

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 1: A Disciple Surrenders To A Gospel-Centered Life
LESSON 16: THE GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE:
PRACTICING HUMILITY

What we want students to learn: That as a follower of Christ living a Gospel-centered life, we must be people of humility.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To look around them and identify real ways they can put other's needs above their own.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 18:1-4

Supporting Scripture: Philippians 2:3-9

Overview: Humility is, for the most part, counter cultural. Sure, there are feel-good moments every now and then on the news or online. But for the most part, it's a "me first" world where people look out for their own needs first before ever thinking about others. The only problem is that this is pretty much the opposite of what Christ has called His followers to do. This lesson will help your students understand how humility and service separate them from the world and identify them as Christ-followers.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 16 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 16, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

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- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

The main passage for this lesson is Matthew 18:1-4. This passage begins a long section where Jesus will explain what it looks like to be a part of His Kingdom. These verses begin with a question from the disciples and Jesus' answer. This type of conversation happens all throughout Jesus' ministry, and here, He sets the disciples straight on how they are to view their position in His Kingdom.

THE MAIN POINT

The disciple's question is one of standing. They are wondering if they, being the closest followers of Jesus, will be privy to special treatment in God's Kingdom. They're probably hoping all their hard work is going to pay off in some way. They're hoping that they will get special privileges because of all they've done for Jesus. Jesus answers with a visual object lesson: a child. Jesus brought the child in the middle of the group as the goal for their attitude. Essentially, Jesus is showing them that, just as a child knows that they are dependent on others, they must be dependent on God and not themselves. The disciples must flip their thinking on its head. God's Kingdom prizes humility: looking to others before yourself.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; and an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To help students begin to see that God's Kingdom does not work the way we think it does: there is no pecking order.
- **Set-Up:** On a dry-erase, write out a list numbered 1-5 with blanks. Print the "Food Chain" clue cards, located with your Lesson 16 files, and cut them out. Place the five clue cards in a paper bag.

FIRST, set up the game by explaining that you're going to have students draw a card out of the bag, and then have them place it where they think it goes on the food chain. Say something like:

- **We're going to build a food chain together. Once you draw a card out of the bag, choose where you think it ranks on the food chain and I'll write it there.**

Ask for five volunteers and have them choose a clue card and place it in the food chain. Ham it up if things get off. (The difficulty with this game will be getting the first several clues right. If they draw the "grass" card and don't place it on the bottom, the food chain will not be correct.)

NEXT, once the five clues have been chosen and placed, correct the food chain. Ask your students why this is the correct order. (The eagle eats the snake, the snake eats the frog, etc.) Make a connection to our lives. Ask:

WEEK 16: LESSON PLAN

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- **How many of you feel like your school is divided up into groups? What are they?**
 - You will inevitably get a 'yes' answer from this question. Allow students to list the groups, but encourage it to be done in a way that isn't judgmental or mean. The groups will vary, but may very well be something like "athletes, band kids, smart kids," etc.
- **Does it feel like some people want there to be a pecking order for these groups?**
 - Answer your own question here . . . you don't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable. The answer is yes – there will always be people who want their "group" to be "first." Many people feel like one group of people or one person is on the top, and there's an order in our lives whether it's based on money, popularity, success, or so on. (You may even help them see that this doesn't change when it comes to some adults!)

FINALLY, transition to *The Main Event* by saying something like this:

- **It's easy for us to believe that this same type of system exists within God's family. (We're about to see that some of the disciples felt this way.) Sometimes it feels like some people are "better" Christians than others. Maybe we think that's us! We can become convinced that we're such good people that God only cares about us. What we're going to look at today shows us that that's not true.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students see that as a follower of Christ living a Gospel-centered life, we must be people of humility.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, start with telling your students about the passage you're going to look at. Say something like:

- **We're going to look at a passage where the disciples ask Jesus a question. This question shows us who they think they are on the food chain.**

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 18:1-4. While students are finding it, provide some context using the Bible Background. When students have finished, lead them in a discussion of this passage. Ask:

- **What question are the disciples really asking? What do they mean when they ask, "Who is the greatest?"**
 - Answer: They're not really asking who is the greatest, they're actually asking Jesus, "Are we the greatest?"
- **Why do you think they would ask that? What had they done to be great?**
 - Answer: These were Jesus' closest friends and disciples. They had left everything to follow Jesus. They were really wondering if that was going to pay off. Would they be treated differently by God because of everything they had sacrificed for Jesus? The disciples valued their own sacrifice. They thought their following Jesus made them better than other people and worthy of special treatment. They thought they deserved to be on top.
- **Jesus was about to turn their values upside down. He brings a child in the middle of the group. What does He say about the child?**
 - Answer: Jesus said that they must turn around from their way of thinking. They weren't ranking themselves on some sort of list or pecking order. Jesus wanted all of them to humble themselves like children.
- **What does it mean to be humble?**

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o Answers will vary. Students usually struggle with this word. Sometimes it is helpful to ask them, "What is the opposite of being humble?" Help them see the core of humility: not seeing yourself as the center of the universe. Humility is realizing that we're not on top. Humility is counting other people as more significant than yourselves.

- **Jesus uses a child as the example. How are children humble?**

o Answer: Children are humble because they are dependent. They realize their need for others. They look to parents for direction, provision, and love. We must be the same way with Jesus. We cannot provide everything we need for ourselves. We need Jesus!

THEN, explain that you're going to look at something the Apostle Paul wrote about this exact same idea. Read Philippians 2:3-9 and ask:

- **Who is the best example of humility?**

o Answer: Jesus.

- **OK so, this was an easy answer. But why would you say that?**

o Answers will vary. Lead students to see that Jesus not only told the disciples that they had to turn around their way of thinking, He demonstrated that. We would think that when God would come to Earth it would be with huge celebration and fanfare. Everyone would know God was there. But in reality, Jesus came quietly as a baby in a forgotten stable. He humbled Himself even to the point of dying for us, because we needed it.

- **Look back at the passage. Can you find a definition of humility?**

o Answer: Look at verse 3. Humility is counting "others more significant than yourselves." This is what Jesus wanted His disciples to understand. We're not operating in a system where we're trying to earn our way to the top. If we're really following Jesus, we will count others more significant than ourselves. We will (verse 4) not only look to our own interests, "but also to the interests of others."

Make sure students know that an important thing to see is the example that Jesus set in humility. Jesus showed us first hand what is valuable in the Kingdom of God. We are not working our way to the top, but we are responding to the amazing love of Jesus by living likewise. Paul is addressing in us the same problem that Jesus was addressing with His disciples. Continue the discussion by asking:

- **Look at verse 3. What are the two things the Paul says we shouldn't be doing?**

o Answer: Paul encourages us to do nothing from rivalry or conceit. He sets these two motivations in contrast to humility. They are the opposite of humility.

- **Do you feel like the disciples were asking their question from rivalry or conceit? How?**

o Answer: The disciples were jockeying for position. They wanted to be valued in God's Kingdom. They were looking at each other as rivals to outwork for Jesus. Their conceit is on display in their question as they ask, "Who is the greatest?" They want to be on top, the greatest.

- **How did Jesus demonstrate the opposite of this?**

o Answer: Jesus actually was the greatest. But, He died for us. He became the least, even though He was God, so that we (sinners) could be righteous and with God.

- **How did Jesus show humility?**

o Answer: Our definition of humility from this passage is counting others as more significant than yourself and looking to their interests. On the cross, Jesus was paying our penalty – He was dying our death. Jesus was looking to our interests above His own. He suffered, not because He had to, but because He loved us enough to give Himself up for our forgiveness. Jesus chose to give His life so that we could be forgiven.

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NEXT, help your students begin to think about how we live humbly in our own lives. We're not following God to work our way up in the pecking order, but because of what Jesus has done for us. Say something like:

- **We know that there are things that we are called to do for Jesus. If we're not working our way to be better than other people, why do we do things for Jesus?**
 - Answers will vary. This is the most important question in this lesson. It's easy for us to mistake our lives as Christians as being about working for God's love or a better status in God's Kingdom. A lot of religions work this way, but Christianity turns this concept on its head. We are accepted by God, not because of our deeds, but because of the work that Jesus has done on the cross. We are valued, not because of our worth as a worker, but because of God's love for us. We live in response to what Jesus has done. We are humble because of the humility that Jesus showed us.

FINALLY, transition to *The Last Word* by explaining to your students that you're going to close the lesson by looking at how we actually live out humility in our lives. Transition by saying something like:

- **When we talk about humility, it's easy for us to talk about what not to do, but harder for us to realize what we should be doing in our lives. As we close the lesson we're going to look at how we can really live out humility in different areas of our lives. How can we count others as more significant than ourselves and not just look to our own interests? How can we respond to the humility that Jesus showed us on the cross?**

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students look around them and identify real ways they can put other's needs above their own.
- **Set-Up:** You'll want to use a dry-erase board, or some other means to help students visualize the three areas of their life that you will consider. You'll also need a piece of paper and writing utensil for each student.

FIRST, explain to your students that you're going to look at three areas of their life. Draw a circle on the board. Divide it into these three areas (proportional to how much time you, the teacher, spend there): Home, Work/School, Play.

NEXT, explain that these three areas will always be there for anyone, no matter what stage of life you're in. Say:

- **These three areas represent your family, the places you have to go, and the places you want to go.**
 - For these students, most of their job is just to be a student right now!
 - "Play" represents the places you want to go. These may be friend's houses, sports teams, hobbies, etc.
- **The amount of time that you spend in these different areas may change at different points in your life, but they will always be there.**

THEN, give your students time to draw out their own chart and divide it up according to how much time they spend in each place. Ask some of your students to share what their circles look like. Help your students challenge themselves to look for the needs of others. Say/Ask:

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- Write the names of two people that you know well in each of these areas. It may be Mom and Dad, a friend from school, a teacher or a neighbor, but come up with six people that you interact with regularly in these different areas of your life.
- Now comes the hard part. Think of a specific way that you can put this person before yourself.
 - Really challenge your students to think this through. It should be more specific than just “do the dishes for mom,” or something like that. Really, how can they count these people as more significant than themselves? Maybe it’s studying with a friend who needs help, working hard to respect your parents, or taking a shift for someone at work so they can go to a concert.
 - Ask some of your students to share. Guide their responses toward real expressions of a humility that counts others as more significant.

Close by helping your students see why. Say something like this:

- **The reason that we help in this way and practice humility in our relationships is because we are not living for ourselves. We are living for Jesus. Because of what He has done for us, we’re looking for any opportunity to show others what Jesus was really like!**

FINALLY, close in prayer, asking God to lead all of you to follow Jesus by counting others as more significant than yourselves. Pray something like this:

- **God, we’re asking you to give us the courage to live like Jesus. Help us to identify real moments in our lives where we can count others as more significant than ourselves. Give us the courage to look to the interests of others and not just our own. Jesus, thank you for the humility you showed on the cross, and help us to live in response to that!**
- Don’t forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you’re posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

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.