The LIFE: Embracing the Life of a Christ-Follower
Part 2: The Picture of a Disciple
Unit 1: A Disciple Surrenders to a Gospel-Centered Life

Lesson 16: The Gospel-Centered Life: Love Covers All

What we want students to learn: That as a follower of Christ living a Gospel-centered life, they are called to live a life defined by their love for others.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate their attitudes toward others as they pertain to demonstrating love to the world.

Scripture Focus: Colossians 3:8-10, 12-14

Supporting Scripture: John 13:34-35

Overview: It would be foolish to attempt to boil God's nature or character down to only one of His attributes. He's far too complex for that. But so much of His activity that involves us, especially His work of redemption and reconciliation through Christ, is motivated by His love. And so it should be no surprise that God views love as one of the primary attributes of His followers. As you wrap up this three-session look at examples of what a Gospel-centered life looks like, you'll challenge your students to be people who exude a Christ-fueled love to others.

Bible Background

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

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

The Details

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul identified himself as the author of Colossians.
- **Time frame:** Most people believe Colossians was written sometime between AD 61 and 63, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:17-31).
- **Purpose:** Ultimately, this letter's purpose is to emphasize the supremacy of Christ over everything. Paul was writing to combat the spread of false teachings within the church at Colossae. The exact heresy being refuted is not certain and may have been a blend of multiple influences. The legalism, mysticism, and asceticism corrupting the pure faith in Colossae were moving attention away from Christ, placing it instead on self-discipline and the awe of other spiritual things.

The Setting

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colossae during his imprisonment in Rome. He reminds them of the truth of who Jesus is and the powerful Gospel that has saved them. Paul explains how disciples of Jesus are to live because the Gospel has forever changed their lives. Beginning in chapter three, Paul explains that disciples of Jesus should be focused on the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of this world. Christ-followers should have lives that are marked by holiness rather than the things of this world.

The Main Point

A disciple becomes like the one he follows. Those who follow Jesus should live lives that are marked by love, because we have been changed by His love for us through the Gospel. Jesus perfectly loved others and calls us to do the same. If His life on earth was marked by love, ours should be too. In fact, Jesus said that one way people will know that we are His disciples is by our love for one another. Our love for one another is proof that we have been radically changed by Christ's love for 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 get students thinking about love.
- **Set-Up:** Bring some sort of timer to class (cell phones work great). Have a way to keep score (white board, pencil and paper, note section of your phone, etc).

FIRST, divide the students into two teams. Explain that you will be playing a game of Buzz Word. Say something like:

- **Each team will have a buzzword. Your team will have one minute to solve the clues I give. The answer to each clue will contain the buzzword. Answers can be a single word, a phrase or an expression. For example, if the buzzword is "apple," I will give the clue "New York's nickname." The answer is "The Big Apple." I may give the clue "A popular restaurant chain" and the answer would be "Applebees." If a clue is too difficult, your team may decide to pass, but you will not get an opportunity to come back to the clue. Also, at the end of your time, the other team will have one chance to "steal" the point of any passed clue if they solve the clue correctly. Each team will play one round. The team with the most points at the end wins.**

THEN, make sure both teams understand the rules and enlist someone from each team to keep score. Explain to the students that the Buzz Word is "love." Then give Team 1 the following clues:

- **Clue: Christian radio station; Answer: K-LOVE**
- **Clue: Those three little words; Answer: I love you**
- **Clue: Extra weight on a person's midsection; Answer: Love handles**
- **Clue: Not able to see the faults of the one you admire; Answer: Love is blind**

NEXT**,** give Team 2 a chance to steal any "passed" clues. Then let them know that the Buzz Word is still "love." Give Team 2 the following clues:

- **Clue: John 3:16; Answer: "For God so loved the world."**
- **Clue: Nickname for the city of Paris; Answer: City of Love**
- **Clue: To completely fall for someone; Answer: Head over heels in love**
- **Clue: Affection between siblings; Answer: Brotherly love**

THEN, give Team 1 a chance to steal any "passed" clues. Tally up the points and declare a winner.

NEXT, explain that love is a very important idea in our culture. We have numerous dating websites where people hope to find love. Hollywood is always rolling out a new romantic comedy. Romance novels line shelves at bookstores. And we even have a holiday devoted to love. Ask something like:

- **Why do you think love is so important to us?**
    - Answers will vary.

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

- **In our lesson today we are going to talk about living a life defined by love for others. As we seek to be people who live as followers of Jesus, it's one of the most important concepts we can discuss. And that's not just my opinion. The Bible is FULL of places that back this up. Let's look at a few right now.**

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

The Main Event

- **Goal:** Help students understand that as followers of Christ living a Gospel-centered lives, they are called to live a life defined by their love for others.
- **Set Up:** Make sure each student will have access to a copy of the Bible.

FIRST, ask students to turn to Colossians 3. As students find Colossians, take a moment to provide context for this passage using information from the Bible Background. Say something like:

- **When you become a follower of Jesus, your entire life changes. Not only are you saved from an eternity in hell, but you are also given a new heart, a new mind, and a new life through the Holy Spirit. You aren't who you used to be. Because all of these things have changed, your lifestyle should no longer look like that of someone who is separated from Christ, living in sin. You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).**

THEN, explain that in your passage today Paul uses the phrases "old self" and "new self" to talk about a person's life before Christ (the old self) and then the person's life after surrendering to Christ (the new self). The things that are characteristic of the "old self" should not be true of someone who is Christ's disciple. Instead, our lives should be marked by the characteristics of the "new self."

NEXT, read or have a student read Colossians 3:8-10, and 12-14. Say something like:

- **When you read this passage, it is actually really helpful to think about changing clothes. Picture yourself taking off your dirty, wrinkled outfit and throwing it into the laundry hamper, never to be**

put on again. Just as you would not put on a dirty outfit to go to a super important event, you should not clothe yourself with the characteristics that mark a life without Christ.

THEN, ask something like:

- **Looking at this passage, what are the characteristics of the old self that we must put away?**
    - *Answer*: Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying.

NEXT, say something like:

- **Now, picture yourself putting on a fresh set of clothes. The outfit has no wrinkle or spot. You are ready to go to that super important event and engage others because you are dressed in clean clothes. This is like the new self that we are to put on, made holy and clean through Christ.**

THEN, lead your students in a brief discussion by asking something like:

- **Looking at this passage, what are the characteristics of the new self that we put on?**
    - *Answer*: Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love.
- **What characteristic is to be put on above all?**
    - *Answer*: Love
- **Why do you think love is above all? What is so important about love?**
    - Answers will vary.
- **According to verse 14, love binds everything together in perfect harmony. How do you think love does this? What does love have to do with the other characteristics of the new self?**
    - *Answer:* Love gives us the ability to show compassion, kindness, humility, meekness patience and forgiveness. We show love to others when we treat them in these ways. Compassion is a demonstration of love because you are sympathizing with another person in his pain with a desire to take that pain away. Kindness displays love in the gentle treatment of others. Humility says that you love another more than yourself. Meekness is gentle power that is controlled by love. Patience is loving another enough to slow down and wait for what is best. Lastly, love empowers you to forgive others as Christ has forgiven you. Extending forgiveness also displays your love for Christ and trust in Him to make all things right.
- **How can having a heart-attitude marked by these characteristics affect the way we interact with others?**
    - Answers may vary.

NEXT, direct students to look at verse 10. Explain that the new self we are to put on is being renewed in the image of its creator. The creator of the new self is Christ. He created new life for us by dying on the cross as a payment for our sins and rising from the grave, defeating death on our behalf. The characteristics of the new self are the characteristics of Jesus, our creator, and we should continually look more and more like Him. We are to put on love above all things because He showed us what perfect love looks like when He laid His life down for us and gave us new life.

THEN, direct students to John 13. While students are turning there, explain that we put on love above all because it reflects the character of Christ, but also because Christ commands us to love one another. Read or have a student read John 13:34-35. Ask something like:

- **According to Jesus, how are we to love one another?**
    - *Answer*: Just as He has loved us.
- **What do you think Jesus meant when He said that we are to love others just like He has loved us?**

- *Answer*: Jesus was speaking about His willingness to lay down His life for His disciples. He displayed His perfect love by willingly giving up His own life and facing God's wrath on our behalf so that we can be made right with God. Jesus commands us to show love for others by being willing to lay our lives down for them.

- **What does it look like to love others by laying your life down for them?**
  - *Answer*: We must be willing to sacrifice our own comfort and selfish desires for the benefit of others. This type of love puts the needs of another person before your own.
- **According to Jesus, how will people know that we are His disciples?**
  - *Answer*: By the love we have for one another.

- **How does loving one another in the way Christ loved us show people that we are His disciples?**
  - Answers may vary. It shows that we are following His model for our lives. It shows that we take His words and commands seriously.
- **How does the way Jesus commands us to show love for others look different from the way the world shows love?**
  - Answers may vary. Jesus' love involves commitment, dedication, and sacrifice. It isn't built on emotion or a feeling.

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

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To have students evaluate their attitudes toward others as they pertain to how they demonstrate love to the world.
- **Set-Up:** Print and distribute a copy of the Lesson 17 "Attitude Meter" handout to each student. You'll need to make sure you provide something to write with.

FIRST, give students a few minutes to evaluate their attitudes toward the various groups of people mentioned on the handout.

NEXT, encourage your students to look at the groups of people on their handout and think about the love they demonstrate to people in each group. Ask something like:

- **How does your attitude toward certain people affect the way you treat them?**
  - Answers may vary. Explain that our attitudes toward others often direct how we treat them. Sometimes the attitudes of others can also affect our attitude and our desire to show them love. Although there are some people who are more difficult to love, Christ commands us to put on love and show His love to everyone.
- **How does your attitude demonstrate Christ's love to the world?**
  - Answers may vary. Certain people are easier to love than others. When we are committed to loving all sorts of people, it shows that the source of our love is greater than ourselves. It points to Christ.
- **How can we redirect the attitudes of our heart to show love to others?**
  - Answers may vary. The more we grow deeper in our love for Jesus, the more we'll love others. The key to loving other people more is loving Jesus more and more.

THEN, challenge your students to think of one way they can show love to someone in each of these groups this week. Remind students that as disciples of Jesus, we are called to live lives defined by love for others. People will be drawn to Jesus when we show them genuine, Christ-centered love.

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