



LESSON 1: IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: Denying ourselves means our image is to be driven more by who God is and less by who we are.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To step back and evaluate the image they present to the world and whether it's focused more on them or on Christ.

Scripture Focus: Mark 8:34-38

Supporting Scripture: John 3:27-30

OVERVIEW: Your teenagers are brand managers. And they are the brand. With every selfie, every Instagram post, every tweet, they shape how they are perceived. For better or worse, they are extremely image conscious. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. But what does this idea of image control have to do with being a Christ-follower? Good thing Jesus had a ton to say about this. This first lesson will help define what exactly you mean by "image," and how your students' conception of image should be tied more to who God is and less of who they are.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Your Image 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 Your Image Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-your-image-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:** The Gospel of Mark was written by its namesake. Mark, also known as John Mark, is believed to have received most of his information for his Gospel from Peter’s firsthand accounts.
- **Time frame:** Mark is thought to have written his Gospel in the mid 50’s AD.
- **Purpose:** Mark was writing primarily for a non-Jewish audience. His Gospel explains Jewish customs to non-Jews in an effort to get them to see the big picture of Jesus’ identity.

THE SETTING

In the chapters preceding Mark 8, Mark regales his audience with a fast-paced account of Jesus’ early ministry. We read about Jesus traveling in and around Galilee, preaching and healing. We read the story of John the Baptist’s death at the hands of Herod. We read about Jesus feeding the 5,000 and the 4,000. We see Jesus walk on water. We see him rebuking the Pharisees, among other things. These few chapters in Mark contain a wealth of rich stories of Jesus’ life and ministry.

Mark 8:34-38 comes immediately after Mark’s account of Peter’s profession of Christ as the Messiah. Jesus’ words in Mark 8:34-38 are connected to Jesus’ rebuke of Peter. Recall, Peter chastised Jesus for predicting His own death. Jesus’ pointed response was a way of reminding Peter that God’s plan took precedence over any human desire.

THE MAIN POINT

The world is image obsessed. From the star athlete, to the movie star, to the rock star, and even to the politician, we focus more on image and “brand” than we do talent or substance. This mindset has filtered down to our teenagers, who, often without thinking about it, spend a great deal of their days cultivating a brand that will get them ahead--however they define this. The medium, more often than not, is the vast array of social media-driven tools and apps.

The problem is that this image-based culture is at direct odds with a Christ-centered one, where we are supposed to reflect Christ, not project ourselves. Jesus words will challenge your students to think through what they are projecting to the world, and how this conflicts with Jesus’ call to “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.”

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 get students thinking about image, and how to begin thinking about why and what we project to the world.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to provide the following supplies for this activity: enough Styrofoam cups for every student in your group to have one; 1 big bag of marshmallows per team; two tables (or other flat surface to build a tower of cups on). Before the activity, you'll need to use a permanent marker to write inside of each cup. In each cup, you're going to write a word that has to do with either an image that a teen might project, or an element of an image. You can come up with your own list, but here are a few examples: Athletic ability, popularity, intelligence, possessions, looks, edgy behavior, fan of a team (or a band, etc.), sexuality, and so on. Set up the tables about 10 feet from each other in the room. Put half the cups and a bag of marshmallows on each table

FIRST, as students come in, divide them into two groups. Let them know you're going to be playing a game. Then, tell them they will have two minutes to build a wall out of the cups on the table. (They'll notice the writing on the cup, but don't explain what it is yet.)

THEN, once the two minutes are up, set up the ground rules. Explain that the goal is to knock down the other team's wall by throwing marshmallows at it. Each team must stay behind their table at all times. They can't do anything to prevent a marshmallow from hitting the wall, like blocking it with their hands. The first team to knock the other wall down wins. (If you want to make the game last a little longer, make teams knock all the cups off the other team's table.) Don't take too long to explain the rules, just run through them real quick and then say, "GO!" (The game should move rather quickly, but it will be wild and crazy. If you want, you can play a couple more times. Just be sure to find ALL the marshmallows!)

When you're done, have the students pick up all the cups and marshmallows. Before they sit down, they're to grab one cup and hold on to it.

NEXT, lead the students in a little debrief. **Ask something similar to the following questions:**

- **How strong was the "wall of cups"?**
Answer: Not very! The wall was made of weak material; wasn't strong enough to withstand marshmallows, etc.
- **Obviously, if something as strong as a marshmallow could knock it down, our wall wasn't strong at all. It's all in the material we use. What kind of material would you want to build a wall out of?**
Answers will vary, obviously something strong.

THEN, transition into the introduction of what you'll be studying for the next four weeks. **Say something like:**

- **For the next 4 weeks, we're going to be talking about image. Specifically, our own self-image and how it relates to our life as Christ-followers. When I talk about self-image, what comes to mind? (Answers will vary, but try to lead them towards something along the lines of "The picture of ourselves we portray to the world.") Image is not necessarily the same as identity. Identity is who we are at our core. Instead, we're going to be talking about image, that picture we show to the world. (Make sure your students understand this difference. We don't want them thinking that they should become mindless robots or brainwashed. Instead, this is about getting rid of an image, a projection, that doesn't take Christ into the equation.)**

NEXT, instruct everyone to take a look at the inside of their cups now, if they haven't already. Explain to your students that the words written inside each of the cups represent images that teens like to present to the world. Have students take a moment to think about and answer the following questions about that image:

- **What is the image in your cup?**
- **What would someone do who wanted to project this image to the world?**

Answers will vary, but you want to show them that these images, these things people hold onto as so important, won't last. Athletic ability is one injury away from nothingness. Possessions break or are replaced by something shinier six months down the road. Looks fade, and so on.

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by explaining to your students that everyone projects an image, whether we are conscious of it or not. **Say something like:**

- **We have our “brand” that we show the world so that people view us a certain way, one that is beneficial to us. Think about what you choose to share on social media. Most of the time you only share things that put you in a certain well-controlled, positive light. Few people tweet about their failures, their shortcomings, how they hurt people, and so on. We all project an image to the world. One that puts a tremendous focus on us. But starting in this lesson, we’re going to take a look at what Jesus has to say about what we’re supposed to be projecting to the world.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that “denying ourselves” means our image is to be driven more by who God is and less by who we are.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, begin by explaining to students that you're going to look at someone who could have been pretty image-driven in his own right. Explain that he was a super-popular guy. He was even called, by Jesus, the greatest human ever to be born! He had crowds following him. Explain that in some circles, he had a bad-boy image with crazy clothes. **Ask:**

- **Can anyone guess whom we're talking about?**

Answer: John the Baptist.

THEN, instruct students to go to John 3:27-30. While they're finding it, explain a little about the Gospel of John and who John the Baptist was. (He was Jesus' cousin. His birth was announced by angels. He preached repentance and baptized countless individuals, including Jesus.) Then, read or have a student read John 3:27-30. **Ask:**

- **What do you think John meant when he said, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven”?**

Answer: His job was to prepare the way for Jesus. His whole image was about the mission God had given him to do.

- **In verse 30, John said about Jesus, “He must become greater; I must become less.” Why did John say that?**

Answer: If John held on to his position, his image, he would have both interfered with Jesus' ministry and damaged his own.

- **How hard do you think it was for John to give up his popularity and position to make way for Jesus? Would you be able to do the same thing in his shoes?**

Answers will vary.

Say something like:

- **As great as John was and as important as his mission was, it could not compare to what Jesus was going to do. John knew that the image he ultimately wanted to project was an image where Christ was at the center, not himself. What about us? We can hold on to our image, and get in the way of what God is doing in us, or we can get out of the way and let our image be one that reflects Christ. Let's see what this looks like.**

NEXT, instruct students to turn to Mark 8:34-38. While they're finding the passage, use the Bible Background to explain the setting of the verses. When students have located the passage, read or have a student read the verses. Then, instruct students to focus on verse 34. Lead them in the following discussion. **Ask:**

- **When people ask what it means to be a Christian, you hear a lot of different answers. But Jesus lays it out clearly in verse 34. What three things does Jesus say a person must do if they want to be His disciple?**

Answer: Deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

- **What does it mean to you to deny yourself and follow Jesus? And what might this have to do with the image you portray to the world?**

Answer: This is a very deep question, and your students might struggle with this. Help them find the right answer, but don't give it to them. Help students to see that in the course of your discussion of image, denying themselves means to think less of projecting themselves to the world and more of using their lives to project Christ.

NEXT, have students look back at verses 35 and 36. **Ask:**

- **Jesus almost gives us a riddle: "Whoever wants to save his or her life will lose it, but whoever loses his or her life for Me and for the Gospel will save it." Relating this to the picture we project to the world, how can someone lose their life by saving it? On the flip side, how does someone save their life by losing it, especially when we think about our image?**

Answer: When people try to hold on tightly to how they craft their image, be it popularity or athletic ability or whatever, they will eventually find that this focus on themselves draws their focus off Christ. In a sense, they waste the influence they have. But when they give up constantly projecting a self-driven image for the sake of a Christ-driven one, it's a sign that they have given over their lives to Christ.

- **Along the same lines, Jesus asks a rhetorical question in verse 36. So, what's the answer? What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul?**

Answers will vary.

- **Then why do people try to gain the whole world, all the while losing their soul? Why do we want to hold on so tightly to ourselves and our image that we would fail to focus on Christ?**

Answers will vary.

FINALLY, explain to the students that living the life of a Christ-follower is not about the image we project to the world. It's not about the half-true, self-focused, heavily cultivated picture we paint through social media and our daily interactions with others. Living as a Christ-follower means that we think of our image in terms of what it can do to reflect Christ and grow His Kingdom. **Say something like:**

- **When it comes to how we project our image to the world, this is what it means to deny ourselves.**

Our world is all about “self.” We build walls around who we really are, and we project what we think the world wants to see. Jesus turns everything upside down. He tells us to give up pursuing our own agenda, embrace Him, and then follow Him. You can’t project a self-driven image and reflect Christ at the same time.

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students evaluate the image they present to the world and whether it’s focused more on them or on Christ.
- **Set-Up:** Go to YouTube and search for “I Am Second” videos. Choose one that you think would resonate with your students. Arrange to show the video, or a clip of the video, to your group.

FIRST, explain to students that as you wrap up your lesson, you want them to realize what this looks like in real life. Explain that you want to show them an example of someone who previously held tight to his or her image, but at some point discovered what John meant when he said, “He must become greater; I must become less”

THEN, show the video. Once it is over, have students reflect on the video by **asking something similar to the following:**

- **What image was this person projecting before they committed to using his or her life as a credit to Christ?**
- **Remember what Jesus said about saving our lives versus losing them? How did this realization lead to this person saving his or her life by losing it?**
- **How did he or she turn things around? How did he or she change?**

NEXT, have students take a few minutes to reflect on their own lives. Ask them to consider what they post on social media; how they interact with friends, parents, and other adults; how they think about themselves. Ask the following questions to help them evaluate the image they project:

- **What image are you projecting to the world?**
- **Are you projecting an image that is more you-centered or Jesus-centered?**
- **What do you think motivates you to focus so intently on shaping and projecting the image that you do?**
- **What’s keeping you from using your life to put Jesus forward instead of you yourself?**

Allow students time to answer these questions, or have them consider them silently depending on the openness of your group. Be prepared to talk about your own struggles in this area.

FINALLY, close by **saying something like the following:**

- **Our image, that person we project to the world, might seem strong and powerful. But it’s just like the Styrofoam cups we made the wall out of earlier. Our self-driven image is pretty weak and empty, and ultimately it will let us down. But when we give this up, and allow Jesus to become greater in our lives, we find who we truly were meant to be.**

If no one has any questions or observations, close in prayer.

- 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.

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LESSON 2: BROKEN

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That they don't have to hide their brokenness from God or the world.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To let down their guard and to express to God where they are most broken, and where they need His presence the most.

Scripture Focus: Luke 18:35-43

Supporting Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:15-16

OVERVIEW: Many of the teenagers in your youth group project an image of invincibility. They project a person who has it all going for them. And even if they are open about their mistakes, it's often done in a humorous light. Few teenagers project an image that makes much room for the struggles, the pain, and the brokenness so many of them suffer with. Yet, God welcomes their brokenness. God stands ready to heal their pain, just like Jesus did for the blind man in Luke 18. But like the blind man, we have to be willing to unashamedly own our brokenness, not caring about how we look or sound. We can't worry about our image and realize the fullness of our sin and suffering. This lesson will help you challenge students to give their hurt to God, not worrying about their image, and trusting Him to heal their pain.

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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

In the chapters proceeding Luke 18, Luke has pictured Jesus healing, teaching, and engaging in some rather tense debate with the Pharisees. Luke transitions from multiple vignettes of this sort to a discussion Jesus had with His disciples about the end that awaited Him in Jerusalem. Apparently, these interactions were happening as Jesus was traveling with His disciples. As they approached Jericho, Jesus encountered the blind man that you’ll focus on in this lesson.

THE MAIN POINT

We learned in Lesson 1 that we all have an image we project. This image does not come out of a position of strength; it’s in reaction to our weakness. The truth is we are all broken people. The image we present to the world is meant to cover up our brokenness and hurt. In this lesson, we want our students to focus on the broken areas in their lives, and give up trying to hide or fix these areas themselves. Instead, they need to turn their brokenness over to Jesus ask that He heal their pain, and give them a story that reflects His image.

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 think about the idea of brokenness and what it really means for their image.
- **Set-Up:** You're going to need a cardboard box, a print out of the girl's face on the "Lesson 2 Lead In Activity Sheet" (contained in your lesson 1 folder), either note cards or scraps of paper (enough for each student to have one), and a pen and pencil to write with. Before class, you'll need to print the "Lesson 1 Lead In Activity Sheet" and tape it to the front of the cardboard box, so that the girl's face is facing the class and the box is open at the top.

FIRST, explain that you're going to be talking about a super-important concept today, but one that can be a little bit of a downer. Encourage students to hang in there, as it's a lesson that everyone needs to hear.

THEN, start off by distributing note cards and scraps of paper. Explain to students that the purpose of today's lesson is to think about the effect all of the "junk" in our lives has on us, and what's it like to try and hold it all together. Instruct students to think of something that would cause pain, stress, fear, disappointment . . . anything that might be something that would cause someone their age to feel depressed or sad. Explain that these are completely anonymous, and they are going to turn them into you when they are finished. Give them a couple of minutes to write, then collect them.

NEXT, point to the young lady whose bright, happy face is prominently pasted on the box at the front of the room. Ask students to describe her appearance. Ask them to try and imagine what she is like. You could even choose to make up a little background info on her, painting her as a typical teenager.

THEN, explain to students that much like a typical teenager, or adult for that matter, this young lady deals with things that cause her pain and heartache. And while the outside might look happy and bright, she struggles with pain that causes a great deal of emotional stress on her.

At this point, you're going to begin filtering through the responses your students have submitted. Some may not be appropriate or relevant. Simply put those aside. But for every response that is appropriate and relevant, read it aloud and drop it in the box. So, it might look something like this:

- **Like many teenagers, this girl deals with (read from sheet of paper) her parent's divorce. (Then drop the sheet of paper in the box.)**

NEXT, continue like this until you have read most or all of the sheets of paper. (You may be prepared to add a few more to the list depending on how well your group came up with responses.) Then, **ask students:**

- **Has the outside appearance of our girl changed any at all?**

Answer: No.

- **But what do we know about what's inside of her? What's going on that she is hiding?**

Answer: Encourage students to maybe restate some of the things that were listed, or to generally summarize that the girl is dealing with a lot of pain and hurt.

- **How are many teenagers today just like this girl?**

Answers will vary.

- **Why do we try so hard to put on a good face when inside we're hurting?**

Answers will vary.

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

- **This is a simple look at a big problem we're all guilty of to some extent. We all struggle with things, some more potentially life-changing than others. We all have disappointments. But the problem is that we're so concerned about projecting a perfect image, that we can't open up enough to get the help we need. Even worse, we try and hide our brokenness from God. But in today's lesson, we're going to see how Jesus stands ready to embrace our brokenness and heal us. But we must be willing to let go of our image. Let's see what I mean.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that they don't have to hide their brokenness from God or the world.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, briefly remind your students that this is the second lesson in a four-part Bible study called "Jesus and Your Image." Ask if anyone can remember what you talked about in the previous lesson, or any high-points that stood out for them. Use the following bullet points to guide your review:

- **Jesus calls us to "deny ourselves," meaning our image is to be driven more by who God is and less by who we are.**
- **We need to step back and evaluate the image we present to the world and whether it's focused more on us or on Christ.**

Explain that this week, you're going to build on this idea by helping them discover what Jesus says about our image and our brokenness.

NEXT, instruct students to turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 18. While they are doing so, ask if anyone knows anything about the Book's author. Provide details of the context of the Book and the passage by using the Bible Background, specifically the Details and Setting sections. Then, read or have a student read Luke 18:35-43. Then lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask something similar to the following:**

- **In verse 35, Luke tells us how this man is broken. How is he broken?**
Answer: Blind is the obvious answer. But have students explore deeper. He's a beggar, so he's broke and has a low social standing. He's likely uneducated. And he would be considered an outcast from society.
- **How would you feel in a similar situation?**
Answers will vary.
- **What could the man do to overcome his brokenness?**
Answer: Really nothing, without Christ.

- **When he hears that its Jesus passing by, he asks Jesus for what? (Mercy) What does he mean by mercy?**

Answer: He probably means kindness. Mercy is probably best understood as God's unearned favor or undeserved compassion. Mercy would be a gift.

- **When the crowd hears him crying out, they try to silence him. Why?**

Answers will vary, but essentially most people don't want to face brokenness, either in themselves or others.

At this point, pause for a moment. Explain that this man's brokenness was easy to see. It was a physical issue. But it's not hard to imagine that the people in the crowd following Jesus around all had their own issues. And yet, they kept quiet. **Say something like the following:**

- **The crowd seemed put off by this man's abrasive, embarrassing display of need. In other words, he wasn't being very image-conscious. He wasn't keeping it all together. He wasn't putting on a happy face. He was broken. He was screaming for Jesus, pleading with Him. And the crowd, which include His disciples, didn't like it. But yet, the man was undeterred.**

Continue your discussion. **Ask:**

- **Why do you think the blind man was unstoppable? Why do you think he continued to call out to Jesus?**

Answer: Two things: 1) He recognized his own brokenness, and 2) he knew that Jesus was the only way for him to be made whole.

- **Jesus responds to him, and asks him clearly what he wants. Why do you think Jesus asked this question?**

Answer: He wanted to make sure the man understood his brokenness, and also see if he would have the faith to ask.

- **What can we learn from the blind man's example? How should we respond once we recognize our own brokenness?**

Answer: In the same way, passionately pursuing and calling after Jesus.

- **What can we learn from the man's response?**

Answer: That when Jesus brings us through the pain of our brokenness, that we are to remember His work in our lives and praise Him accordingly.

THEN, explain that you're going to look at one more example of brokenness from the New Testament. Have your students turn to 1 Timothy 1:15-16. Give them a little background of the passage then have a volunteer read the verses. Then, lead students in a short discussion. **Ask:**

- **If Paul were super concerned about image control and looking like he had it all together, what could Paul have said? How could he have projected himself to his audience?**

Answer: That he was an Apostle; that he had started churches all over the place; that he had seen a vision of the risen Jesus; that he went on numerous missionary journeys; and so on.

- **But what does Paul say instead that shows he cares more about giving his brokenness to God than making sure his image is squeaky clean?**

Answer: He said that he was the worst of sinners, owning up to his brokenness.

FINALLY, transition into the Last Word by **saying something similar to the following:**

- **I'm broken. You're broken. Everyone is broken in some way. But that's not the end of the story. Jesus wants to bring healing to us. He wants to heal the areas of brokenness in our lives. We don't have to hide them; we don't have to pretend they are not there. We need to be like the blind beggar, and like Paul, acknowledging that we are broken and crying out to our savior to heal us. Focusing on keeping a perfect image only keeps us from actually experiencing Jesus' healing. We can't be concerned about looking like we have it all together and still show Jesus our brokenness.**

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To help students let down their guard and to express to God where they are most broken, and where they need His presence the most.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, explain to students that as you wrap up this lesson, you're going to do something that's a little different, maybe a little challenging, and for some, maybe even a little uncomfortable. But explain that being uncomfortable simply means you're stepping outside of your image control mindset and getting real with God. Encourage students to recall the reaction of the crowd to the blind beggar in Luke. **Say:**

- **The crowd was uncomfortable because facing people who are open about their brokenness is difficult. It's more difficult facing our own brokenness. Maybe that's why the crowd was so unnerved: maybe the man's willingness to be open about his needs shamed those who were still too concerned about the image to truly ask God for help.**

THEN, split your students up into pairs. Explain that you are simply going to end the class by praying for each other, by praying that God deals with our desire to have a perfect image, and opens us up to expressing our brokenness to Him. Instruct students to sit in silence for a moment, as long as it takes to listen to God, and get their hearts in a good place. Then, explain that you want them to take turns praying that the other person would open up to God and, like the beggar, expect God to heal whatever it is that they are struggling with. After one partner goes, have them switch and repeat.

FINALLY, allow students as much time as they need to do this. Help keep them focused and quiet. This will be challenging for some students. After it seems like every pairing has finished, bring them back together and wrap it up by **saying something like:**

- **We're all broken. Many of us have faced issues in our lives that have hurt us, wounded us, and damaged us. Yet we still try to hide behind a perfectly manicured image. We need to stop trying to fool God and ourselves. God stands ready to offer healing and grace. He offers mercy. I pray that you take God up on his offer of mercy today.**

Close in prayer.

[Postscript: Be sensitive to issues that may have arisen with this lesson. It is likely that some of your students are coming face to face with areas of brokenness that they have tried to hide, bury, or get rid of unsuccessfully for years. Let your students know you are there for them if they need further help or guidance.]

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LESSON 3: YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That they are ultimately known by their actions; they can try to control their image, but their actions say a great deal to the world, and to God, about who they really are.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To evaluate any areas of their lives where their actions don't line up with their professed identity as a Christ-follower.

Scripture Focus: Luke 6:43-45

Supporting Scripture: Philippians 1:27

OVERVIEW: As you've been talking about image to your students, you've probably mentioned the idea of image control. We all try and project a certain image. Sometimes our actions line up with that image. But sometimes they don't. And when they don't, our actions will always trump any image we try to project. As your students are challenged to project an image that is more about Christ than about them, it's vital that their daily actions reflect this. In this lesson, you'll get the chance to help students grasp this truth.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

The Jesus And Your Image 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 Your Image Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-your-image-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

In Luke 6, Jesus is still in the early parts of His earthly ministry. Luke 4 shows Jesus being tempted by Satan, reading Scripture in the synagogue, healing the sick, teaching, and driving out demons. Luke 5 sees Jesus, among other things, calling His disciples. Luke 6 is basically a chapter consisting almost entirely of Jesus’ teaching. This section on bearing fruit comes just before Jesus’ parable of the man who built his house on the rock, and immediately following a passage on not judging others.

THE MAIN POINT

By this point, your students are beginning to understand that the image they project can’t be about them. Instead, any attempts we make at crafting an image should be one that identifies 100% with Christ. Our image should be rooted in our identities as Christ-followers.

The next step is getting students’ behavior to match the image they project. We use the word “fruit” very intentionally, just like Jesus did. An apple tree can’t help but produce apples: it does it because it’s an apple tree. Same for an orange tree. They just do it because that’s what they are supposed to do. The same goes for the behavior of a Christian. We should act in a manner that is consistent for a Christian.

Our image is about whom we say we are. Yet, as the old saying goes, “Actions speak louder than words.” We may say we are one thing, but our behavior will make it clear who we really are. A word of caution: be careful not to swing over into legalism. This is not about salvation. It’s not about a list of do’s and don’ts. It’s about our actions matching up with our professed faith. It is a fine line to walk, for sure, but one that we need to make sure our students understand lest they fall into legalistic thinking.

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 start thinking about identifying fruit and how each fruit has easily identifiable characteristics.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a blindfold and a variety of fruit cut into pieces, apples, oranges, pineapples, etc. Whatever you can get your hands on. Set this up before the class starts.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to be playing a game called, "Guess That Fruit." The following rules will give you a basic framework to make the game interesting, but you can adapt them to fit your group needs.

THEN, divide the group into two teams. The teams will take turns sending up a volunteer, who will go up and be blindfolded. At that point, the volunteer will be given a piece of fruit they have to identify using only one sense: touch, taste, or smell. They choose which one they want beforehand. They get 3 points if they can identify it by touch, 2 points by smell, and 1 point by taste. They only get one opportunity to guess. If they get it right, they get the points. If they don't, they get 0 points. Once the game has run its course (you can go one or two turns per student, or can just play until the students lose interest), gather students all back together and debrief. **Ask something like:**

- **Was it difficult to identify the fruit only using one sense? Why or why not?**
- **Which sense was easier? Which one was more difficult?**
- **Why are you able to identify the fruit using just one sense? (It has unique characteristics)**

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

- **Here's the deal: Fruit is fairly easy to identify. You know the characteristics of an apple. You know what an orange smells like. They are fairly easily recognizable. Our lives should be the same way. People should look at us, especially our actions, and see that our lives are more about Christ and less about us. In this lesson, we'll see how this impacts our discussion on image.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To help your students understand that they are ultimately known by their actions; they can try to control their image, but their actions say a great deal to the world, and to God, about whom they really are.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board and something to write with. You'll also need note cards or scratch paper for students, as well as pens or pencils.

FIRST, remind your students that this is the third lesson in a four-part Bible study on Jesus and Your Image. See if your students can review what you've covered in the first two lessons so far. Use the following bullet points to help guide the discussion, if need be:

- **Lesson 1:** Jesus calls us to "deny ourselves," meaning our image is to be driven more by who God is and less by who we are.
- **Lesson 1:** We need to step back and evaluate the image we present to the world and whether it's focused more on us or on Christ.
- **Lesson 2:** We don't have to hide our brokenness from God or the world.
- **Lesson 2:** We need to let down our guard and express to God where we are most broken, and where we need His presence the most.

THEN, explain to students that you're taking your discussion of "image" beyond whom we think we are or say we are. Today you're going to be talking about how what we do is directly related to the image we project to the world. Before you start your Bible study time, give each student a piece of paper and ask them to define two terms: authentic and hypocrite. Give them a minute or two to come up with some good definitions. These don't have to be "Webster's" definitions, but make sure they grasp the heart of the definitions of the words.

Then, on the dry-erase board, write the two words. Have the students start sharing their definitions, and record these on the board. You should have a decent picture of what each word means (if not, give a little prompting). Then lead students in a brief discussion.

Ask:

- **Which of these would you rather be? Why?**

Answer: Unless you have some crazy students, everyone of them will probably chose "authentic."

- **Why didn't anyone choose being a hypocrite?**

Answers will vary.

- **Several years ago, there was an excellent book published, called "UnChristian" by Dave Kinnaman. The author researched the attitudes of people who don't believe in God as it pertained to Christians and the Church. One of the biggest negative stereotypes of Christians was that they were perceived to be hypocrites. Based on what you see, do you think this is fair? Why or why not?**

Answers will vary.

- **What is it about a hypocrite that upsets people so much?**

Answer: No one likes a hypocrite. We want people's behavior to match their image. We want to look at people and know that they are who they say they are. We want to say, "That person is the real deal. I am getting what I expect from them based on who they say they are," whether that's good or bad.

NEXT, go back to the fruit game you played at the start. **Ask something like,**

- **Why did an orange (apple, pear, pineapple, etc) taste, smell, and feel like an orange?**

Answer: Because that's how an orange is supposed to taste, smell, and feel.

- **If it tasted, smelled, felt like an apple, what kind of tree would you think it came from? Why?**

Answer: It came from an apple tree, because only apples come from apple trees.

- **What would you think if I said an apple came from an orange tree?**

Answer: Its impossible, you're crazy, etc, and so on.

Transition into your time of Bible study by **saying something like:**

- **An apple tree will always bear apples. An orange tree will never bear apples, and vice versa. It's just the way the world works. When we see an orange tree, we expect oranges. We expect the fruit to match up with the image. Jesus knew this, and He made sure to address it with His followers. Let's take a look and see what He said.**

THEN, have your students turn to Luke 6:43-45. While they are turning there, provide the context for Luke by referencing the Details section of your Bible Background. (Consider providing the context for the passage by summarizing the Setting section, as well.) Read or have a student read the passage aloud. Then lead students in a discussion. **Ask something similar to the following:**

- **Just to make sure we're on the same page, what is each tree recognized by?**

Answer: Its own fruit

- **A good tree bears what kind of fruit? And a bad tree?"**

Answer: Good fruit, bad fruit

- **Verse 44 strikes at the heart of our discussion of image. When someone looks at a thornbush, they have certain expectations, right? They expect it to be thorny. They don't expect it to bear fruit. The opposite is true. When someone in Jesus' day wanted to eat a fig, what did they go look for? What would their reaction be if they went to pick a fig and found nothing but thorns? Why?**

Answer: A fig tree. They would be disappointed. It's all about expectations. When you expect to get a nice fig for breakfast and you go find thorns growing, you're let down.

- **Why is this concept a perfect application for our discussion of image? In other words, how is the relationship between your image and your actions similar to the relationship between a tree and its fruit?**

Answer: Help students connect the dots: if you profess through your image to be a Christ-follower and your actions don't line up with your image, you're like the fig tree that produces nothing but thorns. People will expect one thing from you based on who you say you are. When they get something different, they will respond negatively. And that negative response is often directed at God, the Church, and/or Christ-followers in general.

Make sure students grasp the heart of this metaphor before moving on.

NEXT, continue your discussion. **Ask:**

- **In verse 45 Jesus turns the discussion to a person's heart. Again, just to make sure we're on the same page, what things come from the heart of "good" people, i.e., people who have had their lives transformed by Christ?**

Answer: Good things.

- **What comes from the heart of evil people, i.e., people who have rejected God?**

Answer: Evil things.

- **When Jesus connects our actions, or our fruit, with our heart, He is speaking about motivation. He is speaking about the emotions, feelings, and purposes that drive the things we do. Why do you think Jesus connects our actions with our motivations? What's He trying to tell us?**

Answers will vary, but it should be some variation on the heart is the core of who we really are. Our actions are motivated by who we are at our core.

- **How does this all relate to the image we project?**

Answer: If we project an image that is all about us, chances are pretty good that our actions will be motivated by our self-focused mindset. But if we're consciously striving to project an image that is Christ-driven, our actions should ideally come from a place of good intentions. While no one is perfect, the idea is that our actions would be motivated by a desire to see Christ honored and glorified through us.

Say something like:

- **Jesus uses fruit as an analogy for behavior because an orange tree can't help bearing oranges. Just like a good person can't help doing good. It comes from the heart. Our actions should not be in conflict with the**

Christ-centered image we project. Everyone should be able to identify our image in Christ by our actions. Our fruit should tell the world what kind of tree we are.

THEN, begin to transition toward the end of your Bible study time. Ask: If we should be easily identified by our actions, what should our actions look like if we claim to be a follower of Jesus? Instead of answering this directly, have your students turn to Philippians 1:27 and read it aloud. Then, ask:

- **What does it mean to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ?**

Answer: To live your life in such a way that your image and your actions are a credit to God Himself. People should be able to see that you are different and that the difference in you is all because of God.

- **Paul starts this passage by saying, “Whatever happens.” Why do you think he started out with those words?**

Answer: Our behavior should be shaped by our core image as followers of Christ, not by circumstances or others’ actions.

FINALLY, transition into the Last Word by **saying something similar to the following:**

- **Paul says that, whether he returns or just hears about their actions, he’ll know from what he sees and hears that they are living in a way that honored Christ. Paul was basically saying, “I want to be able to take one look at you and know that your actions are lining up with your image.” The question we have to ask ourselves is If people saw our actions today, would they be able to identify us as Christ-followers? Would our actions today line up with our image? Here’s the secret though: Our focus shouldn’t be on our behavior, but on our hearts. Our actions are simply reflections of what’s in our heart. We need to all look at our actions, and see where they don’t match up with who Jesus calls us to be. And then we need to ask ourselves, “Why”?**

Make sure no one has any questions, then move to wrap up the lesson with the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To evaluate any areas of their lives where their actions don’t line up with their professed identity as a Christ-follower.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll need a dry-erase board and something to write with. You’ll also need note cards or scratch paper for students, as well as pens or pencils.

FIRST, direct students’ attention to the dry-erase board again, and **ask your students:**

- **When we think about our actions, and how we’re called to act, what do you usually think of?**

Answers will vary, but more than likely it will be a combination of following rules and being nice.

Lead students to go a little deeper than this. **Say something like:**

- **Being a Christian is so much more than the “thall shalt nots” and being nice. When we talk of bearing fruit, it’s about showing the world who Jesus is and how we reflect Him. Specifically, what fruit should a Christian show to the world?**

Answer: As you write these down and encourage students’ responses, lead them to consider attributes that describe Jesus. Place their actions well within the character of God and how we see Him reveal Himself in Scripture.

THEN, after a few minutes of discussion, **ask**:

- **Do you feel like you ‘measure up’ to God’s standards? Why or why not?**

Answer: Likely a lot of no’s. Let them answer this, even though it might be difficult. Explain to students that this isn’t about measuring up, this is about what you should strive for. These are things they will continue to develop as they grow closer to Christ. An apple tree doesn’t produce apples overnight. But the cool thing is that apple trees don’t really have to try to produce apples. It just does. The same is true with them the longer they walk with Christ.

FINALLY, leave students with an encouraging word, one that will also help them veer away from seeing their faith through a legalistic lens. **Say something like:**

- **The fruit we bear is not about what we do. It’s about who we are. If we are followers of Christ, the fruit will follow. The only way to get an orange when you have an apple tree is to tear down the tree and plant an orange tree. Some of us live lives where our actions line up pretty closely with our image. For those people, the goal is to continue to grow in your faith, becoming more Christ-like each day. (Come to think of it, this is a pretty good goal for all of us!) But there are some of us in the room who look at our images and our actions and we see the two not lining up all that well. For us, we might need to tear down your old tree, your old life apart from God, and plant a new seed. If this describes you, let’s find some time to talk about it after we’re done.**

Close by reminding students that if they’re a follower of Christ, God is with them in the form of His Spirit, helping them to tend to the tree HE has planted in their lives. He is there to help them nurture it, water it, help it grow, and watch it bear fruit. This is an encouraging thought! We’re never on our own. God is always with us, compelling our actions to line up with our image.

If there are no other thoughts or questions, close in prayer.

- 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@yothministry360.com.



LESSON 4: FEARLESS

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: It's a mistake to let their concern for their image, and what people think about them, get in the way of their devotion to Jesus.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To recommit to living a bold faith for God regardless of how they may look to the world around them.

Scripture Focus: Luke 7:36-50

Supporting Scripture: 1 Peter 2:21-24

OVERVIEW: Your students love God and want to follow Him. Let's at least give them the benefit of the doubt. And yet for so many of them, culture's call to look calm, cool, and collected keeps them from being as passionate about their faith as they might be. This final lesson will help your students see what it looks like for someone to put serving God above what others think about them. In this lesson, your students will be challenged to forget about what people may think about them and to pursue Christ above all else.

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- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
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In Luke 6, Jesus is still in the early parts of His earthly ministry. Luke 4 shows Jesus being tempted by Satan, reading Scripture in the synagogue, healing the sick, teaching, and driving out demons. Luke 5 sees Jesus, among other things, calling His disciples. Luke 6 is basically a chapter consisting almost entirely of Jesus’ teaching. Luke 7 sees Jesus traveling between Capernaum and Nain when he was asked by a Pharisee to come to his home and eat.

THE MAIN POINT

Your students have crafted an image over the years based around what others think of them. For many of them, they had become so wrapped up in this false image and concern for the approval of others that they lost sight of who they really are inside. Hopefully, over the past few weeks, you’ve been able to crack through this false image to release their Christ-honoring identity inside.

Now they will be going back into the world, and their image will be under assault. Friends won’t understand it. Family might be confused. To reflect Jesus in this world will mark them as “different” and maybe “weird.” As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1, it looks like foolishness to the world to follow Christ.

This lesson will prepare your students to face the world and live out their faith boldly.

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 get students thinking about what we think is important.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need a dry-erase board and something to write with. In the week before the lesson, be listening out for topics you hear that are relevant to your students' lives. (Watch Twitter for trending topics, be aware of what's going on in sports, music, entertainment, etc.) Try to have as wide a variety as possible to hit most of your student's interests.

FIRST, explain that you're going to start the class with a discussion about the things in our world that many people find importance in. Explain how you've gathered your info, and then write the topics on the dry-erase board. When you've finished, give students a chance to fill in any topics that were on their radars this week, maybe topics they've tweeted, or posted on Facebook or Instagram.

THEN, when you've finished, lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask:**

- **Why do you think these were popular trending topics for people?**
Answers will vary.
- **Which ones do you think are the most interesting? The least interesting? Why did you answer the way you did?**
Answers will vary.
- **How many of these things are truly important?**
Answers will vary. Hopefully there are some that have some level of importance on a national or global scale.
- **What is it about human nature that people spend so much energy following things that aren't important in the grand scheme of things?**
Answers will vary. Lead students to see that it's certainly OK to have leisure activities and interests. But it's true that many people don't place a great deal of importance on the big picture of life.

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

- **Today we're going to wrap up our discussion about image by thinking about the importance we place on the image we project to the world. So many people spend so much of their time energy and even money projecting a perfect image to the world. And so much of what they do is aimed at not messing up that image. But what we'll see today is that our fixation on image is one of the things people see as important that is anything but. We'll learn what's truly important. Let's take a closer look.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** That it's a mistake to let their concern for their image, and what people think about them, get in the way of their devotion to Jesus.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, remind students that this is the last lesson in your study of what Jesus had to say about our image. Ask students to share anything that has stuck out to them over the last three lessons. Asked if anyone has had any revelations about how they had been thinking about their image and about how Jesus' words have changed that. Reinforce or redirect students' responses by summarizing these points that review what you've learned over the last three lessons:

- **Lesson 1:** Jesus calls us to "deny ourselves," meaning our image is to be driven more by who God is and less by who we are.
- **Lesson 2:** We don't have to hide our brokenness from God or the world.
- **Lesson 3:** We can try to control our image, but our actions say a great deal to the world, and to God, about who we really are.

When you have finished your review time, transition to your time of Bible study by **saying something like:**

• **We've spent the past three lessons talking about our image and how we should be focused on projecting an image that is Christ-driven, not us-driven. In this lesson, we're going to wrap up our time by looking at what it means to put everything aside and live a bold life for Christ.**

THEN, lead off with a loose discussion about why teenagers are sometimes tempted to minimize their faith as they project an image to the outside world. **Ask something like:**

- **What are the main reasons people aren't as bold in publicly identifying themselves as Christ-followers?**
Answers will vary.
- **What are some practical examples of how you see this manifesting itself?**
Answer: Discussions over what or what isn't a sin; discussions about the existence of God; discussions about comparisons over religions; and so on.
- **Why do you think people downplay their relationship with Christ in the face of disagreement or tough conversations?**
Answers will vary.

Explain to your students that the point of this conversation is to set the table for your time of Bible study. Explain that you're about to read a pretty long narrative passage that shows a dramatic example of someone who took a bold step in professing her love and worship of Christ at the risk of sacrificing what others thought of her.

NEXT, instruct students to turn to Luke 7. While they are finding the chapter, have someone provide the details for who Luke was. Use the Details and Settings section of the Bible Background to provide a little context for the passage you're about to read. Before reading the passage, ask:

- **Who remembers who the Pharisees were?**
Answer: Remind students that Pharisees were the largest group of Jewish religious leaders within Judaism. They controlled the synagogues and exerted a ton of control over the Jewish population. They were Jesus' chief opponents, in large part because of their insistence on the tedious, legalistic keeping of God's Law, plus many other rules they had added themselves, as a means of being righteous in God's eyes. The vast majority of them believed Jesus was a heretic and a trouble maker.

Explain that this is an important detail, as the story takes place at the home of a Pharisee. Once you've established this, read or have students read Luke 7:36-39. Then, lead students in a discussion. **Ask:**

- **How did Luke describe the woman?**
Answer: Luke said she was known as someone who had lived a sinful life. Some scholars read an implication that maybe her sin was of a sexual nature, possibly an adulteress or a prostitute. Regardless, she had a reputation that wasn't really good.

- **We know she was a “sinner,” and the chances are pretty good that she was also impoverished (it was customary for the poor to enter into banquets like this one and wait for table scraps at the end of the meal). What kind of reaction might her presence have caused in that gathering?**

Answer: We can't know for sure, but based on the Pharisee's response, her presence wasn't welcomed.

- **What do you think might have compelled the woman to approach Jesus as she did and do what she did to Him?**

Answer: While we can't know her thoughts, we can tell from the text that she was weeping, possibly in remorse for her sin, or simply in awe of Jesus.

- **What was Jesus' reaction to what the woman was doing? Did He rebuke her or pull away?**

Answer: No. He allowed her to worship Him as she was doing.

Before moving on, **say something like:**

• **Let's not move on before we pause and acknowledge how awkward this situation would have been. You're eating dinner when a woman comes in and starts crying on Jesus' feet. She wipes her tears off with her hair. She then kisses Jesus' feet, which would have been dirty from walking in the dusty ground, and then she poured perfume on them, a beautiful sign of adoration and worship. This had to kind of be an unusual event for all who were there. And we know from Luke's account that Simon was not a fan. Let's see how the event plays out.**

THEN, read or have a student read verses 41-47. When you have finished, lead students in a discussion. **Ask:**

- **What point do you think Jesus was trying to make in the short parable He told?**

Answer: The person with the greater debt appreciates forgiveness of the debt more than the one with the smaller debt. The woman apparently realized her sinfulness and realized that Jesus was God. Her sin in the face of Christ caused her to be broken. Simon seems to be in line with how many of the other Pharisees are depicted in Scripture: Self-righteous and convinced he is better than other “sinners.” Jesus rightly points out that the woman is needier and more welcoming of His grace than Simon.

- **Jesus gets us to the heart of the matter pretty quickly. He compares Simon to the woman. List the things Simon didn't do that the woman did.**

Answer: Simon didn't give Jesus any water to wash his feet, a custom that would have been a sign of respect. The woman washed His feet with her tears. Simon didn't greet Jesus with a kiss on the cheek, again, a custom that would have shown respect for a guest. The woman continuously kissed Jesus' feet. Pouring oil on someone's head would have been a sign of an anointing from God, or a special blessing. Simon didn't offer this. But the woman anointed Jesus' feet with perfume.

- **So, at this point, we have Simon, the well-to-do Pharisee, the leader, a man who by all signs we can gather was very concerned with his image. And we have the poor, sinful woman, who threw aside her image to humbly worship Jesus. Not that this is the best way to think about these things, but if we wanted to ask, “Who came out on top”?**

Answer: Obviously, the woman.

- **As we wrap up our discussion of image, remember that we've defined image as the way in which we craft a public perception of ourselves and put it forward to the world. Image is about looking good. Image is about self. What lesson does this story have for us about image?**

Answer: Help your students see that what the world thinks about us can never come between us and our devotion to Christ. Our love for Christ must take precedence over what others think about us. We can never shrink away from seeking out God because we are worried about how we might look in the eyes of the world.

FINALLY, as you move to begin wrapping up the lesson, have your students follow along as you read 1 Peter 2:21-24. Then **ask**:

- **How does Peter describe how Jesus was treated?**

Answer: He was insulted, suffered, and died on the cross.

- **In verse 21, how did Peter say we can expect to be treated as Jesus' followers?**

Answer: Likely, the same way. We will follow in Jesus' steps, steps that inevitably lead to much persecution.

- **So, how did Jesus respond when He was mistreated?**

Answer: Jesus never retaliated. He never cried out how unfair or undeserved it was.

- **How should we respond when we are treated poorly?**

Answer: The same as Jesus.

Close by saying that you included this final passage because so often we struggle with our image because we don't want people to be upset with us. We don't want people to make fun of us because of our faith. We don't want to ruffle anyone's feathers, or call any undue attention to ourselves. But remind students that the Bible tells us over and over again we can't have it both ways. We can't follow God and be friends with the world. By leaving behind a me-first image and embracing a Christ-centered one, we will find ourselves at odds with the world. But Peter tells us to expect this. **Say something like:**

• **We have nothing to fear because God is with us. Jesus knew that He would suffer. He knew that He would be insulted. The Bible is pretty clear that as followers of Christ, we will suffer the same fate. We will be looked down on. We will be insulted. We will suffer. But we are trusting that God will get us through, and God will take care of us. We live with no fear, because God is with us.**

If no one has any more questions or additions, transition to the Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To evaluate any areas of their lives where their actions don't line up with their professed identity as a Christ-follower.
- **Set-Up:** For this activity, you may need to do a little research so that you can be an effective "pretend atheist". You'll also need some scratch paper or note-cards, pens, and a few red markers.

FIRST, explain to the group that you are going to role play as an atheist. Ask them to think for a few minutes about some questions that they would ask an atheist about what they believe, why they don't believe in Christ (or partake in any other religion), etc. If you want to take this to the next level, you can come up with an alter-ego and put a hat on to signify that you are "in character" once the questions begin. **Say something like:**

• **It can be scary to interact with someone who believes differently than you, especially if they openly reject everything that you believe in. That's why I'm going to give you a chance today to practice! I want you to be bold when you ask me questions and be prepared to answer some of mine! Remember, this is a practice exercise. Because I'm only pretending to be an atheist, there are things I will or will not say that someone who is more convicted might.**

THEN, open the floor to your students. If your group is not very talkative, you can always kick things off by asking them questions. You could even start with "Why are all of you gathered here, is this a club or something? Did your parents make you come?" Try to get them thinking about how to proclaim what they believe and stand firm in their faith, even when they are being rejected by someone. As tempting as it may be to make this funny, try to remain as serious as you can. Ask hard questions and give tough to argue with answers to their questions. This should make everyone a little uncomfortable!

Once the discussion dies down, transition out of your character.

- **What was something you learned through this practice conversation?**

Answers will vary.

- **Why is it difficult to have a conversation with someone who disagrees with you about something that is incredibly important in your life?**

Answers will vary.

- **Imagine that the roles were reversed, and I was one Christian speaking to a group of atheists. Do you think that would have been harder for me? Why?**

Answers will vary, but challenge students to think of how difficult it would be to speak to a group of people that actively disagree with your faith. They probably would have a very bad reputation in that room!

THEN, read or have a student read 1 Peter 3:13-16. **Ask:**

- **What does this passage encourage us to do in the face of those who might tarnish our image because we love Christ?**

Answer: Be prepared to give a defense for the HOPE that is within you, and do it in love and respect.

End the lesson by **saying something like:**

• **Peter makes an interesting distinction for Christ-followers in verse 13. He essentially asks the question, “Who can find a wrong thing with somebody who is passionate about doing good for others?” And the answer is nobody! Sure, there are people who will spread lies about you, but lies can be easily overcome with truth. In other words, if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to worry about! Part of the freedom that comes in Christ is letting go of needing to be loved by people who despise good.**

• **As we finish up our series on Jesus and Your Image, I hope that you have been encouraged to seek after Christ in new ways. All of us desire to be liked and feel supported, and it can be discouraging if we don’t receive that. But if we put too much weight on how others view us, we can miss out on some really incredible things that God is doing. God may be calling you to do something that the world just doesn’t care about or even hates! If you are struggling to live out that calling, come talk to me. I would love to help you walk through that.**

Wrap up your group time by praying for your students.

- 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.