by His wisdom that we're empowered to grow in our understanding of Him.
3. **Being strengthened** – It's only in His supernatural power that we can fight the good fight, daily resisting the schemes of the devil and practicing spiritual warfare. Moral living and perseverance are only possible through a close personal relationship with the one who has conquered sin and death, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
4. **Giving thanks** – All of these things mentioned should result in gratitude, daily expressed through the lives of Christ-followers.

(These four categories will be examined in "The Final Word" as the practical takeaway from the lesson.)

**Wrap Up**

Think about this: action springs out of understanding. What someone believes shapes his or her actions, attitudes, and thoughts. Do your teenagers grasp the life-changing reality that they can know God's will and experience His power in their lives? Scripture has to be the foundation for knowing God better and knowing how to live in a way that's worthy of Him. Christ is honored when our attention is focused on Him.

**Lesson Plan**

The **Lesson Plan** contains four elements: *The Lead In*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Main Event*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; *The Bonus Round*, which is simply an additional Bible Study activity that supports the main thrust of the lesson, and *The Last Word*, which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson's biblical truth.

**The Lead In**

**Title:** Focus Intro

**Goal:** The idea is for students to be introduced to the basic theme of *Focus* through a video.

**Set Up:** You'll need the *Focus Media Disc* and a way to show the video, such as a DVD player or your laptop. Or if you would prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the media disc on your computer, download the MOV or MPEG file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST** > explain to students that you're beginning a six-lesson study on what it means to have Christ as the center of your life. Explain that over the next six-lessons, they will learn what it means to live a life of focus. Then, explain to your students that they're going to watch a video introducing the study; the video gives a little glimpse into the theme they will be immersed in over the next six lessons.

**NEXT** > show the video.

**FINALLY** > explain that this lesson will help your students understand that they can't live powerful lives of faith without a knowledge of God that leads to action.



## FOCUS : Lesson 1

# >> KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

### The Main Event

**Title:** Knowledge Is Powe

**Goal:** The idea is for your students to realize that a right understanding of God is essential in order to have right actions that glorify God.

**Set Up:** You'll need copies of the Student Guide and pencils or pens for the students to write with. If you wish, arrange to show the PowerPoint slideshow. The slideshow corresponds with some of the questions, but it's **intentionally sparse** so that you can customize it based on how you choose to teach the lesson.

**FIRST** >> distribute Student Guides and something to write with. Then, begin the study by focusing students' attention on the idea of *power*. Ask everyone to get out their cell phones/media devices/car keys and place them in front of them. Ask the students these questions:

- **Who has a cell phone? iPod®? Car?**
- **How often do you use these things?**

**THEN** >> explain that in order for these items that we use every day to do what they're purchased to do, they must have power—most of the things we need or use regularly need fresh power every day. Build this idea by asking:

- **How would you respond to a classmate who carried a powerless iPad™ everywhere he went, never knowing anything about it but telling everyone how great it was and that they should get one, too?**
- **What would you say to him if he said that the iPad was awesome when he first got it but he never had time to charge it?**
- **How do people do the same thing as followers of Christ? Are you guilty of walking through life, maybe even telling other people about how great Jesus is and that they should believe in Him, too, but never taking time to know Him better or experiencing a life empowered by Him?**

**NEXT** >> connect the illustration to the biblical text by stating that a right knowledge of God empowers us to live the lives He created us to have. Explain that today you'll look at Paul's ongoing prayer for people to continue growing in both their knowledge of God and in exhibiting lifestyles that honor Him.

**THEN** >> take a moment to set the stage for your students. Using the Bible Background, tell students the details behind the Book of Colossians. Then instruct them to open their Bibles to Colossians. Have a volunteer read aloud Colossians 1:9-14 as everyone follows along in their own Bibles.

**NEXT** >> direct their attention to the end of what was just read. Explain that verses 12-14 describe a one-time event, like a transaction where someone exchanges money for the new iPad mentioned earlier. Ask the following questions:

- **What one-time exchange is described in verses 13-14?**
  - o *Answer:* We were rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of God's Son (Christ) and forgiven of our sins, also known as "getting saved."
- **What do you think "darkness" means in verse 13?**
  - o *Answer:* Sin and ignorance, ultimately death (the opposite of light, life, knowledge, and good works characteristic of the Christ-filled life).
- **What do words like "redemption" (vs. 14), "brought us" (vs. 13) "qualified" and "inheritance" (vs. 12) say about our relationship with God?**
  - o *Answer:* He is the One acting in us, through us, and for us. He purchased our freedom, changed our situation, and continually enables us to experience abundant life. These words also tell us that being granted a relationship with God is a one-time event so we don't have to keep working to earn God's approval—our focus can be on living the new life He has given us in Christ.
  - o Clarify that over the next few weeks you'll dig deeper into the significance of being rescued from sin and brought into relationship with Christ.

**THEN** >> direct students' attention back to the beginning of Paul's prayer. Re-read verses 9-10 and ask:

- **Paul asked God specifically for two ongoing things. What did he pray that people would continually do after the initial point of redemption (salvation) in their lives?**
  - o *Answer:* Grow in the knowledge of God's will and walk (live) in manner worthy of Christ.
  - o Have students write, "know God" above Arrow 1 and "Live for Him" with Arrow 2.
- **What relationship exists between knowing God and living faithfully?**
  - o *Answer:* The words "in order that" in verse 10 tell us that knowing God's will is foundational, essential, and empowering for walking worthy of the Lord. You can't follow Christ if you don't know Christ and recognize His direction in your life.

## FOCUS : Lesson 1

# >> KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

**NEXT** >> direct students back to the empty silhouette on their worksheets. Have them shade in a percentage of the person, representing the amount of knowledge they currently have about God. Clarify that it's impossible to know everything about God, but the drawing should be a visual of how what they do know honestly influences everything else in their lives. Lead discussion with the following questions:

- **How could wrong ideas about spiritual things negatively affect a person's life?**
- **What examples can you give of ways that knowing God impacts your daily actions?**
- **What percentage of our lives did Paul pray would be influenced by spiritual wisdom?**
  - o *Answer:* He prayed we would be filled with the knowledge of God's will.
- **What did Paul mean when he wrote about being "filled" with something?**
  - o *Answer:* Filled can mean "knowing no bounds" (2 Cor. 7:4). It also can mean to be controlled by something (drunk on wine or under the influence of the Spirit, as in Ephesians 5:18 ).
- **So what does this passage mean when it says we should be filled with spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and understanding?**
  - o *Answer:* Everything in our lives should be under the influence of God's will—everything we say, think, do (or don't say, think, or do) should be worthy of Jesus. The truth of God should be overflowing into every part of our lives in a way that's obvious to everyone around us and impossible to hide!
  - o *Answer:* Now have them shade the rest of the person, completely filling the silhouette on the worksheet, leaving only the dynamite icon visible.

Emphasize that all of the descriptions of life in Paul's prayer are ongoing, continual actions. Explain that in a few minutes you'll dig into what those continual actions should look like.

**THEN** >> begin wrapping up the discussion by re-reading verses 11-14 and asking the following questions:

- **How easy or hard is it for us to know the right thing and please God in everything that we do?**
  - o *Answer:* It's impossible in our own ability. (We were dead in sin and darkness - v.13.)
- **What do the phrases "strengthened with all power" and "His glorious might" tell us?**
  - o *Answer:* God's power in us will be everything we need to live out this life; it is more than enough; it empowers us to glorify Him.

Direct students' attention back to the image of dynamite inside the silhouette they've shaded on the worksheet. Explain that the word *dynamite* comes from these Greek word *dynamo* or *dynamis*, which Paul was referring to here with the words "strengthened" and "power." Encourage students with the fact that God doesn't expect them to live as Christ-followers in their own strength. Remind them that when their focus is on knowing God and pleasing Him with their lives, He fills them with His incredible power.

- **Like dynamite, God's power removes the things He doesn't want in our lives. What do verses 13-14 tell us that God is removing from our lives?**
  - o *Answer:* The power of sin and darkness.
- **Dynamite is also used to make room for new things. In this prayer, what was Paul asking God to fill our lives with instead of sin and darkness?**
  - o *Answer:* Wisdom, good works, patience, joy, thankfulness, light, an inheritance in Christ.

**FINALLY** >> take students back to the opening example of the ridiculous waste of carrying around a powerless iPad. Challenge them not to miss the point and waste their lives by going day-to-day without God's knowledge and power. Explain to the students that God didn't save them just so that they could walk around knowing spiritual facts. Encourage them with the reality that God fills them with spiritual truth in order that it will overflow into their daily lives, empowering every part of them to glorify the Christ who redeemed them.

### Bonus Round (Optional Activity)

**Title:** God's Will

**Goal:** The idea is for your students to begin to understand God's will for their lives, removing the intimidation factor from the mysterious will of God.

**Set Up:** Look below at the various verses represented. Choose any or all of the verses and write the references on index cards. Distribute the index cards to your students before the activity.

**FIRST** >> explain that during the Main Event your group established that understanding God's will is vital for living a powerful life of faith pleasing to Him. Ease any worries, assuring students that for most people the idea of trying to know God's will is intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. Clarify that God tells us some things very plainly about His will.

## FOCUS : Lesson 1

# >> KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

**THEN** >> instruct students to look up their verses if they haven't already.

**NEXT** >> lead students in a short discussion, asking them to read aloud their verses and then helping them interpret the simple truth about God's will:

- **So according to God's Word, what do we know about His will for our lives?**

o *Answers:*

- Mark 3:35 – Doing His will is characteristic of being in His family.
- Romans 8:27 – The Spirit helps you according to God's will.
- Romans 12:2 – By focusing your mind on Him and through "testing" (practice) you'll learn to recognize what pleases Him perfectly.
- Ephesians 6:6 – Good works in obedience to God come from the heart in service to Christ.
- Colossians 1:1 – He has a specific purpose/plan for your life.
- Colossians 4:12 – His will is knowable.
- Hebrews 10:36 – We will be rewarded for continuing to follow God even when it's hard.
- 1 Peter 2:15 – Always doing the right thing prevents anybody from saying anything bad (that's true) about you and therefore against faith in Christ.
- 1 John 2:17 – Everything in this world is temporary, but obedience to God's will has eternal benefit.

**FINALLY** >> conclude by reminding them that Paul prayed for Christ-followers to grow in their understanding of these things and to continually put them into practice, living them daily.

### The Last Word

**Title:** The Cycle of Life

**Goal:** The idea is for your students to recognize and enter the ongoing cycle of growing in knowledge and living what they know.

**Set Up:** You will need the Student Guide one last time.

**FIRST** >> remind students that Paul prayed non-stop that the hearers of this letter would continually grow in their relationship with God. Point out the awesome and humbling reality that in 2,000 years, nothing has changed from the first generation of believers in Colossae to the 21st century Christ-followers gathered in your group.

**NEXT** >> remind everyone that Paul prayed that we would be filled with knowledge of God's will, so that we would be fueled to walk in a way that pleases Him in every way. Clarify that the four steps represent the four categories Paul used to describe the continual cycle of walking in the way that pleases God.

- **Paul first prayed that the Colossians would be filled with knowledge so that they could live in a way worthy of the Lord, then he described what that life looks like—one of its characteristics being an increasing knowledge of the God. What does this tell us about our relationship with God?**

o *Answer:* It's always growing; there's always more to learn and more to trust God about in our lives; we never "arrive"; He's always greater; we're always following Him.

**THEN** >> direct everyone's attention back to the Student Guide. Allow a minute to reflect on the phrases in the four steps. Instruct everyone to write one practical action they'll commit to do in order to grow in each category. Lead discussion on how students can take steps in each of these categories by asking them to share their answers to the following questions:

- **What steps can we take today to grow in bearing good fruit in every good deed?**

o Remind students that bearing fruit means showing evidence of the healthy life inside them to the world around them. This doesn't mean that good works are done pridefully to draw attention to ourselves but rather to draw attention to God.

o Guide students to identify something helpful, generous, welcoming, self-controlled, honest, apologetic, humble, or bold that they'll do this week.

- **What steps can we begin taking to grow in the knowledge of God?**

o Encourage students to start by reading the provided e-votions and memorizing the available Scripture cards each week.

o Encourage them to not only read and memorize these personally but to also discuss them with each other, with other friends, and with parents or other respected adults who can help them even better understand the spiritual truths in God's Word.

## FOCUS : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

- o Challenge them to read the Book of Colossians on their own—it's only four short chapters. This can be done every week or in little bits and pieces as you go through the next six weeks of FOCUS.
- **How can we continue to walk through tough situations or relationships with endurance?**
  - o Guide students to identify a situation or relationship in which they need more patience.
  - o Remind them that endurance and patience are not only for the sake of their own character and integrity but also for the sake of more opportunities to share the life-changing truth of Christ.
  - o Encourage students with the reality that everything they're facing is temporary; abundant life in Christ is eternal.
- **On what truth can we stand joyfully and thankfully in both good days and bad?**
  - o Ask students what gives them joy.
  - o Ask students what they're thankful for.
  - o Guide them to identify something that currently upsets them or stresses them out. Of what greater eternal truth will they remind themselves in order to gain the right perspective?

Begin wrapping up by explaining that just as with any favorite activity or interest, the more students spend time getting to know whatever they're into, the more they begin to love it. Emphasize the cycle: The more time spent getting to know about it, (1) the more they love it, (2) the more they want to know about it, (3) the more natural it becomes to understand/talk about/do it, and ultimately (4) the more they begin to rearrange their lives around this thing they love. Make the obvious connection for students, clarifying that the better they get to know God → the better they know His will → the easier it is to live for Him → the more they live for Him → the better they get to know God . . . and on and on.

**FINALLY** >> conclude with the encouragement that you're also praying for your students regularly. Assure them that although there's always another step to take, there's no reason to be overwhelmed—just focus one step at a time, and soon they'll recognize that they're learning to walk with Christ more naturally. Remind them that God has taken the first step to save them and is the one empowering them to live a life that glorifies Him. Challenge them to simply focus on knowing and living God's will by the power of Christ.

- Explain to students that you'll be posting two of the **Focus E-votions** to encourage conversation between lessons. Decide ahead of time how you will post these, whether through email, Facebook message, Facebook group page, or through your youth group's website. Challenge students to check in, read and think about the content, and to interact (if there's a method for interaction such as a Facebook wall, comment section on a blog, and so on).

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .**

Do you have questions about a lesson?

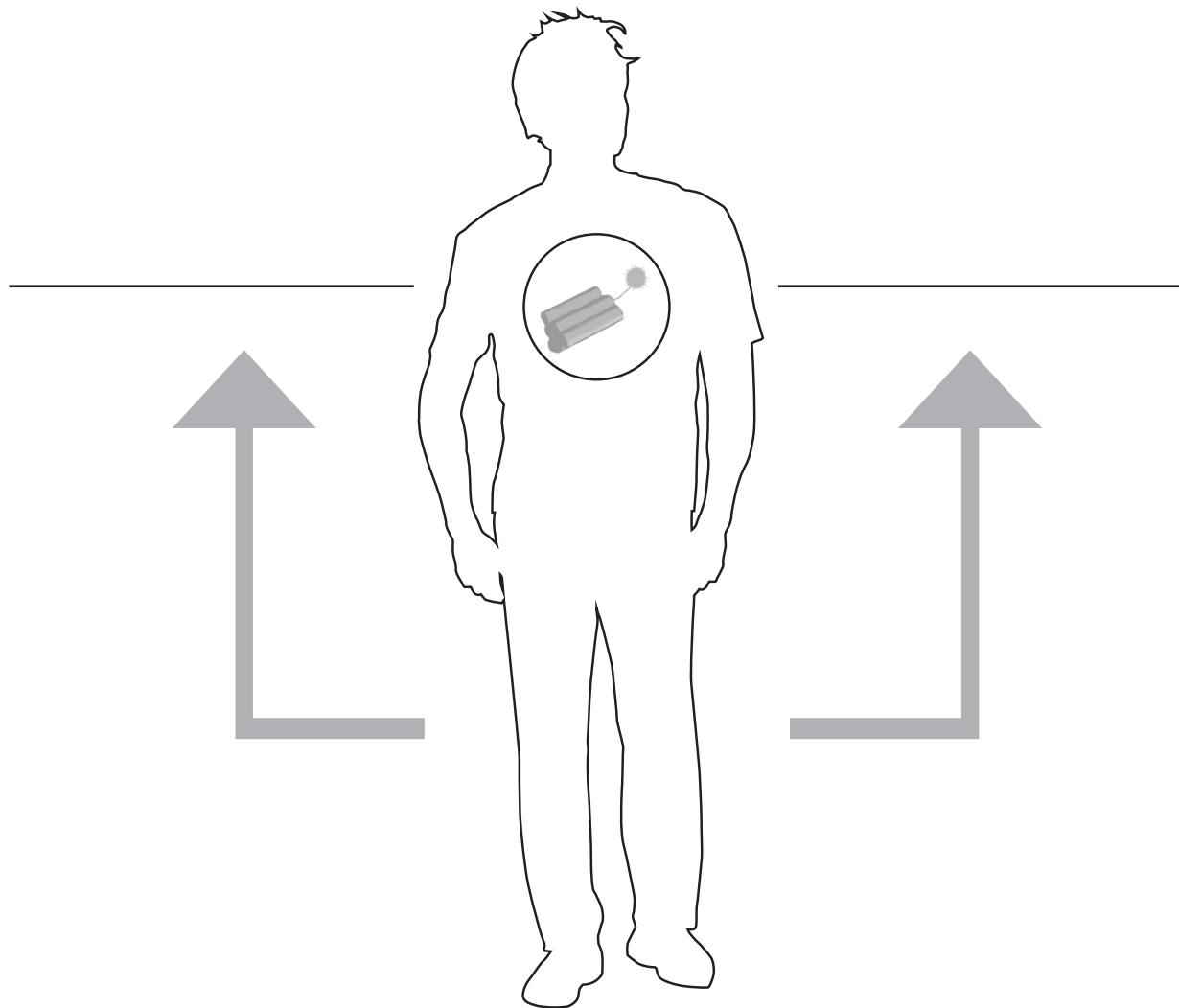
Something that worked particularly well you want to share?

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](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

# >> KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: COLOSSIANS 1:9-14



**BEARING  
GOOD FRUIT**

**GROWING IN  
KNOWLEDGE  
OF GOD**

**ENDURING  
WITH PATIENCE**

**GIVING THANKS  
IN JOY**

# Proof Lesson 1: No Ordinary Guy

**Objective:** The point of the lesson is that your students would see Jesus for who He really is and begin to grasp how incredible it is that they get to have a relationship with Him.

**Scripture Focus:** John 1:1-14

**Overview:** This lesson looks at the stunning picture John paints in the opening passage of his Gospel. In a relatively short amount of verses, John packs-in some pretty awesome truth. Through this passage, your students will see Jesus as the eternal Word who came to save all people from their sins. Your teenagers will see Jesus as a God who can be known, and who truly desires to save them and lead them to a full life in Him.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Proof Lesson One Teacher Prep Video*, click on the URL below and view the video entitled “*Proof Lesson 1: No Ordinary Guy.*”

- [www.youthministry360.com/proof-prep-videos](http://www.youthministry360.com/proof-prep-videos)

## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### The Details

#### Who wrote John?

John the Apostle wrote the Gospel of John. John was one of Jesus’ closest disciples, one of what is called the “inner three,” with Peter and James. John wrote his Gospel, but also wrote 1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation. According to Church history, John was the only Apostle not to die a martyr’s death.

#### When was it written?

Though an exact date is tough to pin down, most scholars think John wrote his Gospel after 70 A.D., probably from the city of Ephesus.

#### What was the purpose of its writing?

John had one purpose in mind: that his readers would know Jesus Christ as Messiah. John’s message is evangelical at its core. He was chiefly concerned with both Jews and Gentiles knowing Jesus’ true identity, and knowing it in such a way that they came to a rich faith in Him.

### The Main Point

#### JOHN 1:14

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This verse could perfectly sum up John’s message in his Gospel. Jesus, the Son of God, the Word, literally took on human flesh, and in visible form, displayed the glory of God on this earth. He walked and dwelt among us, His creation.

That Jesus lived on this earth as fully God and fully man is singularly remarkable. It is the hinge-point of our faith. God is not a detached, cold observer. He is so very intimately involved with us that His plan all along was to send His one and only Son from heaven to earth, to live, teach, lead, heal, die, and ultimately live again. This is the hope of our faith.

The key point in this passage is simply that there is a God, a God who exists in three Persons. One of those Persons descended from His dwelling place in Heaven to come and show His people the true path to salvation. And the world has never been the same since. This is the focus of this passage and the focus of John’s Gospel.

# >> NO ORDINARY GUY

## Wrap Up

There are moments when youth workers or ministry leaders will bemoan the general state of the faith of teenagers. There are statistics cited that show Christian teenagers behaving no differently than their non-Christian counterparts. We talk about how Christian teenagers don't know the Bible, or can't articulate their faith. While these things may be true, it may be that the chief reason some Christian teens aren't living out their faith is because they simply do not recognize Christ for who He is. They do not fully understand whom it is they claim to follow, what His life, death, and resurrection accomplished, and the power gained in surrendering to Him.

The purpose of Proof is the same as John's Gospel: that your students would truly know Christ and be moved to devotion out of this knowledge.

## Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains four elements: *The Lead In*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Main Event*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; *The Bonus Round*, which is simply an additional Bible Study activity that supports the main thrust of the lesson, and *The Last Word*, which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson's biblical truth.

### The Lead In

**Title:** The Most Comfortable Chair In The World

**Goal:** The idea is to get your students thinking about belief in the face of evidence or proof.

**Set Up:** You'll need the *Proof Media Disc* and a way to show the Lesson One Video, such as a DVD player. Or if you would prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the Media Disc on your computer, download the .MOV or .MPEG file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST** >> explain that you're beginning a six-lesson study on the Book of John. Explain to your students that you're going to watch a video that both introduces this particular lesson and also casts a little light on an ongoing conversation they'll watch play-out over the next six lessons.

**NEXT** >> show the video.

**THEN** >> engage your students in a short discussion using the following questions:

- **By listening to his friend, and giving the chair a shot, what did the guy in the video discover?**
- **Why is it that we can be so disbelieving? Why are we so guarded about what we will allow ourselves to believe?**
- **The guy in the video was sitting next to the most comfortable chair all along. But he had to embrace it before he could experience it. Keep this thought in mind as we go through this lesson, and this 6-week study.**

**FINALLY** >> explain that today's lesson is all about seeing Jesus for who He really is, and responding to Him accordingly.

### The Main Event

**Title:** No Ordinary Guy

**Goal:** The idea is for students to begin to understand exactly who Jesus was and what role He plays in the world and in their lives.

**Set-Up:** Provide Student Guides for each student and something to write with.

**FIRST** >> call on three volunteers and put them on the spot. Ask them to quickly describe one of their parents. If they hesitate, hurry them up. Encourage them to just start describing. When they have finished, choose another volunteer and quickly ask them to give you one characteristic of their mom or dad. Any characteristic will do. When the volunteer has finished, choose one more volunteer and ask them to quickly describe what their mom or dad does for a living.

When all three students have gone, explain that what you just did was a fun exercise in relationships. Explain that each of these students could very quickly describe their mom or dad, name one of their characteristics, and describe what they do for a living all because they know them. They spend time with them. They know the intimate details of their life. Without thinking, they were able to tell a lot about who they are. Explain that you are going to take the same approach with learning about Jesus.

**PROOF : Lesson 1****>> NO ORDINARY GUY**

Take a moment to set the stage for your students. Using the Bible Background, share with them the vital stats behind the Book of John.

**NEXT >>** distribute Student Guides. Explain to your students that this lesson is the first lesson in six lessons from the Book of John. This lesson will examine John's description of who Jesus is.

**THEN >>** instruct students to turn to John 1:1-14. Explain that you will be going through a few verses at a time looking for descriptions of Jesus, characteristics of Jesus, or references to the things Jesus did on this earth.

**NEXT >>** begin with John 1:1-2. Read or have a student read the verses. Then, instruct students to call out any words that describe Jesus, or any words that discuss His characteristics. As students call these out, instruct the class to write these on the "God" side of their Student Guides. (Possible words might include "the Word," "with God," and "Word was God.") Ask students:

- **These two verses are short, but they pack a huge punch! They say so much about Jesus' identity. What do they say about who Jesus is?**

o *Answer:* He is God as part of the Trinity. He is eternal. He has always existed.

**THEN >>** read or have a student read John 1:3-5. Do the same thing you did for the first group of verses, calling out any words that describe Jesus, His characteristics, or His role. Instruct students to continue to call these out and to write them on their Student Guide. (Possible words might include "life," "light of men," and "all things made through Him.") Ask students:

- **What did we just learn about Jesus' role in Creation?**

o *Answer:* Jesus was present with God in the beginning when all things were made. Explain that this goes back to what they learned in verses 1-2, that Jesus is eternal. He has always been.

**THEN >>** read or have a student read John 1:10-13, continuing in the same manner as you have previously done. (Possible words might include "in the world," "came to his own," and "children of God.") Ask students:

- **These is a remarkable verses. What are the incredible truths that speak to you?**

o *Answer:* Answers might include that Jesus actually came to earth; that there were many who chose not to believe in Him; and that to all who believe in Him He allows to become His children.

- **What does it mean that we are children of God?**

o *Answer:* Help your students understand this in terms of salvation. By God's grace, our belief saves us from our sins. Salvation is the means by which we become God's children.

**FINALLY >>** read or have a student read John 1:14. Explain that this verse is literally at the heart of our faith. Explain that Jesus, the very Son of God, came to earth and lived here among His people. John says here that if we know Jesus, we know God. And in Jesus, we can see the glory of the Father. Ask:

- **When you think of Jesus, do these words and images we just wrote down come to mind? Do your prayers reflect an understanding of Jesus that is based on these characteristics of Him? If not, why do you think we can be so guilty of not really thinking of Jesus in this way?**

o *Answer:* It seems like we have an idea of what Jesus should be. We make Jesus so much smaller because it is easy to relate to Him. We don't have to have our lives rocked by Jesus if we make Him "less God." When we see Jesus for who He really is, we realize that our lives are pretty small in comparison, and that can make us uncomfortable.

- **Knowing that Jesus is eternal, that all things were made through Him, that He is one with the Father, and that we can literally see the glory of God in Him, how does it make you feel that you have a personal relationship with Him?**

o *Answer:* Don't rush students to answer this. Let it sit for a while. If it's silent for a few seconds, restate the question. Encourage conversation, but be OK if students need to think about this.

Transition to the next activity by reminding students that we can know Jesus personally because He obediently came to the earth and lived a human life for our sakes. We can know the Son because He loved us enough to sacrifice it all.



**PROOF : Lesson 1****>> NO ORDINARY GUY****Bonus Round (Optional Activity)****Title:** Who Is He?**Goal:** The idea is to further shore up students' understanding of Jesus' identity.**Set Up:** None

**FIRST** >> Explain to students that it's difficult for us to grasp the fullness of Jesus' identity. After all, we are humans with a finite, or limited, understanding of God. Although God makes Himself knowable through Scripture, we have a hard time wrapping our brains around it.

**THEN** >> explain that the purpose of this lesson is to grasp what it looks like when we know Jesus' identity. But what happens when we don't? Turn to Acts 2:22-24, and 36. Explain that this is just a month or so after Jesus' death and resurrection. Peter was addressing a large crowd of Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost. In what has been called the first sermon of the Church, Peter explains to the Jews their error in not seeing Jesus for exactly who He was.

**NEXT** >> read the passage aloud. Peter was pretty much putting the smack down. He was saying to the Jews, "you guys had the Son of God in your midst and you murdered Him." Instruct your students to look closely at verse 22. Ask:

- **What does the word accredited mean?**
  - o Answer: Accredited means "to recognize as having legitimacy, or authority."
- **So if Jesus was accredited by God, and the proof was in the miracles He did, what was Peter saying about the severity of the Jews actions?**
  - o Answer: He was basically saying to the Jews that they had no excuse. Jesus' identity was spelled out extremely clearly in front of them. But in their disbelief they committed a serious sin against God and Christ.

**FINALLY** >> explain to students that in a much smaller way, we are in danger of committing a similar mistake. When we fail to see Jesus for who He is, and we do not give Him the honor, glory, and devotion He is due, we commit a similar offense. While we are not guilty of crucifying Jesus, if we don't see Him for whom He is, and relate to Him accordingly, we are guilty of dishonoring Him.

**The Last Word****Title:** Are You Awestruck?**Goal:** The idea is to drive home to students the remarkable concept that we actually get to have a relationship with Jesus.**Set Up:** If you choose, read the article about Tony Dungy and a truckdriver found here: [http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2007/writers/rick\\_reilly/05/07/dungy0430/](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2007/writers/rick_reilly/05/07/dungy0430/)

**FIRST** >> summarize the Rick Reilly article linked above. (Below is a short summary for your benefit, but feel free to read the touching article and provide your own summary):

**During his time as a coach in the NFL, Tony Dungy was one of the league's most successful coaches. Dungy became the first African-American coach to win a Super Bowl, when he did so as coach of the Indianapolis Colts in February of 2007. But it is Dungy's personal side that endears him to many.**

**Dungy is a man of strong Christian faith. He openly lives out his faith in his daily interactions with others. None more so than through his friendship with an Ohio truck-driver named Mark Lemke. You see, Dungy's son, James, committed suicide in December of 2005. Lemke's son, Cory, a star high school golfer, died in a motorcycle accident around the same time. Sport's Illustrated did a short feature on Cory and how grief-stricken Mark was. Dungy read the story, and was moved by it. So, in the midst of the 2006-2007 NFL playoffs, Dungy calls Lemke and talks to him about losing a son and how their faith can keep them going. The two men become friends. Lemke is Dungy's guest at the Super Bowl in February of that year. This unlikely friendship between a trucker and an NFL superstar is one that defies the common logic of our celebrity obsessed culture.**

**THEN** >> ask students why is it remarkable that Dungy and Lemke are friends? What is so unusual about the relationship? The answer is, of course, that it is simply not common for an "average" guy like Lemke to be friends with a celebrity like Dungy. It is for this reason that people are in awe of the relationship.

# >> NO ORDINARY GUY

Ask students if they are ever in awe of their relationship with Jesus. Explain that we would be giddy if we could be friends with our favorite celebrity or athlete, yet we often treat the fact that we have a relationship with the Son of God as no big deal. This needs to change.

**NEXT** >> read Philippians 2:9-11 to your students. Explain that God has placed Jesus over every name there is. All of creation bows down to Him. Yet, this is the same Jesus who allowed Himself to be murdered on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Jesus gave His life for all people who will believe. How amazing is this?

**THEN** >> ask them to take a moment and think about what keeps them from being in awe of Jesus. Ask them to take a second and try and identify the issues they have personally that stand in the way of them recognizing Jesus for who He is, and responding to Him with an overwhelming sense of thankfulness, love, and awe. (If they choose, they can write these on the right hand side of their Student Guide.) Challenge students to begin to realize that this response is the only fitting one for Christ. Help them see that this level of respect is what Christ deserves every day of our lives. Challenge them to begin to start focusing on Jesus in this manner.

**FINALLY** >> encourage students that this level of thinking is difficult. It's not exactly something that happens overnight. And it can't happen without learning more about Christ. Explain that the next five lessons will be spent going deeper in their understanding of Christ and the amazing role He plays in God's plan to redeem all things.

## 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](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

# >> NO ORDINARY GUY

SCRIPTURE FOCUS // John 1:1-14

youthministry360

**WORD**



# ENGAGE Lesson 1: This World vs. God's World

**Objective:** The point of this lesson is that your students would begin to evaluate their relationship with the world and with God.

**Focus Scripture:** 1 John 2:15-17

**Overview:** There are two opposing realities that vie for your students' affection: God and "the world." It's an age-old struggle, made all the more intense by just how hostile the world is to God and the values of His Kingdom. But the most interesting thing is that many of your students aren't aware of this struggle. Many teenagers simply don't see a problem with acting in a "worldly" way with one group of friends or circumstances, and putting on their "church" hat when they are with another set of friends. The only problem with this is that as Christ-followers, we don't have this option. This lesson will help your students understand the difference between the ways of God and the ways of the world, and how to begin evaluating where exactly their life lines up: with the world, or with God.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Engage* Lesson One Teacher Prep Video, click on the URL below and view the video entitled "Engage Lesson 1: This World vs. God's World."

- [www.youthministry360.com/engage-prep-videos](http://www.youthministry360.com/engage-prep-videos)

## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### The Details

#### Who wrote 1 John?

John the Apostle is the author of 1 John. Along with Peter and James, John formed the "inner three" of Jesus' group of twelve disciples. Peter, James, and John were Jesus' closest followers.

#### When was it written?

1 John was probably written sometime in the period after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, but probably no later than 90 AD.

#### What was the purpose for its writing?

John was writing to a population (1st Century Christ-followers) who had seen their ranks diminished at the onset of Roman persecution. John was calling his audience to a faith that was doctrinally sound and application oriented. He reminded his readers of the teachings of Christ, and urged them to put them into practice.

### The Main Point

#### 1 JOHN 2:15

For the purposes of this lesson, the main point of 1 John 2:15-17 is verse 15: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This verse helps set up the foundational argument of *Engage*. This verse sets up the conflict, or the tension, between God and the world.

Notice how John frames the discussion. He is not ambivalent. He does not frame the conversation in mild tones. John says that if you love the world, or anything in it, you hate God. Furthermore, John says that if we love the world, God is literally not in us. Wow. That is about as strong a message as one could communicate. John clearly defines the idea that God and the world are completely opposed to one another.

**ENGAGE : Lesson 1****>> THIS WORLD VS. GOD'S WORLD****Wrap Up**

Lesson 1 of *Engage* is simply aimed at making sure your students feel this tension. They need to understand the two sides of the argument: God and the world. Then, you can begin to help them evaluate their attitudes toward both God and the world. Where does their allegiance lie? What most of your students will probably find is that they have areas in their lives where they are way too close to the world, but also some areas where they have a good foundation for growing closer to God. The goal is to help them understand that they must choose. They cannot have a love for both God and the world.

**Lesson Plan**

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: *The Build Up*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Focus*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; and *The Payoff* which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson's biblical truth.

**The Build Up**

**Title:** You're A Christ-Follower

**Goal:** The idea is to begin to introduce your students to the concept of God vs. the world, with God's ways being opposed to the world's ways.

**Set Up:** You'll need the *Engage Media Disc* and a way to show the Lesson One Video, such as a DVD player. Or if you would prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the Media Disc on your computer, download the .MOV or .MPEG file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST >>** remind students that you're beginning a four-lesson study on how to live as Christ-followers in today's world, entitled, *Engage*. Explain to your students that you're going to watch a video that serves as an overall introduction of the theme of the next four lessons.

**NEXT >>** show the video.

**THEN >>** lead your students in a short discussion. Ask:

- **How do you respond to the video's assertion that the world is a place that doesn't believe what you believe?**
- **Do you see the "If it feels good, do it" philosophy alive in the world around you? What's wrong with this way of approaching life?**
- **Where do you feel the world pulling you away from Christ? How does this look in your day-to-day life?**

Ask students what the difference is in merely living in the world, and engaging the world with the Gospel? Don't give students a chance to answer. Explain that this question is at the heart of *Engage*, a four-lesson study on how to interact with the world your students live in.

**FINALLY >>** encourage your students that the next four lessons will be a time where they will be challenged to evaluate their faith-life, and the kind of impact they are having on the world around them. Challenge them to let this time be one that truly changes the way they live their lives in this world.

**The Focus**

**Title:** This World vs. God's World

**Goal:** The idea is to flesh out the concept of God vs. the world and help students begin to understand that they cannot be aligned with both.

**Set-Up:** Provide Student Guides and something to write with for your students. If you have a projector, you'll need the "This World vs. God's World" PowerPoint presentation found in your Lesson 1 Folder of your *Engage Lessons Disc*. If you don't have a projector, be prepared to use a dry-erase board to write the information that appears on the slides.

**FIRST >>** begin by explaining to students that over the next four lessons they will learn all about what the Bible means when it talks about "the world," and why as Christ-followers, they must know how to approach it. But, explain that right now you're going to lay the foundation for this discussion by defining the terms.

## ENGAGE : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THIS WORLD VS. GOD'S WORLD

**NEXT** >> instruct students to look at their Student Guides. Instruct them to take a moment and define the word, "world," in the space provided. Once they have had a second to do so, allow a couple of them to share their answers with the class. Explain to students that the way you are going to be defining the word "world" over the next few lessons is the way the Bible defines it. Explain that it might be a little different than some of the definitions they wrote down.

**THEN** >> walk students through the way the Bible defines the word, "world." (If you choose, use the "This World vs. God's World" PowerPoint slide show. If not, use a dry-erase board.) Explain that the New Testament defines "the world" as follows:

- "The concerns of the earth and its affairs as distinguished from heaven and the life to come"<sup>i</sup>

Explain that another way of looking at it might be like this:

- An environment of hatred toward God and the things of God.<sup>ii</sup>

Ask students to sum-up both of these definitions in their own words. Lead them to understand that "the world" represents all the earthly things that make up the culture and society we live in, as opposed to the Godly things that have to do with God's Kingdom and His ways.

**NEXT** >> direct students' attention to their Student Guides. Work as a class to answer the question, "Where do you see the world? What does it look like?" Help students understand that we see the world in a variety of places, including:

- Music
- Movies
- Government
- TV
- Business
- Magazines
- People's interactions with others

Explain that basically, we see "the world" in our culture, in the society that surrounds us. And, as you are about to examine, this world stands in stark contrast to God and what He desires for us.

**THEN** >> read or have a student read 1 John 2:15-17. When you have finished, walk students through these verses one at a time. Explain that each verse more-or-less contains one central thought. Lead students in the following discussion:

- **What is the central thought of verse 15? Here's a hint: it has to do with how you should approach the world.**
  - o *Answer:* We can't love the world. (If you choose, have your students write this on their Student Guides.)
- **Think of how we described the world earlier. What do you think it means to love the world?**
  - o *Answer:* When we have a desire for, or a fixation on, the things of this world to the point where they come in between God and us, we demonstrate a love for the world. When we take on the attitude or the behavior of the worldly, we show a love for the world.
- **What is the central thought of verse 16?**
  - o *Answer:* The ways of the world and the ways of God are against each other.
- **Why are the concepts of people's cravings and their lusting after things great examples of what the world is all about?**
  - o *Answer:* Our world puts so much emphasis on possessions and material things. People crave after objects or status. This goes directly against the ways of God's Kingdom.
- **What is the central thought of verse 17?**
  - o *Answer:* The world will not last, but the ways of God will.

**FINALLY** >> explain to your students that the goal of this lesson is just to lay the groundwork for the next three lessons. Review the three summaries of the verses. They should look something like this:

- **We can't love the world.**
- **The ways of the world and the ways of God are against each other.**
- **The world will not last, but the ways of God will.**

Explain that now that we know the difference between the things of the world and the things of God, we have to begin to think about our attitudes toward them. John says we can't love the world and love God. Examining how close we are with the world is pretty vital.

## ENGAGE : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THIS WORLD VS. GOD'S WORLD

**The Pay-Off**

**Title:** Whose Side Are You On?

**Goal:** The idea is to get your students to start thinking about their attitudes toward certain aspects of the world.

**Set Up:** Provide a dry-erase board and something to write with.

**FIRST** > explain to your students that you will be finishing up the lesson by thinking about their attitudes toward the things of this world. Explain that you're going to list a couple of categories on the board. You are then going to help flesh out what it might look like for a 21st Century teenager to show love toward the world for the specific category. Then, you will do the same for what it means to show love toward God.

**NEXT** > start by writing "Media" on the board. Explain that by media, you mean music, TV, movies, magazines, and any similar content on the Internet. Ask:

- **Think for a moment about the music your friends listen to, or the movies or TV shows you and your friends watch. What is the attitude of someone who "loves the world" when it comes to these? How does he or she interact with the content in movies and music?**
  - o *Answer:* They embrace the message; they live out the values and characteristics they see and hear; they show little discretion in what they will listen to or watch; it's all about being entertained regardless of the message.
- **Now, how would someone who is not in love with the world, and is instead in love with God and His ways, interact with the same media? What would their attitude be?**
  - o *Answer:* Recognize that some of the messages go counter to God's ways; understand that entertainment is fine, but to not allow any harmful values or characteristics to creep into their lifestyles; show discretion as to what they will watch or listen to.

**THEN** > write the word "People" on the board. Explain that by people, you mean their attitudes toward others, how they interact with others, and how they view others. Ask:

- **If you are a "lover of the world," how do you view other people? What are your attitudes toward them? What are your interactions like?**
  - o *Answer:* See other people as insignificant; see yourself and any goals you may have as more valuable than others; entertain certain prejudices; use others for personal, professional, or even sexual gain.
- **Now, how would someone who is not in love with the world, and is instead in love with God and His ways, interact with the same people? What would his or her attitude be?**
  - o *Answer:* See people as valuable; selflessly want to meet the needs of others; help others achieve their goals; regard all people equally; never use others for personal gain.

**NEXT** > explain that these are just the two most prevalent ways teenagers seem to encounter the world around them. You could do the same thing for how you viewed possessions, or finances, or even social issues. (Choose another of these topics to discuss if you have time.) Ask students to think for a moment about the discussion you have just had. Ask them where they see themselves in these categories. Do they act more like a lover of the world? Or a lover of God? Challenge students to really think about where their affections lie.

**FINALLY** > explain that as you continue your study of *Engage*, you will quickly realize that we cannot choose to love both God and the world. We have to choose one or the other. Explain that as the study progresses, they will learn exactly what it looks like to love God as it pertains to their interaction with the world. But for now, challenge them to spend this week becoming more aware of their attitudes toward the things of this world.

Explain to students that you will be posting the *Engage* digi-posters to encourage conversation between lessons. Decide ahead of time how you will post these, whether through email, Facebook message, Facebook group page, or through your youth group's website. Challenge students to check in, read and think about the content, and to interact (if there is a method for interaction, i.e., Facebook Wall, comment section on a blog, etc.).

**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](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

<sup>1</sup><http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/the%20world>

<sup>2</sup>Holman Bible Dictionary. General Editor, Trent C. Butler. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003.

# >> THIS WORLD VS. GOD'S WORLD

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: 1JOHN 2:15 - 17

Define the word, "world!"

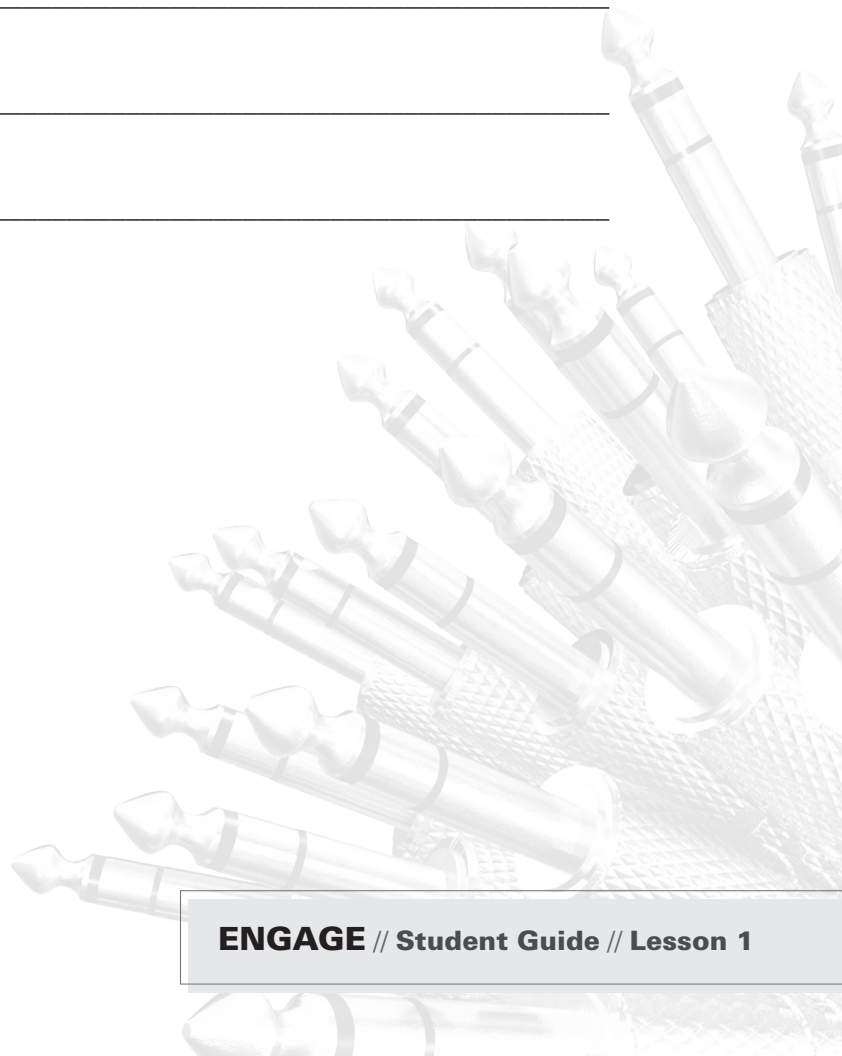
Where do you see the world? What does it look like?

Read 1 John 2:15 - 17 and come up with one key thought for each verse. Write the thoughts in the space provided:

Vs. 15: \_\_\_\_\_

Vs. 16: \_\_\_\_\_

Vs. 17: \_\_\_\_\_





# THE LEAST OF THESE Lesson 1: So Many, So Little

**Objective:** The point of the lesson is that your students understand why poverty exists and also begin to increase their awareness of it in their communities and in the world.

**Focus Scripture:** Genesis 1:27-30; Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 1:28-32

**Overview:** Why does poverty exist? Believe it or not, even though these three passages don't mention the word poverty even once, they make the case perfectly. Look closely in Genesis 1. What do you see? In this passage, we see God's original creative intent. Man and woman living in harmony with God in the Garden with all of their needs provided for. Then what happened? Sin happened. And in the passage from Romans 1, we see sin's effect. By the time Paul was writing, the world had gone from perfection in Eden to imperfection. Sin corrupted God's plan, and all sorts of evil emerged as a result. While poverty has many causes (individual greed, corruption of governments, inability to earn a wage, and so on), its existence can be explained by sin's effect on God's creation.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *The Least of These* Lesson One Teacher Prep Video, click on the URL below and view the video entitled "The Least of These Lesson 1: So Many, So Little."

- [www.youthministry360.com/the-least-of-these-prep-videos](http://www.youthministry360.com/the-least-of-these-prep-videos)

## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### The Details

#### Who wrote the Books of Genesis and Romans?

While there's no specific author named within the text, the traditional authorship of Genesis (as well as the rest of the Pentateuch) is attributed to Moses. The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans as a letter to the Christ-followers in Rome.

#### When was it written?

Put simply, it's hard to know exactly when Genesis was written. There are two different arguments for the date of the actual Exodus of the Jewish people from Israel, an earlier date (around mid 1400s B.C.) and a later date (around the mid 1200s B.C.). The writing of Genesis would fall sometime around these general dates.

The widely accepted date for Romans is sometime during Paul's third missionary journey, probably in 57 A.D.

#### What was the purpose for its writing?

##### GENESIS

Our English title for the Book of Genesis actually comes from the Greek translation of the Pentateuch. The Greek word for *Genesis* means "origins." The Hebrew title is derived from the first phrase in the book, "in the beginning." So Genesis is a book of origins, or beginnings. Genesis tells the story of the beginning of creation, humankind, and God's people.

##### ROMANS

Paul was writing to address the issues that would no doubt come up in a Church made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul addressed big-picture issues such as whether or not the Law could save a person, what the implications of God making salvation available to the Gentiles was for the Jews, and how Christ-followers were to handle such delicate issues as observing Jewish dietary restrictions based in the Law.

### The Main Point

#### GENESIS 1:29-30

For the purpose of this lesson on why poverty exists, the main point of Genesis 1:27-30 is verses 29-30. Here we see God with a blank slate. He had just created the world, humankind, the animals, the plants . . . everything. So it's a great opportunity for

## THE LEAST OF THESE : Lesson 1

# >> SO MANY, SO LITTLE

us to look and see what God originally intended. When God originally crafted the order of the world before sin corrupted it, what did it look like? How did things function? In verses 29-30, we see a glimpse of God’s provision for His creation.

In these verses, God gave Adam and Eve “every seed-bearing plant” and “all the beasts of the earth” for their sustenance and provision. Adam and Eve were perfectly provided for. In a world before sin, God had a plan that accounted for all the needs of His children. There was no hunger, no need, and no want.

### GENESIS 3:17-19

While the entire curse is a heart-wrenching and invaluable study on the results of sin, for the purposes of this lesson, God’s words to Adam in verses 17-19 are the main focus. Look at the difference between how Genesis 1:27-31 and Genesis 3:17-19 describe how humans will gain their provision. The contrast is stark.

In Genesis 1, God provided a seemingly effortless and full provision for His children. In Genesis 3, we see “the ground” cursed because of Adam’s sin; we see that Adam would eat of it by “painful toil”; we see the harvest of the ground thwarted and frustrated by “thorns and thistles.” Sin corrupted God’s original plan for perfect provision.

Again, the word *poverty* does not appear in these verses. But they paint an all-too-clear picture of a world where suffering and fruitless labor had entered the picture. Poverty and suffering were never a part of God’s plan. They are a result of sin.

### ROMANS 1:28-32

This passage from Romans serves in this lesson as a snapshot of the world of sin compared to the tranquility of Eden. Paul’s words in verses 28-29 are our main focus.

Here we see people were completely indulging their sin. And what was the result? Depravity. Evil. Greed. Envy. Murder. Strife. Deceit. And malice. When you consider the societal causes of widespread, systemic poverty, many of them can be found (in some form) in Paul’s words. The world functions in many ways out of its sin. There’s so much darkness, so much suffering, and so much poverty.

## Wrap Up

Looking at these three passages, we can see that God’s original intent had no place for poverty or suffering. These terrible elements entered the world because of the sinfulness of humankind. As we’ll see moving through the four lessons of *The Least of These*, God has not turned a blind eye toward those who suffer. Although poverty exists in this world because of sin, God has a response—a powerful, perfect, and compassionate response.

## Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: *The Build Up*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Focus*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; and *The Payoff* which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson’s biblical truth.

### The Build Up

**Title:** The Least of These (Intro)

**Goal:** The idea is to introduce the main points of the next four lessons and get your students thinking about the issue of poverty.

**Set Up:** You’ll need the *The Least of These Media Disc* and a way to show the Lesson One Video, such as a DVD player. Or if you prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the media disc on your computer, download the .MOV or .MPEG file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST** >> remind students that they’re beginning a four-lesson study on poverty entitled The Least of These. Explain to your students that they’re going to watch a video that introduces some stats on poverty and introduces the main points of the next four lessons.

**NEXT** >> show the video.

# THE LEAST OF THESE : Lesson 1

## >> SO MANY, SO LITTLE

**THEN** > repeat the following statistics from the video, making sure your students caught them. (If you want to use them, a few more statistics have been added to really get your students' attention. The statistics are provided on the "So Many, So Little" slide show using PowerPoint as well.):

- More than 1 billion people in the world live on less than one dollar a day.
- More than 25,000 children die from preventable causes each day.
- One out of seven people in the world struggle with hunger each day.
- Nearly 1 billion people in the world are illiterate.
- One billion people in the world don't have access to safe water. Two and a half billion lack basic sanitation.

Ask your students if these stats get their attention. Explain that poverty is a huge issue. Poverty's impact on people is extremely damaging. Poverty takes an unusually heavy toll on society's most weak: children and the elderly. And it's not just something that happens in developing nations; there are people in students' community, even in their schools, who are not sure if they will go to bed hungry tonight or not. Poverty is an issue that affects people all over the world.

**FINALLY** > encourage your students with the news that this will be a great four lessons where they will learn all about why poverty exists, what God is doing about poverty, and what their role is in His plan.

### The Focus

**Title:** So Many, So Little

**Goal:** The idea is for your students to begin to grasp the theological reasons why poverty exists.

**Set-Up:** Provide your students with Student Guides and something to write with. If you wish, arrange to show the PowerPoint slideshow. The slideshow corresponds with some of the questions, but it's intentionally sparse so that you can customize it based on how you choose to teach the lesson.

**FIRST** > explain to your students that the question of why poverty exists is a very important one. For many people poverty and suffering are the major reasons they choose not to believe in God. "Why would God allow poverty?" they ask. Explain that it's important to know how to answer this question.

**NEXT** > explain that they'll be looking at three different passages. Explain that they'll be taking a big-picture view of Scripture and using these three passages to understand God's original plan for humans and what sin did to that plan.

**THEN** > instruct students to turn to Genesis 1:27-30. Explain to them that they're about to see a snapshot of what's called "God's creative intent." Explain that the phrase God's creative intent is simply a fancy way of talking about what the world was like before sin entered it. Call on a volunteer to read the passage.

**NEXT** > when the volunteer has finished, direct students' attention to the first section on their Student Guide entitled "The Way It Was Before Sin." Explain that you're going to start by asking students to call out any words or phrases that describe the way things were before sin. Allow students to come up with their own responses before leading them in a short discussion. (If you choose, have them write the answers in the space provided.)

- **What does verse 28 say about the order of things? What was Adam and Eve's role in relation to the earth and the things in it?**
  - o *Answer:* They were to subdue the earth and rule over it. We tend to think negatively when we hear the words subdue and rule. There's no negative connotation here. It was simply God's way of creating an order where Adam and Eve could live in harmony with the earth. In a sense, the earth and the things in it would serve them.
- **What does verse 29 say about how God was providing for Adam and Eve?**
  - o *Answer:* God had a plan in place to perfectly provide food for Adam and Eve. They would not be in need. They would have all they needed in abundance.

Explain that students need to remember these concepts as you move on.

**NEXT** > instruct students to look over to Genesis 3:17-19. Explain that this package picks up immediately after Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating from the one tree in the Garden from which He instructed them not to eat. Call on a volunteer to read the passage.

**THEN** > when the volunteer has finished, direct students' attention to the section on their Student Guide entitled "The Way It Is After Sin." Have students call out any words or phrases from God's words to Adam that suggest a change from the way

## THE LEAST OF THESE : Lesson 1

# >>SO MANY, SO LITTLE

things were before sin. Have them refer back to their notes from earlier to help with the comparison. Allow students to come up with their own responses before leading them in a short discussion. (If you choose, have them write the answers in the space provided.)

- **In Genesis 1:29, we saw God freely providing food for Adam and Eve. How do verses 17 and 18 say it was going to be provided?**
  - *Answer:* Through painful labor! Gone were the days when God provided freely. Now, humans would have to work hard to produce their food.
- **How do these verses contrast with the description of the relationship between the earth and Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28?**
  - *Answer:* The earth was cursed! It would produce thorns. This was a far cry from Genesis 1:28, where Adam and Eve ruled over the earth and subdued it. Sin ruined the order of things!

**NEXT** ▶ remind students about the purpose of this lesson: to examine why poverty exists. Ask students where these verses mention poverty. The answer, of course, is that they don't. But what these verses do, from a big-picture perspective, is show that before sin the idea of poverty or people being in need wasn't in God's plan. But once sin entered the world, the order of things was turned upside down. Instead of being freely provided for by God in abundance, as a result of sin humans were forced to provide for themselves. Sin separated us from God, and robbed us of being perfectly cared for in relationship with Him.

**THEN** ▶ explain that they'll look at one more passage that will put everything in perspective. Instruct students to turn to Romans 1:28-32. Explain that they're going to be looking at a letter Paul wrote to the Christ-followers in Rome. Here, he was describing what it looked like when people were given over to their sin. Read the passage aloud as your students follow along. When you've finished, have students come up with words or phrases that describe sinful people. (There will be no shortage here!) Then, wrap up the study with the following few questions:

- **Wow. Describe the difference between what life must have been like in Eden before sin and how Paul paints life here after sin.**
  - *Answer:* Answers will vary, but the difference between the two is intense.
- **Is this a picture of the way God intended things to be?**
  - *Answer:* No.

**FINALLY** ▶ close the activity by explaining that while these verses don't mention poverty by name, they allude to many of the causes of poverty. Explain that there are many, many causes for poverty, including corrupt governments, broken social systems, people's own sinful choices (such as addiction or crime), and people oppressing others. All of these things are different, but they're related by one thing: sin. Sin is at the root of all poverty. Why? Because in God's original plan, there was no need. God provided lovingly for His people. Sin changed that. And Paul says that as a result of sin, greed and all kinds of evil have taken over human hearts.

Explain that in God's original creative intent, poverty was nowhere to be found. But the sin of humankind brought suffering, need, and poverty into the world.

Why does poverty exist? Because of sin in the world.

### The Pay-Off

**Title:** Sight Unseen

**Goal:** The idea is to help demonstrate that just because your students don't see poverty, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

**Set Up:** You will need a table or some other surface to place pictures down upon. Open *The Least of These Lesson Disc* on your computer and download the "Sight Unseen" PDF located in the Lesson 1 Folder. Print one copy. The PDF is set up to print in color. If you don't want to print in color, choose the grayscale option in your print window.

**FIRST** ▶ show the picture of the young girl standing in the door. Explain to your class that this young girl could live anywhere in the world. She could live in Kenya, South America, or the U.S. She's the face of poverty. She might get one meal a day if she's lucky. She probably only has one parent living with her. She probably has very little chance on her own, due to her education level and lack of opportunities, to break out of the cycle of poverty her family has been in for generations. She's a real person with real needs.

**THEN** ▶ place her picture face up on a table or other surface.

## THE LEAST OF THESE : Lesson 1

# >> SO MANY, SO LITTLE

**NEXT** > display the picture of the house. Ask students, in their minds, what this picture might represent. They might say stable families, the American dream, or just a place to live. Explain that unlike many of the poorest people in the world, the vast majority of your students and their friends don't have to truly worry about shelter. Explain that while they might not all live in mansions, they all have roofs over their heads. And so they don't worry about shelter. As you say this, make a point of putting the picture of the house directly on top of the picture of the girl.

**THEN** > display the picture of the grocery store. Ask students to share what this picture might represent. They might say food, or an excess of food. Explain that unlike the billions of people in the world who don't have enough food each day, we go to grocery stores where we choose precisely what we want to eat and refuse to buy what we don't like. And so we don't worry about food. As you say this, make a point of putting the picture of the grocery store directly on top of the picture of the house.

**NEXT** > show the picture of the iPod® in the blue jean pocket. Ask students to name what this might represent. They might say clothes, music, entertainment, and so on. Explain that most of us have clothes that are clean and protect us from the elements. Many of us spend thousands of dollars a year on clothes. Most of us have cell phones and other electronics. So we don't worry about what we'll wear. We're pretty entertained, too. So that keeps our attention. As you say this, make a point of putting the picture of the jeans/iPod directly on top of the picture of the supermarket.

Hold up the stack of photos so the class can see it. Explain that with all that we have in our lives—all the excess, all the comforts—we lose sight of people in poverty. Explain that whether we see them or not, they're still there. As you say this, peel away the picture of the jeans/iPod, the supermarket, and the house to reveal the picture of the young girl.

**FINALLY** explain to students that this lesson is an introductory one. The takeaway was for them to understand why poverty exists and to become more aware of the poverty around them and in the world. Challenge them to remember this object lesson as they go through their week. Just because they can't see poverty, that doesn't mean it isn't all around them. Encourage them to get ready for the next lesson that's all about God's response to poverty.

Explain to students that you'll be posting *The Least of These* digi-posters to encourage conversation between lessons. Decide ahead of time how you'll post these—whether through email, Facebook message, Facebook group page, or through your youth group's website. Challenge students to check in, read and think about the content and to interact with it (if there's a method for interaction, such as a Facebook wall, comment section on a blog, and so on).

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THE LEAST OF THESE

# >> SO MANY, SO LITTLE

**SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** GENESIS 1:27-30; GENESIS 3:17-19; ROMANS 1:28-32

## **THE WAY IT WAS BEFORE SIN**

*Read Genesis 1:27-30*

- Write any words or phrases that describe the way things were like before sin.

## **THE WAY IT IS AFTER SIN**

*Read Genesis 3:17-19*

- Write any words or phrases that describe the way things were like after sin.

*Read Romans 1:28-32*

- How does Paul's description of the world after sin compare to the world in Eden before sin?

# LIVE DIFFERENT Lesson 1: Right Place, Right Time

**Objective:** The point of the lesson is that your students grasp that God intends sex to be enjoyed between a man and a woman within the marriage relationship and that this view begins to influence their attitudes regarding sex and sexuality.

**Focus Scripture:** Genesis 2:20-25, Hebrews 13:4, Song of Solomon 2:7

**Overview:** Today's teenager lives in a hyper-sexualized society. And while sexual immorality has plagued humankind virtually forever, we seem to be in the midst of an age where the glamorization of sex is unprecedented. Teenagers are bombarded by messages about sex and sexual behavior. What does our culture say to teenagers about sex? Culture says sex is part of who you are, and that a teenager's sexuality is simply one facet of his or her identity. Culture says sexual expression is an important aspect of being young. But most importantly, culture says that sex between two consenting teenagers is OK, if not normal. As long as sex is not coercive, marriage, and maybe even love, doesn't really matter. The problem is that this flies in the face of how the Bible talks about sex and sexual expression. It's imperative that teenagers learn God's intention for how they are to make choices about sex and sexuality. This first lesson in *Live Different* helps students understand the biblical context for sex and its expression.

## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

*Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Live Different* Lesson One Teacher Prep Video, click on the URL below and view the video entitled "Live Different Lesson 1: Right Place, Right Time."

- [www.youthministry360.com/live-different-prep-videos](http://www.youthministry360.com/live-different-prep-videos)

## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is a simple and straightforward way to help you prepare to teach the lesson.

### The Details

#### Who wrote the Books of Genesis, Hebrews, and Song of Solomon?

These are three books whose authorship is the source of some debate. While there's no specific author named within the text, the traditional authorship of Genesis (as well as the rest of the Pentateuch) is attributed to Moses. Simply put, no one knows who the author of Hebrews is; over the years Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, and even Priscilla and Aquila have been proposed as authors. Song of Solomon has traditionally been thought to have been written by Solomon, though there's a good deal of textual evidence that throws this in doubt. It seems to have certainly been written during Solomon's reign; if it wasn't written by Solomon, it could have been written under his oversight.

#### When were these books written?

Put simply, it's hard to know exactly when Genesis was written. There are two different arguments for the date of the actual Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt: an earlier date (around mid 1400s B.C.) and a later date (around the mid 1200s B.C.). The writing of Genesis would fall sometime around these general dates. Most scholars argue for a date for the writing of Hebrews as sometime before 70 A.D. and the destruction of the Temple. Song of Solomon is thought to have been written sometime between 960 B.C. and 931 B.C.

#### What was the purpose for the writing of these books?

##### GENESIS

Our English title for the book Genesis actually comes from the Greek translation of the Pentateuch. The Greek word for Genesis means "origins." The Hebrew title is derived from the first phrase in the book: "In the beginning." So Genesis is a book of origins, or beginnings. Genesis tells the story of the beginning of creation, humankind, and God's people.

##### HEBREWS

The Book of Hebrews was written to an audience primarily made up of Jewish Christ-followers to encourage them to stay strong in their faith. The book urges these believers to endure in their faith by reframing an understanding of Jesus as the fulfiller of the Jewish faith. Persecution might have driven some of these Christ-followers to begin to turn away from their faith. The author of Hebrews was calling them to stay strong.

**LIVE DIFFERENT : Lesson 1****>> RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME**SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Solomon more or less tells the story of a man and woman who are engaged to be married. The book communicates their excitement over their love for one another, their upcoming wedding, and the anticipation of enjoying marital relations. It portrays the proper place for sexual relations, namely within the bonds of a loving marriage.

**The Main Point**GENESIS 2:24

This verse encapsulates God's original creative intent for a godly, sexual relationship. When God had a blank slate and created things as He saw fit, He created one man and one woman designed to be in union with one another. Genesis then makes a statement about this union: husband and wife are to join together to become one flesh. This verse paints a picture of God's plan for sexual relations. Part of God's design for humankind was for man and woman to enjoy a monogamous sexual relationship within the bonds of marriage.

HEBREWS 13:4

This verse from Hebrews is a very simple summation of God's design for sex and marriage. Quite simply, the "marriage bed" is to be kept "pure." How does one defile the marriage bed? By adultery, which, of course, is having sex with someone other than your husband or wife, or by sexual immorality, which addresses sexual intercourse or sexual acts outside of marriage. This verse couples with Genesis to support the concept that God's ideal for sexual intercourse is within marriage.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:7

This verse offers a brief and poetic support for the idea communicated in Genesis 2:24 and Hebrews 13:4. When viewed with the backdrop of Song of Solomon as a whole, this verse points to there being a right time for "love" to be awakened. This can be interpreted as more evidence that God desires sexual intimacy to only be expressed in marriage.

**Wrap Up**

Scripture is profoundly clear: God intends sexual expression to only occur between a man and a woman within the marriage relationship. This is a truth that must form the basis of your students' understanding of sexuality, sexual expression, and sexual relations. This, of course, runs completely counter to what the world tells your students about sex. But before you can begin to address your students' attitudes and even practices when it comes to sexual activity, you must start with the baseline of God's design for sex. That is the purpose of this lesson: to provide the biblical argument for the right expression of sexual intimacy.

**Lesson Plan**

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: *The Build Up*, which is a creative, interactive activity that introduces the theme of the lesson; *The Focus*, which is the heart of the lesson and contains the Bible Study section; and *The Payoff* which focuses on driving home the application of the lesson's biblical truth.

**The Build Up**

**Title:** Live Different, Intro

**Goal:** The idea is to get your students thinking about the issues of sex and sexuality, and their attitudes toward them.

**Set Up:** You'll need the *Live Different Media Disc* and a way to show the Lesson One Video, such as a DVD player or your laptop. Or if you would prefer to drop the video into your presentation software, open the media disc on your computer, download the .MOV file, and drop it into a slide.

**FIRST** >> remind students that you're beginning a four-lesson study on sex and holiness entitled *Live Different*. Explain to your students that you're going to watch a video that introduces the study and gives a little glimpse into the theme they will be looking at over the next few lessons.

**NEXT** >> show the video.

**FINALLY** >> explain that this lesson will help them understand the Bible's definition of sex that is good and that falls within God's plan. Encourage them that this will be the foundation on which their attitude toward sex and holiness should be built.



## LIVE DIFFERENT : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

**The Focus**

**Title:** Right Place, Right Time

**Goal:** The idea is for your students to begin to grasp God's true intent for sex and sexual expression.

**Set-Up:** Provide Student Guides and something to write with. You may also choose to provide a dry erase board. If you wish, arrange to show the PowerPoint slideshow. The slideshow corresponds with some of the questions, but it's intentionally minimalistic so that you can customize it based on how you choose to teach the lesson.

**FIRST** >> tell your students that you'll be looking at three different passages to see how God reveals His intentions for sex and sexuality throughout Scripture. Then instruct students to turn to Genesis 2. Read or have a student read Genesis 2:20-25. When you've finished, explain that this is the account of God making Eve. God had made Adam and saw that none of the animals was a suitable companion for him. So God made Eve to be Adam's mate. Explain that looking at this passage is very valuable because it shows us how God originally designed His creation to work; we can see the order of how things were intended before sin corrupted creation.

**THEN** >> instruct students to look at verses 24-25. Explain that when verse 24 talks about man and woman becoming "one flesh," it's talking about sexual intercourse. Direct your students' attention to the Student Guide under the column "What God Says." Instruct them to look at the section entitled "Who?." Then ask the following questions. (Instruct students to record their answers on their Student Guides, or you may write them on a dry erase board.)

- **If we're trying to identify sex that's acceptable in God's scheme of things, based on these verses how would we answer the "Who" question? In other words, when is sex right in God's eyes?**

*Answer:* According to these verses, the "who" is a man and woman joined in marriage. Sex between a husband and wife is good in God's eyes.

- **Verse 25 may seem a little awkward at first, but what does it say about sexuality within God's intended purpose?**

*Answer:* Adam and Eve had nothing to be ashamed about. They were expressing their unique sexuality within the relationship God had created.

- **What does this say about sex and sexuality in general? Is it inherently bad or wrong?**

*Answer:* When sex and sexuality are expressed within the godly boundary of marriage between a man and a woman, God's creative intent for humans is honored. Within this relationship, sex and sexuality are good in God's eyes.

**NEXT** >> instruct students to look in their Student Guides at the column entitled "What Culture Says." Lead them in a short discussion. Ask:

- **Think of the way the culture that surrounds you deals with sex. Think about movies, music, magazines, and so on. What are some examples of the messages our culture sends about the "who" of sex? Who is sex OK with in the world's eyes?**

*Answer:* Culture seems to say that sex between any two consenting people is OK. As long as no one is coerced or made to have sex against his or her will, not many restrictions are put on sex. Age and marriage seem to have little bearing.

- **What about love? Our culture seems to say that sex between two people who love each other is OK, regardless of whether they're married or not. What is the problem with this?**

*Answer:* Answers may include: Love outside of marriage is fleeting and/or changing. Young people may believe they're in love, but find afterward that they were not. Who's to say someone can't feel love for more than one person? Does this make sex with multiple partners acceptable?

Help students to see that if they're Christ-followers, God's intent for sex within marriage is the standard they must hold to.

**THEN** >> read or have a student read Hebrews 13:4. When you've finished, explain that Hebrews is a book of the Bible that was written over a thousand years after Genesis was written. Yet we see Hebrews uphold God's standard for sex and marriage. Ask students to respond to this verse using the following question:

- **What do you think this passage means when it mentions keeping the wedding bed pure?**

*Answer:* It is again upholding God's ideal for holding off on having sex until marriage. Keeping the marriage bed pure seems to directly address those who are engaged or betrothed to marry. But it supports the idea that sex outside of marriage is not part of God's plan.

## LIVE DIFFERENT : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

**NEXT** >> read or have a student read Song of Solomon 2:7. Ask:

- **How does this verse support what we've been talking about so far?**

*Answer:* Explain that while the language may seem rather poetic, it seems to be saying the same thing: there's a proper time for sexual desire, and that time is within the boundaries of marriage. To "awaken" it too soon is against God's plan.

**THEN** >> instruct students to look at the "when" space under the column entitled "What God Says" on their Student Guide. Ask:

- **According to the Scripture we've just read, when is it good in God's eyes to have sex?**

*Answer:* Within a marriage.

- **Look at the other side of your Student Guide. Describe the attitude or the message you get from the world around you about when it's OK to have sex.**

*Answer:* Answers may include: anytime you're in love; as long as you know the person; when you're "old enough."

**FINALLY** >> ask students why they think there's such a great difference between what the world says about sex and sexuality and what God says. Help them understand that as Christ-followers, their attitude must be that of Christ. Remind them that just because the world around us projects a popular attitude or understanding about a certain issue, it's not OK to merely go with the flow. Being a follower of Christ means taking a stand for their convictions. Explain that today they've learned the biblical basis for God's intention for sex. It's their responsibility to begin to conform their actions and attitudes to meet His standard.

## Wrap Up

[Ym360 Note: Because of the subject matter of *Live Different*, we wanted to provide you with some gender-specific discussion questions so you can break-up your discussion into a guys' and a girls' group. If you choose, these gender-specific small group questions are on the pages following the activity below. If you would prefer not to break into gender-specific groups, teach *Align With God* to drive home the lesson's application.]

**Title:** Align With God

**Goal:** The idea is to help students understand why it's important that their convictions, attitudes, and behaviors line up with God's desires for His people.

**Set Up:** No set-up needed.

**FIRST** >> call on two volunteers to help you demonstrate a concept to the group. (If you're teaching a mixed-gender group, this would be a great time to call one guy volunteer and one girl volunteer.) Once you've identified your volunteers, propose the following scenario to them:

- **Since we've been talking about relationships, I want you to think for a moment what you would consider to be the perfect first date, that one-in-a-million experience that would tell your date that no one was in your league. Money is no object! Really think of what the absolutely perfect first date would be. Where would you eat? What would you do after dinner? What kind of activity would you attend or do? What special touches would you include to really make your date stand out?**

After giving your students a moment to think about it, have your volunteers share their dream date. When one volunteer has gone, allow the group to respond. Ask if this is their idea of a dream date. If they disagree, ask why. Ask the group what they would change. Have a little fun with this. Have the second volunteer share and then do the same thing, allowing the group to respond.

**THEN** >> take a moment and compare differences between the two volunteers' ideal dates, and highlight any differences the group might have brought to the discussion. Then ask the following questions:

- **If you want to pull off a perfect date, do you have to follow one of these volunteer's way of doing it?**

*Answer:* Of course not!

- **Why is this a good thing?**

*Answer:* We're all individuals. We each have our own personalities that dictate what we would want in a perfect date.

**NEXT** >> explain that if one is a follower of Christ, it's a little different when it comes to our beliefs. Explain that when it comes to our convictions and how we act on them, we must strive to live in such a way that aligns with God's character.

## LIVE DIFFERENT : Lesson 1

## &gt;&gt; THE RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Lead your students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Based on what we looked at in this lesson (the difference between what God says is a right expression of sex versus what the world says), what are some examples of practical ways your actions and attitudes could reflect your faith in God as opposed to your desire to view sex the way the world does? What do you or could you do to show the world that you see sex and sexuality differently?**

*Answer:* Answers might include: Commit to having godly relationships by not being sexually intimate or active before marriage. Don't go see movies that you know will have sex scenes or that will have a lot of sexual humor. Don't listen to music that glorifies sex or hyper-sexualized attitudes. Be responsible in how you present your body to the opposite sex. Commit to staying far away from Internet porn (and friends who don't share your beliefs), and so on.

- **Why is it so important to live in such a way? Why does it matter that you have the same attitude that God has when it comes to sex?**

*Answer:* Sex saturates our society. If you take a strong stand against the sexual attitudes of our culture, you'll make a statement that you're different. When you do this, people will want to know why. You'll have tremendous opportunities to talk to people about why your faith motivates your actions. Furthermore, you will be in the position to one day fully experience sex as God intends.

**FINALLY** explain to students that this lesson is introductory. The takeaway was for them to understand what God desires and how they can continue to, or begin to, live according to these desires. Challenge students to keep these things in mind between now and the next lesson and to take note of how the world portrays sex and sexuality in ways that are counter to God's view of sex.

Explain to students that you'll be posting two of the *Live Different* digi-posters to encourage conversation between lessons. Decide ahead of time how you will post these, whether through email, Facebook message, Facebook group page, or through your youth group's website. Challenge students to check in, read and think about the content, and to interact (if there's a method for interaction such as a Facebook wall, comment section on a blog, and so on).

**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](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

**LIVE DIFFERENT : Lesson 1****>> RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME*****Guy's And Girl's Discussion Questions***DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR GUYS

- If you're honest, how hard is it to keep a godly attitude about sex and sexuality as a teenage guy in the world you live in? What are some reasons why it is so challenging?
- What are some real ways you can try and deal with, or even limit, the temptations you face when it comes to sexual images or sexual content in media such as TV, movies, the Internet, etc.?
- When it comes to dating and relationships, is the pressure from friends or classmates to have sex something you are dealing with? How does it affect your relationships?
- From a spiritual standpoint, we know sex outside of marriage is against God's will for us. What are some very practical reasons sex outside of marriage is not in your best interests?
- In many cases, you set the tone for the sexual "atmosphere" of your relationship with a girl. How does having a godly attitude toward sex and sexuality in your relationships show girls that you respect them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR GIRLS

- If you're honest, as a teenage girl how hard is it to keep a godly attitude about sex and sexuality in the world you live in? What are some reasons why it is so challenging?
- How do you see TV shows, movies, or even magazines romanticize sex and sexuality? How often do you see the consequences of sex outside of marriage shown? How does this affect your view of sex and sexuality?
- Our culture puts so much emphasis on sexuality and sexiness, especially as it pertains to women. If you look around you, a woman's "sexiness" is portrayed as a vital part of her identity. How does this go against what God intends for sexuality?
- How does this make you feel? Do you feel pressure to live up to the "standard" of sexuality that culture portrays? When it comes to dating and relationships, is the pressure from friends or classmates to have sex something you are dealing with? How does it affect your relationships?
- In many cases, you set the tone for the sexual "atmosphere" of your relationship with a guy. How does having a godly attitude toward sex and sexuality in your relationships show guys that you respect them?

# >> RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

**SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** Genesis 2:20-25, Hebrews 13:4, Song of Solomon 2:7

## WHAT GOD SAYS

Who?

When?

## WHAT CULTURE SAYS

Who?

When?