



Devotion

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

John the Baptizer

A man came who was sent from God. His name was John. He came to give witness about that light. He gave witness so that all people could believe. (John 1:6–7).

John gives witness about Jesus. He cries out and says, “This was the one I was talking about. I said, ‘He who comes after me is more important than I am. He is more important because he existed before I was born’” (John 1:15, NIRV).

When the President of the United States of America decides it is time to visit the Prime Minister of Great Britain, there are certain plans to be made ahead of time. Before the President takes his trip, people inspect Air Force One, his hotel reservations are made, the meals he will eat are planned out and most importantly, his itinerary is written. The President has a very important message to share with those he is visiting. His focus needs to be clear and precise. His success begins with those who go ahead of him and take care of the details before his trip. His arrival is planned for; all need to be ready.

John the Baptizer was meant to be the one who did this job for Jesus before his ministry began. He prepared people for Christ’s arrival. God would share his message of love, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. It was up to John to get the people ready to hear this message. In the same way, God uses each of us to get people ready for Jesus’ message.

Brainstorm for a Moment:

1. *Who are the people in your community who need to hear this message of God’s love for them through Jesus?*

Did you mention:

- Single parents and their children
- People who are homeless
- Newly retired men and women
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Children and their families

Write down some ideas on how you would prepare these individuals/groups to hear Jesus’ message.

John came to develop relationships with people so they could have a relationship with Jesus. This is our task as well. God chooses to partner with us in this ministry outreach and in the faith formation process. People’s hearts will be prepared

to believe what they see living in our hearts. It is the old adage, "Actions speak louder than words." As Jesus shows himself through our actions, people will develop a trust and a relationship with him.

To share Jesus' good news message with any individual or group, they will need to have a relationship with you. These people want to see Jesus at work in your life.

Pick one of the mentioned groups. Brainstorm together ways in which you might prepare them to hear Jesus' message.

2. How do you see yourself developing a relationship with a person within this group?

What would you find most challenging in developing a relationship with a person from this group?

What benefits do you see coming from this relationship?

If time permits, consider other mentioned groups asking the same three questions.

At Bethesda Lutheran Communities, our mission is to equip the church to minister with people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. As God equips you through training and study of the word, you will be given the opportunity to be a John the Baptizer in the life of a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As you share of your life and become a friend of people with disabilities, they will come to know Christ and grow in their Christian faith.

We believe that people with and without disabilities need a personal relationship with Jesus for saving faith. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. *Who might God bring into your life so you can share Jesus with them?*

Prayer: **Thank you God for sending John the Baptizer to get the people ready to hear your good news message. He told them that Jesus, your son, was coming to save them from their sins. As we prepare to share this message with others, we think especially of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Please equip me and my church in sharing this good news message of Jesus' love for them. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**



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for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

The Woman at the Well

A woman from Samaria came to get some water. Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew. I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” She said this because Jews don’t have anything to do with Samaritans.

The woman said, “I know that Messiah is coming.” (He is called Christ.) “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus said, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

(John 4:7, 9, 25-26 NIrV)

Carol had just left a music concert in the city. She wasn’t used to getting around in the city and Carol got lost. She saw an open gas station and stopped to ask for help. The worker that night was able to tell Carol how to get home safely. Within a few minutes Carol was heading toward her home. The person she was a *helpful stranger*.

A woman in the Bible from Samaria was lost, too. The woman did not know Jesus; he was a stranger to her. The woman and Jesus were at the well at the same time. A well is where people in the Bible would go to get water. It was a hot day and both Jesus and the woman needed water to drink. God meant for them to meet this day at the well.

While the Bible does not tell us the name of this woman who met Jesus at the well, there are a few things we do know about her. One thing is that this woman came from a group of people

who lived in the country of Samaria. A lot of people did not want Samaritans, so they did not like this woman. During Bible times, people traveled by walking or riding animals. If people had to travel through Samaria to get to another country, they would walk all the way around the country just to avoid meeting Samaritans.

Imagine, this would be like walking all the way around the State of [insert name] to get to [name a neighboring state].

1. Have you ever gone out of your way to avoid someone or something? Has anyone gone out of the way to avoid you?

Another reason people were not friends with the woman at the well was because she had sinned. People had judged the woman and decided that she could not be their friend. They decided that she was bad.

2. *Are you friends with everyone you know or just a few people you know?*

Are there people who judge you and decide not to be your friend?

Why do you think people decide not to be your friend?

Do people judge you, or say bad things to you, because you have a disability? How does this make you feel?

The woman came to the well in the hottest part of the day when she knew no one else would be there. She hoped that if no one was there, then no one could be mean to her, or stare at her, or make her feel sad. She thought she would quietly get her water and go home. Then she met Jesus. Jesus did not judge the woman; he did not care that she was from Samaria.

3. *Do you know that Jesus is your friend?*

How does that make you feel?

Have you ever been somewhere where people did not want to be with you? Maybe you were ignored or people walked away from you. Share what happened in your situation.

How did this make you feel?

Why do you think people choose to treat other people this way?

Some people are afraid of people with disabilities. They don't know what to say or how to be a friend.

Sometimes people do not understand what it means to have a disability.

4. *How can you help people understand?*

Has there been a time when you or someone close to you helped others know about disabilities?

Teaching others makes you an advocate for people with disabilities.

God wanted Jesus and the woman to talk that day. God wanted the woman to know that Jesus was her friend. Some people did not like this woman, but Jesus did. Some people may not like us, but Jesus does. Jesus loves us so much that he died on the cross to save us from our sins.

Jesus rose from the dead and gives us all life forever in heaven with him.

The woman at the well was an advocate, too. She told others that Jesus would save *all* people from their sins. Including the people of Samaria. You can share God's message with people you know. Telling others about Jesus makes you Jesus' advocate.

5. *What are some of activities you like to do at home?*

In your community? In your congregation?

These are gifts God gave you to share with others.

You are important to Jesus, just like the woman at the well.

You can use your gifts to be an advocate for Jesus.

God wants us to be kind to other people. God wants us to be helpful.

6. *Who can you be a friend to?*

Who can you tell that Jesus loves them?

Dear Jesus, thank you for being my friend and Savior. There are people who do not like other people that are different from them. There are people who don't know you as their friend. Help me tell them about your love for them and everyone. In your name I pray. Amen.