



# In Christ, I am God's Masterpiece

connection  
*ministries*

**Discussion Group**  
**Leader's Guide**

**We are God's creation. He created us to belong to Christ.**

**Ephesians 2:10**

# INTRODUCTION

The theme for this year's Summer Friendship Gatherings (SFG) is **"In Christ, I am God's Masterpiece."** During the course of three days, our friends with intellectual disabilities, their families, caregivers, and church volunteers will learn some key Biblical truths, in that we are **Recreated in Christ, Motivated in Christ,** and **Empowered in Christ.** These vital elements, when mixed and swirled into the core of every believer, results in a beautiful masterpiece of God. **All those in Christ, including those with intellectual disabilities, are masterful works of art.** We are equipped with unique spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to bring God glory, and to build up the Body of Christ. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the great privilege in sharing our gifts with the Church, and with the world!

## DAY 1

### Recreated in Christ

(John 3: 1-7)

**As a Discussion Group Leader, it will be important to emphasize these KEY POINTS during the three-day study:**

When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are miraculously changed. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we think, act, and live differently.

**When anyone lives in Christ, the old is gone! The new is here!**

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIRV)**

## DAY 2

### Motivated in Christ

(John 4: 1-42)

All people are valuable to Jesus. Only through Jesus can we receive the living water that fills us with the Holy Spirit, and gives us eternal life. We are motivated by Jesus to share God's love.

We are forgiven when we confess and repent of our sins.

**"Anyone who drinks the water I give them will never be thirsty. In fact, the water I give them will become a spring of water in them. It will flow up into eternal life."**

**John 4:14 (NIRV)**

## DAY 3

### Empowered in Christ

(James 4: 14-17)

Doing good things doesn't save us; only Jesus Christ saves. However, our faith in Jesus as Lord empowers us to serve Him in our lives.

When we have faith and believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we will become His light that shines by the things we do, because He is our Lord.

We look to God's Word to show us how to bring God glory.

**"In the same way, let your light shine so others can see it. Then they will see the good things you do. And they will bring glory to your Father who is in heaven."**

**Matthew 5:16 (NIRV)**

# HELPFUL HINTS

## BE PREPARED!

To be properly prepared to lead your small group, please read through this guide and study the following Biblical passages prior to the event:

### REVIEW EACH DAY'S OUTLINE

In each day's outline, you will find 4 sections: Discussion Group Questions, Personal Reflection Questions, Group Prayers, and Background Information for Leaders & Companions. These are to help you in leading your small group. All companions should be prepared to help the Discussion Leader through participating, and helping the adult friends understand the lesson.

### HAVE PARTICIPANTS READ ALOUD

If you have adult friends with disabilities, a caregiver, volunteer, or a family member in your group that is a good reader, consider having them read aloud Bible passage references, if time allows.

### INVOLVE EVERYONE IN THE GROUP

Everyone in the group should be encouraged to participate in the discussion, including the adult friends, caregivers, and volunteers. It will be important to moderate the conversation so that all participants have a chance to share.

### WAIT PATIENTLY FOR A RESPONSE

When asking an adult friend a question, take a moment to wait for his/her response. Those with disabilities sometimes need a moment to process the question, and to formulate their answer. If he/she does not respond after a minute, ask the question again or rephrase it. Do not hesitate to ask for help from our friend's caregivers and housemates in the group. Companions can whisper answers in adult friend's ear.

### CONNECT THE BIBLE LESSON TO REAL LIFE

Whenever possible, help to connect the Bible lesson to a real-life situation. This helps our adult friends relate the Bible lesson to their lives.

## DAY 1

### RECREATED IN CHRIST

Jesus talks with Nicodemus (John 3: 1-7)

## DAY 2

### MOTIVATED IN CHRIST

The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4: 1-42)

## DAY 3

### EMPOWERED IN CHRIST

Faith in Jesus Christ energizes us to do good things for God (James 2: 14-17)

# DAY 1

## RECREATED IN CHRIST

Jesus talks with Nicodemus (John 3: 1-7)

### Daily Bible Verse:

Jesus answered, "What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can enter God's kingdom unless they are born with water and the Holy Spirit." John 3:5 (NIRV)

### Lesson Objectives:

When we believe in Jesus we become a new person. With the power of the Holy Spirit we think, act, and live differently.

### Discussion Questions:

Note: be sure to leave about 10 minutes for prayer time after discussion.

#### 1. Who was Nicodemus?

- He was a very religious man, called a Pharisee.
- He was a member of the Jewish ruling council.
- He was like a pastor or a priest; he knew a lot about the Scriptures.

#### 2. Why might have Nicodemus visited Jesus at night?

- He studied the Scriptures, but still had questions.
- The Pharisees were developing a hatred for Jesus, and His teachings.
- The Bible doesn't tell us why Nicodemus visited Jesus at night. Here might be some reasons why;
  - He was afraid to be seen with Jesus, because of the Pharisees.
  - He could have wanted a more intimate conversation with Jesus alone.



DAY 1

## Discussion Questions (continued):

### 3. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus he had to do to see the kingdom of God?

- Jesus stated that no one could see the kingdom of God unless he was born again.

### 4. What did Nicodemus think Jesus meant by His statement?

- Nicodemus was puzzled by Jesus' statement.
- He thought Jesus meant someone had to enter his mother's womb a second time to be born.
- But, that was not what Jesus meant by being born again.



### 5. What kind of birth was Jesus talking about?

- Spiritual birth, which comes from believing that Jesus Christ is your Savior, and receiving the Holy Spirit into your heart.
- *Jesus answered, "What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can enter God's kingdom unless they are born with water and the Holy Spirit." John 3:5 (NIRV)*
- To be born of water does not refer to baptism. The water represents cleansing from sin. When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, our sins are forgiven and forgotten. The Holy Spirit is God's power in our lives to help us become the new person He wants us to be.

### 6. How are we recreated in Christ?

- You are spiritually born again when you become a believer in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit enters your heart.
- Remind the group about the butterfly analogy; a caterpillar wraps itself in a cocoon, and then emerges as a beautiful butterfly.
- A caterpillar represents a person before he/she becomes a believer in Christ.
- The cocoon is like when a person becomes a believer, and the Holy Spirit enters his/her life.
- Finally, the butterfly represents how a person is miraculously changed when he/she believes in Christ as their Lord and Savior and they produce fruit.
- As believers, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in a Godly life!

## Personal Reflection Questions:

- Discuss reflection questions if time permits. After day 2 the participants can take home the discussion booklet and discuss the reflection questions with family and caregivers.

**1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?**

**2. As a new creation, what are some ways the Holy Spirit can guide you in your life?**

- Love one another. (i.e. family, housemates, staff, co-workers, etc.)
- Forgive others who do us wrong. (*see Romans 12:14; 19-21*)
- Serve God by serving other people.
- Read the Bible. (God's Word)
- Pray on a daily basis.
- Be in Christian community. (i.e. church, Friendship Group)

**3. When are we afraid to let others know we follow Jesus?**

- When people make fun of us for our faith; we fear rejection.
- We don't want to "offend" people.
- At work; with family who aren't believers; even in our homes.
- We need to remember that God is with us always. (*see Matt. 28:20*)
- Rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the boldness to share our faith, and the words to say.

## Group Prayers:

**A. Take this time to collect prayer requests from the group (include all in the prayers, such as adult friends, companions, caregivers, and volunteers).**

**B. Lead the group prayers.**



**DAY 1**

## Background Information for Leaders & Companions:

### **A. To be born again means that a person experienced a spiritual birth, given from God above.**

- *Jesus answered, "What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can enter God's kingdom unless they are born with water and the Holy Spirit." John 3:5 (NIRV)*
- In the original translation of this Bible verse, water and wind meant to come from above; in this case, to be born of water **does not** refer to baptism.
- The water represents cleansing from sin. When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, our sins are cleansed; they are forgiven and forgotten. The Holy Spirit represents God's power in our lives; the strengthening power of Jesus to help us become the new person He wants us to be.

### **B. You are spiritually born again when you become a believer in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit enters your heart.**

### **C. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we become a new person. He recreates us! With the power of the Holy Spirit, we think, act, and live differently.**

- As believers, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in a Godly life.
- *"When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIRV)*

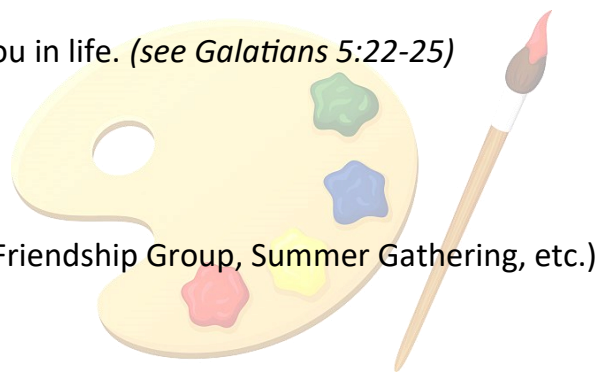
### **D. How do we show others that we are recreated in Christ?**

- Depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you in life. (*see Galatians 5:22-25*)
- Study God's Word for guidance.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you.
- Be in Christian community. (church, Friendship Group, Summer Gathering, etc.)

### **E. Love one another. (*1 John 4:7*)**

- Loving housemates, staff, caregivers.
- Forgiving people who hurt your feelings.
- Being careful not to hurt others with your words and actions.

### **F. Share the Good News of Jesus Christ. (*Matthew 28:19-20*)**



# DAY 2

## MOTIVATED IN CHRIST

The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4: 1-42)

### Daily Bible Verse:

“Anyone who drinks the water I give them will never be thirsty. In fact, the water I give them will become a spring of water in them. It will flow up into eternal life.” John 4:14 (NIRV)

### Lesson Objectives:

All people are valuable to Jesus. Only through Jesus can we receive the living water that fills us with the Holy Spirit, and gives us eternal life. We are motivated by Jesus to share God’s love.



### Discussion Questions:

Note: be sure to leave about 10 minutes for prayer time after discussion.

#### 1. Why was Jesus at the well?

- He was tired and thirsty, and resting from the long walk from Judea.
- The fact that Jesus rested and was thirsty showed that He was human.

#### 2. Who did He meet at the well?

- A Samaritan woman, who was coming to the well to fill her water jar.

#### 3. What did He say to the Samaritan woman?

- Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water.



## Discussion Questions (continued):

### 4. Why was she shocked?

- Jews and Samaritans did not talk to each other; the Jews hated the Samaritans.
- Jewish leaders did not speak to women in public, or even look at them.
- This woman might have also been an outcast in her community. Normally the women would come in the cool of the day, together. They would chat, trade stories, and get water from the well. This woman came by herself, in the heat of the day.
- We know from the Bible that she had been divorced five times, and was now living with another man.

### 5. What did Jesus tell the woman about herself?

- That she had had five husbands, and the man she was living with was not her husband.
- The woman began to understand that Jesus was more than just a man, and that He was talking about faith in God.

### 6. What did Jesus say about the water?

- *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But anyone who drinks the water I give them will never be thirsty. In fact, the water I give them will become a spring of water in them. It will flow up into eternal life.” John 4:13-14 (NIRV)*
- When we drink water, it just quenches our physical thirst. Natural water is essential for our bodies, but the life-giving water Jesus offers quenches us spiritually.
- The living water fills us with the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus can give us this living water.

### 7. What did the woman do?

- She left her jar and ran back to town to tell the others about Jesus; *When she heard this, the woman left her water jar and went back to the town. She said to the people, “Come. See a man who told me everything I’ve ever done. Could this be the Messiah?” John 4:28-29 (NIRV)*
- She shared the Good News of Jesus with her neighbors.
- The Samaritans from the town came to see Jesus, and many more believed because of His Word.

## Personal Reflection Questions:

- Discuss reflection questions if time permits. The participants can take home the discussion booklet and discuss the questions with family and caregivers.

### 1. What are some ways we are like the woman at the well?

- In order to receive the life-giving water that Jesus offers, we have to recognize our need for it.
- We are all sinners, and Jesus know our sins.
- When we repent and ask for forgiveness of our sins, He will forgive us and change our lives.

### 2. What does it mean to be spiritually thirsty?

- Needing to know about God's love, knowledge of Jesus, and forgiveness of sin.
- Only Jesus can satisfy our heart's inner thirst. Without Jesus, a person's heart is empty.
- One can quench that inner thirst with life-giving water with Jesus, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. That living water is a gift from God.
- When you have God's Word and Holy Spirit in your heart, you also have eternal life in heaven.

### 3. How can we share God's love with others?

- We can tell others about Jesus, and what He has done for you.
- Invite people you know to church, to attend your Friendship Group.
- Do a kind deed for someone else.
- Be kind and loving to others, even when they are not kind back.

**\*Note: everyone visits the well to get a water bottle, and put on a Bible passage sticker.**

**The water bottle is for sharing with another person.**

## Group Prayers:

**A. Take this time to collect prayer requests from the group (include all in the prayers, such as adult friends, companions, caregivers, and volunteers).**

**B. Lead the group prayers.**

There will be no discussion group on Day 3. The Day 3 discussion and reflection questions can be found in the discussion booklet.

**DAY 2**

## Background Information for Leaders & Companions:

### **A. The Samaritan woman wanted the life-giving water that Jesus offered.**

- In order to receive the life-giving water, we have to recognize our need for it.
- Forgiveness comes only to those who confess and repent of their sins, and desire forgiveness.

### **B. When Jesus revealed to the woman that he was the Messiah, she immediately went and told everyone!**

- *When she heard this, the woman left her water jar and went back to the town. She said to the people, "Come. See a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?" John 4:28-29 (NIRV)*
- The woman was so excited about her meeting with Jesus, that she ran to tell everyone right away.
- She was an outcast, and could have been afraid to share the Good News, but she did! When we know Jesus, we want to share His love with everyone.

### **C. Only Jesus can satisfy our heart's inner thirst. Without Jesus, a person's heart is empty.**

- One can quench that inner thirst with life-giving water with Jesus, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. That living water is a gift from God.
- With Jesus, a person's heart is like a water jar that is full of life-giving water.
- Only through Jesus can we receive eternal life.
- When you have God's Word and Holy Spirit in your heart, you also have eternal life in heaven.
- *"Those who drink of the water that I give them will never be thirsty." John 4:14 (NIRV)*

### **D. Important points to remember...**

- The life-giving water stands for Jesus, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. That living water is a gift from God. We have life-giving water when we have Jesus in our hearts.
- We receive the living water, which is the Holy Spirit, only through Jesus.
- All people, whether Jewish or Gentile, man or woman, popular or outcast, are valuable to Jesus.
- We are forgiven when we confess and repent of our sins.
- We should tell others about Jesus!

**DAY 2**

References:



<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Readers-Version-NIRV-Bible/>

New International Readers Version (NIRV) Bible



Equip Christian congregations to minister with adults with intellectual disabilities

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