

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)."¹ 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>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We're giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.
OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What is something that you would say is "worth it" when it comes to spending your time and energy that others may not agree with? Why?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

Jesus values everyone and regularly entered awkward situations to connect with questionable people, like how he noticed the Samaritan woman and invited her to know him. He saw who she could be, which made her wonder, "Can this be?" about herself and God. She went out and shared it all, leading others to meet him, too. We're called to be witnesses in the same way, which also feeds our own souls.

Read John 1:1–26 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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.
- 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.



Say something like: Some describe God as one who gives us many chances, but he also likes us to be willing to take chances. This is especially true in sharing Christ with others, even if it's challenging for us.

Read John 1:27–30, 39–42 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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'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?
Answers will vary. Push students to think big.



Say something like: Evangelism may feel like a “have to” for Christ-followers, but it's actually a “get to.” God wants the whole world to know who he is, which can feel daunting if we overthink it. Instead, Jesus tells us to simply be a witness to what we've experienced with him.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read John 1:35–38 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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.
- When was a time when you felt God leading you to do something uncomfortable? How did you respond? And 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.



Say something like: 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.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how it's easy to stay in your own safe circles versus reach out.



Example: Mission trips are meant to do many things, from directly reaching the people you serve to helping you grow in what you try. For whatever reason, it can feel easier for us to show courage “over there” that we don’t always bring back home to live out “here.” Imagine treating every day at school as though you are walking onto a mission field. This way of thinking might help us intentionally prepare to share the Gospel the way we do on mission trips.

- 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.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ boldly tell others about God (Acts 4:29).
Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

When the Samaritan woman decided to tell others about her encounter with Jesus, she urgently left her water jar behind to do it. What do you need to “put down” to be more effective in telling others about your encounters with God? How will you do it?



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING**PRAYER***2-3 minutes*

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests in light of the lesson. 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.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

Acts 4:29 (ESV)

NOTES

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

