

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

Part 2: The Picture Of A Disciple
Unit 6: A Disciple Invests In Multiplication
Lesson 46: The Challenges Of Sharing The Gospel

What we want students to learn: That if they are true to sharing the Gospel, they will occasionally meet opposition to their message.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To imitate the brand of boldness that Paul models for us.

Scripture Focus: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Overview: Are Christ-followers called to share the message of the Gospel? Absolutely. Is it a core part of our identities? Of course. Is sharing the Gospel always easy? Not a chance. Sharing the message of the Gospel, in both our actions and our words, will inevitably bring about challenges. Some people don't want to hear our message (for a variety of reasons). But whatever the cause, being faithful to being messengers of the Gospel isn't always easy. And still, we're called to never shy away from sharing the Gospel with the world around us. Paul understood this. And in the face of great persecution, he modeled boldness. The purpose of this lesson is to help your students embrace this same kind of boldness in their own lives.

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 46 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 46, 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 of what's happening in and around the passage. *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:** Since the early church period, the Apostle Paul has been the acknowledged author of 1 Thessalonians, though there has been recent (and failed) attempts to challenge this authorship.
- **Time frame:** 1 Thessalonians was probably penned from Corinth in 49–51 AD.
- **Purpose:** The Thessalonians were under the false belief that the "day of the Lord" had arrived. They were greatly confused about the second coming, resurrection, and so on. They were scared and uncertain. Paul wrote the letter to help calm their fears and straighten them out, doctrinally speaking.

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The Setting

Thessalonica, the civil hub of Macedonia, became a place of conflict as the Gospel spread and the church flourished there. Paul had been beaten and imprisoned for his ministry in Philippi and faced similar accusation of civil treason in Thessalonica. Paul had learned first-hand that effective ministry comes with severe opposition. His letter sought to prepare the church for such an outcome.

The Main Point

A world enslaved to darkness is going to resist when confronted with the light. We know that opposition to the truth of Christ is inevitable, but we can be bold in our Gospel ministry because our confidence comes from God.

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 get students to consider their willingness to meet a challenge.
- **Set-Up:** You will need a way to preview and show the following video clip from YouTube.: https://youtu.be/7TPrcNk5_so

FIRST, ask students if they have ever heard of the “Andy’s Coming” challenge. For any that don’t know, it’s a spoof on what the toys would do in the classic Disney/Pixar “Toy Story” movies. When Andy, the boy to whom Woody, Buzz, and the rest of the toys belonged, was about to enter, someone would yell, “Andy’s coming,” and the toys would return to their inanimate states. The video shows various people recording themselves playing a similar game.

THEN, show some or all of the video. When the video is finished, ask:

- **Has anyone here participated in an “Andy Challenge”?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Can you name any other challenges like this that you have done or heard of other people doing?**
 - *Answer:* Allow students to share various examples. They may name some other viral challenges such as the mannequin challenge, “the floor is lava,” the ice bucket challenge, etc.
- **Why do people do these kinds of things?**
 - Answers will vary. Let them share their ideas.

FINALLY, begin to transition to making the connection between challenges like these and today’s lesson. Say:

- **It’s amazing to see the things that people are willing to do just because it’s considered a challenge. There is something about saying, “I did it!” that makes us proud. Usually, we are more willing to do this type of thing when we have a group of people doing it with us. Would a challenge like this be as readily accepted if you had to do it alone? It’s something to think about, isn’t it? Challenges can be a lot of fun when they are silly because there is nothing really at stake. Sometimes though, when a challenge really matters, we back down rather than being willing to go for it. Today we are going to look at how Christ-followers should face challenges to the Gospel, especially when the stakes are high.**

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

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The Main Event

- **Goal:** For students to understand that if they are true to sharing the Gospel, they will occasionally meet opposition to their message.
- **Set Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board and some markers. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to 1 Thessalonians 2. While they are finding it, provide some context for the passage using the Bible Background section of your lesson plan. Once students have found the passage, read or have a student read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4. Then, ask:

- **What event in Philippi does Paul remind the church of (v. 2)?**
 - *Answer:* His mistreatment in Philippi that occurred before his last trip to see them. He was brutally beaten for preaching the same Gospel that he came to share with them.
- **Why do you think it would be important for the believers in Thessalonica to remember the way Paul endured suffering in another town?**
 - *Answer:* He was willing to be an example to them of how to be strong in the faith despite opposition.
- **Where did Paul say his boldness came from when he shared the Gospel "in the midst of much conflict"?**
 - *Answer:* He states that he had "boldness in our God" to declare the Gospel.
- **Do you think it was helpful to the believers in Thessalonica to hear Paul confess that his boldness came from God and not just his own personality or confidence? Why?**
 - Answers will vary. Let students think about the fact that some people are naturally more confident and bold than others. This is not the kind of boldness Paul described. Paul is speaking of a boldness that comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer who is actively living out the Gospel message. This is available to ALL believers regardless of personality.

THEN, explain to students that motivation is everything. When times get tough, it is critical to focus on why you do what you do. Paul is sharing a bit of his story with the believers in Thessalonica. He wanted them to see that he was able to remain strong in sharing the Gospel with them even when he had been brutalized in the previous town because he had a strong motivation. Say/Ask:

- **If we are living the Christian life to please people, we will not know what to do when people reject us for it. BUT, if we are living out our faith to please God, then we can handle earthly persecution knowing that God is pleased with our faithfulness. When others are criticizing you, why is it important to remember that God tests your heart? (v. 4)**
 - *Answer:* Allow students to think through this personally, but emphasize that God knows the purity of our motives. If others are seeking to find fault in you to discredit your message, it is important to know that God sees your heart.

NEXT, read 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8 and ask your students:

- **Paul asked the readers of his letter to remember his actions when he was among them. What kind of things did Paul say they did NOT do when they came to minister to the Thessalonians?**
 - *Answer:* They did not use flattery, greed, or seek glory.
- **Why is it significant that Paul brings up the idea of his motives?**
 - *Answer:* It is important to note that while Paul and the apostles came in the power of the living God, they did not come in arrogance. As we allow God to test our motives, we must evaluate if the conflict we encounter is true opposition to the Gospel, or if it is a conflict of our own making due to a lack of humility.
- **How does Paul describe his attitude toward the people in Thessalonica?**
 - *Answer:* Like a loving mother toward her young child. Affectionate but responsible.

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- **Why does a mother have to care for a new baby so attentively?**
 - *Answer:* Because the baby doesn't know how to care for itself. It needs protection and provision or it will not survive.
- **How does this imagery explain the responsibility that believers have to boldly and compassionately care for those who do not know God?**
 - *Answer:* Those who are lost do not know the saving power of the Gospel and are therefore helpless to prevent their own spiritual death. When we lovingly bring the truth to them, we are the messengers of life.
- **Do you think our responsibility to share life with a lost world is worth the risk that it may require? Why?**
 - Answers will vary, but obviously we want students to respond with a resounding YES!
- **Paul is clear that we must be bold in our message, even in the face of conflict. But, looking at verses 7-8, what word would you use to describe as the motivation for our boldness?**
 - *Answer:* LOVE! We do not back down in the face of opposition because we love people too much to deprive them of the message that we bring.

FINALLY, remind students that Christ-followers are called to share the message of the Gospel, but that this was never promised to be an easy task. Sharing the message of the Gospel, in both our actions and our words, will inevitably bring about challenges. Being faithful to being messengers of the Gospel isn't always easy. But, like Paul, we're called to never shy away from it. Say:

- **Like Paul, we're called to embrace boldness regardless of the challenges posed by the reactions of others. Let's begin wrapping up our time together as we focus on what this practically looks like.**

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

The Last Word

- **Goal:** For students to imitate the brand of boldness that Paul models for us.
- **Set Up:** None

FIRST, tell students that you are going to have a couple of scenarios to discuss to see how they could demonstrate boldness similar to Paul's. Divide your group into smaller groups, based on the number of students you have. Choose from these scenarios to allow each group to discuss possible responses to these situations.

- **Scenario One:** You are meeting for your FCA group at school and you received a message that you are no longer allowed to meet on campus. Someone has complained that the FCA group is being too open with their beliefs and that it is infringing on separation of church and state. How can you approach the administration and appeal for your right to continue to meet.
- **Scenario Two:** You are working at a fast food restaurant after school and have been witnessing to a co-worker. The boss calls you in to tell you that you cannot talk about your religion at work. How will you respond to your boss? How will you continue to share with your co-worker while still honoring your boss?
- **Scenario Three:** You have a friend from church who professes to be a Christ-follower, but you know they are living a lifestyle that goes against God's desire for their life. You are worried for your friend and anxious that their choices may bring them serious consequences. How can you lovingly approach your friend to help see them restored in their walk with Christ?

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FINALLY, when you have finished discussing these scenarios, close in prayer. Remember to ask God for boldness and love for His message and His people.

- 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.