

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ have the same value system as God.

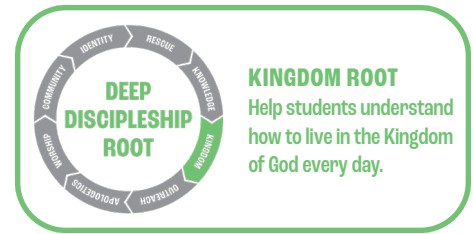
SCRIPTURE

LUKE 2:8-20

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

This was the moment! Since Genesis 3, humanity waited and waited for the promised deliverer to come and save God's people. After millennia in the making, the long-awaited moment had finally arrived...and no one was there to witness it. Other than his parents, probably some animals, and a handful of shepherds, the rest of the world missed the birth of the Messiah. Because people expected Christ to come in a different way than he did, they missed it. The same thing still happens today. People look for Jesus to be different than he is, so they end up missing out on him completely.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/816582063>



KINGDOM ROOT
Help students understand how to live in the Kingdom of God every day.

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?
- What is the most exciting thing that has ever happened in your hometown?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

The Son of God who would save the world was born in a filthy place and enjoyed his first rest in an animal food trough. Amazingly, this was all part of God's plan! Those invited to the party were untrustworthy and uneducated outcasts who couldn't participate in worship at the temple because they were deemed unclean. These shepherds were trusted first with this good news and conveyed to others the message that the Savior was born. When God made his plan for the world's redemption, this is how he chose to do it? Perhaps God views things differently than the world does. *Disciples of Christ have the same value system as God.*

Read Luke 2:8–9 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- If the son of a great king was born today, who do you think would be invited and entrusted to spread the word of his arrival?

Answers will vary but might include: other famous people, world leaders, popular influencers, and entertainers. Encourage students to examine today's culture and cultural values.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Who would be the last person to get an invite to a royal birth and be asked to celebrate or spread the word of this significant arrival?

Answers will vary. However this question is answered, the same thoughts probably applied to shepherds in biblical days. They were ignored, not trusted, and considered unworthy of worshipping with those who were deemed worthy. They were the last people who should have received this news first.

Say something like: For some reason, God chose the least likely people to participate in the world's greatest gift. Ask yourself: if this seems so unusual, why is it usual for God? Is our perspective right, or is his?

Read Luke 2:10–14 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- Who in our society is often overlooked and deemed unimportant?

Answers will vary but challenge the students to go deeper and build a large list. The more, the better, as it will help them to consider who they might be personally overlooking.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Who in your life do you treat as unimportant to you and not worthy of your time and attention?

Answers will vary. Don't let students use names. Allow them to consider how they might be applying the filters of this world when evaluating others' worth and esteem.

- How can you challenge your views of such people and communicate their high importance and value to them?

Answers will vary. Jesus gives us many examples of how to reach out to the poor, sick, young, rejected, sinful people in society and share the love of the Father with them. Jesus was of lowly origin, and he intimately knew God's love. We should seek to share the love of God with those whom our world sees as unworthy.

Say something like: The shepherds were given unbelievable news by an angel of the Lord. This news would bring great joy to all the people, but they received it first. It's very likely these shepherds had never been considered worthy of hearing any important news, especially something that would impact all people. God sees value in people that don't make sense when we look at things by the world's value system.

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

Read Luke 2:15–20 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How do you think these shepherds' lives were different after this encounter?

Answers will vary. We can't know for sure, but they probably felt honored to be chosen by the Lord. Maybe this changed how they viewed themselves or their place in God's Kingdom.



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

- How can being used by God change you?

Answers will vary.

- How can you remember stories of God valuing those the world rejects when you feel overlooked and unimportant?

Having a plan to recall and remember the ways of God's value system is vital to staying faithful and encouraged in this life. Encourage your students to regularly remind themselves of the upside-down nature of God's value system compared to this world's (1 Sam. 16:7).

Say something like: The shepherds responded to this news with trust and obedience. They were told to seek out the baby Jesus, and they found him. Their response was to spread the Good News! If God trusted these often-overlooked people with such a message of love, how can we seek out those often overlooked and share the Good News with them?



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 God has reached you when you've felt unworthy or overlooked.



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

Example: Probably the most famous shepherd in ancient history is David. In fact, he likely tended his flock of sheep in the same hills as the shepherds in the Christmas story. God chose David to be the second king of Israel, but he started with the simple task of tending his father's sheep. The first king, Saul, was tall, strong, and very impressive on the outside. After God rejected Saul as king, he sent Samuel the prophet to anoint a new king from the sons of Jesse in Bethlehem. Samuel was not sure who God had chosen among the sons, but when he saw Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, he was impressed by his appearance and was sure this would be the chosen king. "But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart'" (1 Sam. 16:7). Samuel met each of Jesse's sons, but the Lord selected none to be king. Perplexed, Samuel asked Jesse if there were any other sons and discovered the youngest, David, was keeping the sheep. While even his family had overlooked David, God sought him out because he saw past his outward appearance and valued him greatly. Similarly, God included the shepherds in the Christmas story to be the first to celebrate the birth of the Savior, even if the rest of the world overlooked such an unimpressive group keeping watch over the sheep.

- How can we learn to look past the outward appearance of people and see them the way God does?

Answers will vary, but the more time we spend with God, the more we become like him. What matters to him will matter to us. We will begin to speak, act, think, and see things the way he does.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ have the same value system as God.

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

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

How can you interrupt your view of people based on their status or stature and see things as the Lord does? Come up with a few specific things you can do this week.



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' eyes will be opened to seeing value in those the world overlooks.

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.

"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."
1 Samuel 16:7b (ESV)

NOTES

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