



## LESSON 4: FORGIVING THOSE WHO ARE THE MEANEST

**WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN:** Jesus modeled how we're to treat the meanest the mean of people in our lives.

**WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED:** To extend forgiveness to the mean people in their lives who've hurt them the most.

**Scripture Focus:** Luke 23:26-34

**OVERVIEW:** Jesus gave us what is perhaps the most extreme example of how to deal with mean people: He forgave the very people who crucified Him. Has there ever been a more extreme example of an innocent person finding himself more unjustly punished? And there was so much hatred for Jesus from His tormenters. And yet, He modeled the kind of grace and mercy that He expects His children to model. If Jesus can forgive His murderers, we can forgive those people who are mean to us. This lesson will challenge your students to do just that.

### TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Mean People Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your "Jesus And Mean People Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-mean-people-teacher-prep>

### BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details give 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:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

## THE SETTING

Luke 23 finds Jesus at the very end of His time on this earth. At the point we pick up in verses 26-34, Jesus has already been arrested and forced to undergo the farce of a trial that led to His being sent to the Roman officials. Both Pilot and Herod found no fault with Jesus, but the Jews demanded His crucifixion. We pick up the narrative as Jesus is being led to Calvary to be crucified.

## THE MAIN POINT

This lesson is pretty straightforward and hopefully serves as a real punch at the end of your time studying what Jesus had to say about mean people. Ultimately, you’ll look at a snapshot of Jesus’ crucifixion with the intent of seeing His reaction to the mean people that drove the final moments of His earthly life. In this snapshot, you’ll help students see that Jesus’ reaction to the enemies that surrounded Him is so incredibly gracious and noble as to be shocking. And yet, it’s the very reaction He wants them to have toward the mean people in their lives. Love. Mercy. Forgiveness. If Jesus could extend it to the people who essentially murdered Him, we can extend it to those people who are mean to us.

# 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:** To help students begin to think about the idea of unexpected responses.
- **Set-Up:** Sour candy of some sort- preferably sour patch kids. Have enough that everyone can grab a piece. You can even show the classic “first they’re sour, then they’re sweet” commercial on your screen if you want to take this demonstration further.

**FIRST**, explain to students that the contents of this final lesson are a lot like sour candy. **Say something like this:**

- **Some people love the taste of sour candy, and others avoid them at all cost. But imagine for a minute that I gave you a whole bowl of sour candy and lied to you about the taste. Maybe I told you it was sweet or salty. And not knowing any better, you took a whole handful and put it in your mouth... (If you want to create a funny moment for your students, you might bravely take a whole handful of sour candy and put them in your mouth right here so they can see the response.)**

**Even if you like sour candy, expecting one thing and getting another is still a bitter experience.**

**NEXT**, allow students to grab some of the sour candy if they want, or pass them out.

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

- **This is the last lesson in our four-lesson look at what Jesus had to say about mean people. We’re going to see that Jesus had a meaningful and at the time unexpected reaction to some mean people. And from this, we’ll take away a powerful truth about how we’re supposed to deal with mean people.**

## THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help students understand that Jesus modeled how we’re to treat the meanest the mean of people in our lives.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll have a moment where your students will more or less “crowdsource” the narrative of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion. You may want to have your Bible open to Luke 22:47-23:25, however, it’s probably more practical to spend some time refreshing your memory by studying the passage prior to teaching.

**BEGIN** by having students review what you’ve learned so far. To help them think back on what you’ve covered in the first three lessons, refer to the following bullet points:

- **Lesson 1:** Jesus said that when we’re living as Christ-followers and people are mean to us, we should count it as a blessing.
- **Lesson 2:** Jesus taught that we’re called to treat mean people with grace, and in so doing, identify ourselves with God.
- **Lesson 3:** That they are to have courage when facing mean people because the Holy Spirit is with them, always.

**THEN**, when you have finished, instruct students to turn to Luke 23. Provide some context for what you’ll be studying, possibly referring to the Setting section of the Bible Background. After you’ve provided the context, read or have a student read Luke 23:26-34. Then, lead students in a short discussion. **Ask something like:**

- **Focus back on verses 26-31. Describe the setting. What is happening?**

*Answers will vary.*

- **What would you say is the tone of the events that Luke is describing?**

*Answers will vary.* But, words like hopeless, sad, tragic, and so on would be appropriate.

- **What do verses 32-33 say about the status being attached to Jesus? In other words, how is Jesus being perceived at this point?**

*Answers will vary.* But it's interesting to note that Jesus is being crucified with criminals, even though He was never truly found to be guilty of anything.

Before focusing on verse 34, explain to students that now is the time you need to back up and really focus on what happened at the end of Jesus' life. After all, Jesus was being given a punishment that was reserved for the worst criminals. **Say something similar to the following:**

- **As a group, starting with Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, after the Last Supper, we are going to piece together the narrative of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Let's all try and remember what we can about these events.**

**NEXT**, start the reconstruction of the narrative by asking: Who remembers what happened in the Garden when Jesus got arrested? Allow students to share as much as they can remember, encouraging their participation. Using Luke 22:47-23:25 as your guide, help fill in the gaps where they might be missing or misremembering the facts of Jesus' final moments on earth. Once you feel like you have captured the story, **ask the following questions:**

- **Thinking about the narrative we just recreated, what crime did Jesus commit worthy of crucifixion?**

*Answer:* Jesus was ultimately crucified for claiming to be the Son of God. However, this was not a crime because it was a true fact about His identity.

- **Was Jesus treated fairly? Give examples to support your answer.**
- **In your opinion, would Jesus had been within His rights if He had suddenly come down from the cross and wiped out every person who had accused Him, beat Him, or otherwise mocked Him? Why or why not?**

*Answers will vary.*

**THEN**, make the transition back to looking at Jesus' reaction in verse 34. **Say something like:**

• **Jesus was arrested and initially tried in a deceitful manner that actually violated Jewish law. He was found to be innocent by Pilate and Herod, and yet He was still abused and murdered. If Jesus had chosen to punish everyone who had wrongfully accused Him, or beat Him, or played a role in His crucifixion, it's not like He would have been wrong. Jesus is God. We know from Paul's words in Romans that the result of all sin is death. And we've seen in countless places in the Old Testament what the results of rebellion against God looks like (hint: it doesn't end well for those who rebel). And so, had Jesus chosen to express His perfect and righteous judgment against all who had a role in His arrest, trial, and death, He would have been within His rights as God. Knowing this, let's take one last look back at the original passage we started with.**

**NEXT**, instruct students to look back at verse 34. Have a student read it out loud. **Then, ask:**

- **Why is this so remarkable?**

*Answers will vary.*

- **How does this make you feel about Jesus?**  
*Answers will vary.*
- **How does it make you feel about Jesus' willingness to forgive your sin?**  
*Answers will vary.*
- **Remember, we're here to talk about what Jesus had to say about mean people. Considering that the people who played a role in Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion were about as mean as they come, what does Jesus teach us here about how to respond to our worst enemies?**  
*Answer:* Jesus models radical grace, mercy, and forgiveness. To those who had wronged Him the most, He extended nothing but grace.
- **If innocent Jesus, who was hanging on the cross as a beaten and broken man, could look down on His accusers and ask God to forgive them, what excuse do we have for not forgiving the mean people we encounter in our own lives?**  
*Answer:* We really don't have any excuse at all.

**FINALLY**, help students see that when it comes to how we deal with mean people, this is the ultimate calling for any Christ-follower. **Say something like:**

- **Jesus gave us an incredible example of how we have to approach the mean people in our lives. We have to meet anger, jealousy and lies with mercy. By doing so, we model the example of Jesus, our Lord, and Savior. As we get ready to wrap up, let's talk a few minutes about what this looks like in our lives.**

**If there are no further questions or comments, transition to the Last Word.**

## THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students extend forgiveness to the mean people in their lives who've hurt them the most.
- **Set-Up:** You might need a notecard or scratch paper for students to write with, though you can also take advantage of their smartphones for those who have them.

**BEGIN** by encouraging students to take a moment and think about the last few weeks. Have them think about the last time they had a painful encounter with a mean person. It could have been a week ago, or several months ago. Instruct students to take a moment to visualize this person.

**THEN, say something like:**

- **What are you feeling right now? It depends on how poorly you were treated. For some of you, the wrong that a mean person did to you hurt but was maybe kind of minor in the grand scheme of things. For others, you're thinking of a person right now that rocked your world with what he or she did. Your emotions run high. You get angry, and anger is the natural reaction. But what we learned today from Jesus is that we must meet all these emotions with grace. We have to be able to draw upon the strength God gives us to forgive the mean people in our lives.**

**NEXT**, instruct students to grab a notecard, scratch paper, or a note-taking app on their phone. Instruct them to write down the initials of the mean person they are thinking about. Challenge them to keep these initials where they can see them for one week and pray every day that God would work in their hearts to help them forgive this person. Encourage them by letting them know that you're aware of how difficult this can be, but that you'll be praying for them as well.

**FINALLY**, if there are no more questions or thoughts, close in prayer.

- For added accountability, text your students this week and remind them to continue to pray that God would help them forgive the mean people in their lives.
- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Social Media, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

## 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).