

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
UNIT 4: A DISCIPLE ENGAGES WITH HIS OR HER SURROUNDINGS

LESSON 36: HOW ENGAGING WITH OUR SURROUNDINGS IMPACTS US

What we want students to learn: That when we engage with our surroundings, we experience a positive impact as well.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To consider ways they can engage their surroundings for the sake of making Jesus known.

Scripture Focus: Isaiah 58:6-11

Supporting Scripture: Luke 12:48

Overview: One of the truths of being a Christ-follower who engages with his or her community is that we can't truly do so without being changed. When we engage with the world around us in compassionate service, we draw close to God. And when we are in proximity to God, we can't help but experience His favor. To be sure, God doesn't bless us or give us preferential treatment because of our good deeds. But Scripture is clear: God calls us to engage with those who need it most, and when we do, we experience the joy that comes with serving Him.

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 36 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 36, 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:** Isaiah, son of Amoz wrote the book of Isaiah.
- **Time frame:** The events of Isaiah occurred between 740 and 681 B.C., though some parts of the book would have been constructed at a later date.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of this book was to call the nation of Judah back to God, to warn of coming judgment, and to tell of God's ultimate salvation through the Messiah.

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THE SETTING

Isaiah was a prophet to the nation of Israel. The date of this writing is thought to be around 700 B.C. Throughout the book, Isaiah lets the people of Israel know how ungrateful they have been for all that the Lord has done for them. He describes the judgment that they will face, but also reminds them of God's graciousness and desire for them to come to repentance. Isaiah consistently calls them out for their mistreatment of the poor and vulnerable, which stands in stark contrast to God's treatment of the weak and lowly.

THE MAIN POINT

Faith calls us to engage with those around us. Engaging rightly with others, particularly those in need, puts believers in a position to receive the Lord's blessings. These aren't necessarily material blessings like many people wish to receive. They are the spiritual blessings of God enriching our lives with His presence, peace, and guidance. Christians do not receive things from God because of "good deeds," but when believers are in right relationship with God, they naturally see others through His eyes and want to help.

LESSON PLAN

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

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** For students to gain perspective on their blessings and what life is like for others around the world.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need the requisite technology to display the "Quality of Life Index" graphic. Before class, you will need to print or write some of the countries on the index on slips of paper. You will put these slips of paper in a container of some sort to be passed around. You can access the Quality of Life Index here: https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/rankings_by_country.jsp

FIRST, explain that the map shown on the screen is called the Quality of Life Index. Let students know the factors that play into quality of life include: material well-being, health, political stability and security, family life, community life, climate and geography, job security, political freedom, and gender equality.

NEXT, pass a container with slips of paper that have individual countries on them. Have the students pass the container around the room and tell them to each draw one piece of paper. Instruct students to look on the screen for his or her particular country.

THEN, ask for 2-3 volunteers to share where they live and what they think life is like given that country's Quality of Life Index.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 12:48b. Engage as many students as possible in a general discussion of those that have much and those that have little in the world. Ask something like:

- **Where do you think you fall in that discussion?**
 - Answers will vary. Remind them that even the lower income in America are among some of the richer people of the world.

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- **If that's the case, what is required of us?**

- Allow students to answer as they will. The answer you're looking for is something like, "We've been blessed with much, so much is required from us." But if students don't get to this out of the gate, it's OK. By the end of the lesson, they will.

FINALLY, wrap up this section by saying something like:

- **No one gets to decide where he or she will be born. Many if not most of us were born into a family capable of taking care of all of our needs. That is a blessing. If we were in need, and others had more than enough, wouldn't we want them to help us? What we're going to see is that if we are followers of Jesus, we should definitely be modeling this expectation. Let's dig into this a little more and see what we find.**

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of the lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** For students to learn that when we engage with our surroundings, we experience a positive impact as well.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not essential. You'll want to make sure students have a Bible or a Bible app.

FIRST, ask your students to recall a time that they went out of their way to help someone. Have 2-3 students share that experience with the group. Ask them how it made them feel to help someone in need. They may recount feeling joy or satisfaction for having been obedient to the Holy Spirit's call to help, peace for having done the right thing, etc.

THEN, have the students turn to Isaiah 58. Explain to them that the Lord was criticizing the people of Israel for fasting in order to look religious while they ignored what He was really calling them to do. They were doing things outwardly to look the part, but their hearts weren't really engaged in what they were doing. Read or have a student read Isaiah 58:6-11. Help them understand what's going on here by leading them in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **What are some things we do to look the part of following Jesus while we ignore what He really wants from us?**
 - Answers will vary. Some potential answers may include coming to church, going on mission projects or trips, avoiding certain noticeable sins, etc.
- **Is there anything wrong with doing/not doing those things we just named? What is it that the Lord really wants from us?**
 - Answer: Of course there's nothing wrong with coming to church or going on mission trips or avoiding sin. But God doesn't want us JUST going through the motions. He is equally concerned about the motivation for our actions. God wants our hearts.
- **What does it mean to "loose the bonds of wickedness?"**
 - Answers may vary. Wickedness can take many forms. This statement calls for justice and charity.
- **What does it mean to "undo the straps of the yoke?"**
 - Answer: A "yoke" is heavy and hard to carry. This may have specifically referenced unjust and unlawful obligations that had been forced upon people and carried out through fear of retribution.

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- **What does it mean to “break every yoke?”**
 - Answer: This means that you set people free from any type of oppression or unlawful hardship.
- **This type of action, this type of care for the weak and vulnerable around us, where does it come from? What’s our motivation for caring?**
 - Answers will vary. God wants our motivation to be a response to His love for us. He has been gracious and kind towards us when we were weak, vulnerable, and separated from Him. If we’ve been loved and cared for this much, shouldn’t we in turn show it to others?

NEXT, instruct them to look back in their Bibles at verses 8-11. Ask something like:

- **According to these verses, how will God respond when we practice this type of fast?**
 - Answer: Light will break forth like the dawn (verse 8); healing shall spring up quickly (verse 8); righteousness shall go before you (verse 9); the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard (verse 9); the Lord will answer your call and your cry (verse 10); light will rise in the darkness (verse 10); gloom will be as noonday (verse 10); the Lord will guide you continually (verse 11); the Lord will satisfy your desires in scorched places (verse 11); the Lord will make your bones strong (verse 11); and you shall be like a watered garden and a spring of water (verse 11).
- **Can you summarize what you think all of this means? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary. It means God will honor us caring for the weak and vulnerable. It means that He will watch over us and that His light will shine through us to a dark world.
- **How does all of that sound to you?**
 - Answers will vary. All of these things together paint a beautiful, refreshing picture of the Lord protecting and providing all that we need.

FINALLY, close with a summation to paint the big picture for your students. This passage is very different than the “Prosperity Gospel,” which has gained inroads in many parts of the church in recent decades, which preaches that if you have enough faith or do enough good deeds, then God will bless you with wealth, and health, and every good thing. Say something like:

- **We know such teaching is false by looking at the disciples and the early Church in Scripture who suffered much persecution and lost many of the few possessions they owned. God is teaching that this type of “fast,” or generous behavior toward others, flows out of hearts that are close to Him. And, when we are in right relationship with God and with others, we are best prepared to receive God’s blessings.**

Explain that God’s greatest blessings are not tangible things (health, material possessions, etc.); rather, the greatest blessing we can receive from God is Himself, His presence with us. Help students see that verses 10 and 11 speak of “light in the darkness,” “gloom as noonday,” and “God satisfying your desires in scorched places.” Remind them that the darkness is still there. Gloom is still present. Scorched places still exist. But God is promising to be there with us, making even challenging circumstances worthwhile and allowing us to experience light and strength even in times of difficulty.

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To consider ways they can engage their surroundings for the sake of making Jesus known.
- **Set-Up:** Enough pens and paper for groups of 3-4 students to have one of each.

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FIRST, explain to the students that verse 7 identified a few ways for God's people to care for those in need: share food with those who are hungry, invite homeless people to stay in your home, give clothes to those without any, and to help fellow Israelites in need.

THEN, divide your students into groups of 3-4. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pen. Ask each group to brainstorm specific ways that we can practice this type of fast today. Instruct them to think about their context. Who do they come across on a regular basis that they could invest in? What ways do they need to branch out of their current contexts?

Once you give them a few minutes to discuss this in their groups, allow a spokesperson to share a couple ideas from each group. If you have a dry-erase board, it would be good to write down their answers. Help them think through their responses. Think about certain local organizations they can connect with or mission agencies your church might have a connection with. Have them think about people in their schools or that they pass by each day.

NEXT, challenge the students to choose something from this list that they can put into practice this week. Have them jot it down on a piece of paper or make a note in their phone. Remind them of what Isaiah told us will happen when our hearts are engaged in the right kind of fast. Are they ready to experience that?

FINALLY, allow time for any closing thoughts or questions from your students.

- 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.