

**LEADERTREKS** **SERMON SERIES****MARK OF A DISCIPLE**

Disciples of Christ know God's desire is for all to be saved, and they join in completing his mission.

**SCRIPTURE**

MATTHEW 18:10–14, 1 TIMOTHY 2:1–7

**SERMON OVERVIEW**

The Bible makes it clear that God is on a mission to save people from the consequences of their sin. God desires all to be saved! The Bible also makes it clear that, as Christ-followers, we participate with God on this mission. Students will learn why evangelism matters and that they are called to reach out to those who do not know Christ. They will see examples from film and history of people who risked everything to save lives and consider how they can best pursue those who need to be found by the Good Shepherd.

**OPENING****WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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**ICE BREAKER QUESTION**

- Share a story about a time when you lost something valuable. What did you do to search for it?

**MESSAGE**

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

**READ MATTHEW 18:10–14 & 1 TIMOTHY 2:1–7****POINT 1: God loves and values everyone**

Whether you've followed Christ for a lifetime or have just started getting to know him, you've probably asked questions like: What does God want? What is he like? Why does he do what he does? The good news is that Jesus shows us who God is through his action of dying to save the lost. And if Jesus' actions aren't clear enough, Jesus also tells us exactly what God wants. God wants all to be saved—rich or poor, young or old, influencer or under-the-influence—God is seeking the lost with all his heart.

In Jesus' time, sheep were very valuable; shepherds depended on them for their livelihood. So in the story in Matthew, the shepherd isn't crazy to take a risk to save just one sheep. In a similar way, each person in God's "flock" is extremely valuable. Helpless children and powerful rulers are both equally valued, loved, and sought after by God. He desires for all to be saved because each person is made in his image. And it was worth it to God to sacrifice his Son, Jesus, on the cross so that each person who believes the truth can be saved from God's wrath and have a personal relationship with him.

*ILLUSTRATION:* The movie *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* features a seemingly worthless robot, R2-D2, who is secretly carrying stolen plans to a terrible killing machine, the Death Star, created by the evil empire that runs the galaxy. The only hope to stop this evil empire from killing millions of people is to find R2-D2 and then use the plans to destroy the Death Star. Members of the Rebellion (the good guys) are willing to lose everything—even their lives—to find this little robot that holds the key to salvation. In order to save the lives of people in the far reaches of the galaxy, the heroes of *Star Wars* are willing to face any obstacle.<sup>1</sup>

Just like the members of the Rebellion were willing to risk even their very lives to find one robot, God gave up his own Son who died for us. God deeply loves and values every single person and desires that they would come to know him. He intentionally pursues people, both through the sacrifice of Jesus and in so many little ways every day.

## POINT 2: God's mission is our mission

From the moment Adam and Eve rebelled against him, God began his mission to rescue them from eternal death—the punishment for sin. Our job is to do the same: we are called to share the Gospel and make disciples through our words, actions, and prayers. As followers of Christ, we get to be part of his mission to rescue the lost. It's our duty and our joy. Sometimes we intercede for others (praying on behalf of someone), as we see in 1 Timothy. Sometimes we reach out in tangible ways, as we see in Matthew 18, showing God's love and telling them about Christ's sacrifice for them.

*ILLUSTRATION:* When thinking of heroes who save thousands of lives, we don't usually think of people using just words to do it. Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat to Lithuania at the beginning of World War II. When Jewish refugees began asking him for help to escape Nazi and Soviet persecution, Sugihara risked his career and his family's lives by issuing visas for them to travel to Japan. As more people approached him, he was ordered by his superiors to issue no more visas; however, when he saw how hopeless their situation was, Sugihara defied orders. It's estimated that he spent 18 to 20 hours a day hand-writing thousands of visas. He then worked with Russian and Japanese officials to ensure that an estimated 6,000 to 10,000 people could use these visas and escape to safety.<sup>2</sup>

Sugihara used his position and resources to help people. Every single one of us has gifts, talents, and influence that we can use to help people know Jesus. God's heart is for all people to come to salvation. That's his mission, and it is our mission, too.

## CLOSING REFLECTION

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

- What resources or gifts do you have that you can use to join in on God's mission of bringing people to salvation?

## GROUP DISCUSSION

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

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When have you introduced something you enjoy to someone you care about?
- Why does God put forth so much effort toward saving one person?
- Who are you tempted to overlook when it comes to praying for others and sharing God's truth?
- What do you think your role is in God's mission, and who ultimately saves a person?
- When have you risked something to share the Gospel with someone?
- What would you be risking if you shared about the Good Shepherd with people in your life?
- What small risk could you take today to pursue someone who doesn't know Christ?
- Who in your life needs prayer to be found by Jesus?
- What would your life look like if you dedicated yourself to God's mission to pursue the lost?

### 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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<sup>1</sup> "Sparknotes: Star Wars Episodes IV–VI: Plot Overview," *SparkNotes*, accessed February 5, 2020, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.sparknotes.com/film/starwars/summary/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Chiune Sugihara," *Wikipedia*, accessed May 1, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chiune\\_Sugihara&oldid=952975953](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chiune_Sugihara&oldid=952975953).