

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS

SIMPLIFY

JANUARY 31, 2024

Week 4 of a 4-week series
about what Jesus said
matters most

BOTTOM LINE

Love people the way
Jesus loves people.

SCRIPTURE

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

- John 4:7-9 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students take a step toward those who are different than they are and to encourage them to approach all people in their lives with the love of God



>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: To close this series, we're talking about what it looks like to love others the way God loves them. Specifically, the conversation centers on loving those who are different from us in one way or another. This may be challenging for your group for a few reasons. First, as middle schoolers, they don't always have a lot of control over who they spend time with on a regular basis. Second, they're also still living under the rules and opinions of those in charge of them. So while they may be open to getting to know or hanging out with someone who is different, the adults in their lives may not allow them to do so. Finally, middle schoolers tend to think about one thing more than anything: themselves. This isn't a bad thing; it's just where they are in development! That means they may not recognize yet the value in expanding their circle or getting to know someone who isn't like them. That's all okay! Your conversation and encouragement will plant the seed to help them look for and love people who are different from them as they grow up.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DO THIS:

Line up your group and ask them to take a step forward if they've ever met someone who:

- Had different interests than you.
- Had a different style than you.
- Spoke a different language than you.
- Thought something was cool that you didn't.
- Had a different skill/talent than you.
- Has a family that's different from yours.
- Had a different idea of what is right/wrong than you.
- Had a different faith than you.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What surprised you the most about that activity?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult is it for you to love someone who is different from you?
- What's one thing that might make loving someone who is different from you difficult to do?
- Why is it important to see the value in people who are different from us?
- How did Jesus treat those who were different from Him?
- How might loving people like Jesus change the way we see them? How might it change us?

DO THIS:

Lead your group through the "Same or Different" activity using the leader page, student pages, pens, and crayons provided. Conclude with the discussion questions on the back of the leader page.

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

HIGH
SCHOOL
FOCUS

SIMPLIFY

JANUARY 31, 2024

Week 4 of a 4-week series
about what Jesus said
matters most

BOTTOM LINE

Love people the way
Jesus loves people.

SCRIPTURE

*When a Samaritan woman
came to draw water, Jesus
said to her, "Will you give
me a drink?"*

*The Samaritan woman said
to him, "You are a Jew and
I am a Samaritan woman.
How can you ask me for a
drink?" (For Jews do not
associate with Samaritans.)*

- John 4:7-9 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students take a
step toward those who
are different than they are
and to encourage them to
approach all people in their
lives with the love of God

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Your students are growing up in a very polarizing time. While they may have access to different people or be exposed to different perspectives more than generations in the past, they're coming up in a time where meeting in the middle isn't common. The result? A very divided world. It's this "us vs. them" mentality that Jesus challenged with His words, actions, and relationships while on Earth. So, as we encourage students to follow that example and love others the way God calls us to love them, the best place we can start is with Jesus. The goal here isn't sameness or agreement on all fronts. Rather, it's simply to encourage your students to bridge the gap between themselves and others by leading with love.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Think about the people you're closest to in life. What do you have in common that keeps you close to one another?
- Why do you think it's easier to stay close to people who are similar to us?
- What's one reason we may distance ourselves from people who are different from us?
- Do you think Christians have become known for distancing ourselves from those who are different? Why or why not?
- Think about the way Jesus treated the Samaritan woman—someone very different than Him. What can we learn from His example?
- What would it look like for you to move away from categorizing people who are different from you and instead engage them in conversation?
- What might be different about the following relationships in your life if you approached them the way God approaches them:
Your parents? Your friends? Your small group? Your teammates? Your siblings?

DO THIS:

As a small group, make a plan to continue the conversation about seeing others through God's eyes. Watch a movie together in a different language, listen to music from a different culture, or try some new food together and celebrate how God's love can be found in so many different places and people.