

## MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ boldly tell others about God (Acts 4:29).

## SCRIPTURE

JOHN 4:1-42



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

On his way to Galilee, Jesus could have taken three different routes. He chose to go through Samaria, which was unusual considering the long-standing hatred between the Samaritans and Orthodox Jews. “The Samaritans were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile, that grew out of the Assyrian captivity of the ten northern tribes in 727 B.C. Rejected by the Jews because they could not prove their genealogy, the Samaritans established their own temple and religious services on Mt. Gerizim. This only fanned the fires of prejudice. So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans that some of the Pharisees prayed that no Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection! When His enemies wanted to call Jesus an insulting name, they called Him a Samaritan (John 8:48).”<sup>1</sup> Still, Jesus made a point of going through Samaria because he had a divine appointment with a woman at a well.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1064813788>

## OPENING

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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#### MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

### GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group’s size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend **If You Knew Me, You’d Know** or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**—What’s the best surprise you have ever had? What’s the worst?

#### DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It’s already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

### WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYSCbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

#### SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

## TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

### VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

## MESSAGE

*Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.*

### POINT 1: Jesus seeks out and notices people

Read or have someone in your group read John 1:1–26

This woman's past is somewhat controversial, considering the high number of spouses she had. She may have outlived her many husbands or perhaps had multiple divorces. Either way, others would have regarded her as someone "questionable" for a rabbi like Jesus to talk to, if for no other reason than she was a Samaritan and a woman. During that time period, Jews didn't associate with Samaritans, and men didn't usually associate with women publicly. Despite the many reasons Jesus could have used to avoid this lady, he intentionally stepped into her life and welcomed her endless questions so she could grasp God's larger story.

*ILLUSTRATION:* Tell a **personal story** about someone reaching out to you to help you grow spiritually. Explain how it felt to have that person value you in that way.

Consider who you might overlook because they don't naturally enter your social circles. Jesus' example reminds us not to shy away from possible awkward situations, to notice others, and to invite them to know him.

### SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- John 1:1–26
- Point 1

### POINT 2: Anyone who experiences Jesus can share about Jesus

Read or have someone in your group read John 1:27–30, 39–42

Sharing our faith can feel scary at times. We may worry we won't know what to say, say the wrong thing, or simply come across as weird. This woman skipped all the overthinking and just told her story of meeting Jesus. Notice no one shut her down or brought up her past but instead listened to how captivated she was about Jesus. Through her testimony, many decided to seek out Jesus themselves.

*ILLUSTRATION:* For a visual example, fill a clear container with water and have several students take turns dropping a pebble into the water and try to count how many ripples form from the one point of contact. Then, tell them how a single encounter with God can have a rippling effect around us when we share that encounter with others.

God is ready to do something in us that ripples out to others. Our job is to share with others the experiences we have with God.

### SLIDES (optional)

- John 1:27–30, 39–42
- Point 2



**POINT 3: Doing God's will feeds us and others**

Read or have someone in your group read John 1:31–38

Jesus said that doing the Father's will and accomplishing his work is like "food" that deeply satisfies (verse 34). We are fed spiritually when we are obedient to God's calling. As food is vital for us to grow physically, putting into practice what God's Word teaches is vital for our spiritual growth. Telling others about God matters to others, but it's also a gift to us. God meets us in those moments to work in us as he's also working in the people we're talking to. Helping others grow with God is a huge way we grow with God.

**SLIDES (optional)**

- John 1:31–38
- Point 3

**CLOSING****MARK OF A DISCIPLE**

Disciples of Christ boldly tell others about God (Acts 4:29).

**SLIDES (optional)**

- Mark of a Disciple

**FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?**

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

**REFLECT & RESPOND**

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- When were you ever asked to do something important that you didn't feel up to do?
- What's something significant you hope God asks you to do one day? What makes that more "significant" than anything he's already asked you to do?

**SLIDES (optional)**

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** Don't rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider what makes them hesitate to share about Jesus boldly and why.

**PRAYER**

Take time to pray for your students to realize that God is already at work in the lives of others, and we don't "start" it as much as we join God in it.



## SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

*Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.*

### BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

#### Build Meaningful Relationships

- **Who is someone famous you'd really like to see become a genuine Christ-follower? Why?**  
Make this a fun question, being careful not to become judgmental but inspired. Remind them that we can pray for these people even now.
- **What is a character trait you hope people associate with you?**  
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share your own answer to help get the conversation started.

#### Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- **What do you think pleases God more in telling others about him: being someone who thinks first and acts later or someone who acts first and thinks later? Explain your answer.**  
Answers might vary, but it's good to point out that God uses all kinds of personalities and people. Both of these styles are effective in God's hands.
- **What would you say is the "best" way to approach someone who isn't a Christ-follower if you want to talk about Jesus?**  
Answers will vary, but we often get hung up on whether there is a "best" way. Maybe it's as simple as paying attention to whether they're open, if it's a good time, or if you've even taken the time to pray first and ask God to help you care about that person, etc.
- **What are some little things or big things others have risked so that you could know Jesus? What are you willing to risk so others can know him, too?**  
Answers might vary. Come prepared to share your own answers. Also, look for common trends in their answers to help them see the larger story and opportunities.

#### Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- **When was a time that you felt God leading you to do something uncomfortable? How did you respond? What is something he's leading you to do now?**  
Answers might vary, and students may fear sharing out loud, so create a safe space for talking by sharing your own answers. Remind them that everyone is different, so what might seem scary to you might not seem scary to others, and that's okay.
- **How does the fear of what others might think or say affect your willingness to take risks following Jesus?**  
Answers will vary. Remind students that if we try to live like Jesus, people will treat us as they did Jesus. When we look at the Gospels, we see that the crowds were divided in most places Jesus went—many people loved him, and many people didn't. We can expect the same.

### PRAYER

Take time to pray for your students to realize that God is already at work in the lives of others, and we don't "start" it as much as we join God in it.

*Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.*

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 299). Victor Books.

