

LEADERTREKS **SERMON SERIES**

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ live differently.

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 17:11–21, 1 PETER 3:15

SERMON OVERVIEW

God wants his followers to look different from the world around them. He doesn't want to take them out of the world but keep them in the world, living radically different lives. This difference has a purpose: to draw people to God. When people see how differently followers of God live, that creates an opportunity to explain the difference Christ makes. This lesson will help students see that God wants them in the world but not like the world. As they live a radically different life within the world, they will have opportunities to share Christ and the reason for that difference.

OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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ICE BREAKER QUESTION

- Share about something that makes you different from others.

MESSAGE

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

READ JOHN 17:11–21

POINT 1: **Jesus prays for his followers to live differently**

One of the most fascinating things we read in the Gospels is that Jesus prayed for his followers. We often think about prayer as something we do to talk to him, but in John 17, we read about how Jesus prayed to God, and the whole focus of his prayer was how we should live.

Jesus doesn't want us to be like everyone else, so he prays that we would be in the world but not of the world. That doesn't mean we should completely separate ourselves from non-believers (Mark 2:16-17). Jesus showed us what he meant by the way he lived—he pursued community with people from all walks of life, actively engaging with the world around him yet making radically different lifestyle choices. Following Jesus should cause us to live differently than those around us who do not follow him. But we shouldn't be different just to be different—God has an important purpose in mind.

ILLUSTRATION: Arthur McPhee wrote an old poem that goes like this:

*The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
Are read by more than a few
But the one that is most read and commented on
Is the gospel according to you.
You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day
By the things that you do and the words that you say,
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?
Do men read His truth and His love in your life,
Or has yours been too full of malice and strife?
Does your life speak of evil, or does it ring true?
Say, what is the gospel according to you?¹*

The point of this poem is simple. Your life and how you live it tell a story that either draws people toward Jesus or not. When your life looks different from the world around you, it will draw people in and toward Christ. This is exactly what Jesus prayed for on our behalf!

READ 1 PETER 3:15

POINT 2: Living differently allows us to share Christ

God keeps us in the world after we start following him so we can tell others about him and they too can follow God. One of the primary ways this happens is when people see how we live our lives. People should see a difference in us and ask us about the reason behind that difference. When they do, the Bible says we are to be ready to give an answer, and the answer is Jesus. When we put our faith in Jesus, he allows us to live joyfully in the middle of trials, respond to others with love and forgiveness, and experience peace and thankfulness in all circumstances.

ILLUSTRATION: One of the things you would notice if you traveled to different parts of the United States is how people talk. Maybe some of you have experienced this. Sometimes people use different words for the same thing, but they often say the same words with different accents based on where they're from. How they talk sounds different, and people notice it quickly. Hearing a different accent makes people curious about a person's background or where they're from.

In the same way, a Christ-follower's lifestyle should be different from those around us who do not follow Jesus. The difference should be so noticeable that people ask us why we choose to live the way we do. Even if they don't directly ask us, there will still be opportunities to share about our faith and point them to Christ.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Use this prompt to wrap up your message and leave your students with a challenge to apply.

- Make a list of ways your life should look different as a Christ-follower from those around you. Strive to be consistent in those areas so people see the difference in your life.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Pick a few questions from below to discuss. Close with prayer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why does God leave us in this broken world after we start a relationship with him?
- How does it make you feel that Jesus prayed for his followers?
- Out of all the things Jesus could have prayed, why do you think he prayed for his followers to be in the world but not of it?
- Why are people more likely to evaluate Christianity by looking at your lifestyle rather than the Bible?
- If people don't see a difference in how we live, what might they assume about our faith in Christ?
- What are some examples of how we, as Christ-followers, should live differently than non-believers?
- What type of story is your life telling right now?
- Do people ask you about the difference they see in your life? Why or why not?
- How can your life point toward Christ more?

PRAYER

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

Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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¹ Arthur McPhee, quoted by Mike Spaulding, "Matthew 5:13-16-How Are You Using Your Influence?," *The Transforming Word with Dr. Mike Spaulding (blog)*, July 11, 2015, accessed February 15, 2020, <https://ccpastormike.wordpress.com/tag/arthur-mcpee/>.