

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ make sacrifices to follow God's will.

SCRIPTURE

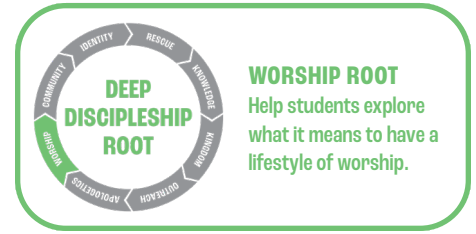
PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; JOHN 1:1-3, 14, 6:38

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

In Philippians 2, Paul hints at some disunity in the church. To remedy this issue and give the congregation an example to follow, Paul points to Christ. In humility, Jesus gave up everything because of his love for God and others. His obedience to the Father required sacrifice after sacrifice. Jesus "emptied himself" (v. 7) so that we could be made full (John 10:10).

Check out the **Teacher Prep Video** for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/816582817>

FACILITATOR NOTE: We've 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?
- How would you describe the ultimate gift?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

Jesus had it made! He lived in the Father's presence, enjoying limitless authority, power, splendor, and comforts. Yet he chose to give that up and live among the humans he had spoken into creation. Moreover, Jesus was willingly born into a common family with some pretty sad accommodations for his birth. He was certainly worthy of more! When we think of the sacrifice of Jesus, we often look at the cross. But Jesus gave up the throne room of heaven and took on flesh to live among the poor and outcast of this world. His sacrifice started from the very beginning of his life on earth. We can follow Jesus' sacrificial examples since *disciples of Christ make sacrifices to follow God's will.*

Read Philippians 2:5–8 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What is one of the most special gifts you have received?**
Answers will vary. Be ready to share an example from your life to get the conversation going.
- **How much did the person who gave you that gift need to sacrifice to give you the gift?**
Sometimes an expensive gift can be easy to recognize, but if a person gives up time, effort, energy, or even something personally valuable to give a gift, that can be even more meaningful. Challenge your students to stretch to see the depth of the sacrifice.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: Jesus' gift cost him more than we could ever imagine. The cross is where we clearly see Jesus giving up his life, but his sacrifice began the moment he left the throne room of heaven to be born into this world.

Read Philippians 2:9–11 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What could Jesus have done with his authority and power?**
Answers will vary. Since Jesus spoke creation into existence, he could have done whatever he wanted. The miracles he performed on this earth were a tiny fraction of his creative powers.
- **Why would Jesus choose to be born in a manger instead of something more worthy of his position?**
Jesus could have been born into a royal room with the best of life's comforts and lavish accommodations. His choice to subject himself to a lowly lifestyle and walk among the outcasts of this world indicates his great love for us and the upside-down nature of his Kingdom.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: The example of Jesus teaches us that God lifts up those who humble themselves in obedience to his will (1 Pet. 5:6).

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

Read John 1:1–3, 14, 6:38 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What keeps you from sacrificing things in order to follow God's will?**
Answers will vary. Possible answers include: selfishness, fear, lack of love, etc. Remind students that Jesus, who gave up all the authority and status that he deserved, is our ultimate example of sacrifice.
- **Jesus created mankind but was willing to be tried, convicted, and killed by human authority. How do you think he was able to suffer such humiliation?**
Jesus' focus on his Father's will made this possible. He had to continually subject himself to that rather than the easy and comfortable path of life. His love for God and others drove him to live a life of total humility.
- **John 6:38 indicates that Jesus focused on doing his Father's will during his life on this earth. What do you hold in higher regard than the will of God the Father?**
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share an example of something that has the tendency to take your top priority over God's will.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: When we focus on ourselves and what we think we're owed, it's very difficult to humbly sacrifice for others. Jesus shows us the way by laying down his life because of how much he loved his creation and wanted to follow his Father's will.



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 someone sacrificed much to give you a gift.



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

Example: People sacrifice for others in small ways all the time. Go out for a drive in your town, and you will see someone offer up the right of way. Walk toward a building and notice how someone will take extra time to hold the door for you to pass through. Small sacrifices are pretty common, but major sacrifices turn heads. Examples of significant sacrifices can be seen when a firefighter risks their life to save someone trapped in a burning building, when a police officer puts themself in harm's way to rescue a victim, or when a soldier offers up their life to protect the freedom of others. Laying down one's life for another is said to be the ultimate sacrifice (John 15:13). These sacrifices change the lives of others. Jesus' sacrifice changed the world.

- How can you live with sacrificial humility toward others?

Answers will vary. Encourage your students to start small (let someone go in front of them in line, put away the lunch trays from their table after lunch, etc.). Small sacrifices can lead to big ones.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ make sacrifices to follow God's will.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Think about ways to give up what you are entitled to or have earned to benefit those around you. What can you sacrifice this week to benefit someone else?



MAKE LIFE APPLICATION

Be specific:

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



HOLD STUDENTS 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. Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks. Spend some time praying that your students would better understand Jesus' sacrificial life and look to emulate his attitude.

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.

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

NOTES

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