



In Christ, I am God's Masterpiece

Large Group
Leader's Guide

connec**ion**
ministries

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

Ephesians 2:10

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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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 Large 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 deeds 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 the large 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 3 sections: Daily Bible Verse, Lesson Objectives, and Bible Lesson Outline. These are to help you in leading the overall large group.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

It is vital for the Bible lesson to actively engage the adult friends, as this encourages further learning. Here are some ideas to use in teaching the large group lesson:

SKITS, PROPS AND COSTUMES: interactive resources to engage the large group in the Bible lesson, through the use of skits, costumes, and/or having a guest visitor.

SONGS: worship and interactive songs related to that day's Bible lesson (refer to playlist).

BIBLICAL CHARACTER: a volunteer can play a Bible character from that day's lesson, to emphasize the main points.

The Connection Ministries Program Team has provided resource options in the "Additional Resources" supplement.

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.

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:

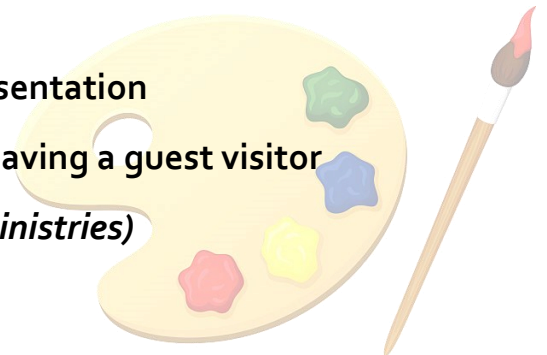
Jesus answered, "What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can enter God's kingdom unless they are born with water and the Holy Spirit." John 3:5 (NIRV)

Lesson Objectives:

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

Suggested Props/Teaching Aids:

- "Day 1: Recreated in Christ" PowerPoint presentation
- Costumes, for acting out the lesson and/or having a guest visitor
- Butterfly costume (*supplied by Connection Ministries*)



Bible Lesson Outline:

I. USE THE "DAY 1: RECREATED IN CHRIST" POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AS A GUIDE. (*John 3:1-7*)

A. Who was Nicodemus? (*refer to Slides 2-3 in PowerPoint presentation*)

- He was a very religious man, called a Pharisee.
- He was a member of the Jewish ruling council.
- Nicodemus 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

II. JESUS TALKS WITH NICODEMUS. *(refer to Slides 4-5 in PowerPoint presentation)*

- A. Nicodemus stated that Jesus must be a teacher from God, because of the amazing miracles He was performing in Jerusalem.
- B. Jesus stated that no one could see the kingdom of God unless he was born again.
- Nicodemus was puzzled about 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.
- C. Jesus said to be born again meant 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.
- D. You are spiritually born again when you become a believer in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit enters your heart.

III. 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.

(refer to Slide 6 in PowerPoint presentation)

- A. Think of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly (use butterfly costume) .
- The caterpillar wraps itself in a cocoon, and 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. A butterfly has the ability to fly, pollinate flowers, and bears much fruit.
 - As believers, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in a Godly life.

DAY 1

IV. “WHEN ANYONE LIVES IN CHRIST, THE NEW CREATION HAS COME. THE OLD IS GONE! THE NEW IS HERE!”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 (NIRV) (refer to Slide 6 in PowerPoint presentation)

A. How did Jesus say we can be recreated in Christ?

- You are spiritually born again when you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit enters your heart.
- The Holy Spirit changes the way we think, in that we want to love God and love others.
- *“When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIRV)*
- As believers, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in a Godly life!

V. HOW DO WE SHOW OTHERS THAT WE ARE RECREATED IN CHRIST?

A. Depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you in life. (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.)

B. Love one another. (1 John 4:7)

- Loving family, housemates, staff, caregivers, co-workers, and even people who are hard to love!
- Forgiving people who hurt your feelings.
- Being careful not to hurt others with your words and actions.

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

- What are some ways you can share your faith with others?
- Invite them to your Friendship Group, and to your church!

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to help us live the kind of life you want us to live. Thank you for changing my life. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can reach out to those around us to bring them to you.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

DAY 1

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.

Suggested Props/Teaching Aids:

- “Day 2: Motivated in Christ” PowerPoint presentation
- Costumes – Samaritan woman, Jesus, Samaritan people, disciples
- Two water well props with water bottles, small one to use as a large group object lesson, and a larger well filled with bottled water with John 4:14 passage stickers.

Bible Lesson Outline:

- I. **REVIEW BIBLE LESSON, DAY 1** (*John 3:1-7*) (*refer to Slide 2 in PowerPoint presentation*)
 - A. We are recreated in Christ. When we believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we become a new person. We think, act, and live differently.

II. JESUS TALKS TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (*John 4:1-42*)

A. Introduction: before we get started, I need a drink of water (take a drink). Did you know that most experts agree we should drink eight or nine glasses of water every day? That's a lot of water! Is there anyone here who drinks that much water? I don't think I do. How much water I drink depends on the weather, and how much exercise or work I do. In today's Bible lesson Jesus is talking about living water, and if you drink it you will never thirst again. Does that sound possible? Let's find out how we can get this life-giving water.

B. *John 4:1-5; Jesus and His disciples traveled from Judea to Galilee. (refer to Slide 3 in PowerPoint presentation)*

- The Jews and Samaritans did not get along at all. Here are some reasons why;
- The Jews did not like the Samaritans because they married non-Jews.
- Samaritans believed that only the first 5 books should be included in the Bible.
- The Jews worshipped in Jerusalem, and Samaritans worshipped at Mt. Gerzin.
- Most Jews did not even pass through Samaria, but Jesus did! His Good News is for everyone!

C. *John 4:6; Jesus stopped in Sychar, where Jacob's well was located.*

- Jacob's well was very important to both the Israelites and the Samaritans because Jacob with their ancestor.
- Tired from the long walk, Jesus sat down beside the well to rest and sent His disciples to town to get food.
- The fact that Jesus rested and was thirsty showed that He was human.
- As the Large Group Leader, share about a time when you were really thirsty, or about the benefits of water.

D. *John 4:7-9; a Samaritan woman came to fill her water jar. Jesus asked her for a drink of water. (refer to Slides 4-5 in PowerPoint presentation)*

- The woman was shocked. *"How can you ask me for a drink?"*
- She was shocked because Jesus was a Jew and she was a Samaritan. Jewish leaders did not speak to women in public.
- A religious leader would not even talk to his mother, wife, sister, or daughter on the street and would actually close their eyes if they saw a woman.

DAY 2

(SECTION II CONTINUED)

E. Another reason the Samaritan woman may have been shocked was because she was an outcast.

- When she came to the well she needed both water and God!
- 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.
- In those days men could declare their wives unclean, unloving, or incapable of fulfilling her wifely duties, and divorce them on the spot. She may or may not have been unfaithful, but either way, no decent man would have spoken to her.

F. The fact that Jesus spoke to her shows that all people, whether Jewish or Gentile, man or woman, popular or outcast, are valuable to Jesus.

G. *John 4:10-14; Jesus said to the woman, "If you knew what God gives and who I am, you would be asking me for life-giving water, and you will never be thirsty again."* (refer to Slide 6 in PowerPoint presentation)

- *"Sir," the woman said, "you don't have anything to get water with. The well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Our father Jacob gave us the well. He drank from it himself. So did his sons and his livestock. Are you more important than he is?" John 4:11-12 (NIRV)*
- *Jesus answered, "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) (another phrase could be "fill up")*

III. ONLY JESUS CAN SATISFY OUR HEART'S INNER THIRST. WITHOUT JESUS, A PERSON'S HEART IS EMPTY.

A. 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.

B. The life-giving water Jesus offers, which quenches us spiritually, is very different from natural water, which only quenches us physically.

C. When you have God's Word and Holy Spirit in your heart, you also have eternal life in heaven.

DAY 2

(SECTION III CONTINUED)

D. 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.

- *"Those who drink of the water that I give them will never be thirsty." John 4:14 (NIRV)*
- When we have Jesus in our hearts, we can share that life-giving water that gives eternal life. We can share God's love!

IV. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN WANTED THE LIFE-GIVING WATER THAT JESUS OFFERED. (refer to Slide 7 in PowerPoint presentation)

A. John 4:15-18; Jesus told her to go get her husband.

B. *"I don't have a husband," she replied. "You are right," Jesus answered. "You have had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband." John 4:17-18 (NIRV)*

C. Jesus knew about her life, but He asked her anyway. Why?

- 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.

D. John 4:19-25; the woman began to understand that Jesus was more than just a man, and that He was talking about faith in God. She said, *"I know that the Messiah will come, and when He comes, He will tell us everything."* (refer to Slide 8 in PowerPoint presentation)

E. John 4:26-30; Jesus told her that He was the Messiah. *"I am He."*

- *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)*
- This was amazing! 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!
- Like the butterfly talked about yesterday, the woman was recreated in Christ, and produced fruit by telling others about Him.
- When we know Jesus, we want to share His love with everyone.

DAY 2

(SECTION IV CONTINUED)

F. John 4:39-42; many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." (refer to Slide 9 in PowerPoint presentation)

- So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked Him to stay with them. And He stayed there two days.
- Many more believed because of His Word.
- *They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world." John 4:42 (NIRV)*

V. WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER? (refer to Slide 10 in PowerPoint presentation)

- A. 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. Only through Jesus can we receive eternal life.**
- B. All people are valuable to Jesus.**
- C. We receive the living water, which is eternal life, only through Jesus.**
- D. We are forgiven when we confess and repent of our sins.**
- E. We should tell others about Jesus!**
- F. Use the small water well prop at the end of the lesson, as an teaching aid to emphasize the main point of life-giving water.**

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for giving us living water to quench our thirst for you. Help us to remember that all people are valuable to you. Help us to be kind and to love others, as you love us. We know that when we confess and repent our sins, you forgive us. Help us to tell others about you.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

DAY 2

DAY 3

EMPOWERED IN CHRIST

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

Daily Bible Verse:

"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)

Lesson Objectives:

- 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.
- When we are recreated, we act and do things (good works) that please God.
- Doing good works doesn't save us; only Jesus Christ saves. However, our faith in Jesus as Lord empowers us to serve Him in our daily lives.
- We look to God's Word to show us how to bring God glory.

Suggested Props/Teaching Aids:

- "Day 3: Empowered in Christ" PowerPoint presentation
- Personal headlamp for leader to wear during lesson
- Lampshade or basket to cover the headlamp as object lesson



Bible Lesson Outline:

I. REVIEW BIBLE LESSONS, DAYS 1 & 2 (*John 3:1-7; John 4: 1-42*) (refer to Slide 2 in PowerPoint presentation)

A. Day 1: *John 3:1-7*

- We are recreated when we believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. We become a new person. We think, act, and live differently. (Review how the butterfly pollinates, and helps to produce fruit).

B. Day 2: *John 4:1-42*

- Through Jesus Christ we receive living water that gives eternal life, and causes us to share God's love.

DAY 3

II. WE ARE EMPOWERED BY CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT!

(refer to Slides 3-4 in PowerPoint presentation)

- A. Introduction: Have you ever been really excited about something, like going on a trip? Does your daily schedule change as you get ready for the trip? When something big happens in our lives, we usually act and do things differently. When going on a trip, we dress in different clothes, pack a suitcase, and are excited to meet new people and see new things.
- B. It's like this when we have Jesus Christ in our hearts; we act and do things differently. When we believe that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, the change we go through doesn't go away; it's here to stay!
- C. Let's look at what happens when Jesus becomes our Lord and Savior.
- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is sitting on a mountainside with His disciples. He tells them; *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill can't be hidden. Also, people do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand. Then it gives light to everyone in the house. 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 5:14-16 (NIRV)
 - Large Group Leader should put the cloth over his/her head with the headlamp on, to illustrate the Bible passage.

III. THE ANALOGY OF THE FLASHLIGHT. (refer to Slide 5 in PowerPoint presentation)

- A. How do we shine our light?
- Think about a flashlight. A flashlight is a thing that has been made from materials. The shape alone can't do much, even with a light bulb installed. A flashlight cannot shine light without batteries.
 - When batteries are installed, the flashlight becomes something different. The batteries empower the flashlight, so it can shine light.
- B. Like a flashlight needs batteries, we cannot shine light without being empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us faith that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and comes to live in us.
- The Large Group Leader should remind the group about the living water from yesterday's lesson, and the living water represents the Holy Spirit. He gives us faith in Jesus Christ, which gives us eternal life.

DAY 3

(SECTION III CONTINUED)

C. Once we have the Holy Spirit, what do we do? (refer to Slide 6 in PowerPoint presentation)

- “Suppose a person claims to have faith but doesn’t act on their faith. My brothers and sisters, can this kind of faith save them?” James 2:14 (NIRV)

D. Let’s think about the flashlight again. What does it do?

- It shines light to show the path that we are walking on.
- It can show barriers and objects that we could stumble on.
- A flashlight can be used in different ways. We too are used in different ways by the Holy Spirit, as we use the spiritual gifts God has given us.

IV. WHEN WE BELIEVE JESUS CHRIST IS OUR SAVIOR, WE ARE RECREATED IN HIM, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ENTERS OUR HEARTS! HE ALSO EMPOWERS US TO SERVE JESUS IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. THIS IS CALLED GOOD WORKS.

(refer to Slides 6-7 in PowerPoint presentation)

A. “Suppose a person claims to have faith but doesn’t act on their faith. My brothers and sisters, can this kind of faith save them?” James 2:14 (NIRV)

- To have faith means to be recreated in Christ. The Holy Spirit enters your heart, and you believe that Jesus is your Savior.
- Good works is what a person does because of his/her faith in Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit leads us in good deeds through loving God, and loving others.

B. It’s very important to remember the only thing that saves us is faith in Jesus Christ.

- Doing good works is what we do because of our faith in Jesus.
- In the Bible, James tells us to have an active faith; “Suppose a brother or a sister has no clothes or food. Suppose one of you says to them, ‘Go. I hope everything turns out fine for you. Keep warm. Eat well.’ And suppose you do nothing about what they really need. Then what good have you done? It is the same with faith. If it doesn’t cause us to do something, it’s dead.” James 2:15-17 (NIRV)

C. Doing good deeds does not save us. However, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to do good things for God! (refer to Slide 8 in PowerPoint presentation)

- Like the butterfly on Day 1, when we are recreated in Christ we produce good fruit to glorify Him.

DAY 3

V. HOW CAN WE GLORIFY GOD BY SHINING HIS LIGHT? (refer to Slides 9-10 in PowerPoint presentation)

A. We look to God's Word to guide us in doing the right thing;

- Practice righteousness (means to practice doing good).
- These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

B. The Holy Spirit uses us in different ways to shine the light of God.

- Loving one another including the people that are hard to love. (see Matthew 7:12; Luke 10:27-37; 1 John 4:7)
- Serving in our community.
- Working hard at our jobs.
- Telling others the Good News of Jesus Christ.

C. What are some service projects (good deeds) that your Friendship Group can do to serve God, and others?

- Create school kits for underprivileged children.
- Make gift baskets for the needy.
- Collect food for a food pantry.
- Visit a nursing home and fellowship with residents.
- Invite others to your Friendship Group.
- Take an offering, to help God's people.
- Pray!

Closing Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for giving us the faith to accept your Son, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Thank you for giving us direction in your Word so that we can do good things that bring you glory. Having Jesus as our Savior, we want to shine your light in our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

