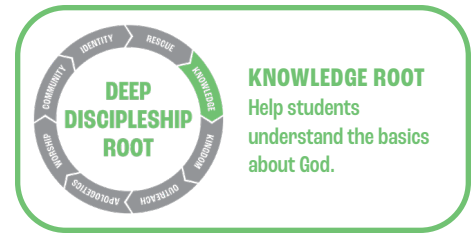


MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ trust that God is always present, even when life is hard.

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 11:25–30, HEBREWS 4:14–16, JAMES 4:6–8



OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from the **Game Library** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—choose a screen game from the **Game Library**
- **Ice Breaker**—What's the hardest job you have ever had to do? What was the worst part about it?

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist (e.g., YouTube, Spotify, etc.).

- 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>

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

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 LIBRARY

Look in the **Intentional Programming** folder included in your download. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

SLIDES (optional)

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

VIDEO

Show **SERIES Bumper Video** or **SERIES Intro Video** after the last worship song. This will give the students something to focus on while the band leaves the stage and you step onto it.

MESSAGE

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

POINT 1: God gives rest

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 11:25–30

Most of you are busy. You're in school for what feels like 14 hours, then you have practice or a job or responsibilities at home or homework or stuff to study for, and this doesn't even include things you want to do like go on dates or hang out with your friends. Life is busy, and a lot of the busyness is difficult. Life on this planet will always be a struggle for believers and unbelievers. But only Christ-followers can find God-given rest, the kind of rest that strengthens you to do everything else.

SLIDES (optional)

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

- Matthew 11:25–30
- Point 1

POINT 2: Jesus can relate

Read or have someone in your group read Hebrews 4:14–16

Because Jesus became one of us, he knows what it's like to be tired. He can relate to situations where people are unkind or mistreat you. He understands how it feels when the odds seem stacked against you.

ILLUSTRATION: Make up a scenario/story where you went to the wrong place for help. (Example: Your car broke down, so you called a plumber. Be sure to mention that they weren't much help because they couldn't understand the problem.) If you have a real story of a similar circumstance, use it.

Jesus knows how to help and bring comfort in the ways we need because he knows what it's like to be in our shoes. He can relate to our struggles because he was one of us.

SLIDES (optional)

- Hebrews 4:14–16
- Point 2

POINT 3: God comes to us

Read or have someone in your group read James 4:6–8

The Bible never promises to take away all the pain or difficulties in our life. But God does provide a safe place to go when things are tough—himself. There is a promise in this passage that he will come near to us if we go near to him. Having the God of the universe present with us, near to us, gives us the ability to face anything.

SLIDES (optional)

- James 4:6–8
- Point 3



CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ trust that God is always present, even when life is hard.

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 your Small Group Leaders with a copy of the **Small Group Break-out 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:

- How does it feel knowing we have a Savior who can relate to all we experience?
- What areas of your life seem to be the most difficult right now? How do you think God's presence can bring rest in those areas?

SLIDES (optional)

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

FACILITATOR NOTE: Give your students a little extra push to take action in what they've learned through the **When Life is Hard** study. Knowledge is good, but application is better.

PRAYER

Close by praying or invite someone to pray for your group.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

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

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS**Build Meaningful Relationships**

- Did you ever get separated from your parents or lost somewhere when you were a kid? If so, what was that experience like?
- What circumstances cause you to feel all alone in life? What do you do during those occasions?

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- How can knowing God is with you change the way you view going through hard times and experiencing hurt?
- How would you describe “going to God” to someone hearing it for the first time?
- Why do you think Jesus’ yoke will be easier than facing struggles on our own?

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- What can you do to go to God when life is hard?
- What areas of your life feel “heavy” that you need to turn over to Jesus?

PRAYER

Take time to let your students pray for each other’s applications in the upcoming weeks.
Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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