CHARIS YOUTH

Series: Jesus Influencers

Lesson 1: Youth: Looked Down On Or Looked Up To?

About This Lesson

Youth are being influenced by others, but don't always see themselves as influencers or leaders. This lesson allows everyone to recognize that God placed gifts and talents in every person. As believers, we also have the gifts of the Spirit. This lesson challenges the youth to recognize that when they use their God-given gifts, they can influence and lead people to want to learn about and follow Jesus.

Key Takeaway: To be the influencer and leader you were created to be, you have to follow Jesus and His instructions in the Bible. If not, you will end up following something else. His way is the best way!

Key Verse: 1 Timothy 4:12 *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

Teaching Outline:

I. LET NO ONE DESPISE YOUR YOUTH

1 Timothy 4:12-14 *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* [13] *Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.* [14] *Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.*

A. What does it mean to despise? It means to look down on.
   1. Even though you might be young, God wants you to be the type of person that others can look up to!
   2. More people are looking up to you than you realize!
   3. You are setting an example for somebody.

II. BE AN EXAMPLE

A. Others should look up to you in the following ways:
   1. IN WORD – What is coming out of your mouth? Are your words building others up or tearing them down? Are your words building you up or tearing you down?
      a. Proverbs 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

   2. IN CONDUCT – What are you doing? You are a leader, an influencer to someone who will copy you and do what you do! Others might ask themselves what you would do in this situation.
      a. James 2:20 *…faith without works is dead.*
      b. James uses Abraham and Rahab as examples of faith because he wanted people to know that faith works for anyone (James 2:21–25). Anyone can be a leader and be used by God!

   3. IN LOVE – *Agape*, your love for God will be reflected in your love for others.
      a. John 13:35 *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

   4. IN SPIRIT – Attitude matters. Keep a consistent attitude and positive outlook on life.

   5. IN FAITH – Your beliefs, convictions, and character should point people to God.

   6. IN PURITY – Stay out of willful sin and keep your motives pure.

B. You are called to be an influencer! If you aren't purposefully trying to be a positive influence—you will be influenced by the wrong people and the wrong ideas.
   1. To be the influencer and leader you were created to be, you have to follow Jesus! You have to follow His instructions in the Bible. If not, you will end up following something else. His way is the best way!
      John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

III. HOW ARE YOU TO GROW AS A LEADER AND AS A JESUS INFLUENCER?

1 Timothy 4:13 *Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

A. Give attention to three things:
   1. Read the Bible!
   2. Exhortation is the Greek word *paraklesis*, which means to build up, build yourself up, and build others up. Don't spend too much time with people that constantly bring you down.
   3. Doctrine is the teaching or precepts, which are the guidelines or instructions for Christian living. Where do you learn doctrine? Go to church and be taught the Word and how it applies to your life.

B. Don't neglect the gifts that are in you!
   1. God gave each person gifts. Learn what gifts are in you.
   2. As believers, we all have Jesus on the inside of us, and we have the fruit of His Spirit. Galatians 5:22–23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control.*
   3. You have to use and develop your gifts! If you are a gifted athlete, you have to practice if you want to grow. If you are a gifted musician, you have to practice if you want to grow.
   4. Jesus' influencers and leaders need to grow spiritually! You need to continually activate what He has given you!

Bottom Line:
You ARE an influencer to someone, so use your God-given gifts to influence people to follow Jesus

Small Group Time:

1. Being an influencer is popular now. Most influencers use their social media platform to influence their audience. Influencers are often experts in a particular field, such as fashion, fitness, or travel. They can influence their audience to try a product or service.

- What does it mean to you to be an influencer?
- Which influencers do you follow, and why?

2. Not everyone is a social media influencer, but everyone is influenced by others. Sometimes, we don't recognize that we are being influenced by someone until we notice that we are repeating what the person said, dressing like the person, or eating something we heard about from them.

- What does it mean to be a Jesus influencer? (Allow each person to answer, and make sure the following points are covered.)
  - First of all, you are primarily influenced by Jesus! You follow Him more than you follow anyone else.
  - Secondly, when people are around you, your influence points people to Jesus. You are an example of what it means to follow Jesus.

3. You might not realize who you are influencing, but people are watching and being influenced by YOU. There are some people in your life who will pay more attention to what you say about Jesus than they would pay attention to someone who is a big "influencer" on social media. Why is that? Because they know you! People who you know and interact with on a frequent basis are part of your sphere of influence.

- Who are people that are close to you that you influence?
  - Your parents, your siblings, your friends, other students at school, other students at an activity/sport/event that you participate in.
  - You have a pretty big influence!
  - You have probably influenced your parents to eat at a certain restaurant, buy a certain food, or watch one of your favorite movies.
  - You have probably influenced a sibling or friend to dress a certain way, to wear a certain brand, or even to avoid certain ways of dressing.

- Do you think you could be a Jesus influencer in someone's life?
  - Let's pray for that person now!

Declaration:
"I choose to be influenced by Jesus, and I will be a Jesus influencer to others. God gave me gifts to use, and when I use them, it helps others know Him."

Youth Weekly Journal:

Handout, Email, or Download

- **Question:** How will you be a Jesus influencer this week?

- **Pray:** Ask God to show you any areas where you need to be influencing others towards Jesus rather than being influenced by others to not follow Jesus' ways.
- **Read:** 1 Timothy 4:12–14 each day and meditate on it. Write down what new revelations the Holy Spirit reveals to you.
- **Live It:** Think of a specific friend or family member that you would like to encourage, help grow in their relationship with Jesus, or invite them to come to know Jesus. Make a plan to meet with them, invite them to church, or share your testimony with them.
- **Create:** Make a list of things you said and did this week that had an influence on someone. Write down next to each item whether you were a positive or negative influence on the person. Make a meme to post that shows you are a Jesus influencer.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

Icebreaker Question: If you were a social media influencer, what would your topic be and why?

Opening Activity Suggestion: This lesson talks about how God has placed a gift inside of you that can be used as a Jesus influencer. Wrap a package with a snack for the group inside and set the package in front of the group, but don't talk about it. Toward the end, when someone asks what is in the package, let someone open it and share the snack. Relate that to the gift God places inside each person and that often, we don't open and use the gift. Use this as an opportunity to affirm the gifts you've seen in the young people. Their gifts can help them be a Jesus influencer.

Opening Affirmation: "The Bible is my guidebook. I follow what the Word says. I am a Jesus influencer. Others are watching, and I want them to see Jesus in me!"

Giving Time: Luke 16:10–12 *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.* [11] *Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?* [12] *And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?*

Jesus talks about faithfulness in the area of finances. When you are faithful with your money, He can share spiritual riches with you! You reap what you sow. Stay faithful in what Jesus says, and you will be blessed!

BEYOND –
ADDITIONAL APPLICATION FOR CHURCH OR HOME

Challenge: The young people can begin to form a habit of being intentional about what they say and do, so they are being Jesus influencers each day. Take time to brainstorm as a group or in small group time ways they can be Jesus influencers at school, as they do sports and extracurricular activities, in their neighborhood, and at home. Challenge them to intentionally do something each day in front of someone else that shows they are following Jesus' ways. Next week, ask them how they were Jesus influencers.

Biblical Worldview: Peer pressure is very real in our culture and society. Remind the young people that they need to be aware of times they are being influenced by others who don't use the Bible as the source of their worldview. Take time to have the young people pray for each other to be bold Jesus influencers this week and not be influenced by others to go against what the Bible says.

Outreach/Missions: The missionary lifestyle involves being a 24/7 Jesus influencer. In some ways, it might seem easier to be a Jesus influencer among people you don't know. If possible, invite a missionary to share what it is like to be a Jesus influencer in another culture. Remind the youth that every believer is called to share Jesus with others. There is no age requirement given. Encourage the youth to look at their school, neighborhood, and city as their mission field and to go be a Jesus influencer everywhere their feet take them this week!