

Series: With the People

Lesson 3: The Past is History

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- identify that Jesus prioritized people over their past mistakes
- identify some of the risks and rewards of prioritizing people over their past mistakes

Materials Needed:

- ☐ safe but heavy object for relay
- ☐ prizes (optional)
- ☐ board and markers
- ☐ Bibles or a double-sided copy of handout “With the People: Three”
- ☐ scrap paper
- ☐ Pens

Lead In:

Divide students into two teams and have them compete in a relay race in which they have to carry something heavy (a stack of books, a bag of flour, a team member, etc). Hand out prizes to the winning team if desired.

Say something like, *Sometimes things from our past can weigh us down much like this (insert relay item here). This is especially true in our relationships with others.*

Task One:

Ask all of the students to stand up. Now ask each student to think of a relationship in his or her life that is currently being negatively affected by a past incident. They need not disclose the relationship; only think of it. Once they have identified that person, they should sit down. Continue until everyone has thought of one. Some may not be able to; they can sit down too.

Now ask if there are any students who are comfortable sharing their incident. They can keep the other person involved anonymous. Have the listening students decide what the relationships discussed had in common, if anything.

Task Two:

On the board, write the following Scripture references, preferably in advance. Tell the students that they are going to work in groups to look up these passages and decide whether there is any past baggage affecting the characters in the texts. You can use Bibles for this or a copy of the handout, “With the People: Three”, which has all of the relevant passages on one piece of paper; choose whichever suits your group better. You may also want to do the first passage together to ensure that they have understood the instructions.

Have students divide into small groups of 3-6 and begin. Give each group scrap paper and a pen to record their answers.

- Matthew 9:9-13
- Luke 19:1-10
- Luke 23:32-43
- John 4:7-30
- John 8:3-11
- Romans 5:6-11

When students have finished, solicit one answer verbally for each passage. When you are all agreed on the appropriate responses, ask the students what all six of these passages have in common. The answer is that in every case Jesus put aside the person or people's past mistakes and showed them love and compassion. Ask students why they think that Jesus responded in this way. Was Jesus ignoring sin? Could we treat people in the same way?

Task Three:

Add another Scripture reference to the board: Acts 15:36-40. Ask students to brainstorm some of the risks and rewards of Barnabas' actions (both directly from the text and from inference). Have a volunteer record these on the board. Ask students which of the people from the passage they identify with most. Solicit some answers and then transition by saying something like, *Investing your life in others starts with a heart attitude that says that people are more important than their past mistakes. This might possibly be the hardest investment to make out of the three we've talked about. Barnabas stuck up for John Mark even when it caused a disagreement between his friend and partner Paul.*

Closing:

Ask for a student volunteer who likes to draw (but doesn't have to be an artist). Send that person to the board. Say something like, *The challenge at the beginning of this series was to decide whether or not you were going to spend your life or invest it. What would a life of investment look like? Use anything you remember from the last three weeks to draw a complete picture of a life invested in others. Include the rewards and the risks of such a life.* Have the volunteer solicit answers from the others and draw these on the board until all are satisfied with the picture.

When the picture is finished, ask for one or two people who are willing to pray for the group. They can pray that the group will be marked by its investment in other people and for the strength to carry that out.